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JUBILEE OF CONSECRATED LIFE
John Paul II

MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION:
THE CHURCH AND THE FAULTS
OF THE PAST
International Theological Commission

THE ROMAN MISSAL 2000
*Congregation for Divine Worship
and Disciplines of the Sacraments*

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official interdiocesan Bulletin

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Table of Contents

EDITORIAL	652 RALLIES FOR PEACE
PASTORAL WORDS	
<i>Jaime Card. Sin, DD</i>	653 ANG PAGTATALAGA NG BAYANG FILIPINO SA KALINIS-LINISANG PUSO NI MARIA
<i>Jean-Louis Tauran</i>	657 THE DEFENSE OF LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND NORMS
<i>International Theological Commission</i>	678 MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION: THE CHURCH AND THE FAULTS OF THE PAST
DOCUMENTATION	
<i>Congregation for Divine Worship and Disciplines of the Sacraments</i>	735 THE ROMAN MISSAL 2000
<i>John Paul II</i>	760 JUBILEE OF CONSECRATED LIFE
CONSULTATIVE WORDS	
<i>Javier Gonzalez, OP</i>	766 A VALIDATION OF CML MARRIAGE
GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW	
<i>Mario Baltazar, OP</i>	771 HOMILIES FOR JANUARY 2001
INDEX OF VOLUME LXXVI, NOS. 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821 (2000)	798

EDITORIAL

Rallies for Peace

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

The Marian Rallies for Peace in Quezon City on August 22, in Agoo on August 28, in Lipa on August 30, in Iloilo on September 8 and in Aklan on September 10 is a way of doing something concrete to stop war in Mindanao.

We are aware that many sectors in government are making negotiations for peace in Mindanao. The Church sectors and other Christian groups are doing what they can. There are also members of Muslim communities that are praying for peace and making their own moves for a peaceful country and peaceful Mindanao. But all efforts seem to be slow if not ineffective.

Let us entrust to God the NEGOTIATION THRU THE HANDS OF MARY, the Mother of the Philippines.

Mary the Mother of God. So, never fails us. That is why we pray:

*Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with the confidence, we fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer us.
AMEN*

Ang Pagtatalaga ng Bayang Filipino sa Kalinis-Linisang Puso ni Maria

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

Circular No. 2000-66
1 August 2000

1. "Sa iyong pagkakandili kami'y nagpapaampon, Mahal na Ina ng Diyos!"

Ang mga katagang ito na nag-ugat na sa panalangin ng Santa Iglesia, maraming siglo na ang nakalilipas ay muling namumutawi sa aming labi, lalo na ngayong ipinagdiriwang namin ang Dakilang taon ng Yubileo ng aming kaligtasan.

Kami'y nagkaka-isa bilang mga Pastol ng Simbahang Pilipino, pinagbubuklod bilang isang sambayanan na nakaugnay sa pamumuno ni Pedro.

Sa buklod na ito ay muli naming sinasariwa ang mga kataga ng pagtatalagang ito, na siyang panalangin, ni Juan Pablo II na aming Papa, noong itinalaga niya ang buong daigdig sa iyong Kalinis-linisang Puso, kalakip ang lahat ng adhikain at pangamba ng bayang Filipino.

Sa pagpasok namin sa bagong milenyo bilang isang bayan, ay natatanto namin ang aming pagkakawatak-watak, bilang mga Muslim, Kristiayano at Lumads, at sa kabila nito'y naghahangad ng kapayapaan sa gitna ng kaguluhan.

Mahal na ina ng bawat isa sa amin ng buong sangtinakpan, nababatid mo ang aming mga pagdurusa at mga pangarap. Ikaw ang nakakaalam, dahil sa iyong maka-inang pagkalinga sa amin, ng aming pakikibaka laban sa kasamaan tungo sa kabutihan, laban sa kadiliman tungo sa kalinawagan. Dinggin mo ang aming panalangin na puno ng pananampalataya. Yakapin mo ng buong pag-ibig, bilang Ina at lingkod ng Diyos, ang aming daigdig na ipinaubaya at itinatalaga namin sa iyo, dahil na rin sa marubdob naming pagkalinga sa kinabukasan at kaligtasan ng aming bayan at mga kababayan.

Sa natatanging paraan kaming mga Kristiyano, mga Muslim at mga Lumads ay nagpapaubaya at nagtatalaga ng sarili, pati na rin ng aming bayan, mga pinuno at mga mamamayan, mga sundalo at sibilian, mga nagpapalaganap ng digmaan at mga biktima ng karahasan, at ng lahat ng mga taong kinakailangan na isama sa pagtatalagang ito.

Sa iyong pagkakandili kami ay nagpapaampon, Mahal na Ina ng Diyos, huwag mong siphayuin ang aming kahilingan at sa aming pangangailangan ay lingapin mo kami.

2. Narito kami ngayon sa iyong harapan Mahal na Ina ni Kristo, sa iyong Kalinis-linisang Puso, kami'y naglalayon kasama ang buong Iglesia, na magka-isa sa pagtatalagang ito, na tulad ng iyong Anak ay nagtatalaga rin ng kanyang sarili sa Ama. Ang Panginoon ang nagwika: "Alang-alang sa kanila'y itinatalaga ko ang aking sarili, upang maitalaga rin sila sa pamamagitan ng katotohanan. Nananalangin kami sa pagkakaisa ng buong sambayanang Pilipino na kasama ni Jesus na aming tagapagligtas sa pagtatalagang ito para sa buong daigdig, para sa sangkatauhan, na tanging sa kanyang puso lamang makasumpong ng pagpapatawad at lakas sa pagbabalik loob sa Diyos.

Ang lakas ng pagtatalagang ito ay dumadaloy sa lahat ng panahon, tao, at bayan. Sinusugpo nito ang lahat ng kasamaan at ang kapangyarihan ng kadiliman. Sa pagtatalaga namin ngayon ay nakatatagpo kami ng bagong kamalayan para sa aming panahon at bayan.

Lubhang nababatid namin ang kahalagahan ng pagtatalagang ito ng buong sangkatauhan, ng aming bansang Pilipinas — kaugnay ng pagtatalaga ni Kristong aming Panginoon. Dahil nararapat lamang na makibahagi ang sanlibutan sa kaligtasan dulot ni Kristo sa pamamagitan ng Santa Iglesia.

Higit sa lahat ng nilikha, ikaw ang aming Ina, ang bukod na pinagpala. Ikaw ang matapat na lingkod ng Panginoon na tumalima sa kalooban ng Diyos.

Ipinagbubunyi ka namin dahil sa iyong ganap na pakiki-isa sa nakapagliligtas na pagtatalaga ng iyong Anak sa kanyang Ama.

Ina ng Santa Iglesia, akayin mo ang Bayan ng Diyos sa daan ng pananampalataya, pag-asa at pag-ibig. Tulungan mo kaming maging tapat sa katotohanan ng pagtatalaga namin kay Kristo para sa buong sangkatauhan, para sa aming bayan at sa buong daigdig.

3. Aming ipinautibaya sa iyo, O mahal na Ina, ang aming bayan, at ang lahat ng mamamayan nito. Lalo't higit ay pinagkakatiwala din namin sa iyong Kalinis-linisang puso ang pagtatalagang ito.

Kalinis-linisang Puso ni Maria, aming Ina, tulungan mo kaming sugpuin ang pain ng kasamaan na agad na nag-uugat sa aming kalooban at nagdudulot ng malagim na kasiraan sa aming lipunan at humahadlang sa aming pagsulong sa kinabukasan.

Iadya mo kami mula sa gutom at digmaan, mula sa kalupitan ng mga magkakapatid, at sa di-masukat na pagwasak ng sarili,

mula sa lahat ng karahasan laban sa buhay mula pa sa sinapupunan, mula sa poot at pagyurak sa karangalan ng mga anak ng Diyos, mula sa lahat ng pang-aapi sa aming Hpunan laban sa mga Kristiyano, mga Muslim at mga Lumad, at lahat ng mga naghihikahos sa buhay,

mula sa aming pagpapabaya na lapastanganin ang mga utos ng Diyos,

mula sa katigasan ng aming puso sa pakikinig sa tinig ng Diyos, at sa aming pagkabulag sa pagkilala sa tama at mali.

Tanggapin mo ngayon, O Ina ni Kristo, ang aming daing puno ng pagdurusa ng bawat Pilipino.

Alalayan mo kami na sa tulong ng Espiritu Santo na mapagwagian namin ang lahat ng uri ng kasalanan, maging personal man ito o panglipunan.

Kami'y nananalangin na muling matingkad na mahayag ang iyong nakaliligtas na kapangyarihan sa aming kasaysayan, ang kapangyarihan ng iyong walang hanggang pag-ibig. Magapi nawa nito ang kapangyarihan ng lahat ng kasamaan.

At maging lakas nawa ito ng lahat sa pagbabalik loob sa Diyos.

Mahal na Ina, akayin nawa kami ng iyong Kalinis-linisang Puso sa liwanag ng Pag-asa.

The Defense of Life in the Context of International Policies and Norms*

JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN

A review of the progress of the debate in international circles over the last five years makes clear how timely was the Encyclical *Evangelium vitae*.¹ The Encyclical authoritatively presented the Church's position on an array of threats to human life, especially at its beginning and at its end, which are now taking on a new form inasmuch as they seek to be recognized as rights.² In effect, in the years following the publication of the Encyclical, the fundamental moments of human life, as well as the transmission of life, have been present in an unprecedented way, not only in scientific research but also in the formulation of policies and the creation of international juridical instruments.

In order to have an adequate picture, a fundamental distinction must first be made. On the one hand, there are trends emerging *from the global Conferences organized by the UN* which are more "political" in nature but which nonetheless affect the activity of the international bodies of the UN system. On the other hand, there

* February 11, 2000 during the Sixth General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

¹ Hereafter cited as *EV*.

² *EV* 11.

is the level of norms stated by Conventions which are binding on States; these are often limited to individual questions.

* # *

The defense of life at the international Conferences (Cairo and Beijing)

After the collapse of ideological opposition between the blocs, it seemed possible, at the beginning of the nineties, to develop a world consensus on the principal problems of humanity. A series of global Conferences organized by the UN were held; these — it is right to note — helped to focus attention on the needs and the prospects of humanity and to establish a more balanced definition of development — which is not only economic but sustainable, human and social ("Place people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively³"). As far as the defense of human life is concerned, the cultural climate at the time was affected by two factors: first, by apocalyptic forecasts of a population boom exceeding the resources of the planet and, second, by a radical feminist ideology calling for women to have complete control over their own bodies, including any unborn children.

In this context, the *International Conference on Population and Development* (Cairo, 5-13 September 1994) did emphasize population control rather than development and was under powerful pressure to concentrate on "women's reproductive health". Consequently, abortion was considered an aspect of demographic policy and a health service ("reproductive health service"). On the other hand, despite strong pressure, and thanks also to the firm commitment of the Holy See Delegation, there was a reaffirmation of

³ *Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development* (12.03.1995), No. 26a.

the principle agreed upon in Mexico City in 1984, namely that abortion is never to be considered a means of family planning,⁴ and there was no endorsement of a so-called "right to abortion". These points were also upheld a year later, at the *Fourth World Conference on Women* (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995), where the pressures earlier in Cairo reappeared even more forcefully, leading to the insertion throughout the final documents of language about which the Holy See had expressed serious reserves in 1994. A balanced evaluation of these great international meetings must nevertheless recognize that other conclusions — like those of the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen or the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome — proved decidedly closer to the positions of the Holy See, especially with regard to social issues. The tendencies present in Cairo and Beijing re-emerged when the UN sought to evaluate, five years after the Conference, the implementation of the Action Programme adopted at Cairo. There a move was made to introduce the novel and equivocal expression "emergency contraception" as a pretext for medically induced (by pills) early abortion. The Holy See, with the support of Argentina, Nicaragua and some other countries managed not to have this expression approved.⁵ The Holy See also denounced the tendency to accept sexual relations outside of marriage, even for adolescents, and to consider abortion as an aspect of demographic policies and as a method of choice.⁶

In view of the efforts being made in society to defend human life, we may ask: what weight do the conclusions of these world

⁴ "In no case should abortion be promoted as a means of family planning" (ICDP Platform 8.25).

⁵ This would have in effect overridden the prohibition of abortion as a method of family planning sanctioned at Cairo.

⁶ See the Statement of interpretation by Archbishop Renato R. Martino at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly (30 June - 2 July 1999), in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5-6 July 1999, p. 2.

meetings have? We may point out that these are not texts which are binding on States; rather, they establish, by consent, general principles which merely serve as guidelines ("soft law"). These principles are meant to create or confirm tendencies which will then influence the policy decisions of the individual countries. Furthermore, these principles can become conditions for multilateral or bilateral assistance to poor countries.

It must be made clear however that we are dealing with tendencies which are not resolved on the basis of a single term or an individual paragraph: although the expression *emergency contraception* was not finally approved at "Cairo + 5", at the very same time the abortifacient pill RU486 was being liberalized, under the name Mifegyne, in some European states.⁷ And this grave fact can be seen as related to the other statement of the Action Programme of the Cairo Conference, namely, that "in circumstances where abortion is not prohibited by law, it should be carried out safely" (No. 8.25).⁸ As you know, the "morning after pill" has been distributed for several weeks in the schools in France and, experimentally, in the London pharmacies.

It should be noted that the reasons adduced in support of these tendencies have gradually changed. In the beginning — e.g., before and during the Cairo Conference — an appeal was made to the spectre of uncontrolled population increase, but this fear has been proved unfounded: as demographic projections are being revised downwards, the international documents are now linking the issues of population growth and the "population aging". Lately a so-called

⁷ The pill, marketed in France, Great Britain and Sweden, was authorized on 6 July 1999 in Germany and the following day received the "go-ahead" of the Belgian medical authorities; the manufacturer expects that approval will soon be given in Austria, Denmark, Spain, Finland and the Netherlands.

⁸ In the French text: "Dans le cas ou il n'est pas interdit par la loi, l'avortement devrait etre pratique dans de bonnes conditions de securite".

"human rights approach" has become more common: all these issues are seen in terms of human rights. Often an appeal is made to the freedom of individuals over their own body, that of adolescents in particular.

Lines of Action of the Convention Committees and the Agencies of the United Nations System

The conclusions of the global Conferences also have a second effect. They constitute guidelines for the Convention Committees and directives for the political activities of international agencies and bodies, those of the United Nations system in particular, but others as well.⁹

Thus CEDAW, the Committee for the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which affirms women's rights in matters of family planning¹⁰, issued in February 1999 a General Recommendation" calling for laws condemning abortion as a crime to be amended by removing penalties against women;¹² the Recommendation also states that a

⁹ The international bodies most affected are, in the UN system, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and the UN Economic Commissions ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP. In particular, UNFPA, together with the IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation), has programmes in 157 countries lobbying to change laws and to implement programmes of birth control, with reserves of 335 million US dollars. Among those bodies not belonging to the UN system, the World Bank, Regional Banks for development and the OECD can be mentioned.

¹⁰ Convention cited above, art. 12 and 14.

" Relative to Art. 12 of the Convention.

¹² "When possible, legislation criminalizing abortion could be amended to remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion": *Implementation of Art. 21 of the Convention... General Recommendation on Article 12: Women and Health* (1 February 1999), No. 31c, p. 14.

State is bound to furnish reproductive health services even in cases where health officials are conscientiously opposed to this.¹³

We can thus say that all the development efforts of the United Nations now bear the stamp of Cairo and Beijing, and that the operative principles of the action plans of those Conferences are being proposed in counseling, in contracts of cooperation and in various forms of assistance offered both to Governments and to non-state institutions. We should not be surprised if they are proposed, for example, to Catholic Universities, health centres or Dioceses: in such cases, a careful evaluation is needed of the responsibilities assumed and the impact of any such agreement with an international agency within the local context.

At the level of general declarations, the *World Health Organization* sought, at least until 1998, to accommodate opinions opposed to the concepts of "reproductive health" and "reproductive rights". This enabled the Holy See to make its voice heard, with the result that, for example, the document with which the WHO¹⁴ accepted the conclusions of the Cairo Conference avoided some of the more controversial points of that Report. Furthermore, the Ethics Committee on human cloning and medical research reached relatively acceptable conclusions. Regarding concrete policies in the field of health care, it should be noted that the World Health Organization assists States in developing health programmes within the context of a worldwide consensus. Many programmes are also financed by certain States and by private foundations. Hence, alongside many perfectly acceptable programmes, there has also

¹³ "It is discriminatory for a State party to refuse to legally provide for the performance of certain reproductive health services for women. For instance, if health service providers refuse to perform such services based on conscientious objection, measures should be introduced to ensure that women are referred to alternative health providers" (Ibid., No. 11. p. 5).

¹⁴ Cf. Resolution of the WHO Assembly WHA 48.10, dated 12 May 1995.

been the Human Reproduction Programme, aimed at developing the technology of contraception and medically induced abortion.

It must however be pointed out that the present leadership of the World Health Organization, which took over in 1998, has adopted a much more decisive stance in favour of birth control and reproductive health. Official declarations now reflect practical tendencies, unfortunately in a sense unacceptable to the Holy See. At the same time, a needed restructuring has led to the elimination of sectors most at odds with the views of the new leadership (and most sympathetic to those of *Evangelium Vitae*). Among other things, plans to establish an ethics committee have been postponed and perhaps even eliminated. Significant resources have also been set aside for research in the field of so-called "reproductive health".¹⁵

Among other organizations, we may also mention UNICEF and UNHCR as particularly significant. The former has for some time launched contraceptive and sex education programmes; as is known, the Holy See has suspended its symbolic contribution to UNICEF in the light of the latter's refusal to guarantee that this contribution would not be used for programmes contrary to Catholic principles.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provides for the support of 22.3 million refugees, displaced persons and

¹⁵ In the Programme Budget 2000-2001, the "Health systems and community health programme" saw a 20.37% increase of its budget. It will be in a position to draw on US\$145,022,000, the largest amount after that set aside for communicable diseases. Of this amount, \$21,622,000 comes from the ordinary budget, while \$123,400,000 comes from other funds. One notes that \$64,561,000 (about 50%) will be set aside for reproductive health and research. The other areas of the programme which will receive financing are health systems, the health and development of children and adolescents, women's health. The indication is clear: to increase and spread ideas, initiatives, programmes on reproductive health from a secular viewpoint with all the moral consequences relating to sexuality and the family.

returnees throughout the world. In November 1996, the UNHCR announced that it was joining UNFPA in making available "emergency reproductive health services" which include "post-coital" or "emergency" contraception and assistance for "incomplete abortions" in refugee camps during the civil war in Rwanda. The International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies also agreed to follow this project. The UNHCR also published the notorious *Interagency Field Manual*, which emphasizes the sex education and "reproductive services" to be provided to adolescents. A recent illustration of these policies with regard to refugees was the sending of "emergency reproductive health kits" for 350,000 people announced by UNFPA during the recent Kosovo crisis.

As for *relations* between the international agencies themselves, there is a growing movement away from forms of partnership for cooperation on specific programmes to types of strategic alliances where the technical leadership of some organizations tends to lose ground to powerful agencies which are politically and economically present in the territory. UN AIDS, the United Nations programme to combat AIDS, is a case study of how this kind of cooperation between the organizations and agencies of the United Nations ends up depreciating the technical function of some agencies and favouring various kinds of lobbies.

* * *

International directives regarding the themes of the Encyclical

We now pass to the normative juridical texts on the international level which regulate the sensitive areas of the beginning, end and transmission of life. While to this point we have been considering trends, it is now time to examine specific areas, without neglecting new issues as they arise.

The right to life and abortion.

It is important to begin by noting that international juridical instruments solemnly proclaim a fundamental right to life.¹⁷ It must be pointed out however that, beginning with the first discussions on the international level after the Second World War, the numerous and pressing requests to define this right in terms of a ban on abortion met resistance also from traditionally Protestant countries.¹⁸

On the level of the juridical instruments of the United Nations, the strongest affirmation of the right to life even of unborn children is contained in the *Declaration* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.¹⁹ Principle 4 of the Declaration, repeated in the Preamble of the Convention, states that every child needs "appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth". But this statement could only be made because it was left to national legislation the determination of when a human being begins to exist.

¹⁸ Cf. EV 13, 17, 58-60.

¹⁷ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person"; *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Article 6.1: "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life."

¹⁸ Great Britain and Denmark in particular.

¹⁹ "Whereas the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth" (Preamble of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 1386 - XIV - of 20 November 1959); "... He shall be entitled to grow and develop in health; to this end, special care and protection shall be provided both to him and his mother, including adequate pre-natal and post-natal care" (ibid., Principle 4). Twenty years later, in the Convention, Principle 4 of the Declaration was repeated in the Preamble, and in article 6 it was recognized that "every child has the inherent right to life"; but in article 1 the following definition was formulated: "a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years", mentioning the *terminus ad quern*, but not indicating precisely the beginning and leaving the interpretation of the term "human being" to national legislation, for the precise purpose of making the text acceptable also for those countries opposed to an international prohibition of abortion.

On the regional level, we can mention international juridical instruments and policies concerning the unborn in Europe and America. With regard to the *Council of Europe* and the *European Union*, it is sadly taken for granted that access to abortion is an acquired right, although legislation in certain countries (Malta and Ireland) does not permit it. When international juridical instruments which might touch on this theme are drawn up — like the Council of Europe's recent *Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine* — terminology is used which will not interfere with the legislation of individual nations, in order to enable a consensus. It should be noted that in particular situations, as in the Kosovo conflict, both the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe²⁰ and the European Parliament²¹ adopted resolutions affirming the right to abortion on the part of women who were raped.

The *American Convention on Human Rights*,²² which went into effect in 1978 and was ratified by 25 countries of North and South America and the Caribbean (out of a total of 34 countries in the region), is the only international convention on human rights which grants juridical recognition to life from the moment of conception,²³ and this commitment is clear to the member States.²⁴ The Holy See has made frequent reference to this Convention in its interventions before the Organization of American States and other

²⁰ Second part, April 1999.

²¹ March 1999 Session.

²² *Pacto de San Jose de Costa Rica*, dated 22 November 1969; it went into effect on 18 July 1978.

²³ Article 4 § 1: "Toda persona tiene derecho a que se respete su vida. Este derecho estara protegido por la ley y, en general, a partir del momento de la concepción. Nadie puede ser privado de la vida arbitrariamente."

²⁴ This is one of the reasons why the United States of America did not ratify the Convention. Argentina, in the constitutional reform of 22 August 1994, in Article 22, granted constitutional status to the Declarations of Rights of the American Convention, as well as to those of the two Covenants on Human Rights of the United Nations. In 1998, San Salvador also incorporated into its Constitution the provisions of the American Convention.

organizations of the so-called "inter-American system". These interventions have consistently been well-received.

A specific question within the context of abortion is raised by the problem of so-called "forced pregnancy". This involves the particularly painful case in which a woman who was raped for ethnic reasons is forced to bear the child against her will. The term "forced pregnancy", which is *per se* ambiguous,²⁵ appeared in the final documents of the Vienna Conference with direct reference to situations of conflict; it was then taken up again at the Cairo and Beijing Conferences. During the attempts to establish the *International Criminal Court* at the Rome Diplomatic Conference in the summer of 1998, some countries — considering the continuance of ethnic rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina — wanted to include an explicit reference to "forced pregnancy" in the list of crimes against humanity. Since the term could be interpreted as a justification of abortion, either in situations of armed conflict or as a precedent for other situations, the Holy See, after unsuccessfully attempting to have the term deleted or replaced, asked that it be clearly defined. The crime was thus given a foothold in international law, but with no reference to a right to abortion. Despite some resistance, in the end the delegates defined "forced pregnancy" as "the unlawful confinement of a woman forcibly made pregnant, with the intent of affecting the ethnic composition of any population or carrying out other grave violations of international law. This definition shall in no way be interpreted as affecting national laws relating to pregnancy".

Experimentation on Embryos²⁶

Experimentation on human embryos is an issue which has encountered such difficulties in international debate that no consensus has

²⁵ Since it is difficult to view the birth of an innocent human being as a crime; instead we have here a combination of crimes to which heavy penalties have already been attached: sexual violence, unlawful confinement, etc.

²⁶ Cf. EV 63.

yet been reached. On the world level, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, while dealing with matters of genetic experimentation, is silent on the issue of experimentation on the human genome, despite the observations put forth by the Holy See together with other delegations. One difficulty arises from the tendency begun by the "Warnock Report" and followed, among others, by British legislation, which accepts experimentation on embryos up to the fourteenth day. This means that the embryo is not recognized as being fully human until the period of implantation is completed. To obtain the agreement of the British, while on the other hand sensing a need to protect the embryo, the negotiators of the text of the *Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine*, which the Council of Europe presented for signing at Oviedo in 1997, deferred treatment of the issue to a future additional Protocol, specifying in Article 18 of the Convention two points which, while insufficient, have a certain value in principle: (1) whenever the law permits research on embryos, such research must ensure that the embryo is adequately protected; and (2) the creation of embryos for research purposes is prohibited. It would be desirable for the additional Protocol to call for full respect for the human embryo: even if such a position would not receive widespread support, it would represent a clear statement of principle in international law.

The Human Genome and Cloning

In connection with experimentation on embryos, it seems appropriate to mention two issues which taken on greater importance in recent years: the use of the human genetic patrimony and human cloning.

With the growth and scientific progress made in the Genome Project, prospects opened up for the possible appropriation and economic exploitation of human genes as such. The then Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, proposed a

juridical instrument which would establish principles in this sensitive and as yet unexplored area. In January 1993 a process began which led to the drafting, by the International Consultative Committee for Bioethics, of the *Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights*. This was adopted by UNESCO on 12 November 1997 and then by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1998.²⁷ The entire process of the drafting of this document was carefully followed by the Holy See²⁸ which, in addition to various other points, insisted above all on the need for emphasis on the protection of each individual human being (rather than the entire complex of humanity's genes), the prohibition of all cloning of human beings, the inadequacy of the concept of "heritage of humanity" with regard to genetic patrimony, the need to defend the embryo, and control over the political, economic and military interests which could influence genetic research.

The Declaration as adopted, in addition to various principles about the respect due to patients, proclaims in an infelicitous formula that the human genome "is the heritage of humanity" (even if "in a symbolic sense"), prohibits using the human genome in its natural state for financial gains²⁹ and states that the cloning of human beings — unfortunately for reproductive purposes only — is contrary to human dignity and should not be permitted.³⁰ This rejection of cloning, not originally planned, was added towards the end of the drafting of the text, following the well-known experiment of Dolly the sheep.

²⁷ 85th Plenary Session, Resolution 53/152 of 9 December 1998.

²⁸ In addition to the French Episcopal Conference, which published an interesting and timely position paper.

²⁹ Cf. Article 4.

³⁰ Cf. Article 11: "Practices which are contrary to human dignity, such as reproductive cloning of human beings, shall not be permitted".

Whereas the UNESCO Declaration is, by nature, a statement of principles (provisions have been made, however, for a process to oversee its implementation in each country), the first binding juridical instrument dealing with this latter issue was drafted by the Council of Europe. On 12 January 1998, 19 countries³¹ signed in Paris an *Additional Protocol* to the European Convention of Biomedicine on *the Prohibition of Cloning Human Beings*. This protocol, which also calls for serious criminal penalties, forbids "any procedure aimed at creating a human being genetically identical to another human being, living or dead", regardless of the technique used, with no exceptions even for reasons of public security, the prevention of criminal offenses, the protection of public health or the protection of the rights and liberties of third persons.

Both in the case of the UNESCO Declaration and in that of the Council of Europe Protocol, it must be pointed out that, although the discussion took place at a time when the public opinion was very much aware of the issue and in favour of the establishment of precise norms, the only consensus that could be reached on the international level (after considerable effort) was a ban on human cloning for reproductive purposes, but not for other purposes, such as research or therapy.

Questions about the patenting of human life

In April 1994, with the implementation of the Marrakesh Accord, the World Trade Organization was established. From the point of view of the defense of human life, its agreement on the

" Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldavia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. The Protocol will go into effect when at least five of the signatory countries have ratified it. It has been presented for signing to the 41 Member States of the Council of Europe and to others which took part in its drafting, such as Australia, Canada, Japan, the Holy See and the United States.

protection of intellectual property could prove important.³² In compliance with the agreement States must grant patents to pharmaceutical products and biotechnological inventions. A State can nevertheless exclude from its patenting provisions those inventions which it considers inadmissible on moral grounds or for reasons of public order.³³ As is known, a patent grants its holder a monopoly on the commercial benefits of an invention for a period of twenty years. If a given product or invention is not granted a patent, one may profit from it but only in the context of free competition, in which anyone is free to "copy" it. At the present time, biotechnological research calls for an enormous financial outlay, which means that a monopoly on commercial gain is a condition *sine qua non* for the release of a product (since otherwise it would prove unprofitable). Therefore, should a State deny a patent for some line of products, the companies producing those products would not market them. This norm seems important, especially given the products and procedures related to the use of aborted fetuses and embryos, or from human cloning.

Nevertheless, producers who are pressing to expand their market will probably insist on obtaining patents, and so a change of the norms is likely. Should this occur, the European Directive 98/44/CE of 6 July 1998 on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions is important.³⁴ Strictly speaking, this Directive binds only

³² The reference here is to the ADPIC/TRIP Accord (*Aspects des droits de propriété intellectuelle qui touchent au commerce/Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights*), which establishes a common provision for the protection of intellectual property.

^M *Accord de Marrakech instituant l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce* (Marrakesh, 15 April 1994) - *Annexe Ic: Accord sur les aspects des droits de propriété intellectuelle qui touchent au commerce* (ADPIC), Articles 27 and 73.

³⁴ Directive 98/44/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated 6 July 1998, on the *Legal Protection of Biotechnological Inventions*, in the official gazette of the European Community, Series L, No. 213, 30 July 1998, p. 13. The Member States of the European Union must bring their respective national norms into line with the Directive before 30 July 2000.

the Member States of the European Union; nevertheless it provides a series of substantial definitions in the area of patenting, with which the Member States of the World Trade Organization OMC/WTO (162 countries) will have to bring their present practice into compliance. The Directive will thus represent a theoretical and legislative guide for other States and also for future legal coordination within the various economic and commercial blocs now being organized (MERCOSUR, APEC, etc.).³⁵ The European Directive lays down the principle that it is forbidden to patent the human body and its parts, and embryonic human cells; it also forbids the patenting of the human embryo, of methods of human cloning and of procedures for modifying the foundational genetic identity of human beings.³⁶ The patenting of the use of human embryos for industrial and commercial purposes is also banned. This text of the European Union is important because it fills a legislative gap; even so, respect for these principles will also depend upon their legal interpretation and the political will of the European nations in future negotiations on the worldwide level.

The Death Penalty

As is known, positions concerning the death penalty have traditionally been divided: while some States rightly consider the abolition of the death penalty to be established principle of modern legal thought, others consider it an effective deterrent measure. When the Encyclical mentions "among the signs of hope" the "growing public opposition to the death penalty",³⁷ and affirms that "the problem must be viewed in the context of a system of penal justice ever more in line with human dignity", it can appeal to specific juridic facts. In the Council of Europe, *Protocol No. 6 to*

" This would be an example of how action on the regional level can have a positive influence on the universal level.

³⁶ Directive 98/44/CE, Article 6, §2.

³⁷ EV 27.

the European Convention on Human Rights, Concerning the Death Penalty, of 28 April 1984, declared in its first article that "The death penalty is abolished. No one can be condemned to this penalty nor executed", while exceptions are admitted only in time of war or in imminent danger of conflict.³⁸ Within Europe, this tendency has gained momentum: in October 1994 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a Recommendation calling for the complete abolition of the death penalty in all Member States, rejecting by a large majority an amendment intended to preserve the right of States in cases of high treason and espionage. A similar tendency also emerged within the European Union: in March 1992, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the abolition of the death penalty in every country of the world. The countries of the European Union are committed to deny the extradition of accused persons subject to the death penalty. Furthermore, the commitment to the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world has set this as a condition for negotiations with other countries.

The position adopted by *Evangelium Vitae*³⁹ has also drawn attention on the international level. As is known, the Encyclical states that it should never come to "the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society". It likewise points out that "today however, as a result of steady improvements in the organization of the penal system, such cases are very rare, if not practically non-existent".⁴⁰

³⁸ *Protocol No. 6*, art. 2; States must report to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe about their respective legislation. Countries which have joined the Council subsequently are requested to adjust their legislation by abolishing the death penalty (in 1995 the Ukraine stated that it would respect a moratorium on executions in view of the abolition of the death penalty within three years).

TM Cf. *EV* 27, 55-56.

⁴⁰ *EV* 56.

In June following the Encyclical's publication, the European Parliament asked the United States to abandon the application of the death penalty. In May 1999, the Strasbourg Parliament again requested that the issue of a universal moratorium on executions be included in the next General Assembly of the United Nations.

The reaction at the level of the United Nations appears significant. In May 1996 - little more than a year after the Encyclical's publication - the Fifth Session of the UN Commission for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice⁴¹ discussed the issue, and the Report of the Secretary General devoted an entire section⁴² to the position taken by Pope John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae*. In the Working Group on the issue (the Third), Austria, together with Germany and Italy, presented a draft resolution⁴³ which met with opposition from Islamic countries, which considered it a matter of divine law, and from other countries such as Tunisia and Japan. As a final compromise, the resolution, as adopted, "takes note with appreciation of the continuing process towards worldwide abolition of the death penalty". On the other hand, the proposal of a moratorium on capital punishment, presented to the General Assembly in November 1999, was postponed in the face of strong opposition from many countries.

It is important to point out that the International Courts for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia have not made provisions for the death penalty. This is especially significant in the case of Rwanda: in that African country the accused are subject to the death penalty, but not if they are found guilty by the International Tribunal. The Diplomatic Conference of Rome, which established the International Criminal Court, did not provide for capital punishment in its list of penalties.

⁴¹ Vienna, 21-31 May 1996.

⁴² Doc. E/CN.15/1996/19, n. 42, p. 11.

⁴³ Doc. E/CN.15/1996/L.17.

Euthanasia

The debate concerning "easy death", carried on at times with definitions poorly adapted to the scientific facts and the ethical issues involved, had begun before the publication of *Evangelium Vitae*. It can be pointed out that on the international level — hitherto the debate has been limited to European institutions - whenever it has been a question of voting for juridical instruments, the defense of life has thus far prevailed.

In the European Parliament, as early as 1991 a Resolution on assistance to the dying which actually permitted euthanasia and had received the approval of the Commission for Environment, Health and Consumer Protection, was not presented to the plenary assembly, due in part to the intervention of the European Bishops and Parliament members sensitive to the Catholic position. In 1996,⁴⁴ the Parliament adopted a Resolution concerning attacks on the right to life of the handicapped. The Resolution forcefully rejects the claim that minors, patients in a state of unarousable awareness ("*coma vigile*") and the newborn do not have an unrestricted right to life; it affirms that the right to life is granted to every human being regardless of health, gender, race and age; and it rejects active euthanasia with regard to patients in a state of unarousable awareness ("*coma vigile*") and newborn children with handicaps.⁴⁵

In June 1999, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe approved a Recommendation favouring the continuation of an unconditional ban on the deliberate ending of the life of the terminally ill or the dying. All the Member States are asked to adopt whatever legislative measures are necessary to ensure the

⁴⁴ Session of 20-24 May 1996.

⁴⁵ It should be noted, however, that no reference is made to the life of unborn children.

legal and social protection of the terminally ill; everyone must be guaranteed palliative care even at home and the availability of analgesics, even when these, as a secondary effect, might aggravate the patient's condition. The adoption of this stance therefore rejected the argument of a "right to die" put forward by many organizations; it may reopen debate in the Netherlands and Switzerland, where euthanasia is practised under strict controls, and it may influence other countries like Belgium and Luxemburg, where legislative proposals in this regard have recently been presented.

Conclusion

At the present time, international policies and norms on human life present a checkered and uneven picture, combining decisions made at different times and reflecting different concerns, and one still in a state of flux. Yet if we wish to grasp their "logic", so to speak, we may observe that:

a) the life of persons already born is well protected, even *vis-a-vis* the interests of scientific research and, at least hitherto, of the individual's own will: the idea of euthanasia is not accepted. In this regard, one can point to a non-acceptance, at least on the worldwide level, of the death penalty;

b) whenever there is a conflict between the interest of a person already born and the life of an unborn human being (a fetus or embryo), the latter is sacrificed (e.g., by abortion, assisted procreation, the use of surplus embryos and even cloning for therapeutic purposes);

c) the interests of scientific research tend to prevail over respect for unborn life;

d) some fixed limits have been set: the rejection of cloning for reproductive purposes and, in Europe, the rejection of the production of embryos for research purposes.

In this overall picture, which emerges from a framework of legal positivism, it is not difficult to see inconsistencies and substantial contradictions. With a view to activity in favour of life, I would consider it helpful to keep in mind that these international policies are in effect the reflection and the result of ways of thinking - which might be called hedonistic or neo-Malthusian - which are widespread in the developed countries and associated with real or alleged economic and political interests. The political consensus forged at a World Conference or the application of a Convention can have a significant influence on the national level, yet they themselves are conditioned by public opinion, which can be influenced by what is being done from below. On the other hand, the international juridical instruments, for all their limitations, do contain principles to which citizens can appeal in demanding from States a greater protection of human life. In addition, there seems to be ample room for activity "from below", inspired by charity. Much can be done to defend life and to create a sense of hope within the broader public before the issue reaches the level of international debate. Activity can take place on many levels, from the national down to the local: by careful attention to the granting of patents, by practical acts of solidarity with mothers struggling to accept an unborn child, by insistence upon the right to conscientious objection without discrimination for health-care workers, and by commitment to scientific research which will respect life.

Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

Introduction

The Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, *Incarnationis mysterium* (November 29, 1998), includes the purification of memory among the signs "which may help people to live the exceptional grace, of the Jubilee with greater fervor." This purification aims at liberating personal and communal conscience from all forms of resentment and violence that are the legacy of past faults, through a renewed historical and theological evaluation of such events. This should lead - if done correctly - to a corresponding recognition of guilt and contribute to the path of reconciliation. Such a process can have a significant effect on the present, precisely because the consequences of past faults still make themselves felt and can persist as tensions in the present.

The purification of memory is thus "an act of courage and humility in recognizing the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christian." It is based on the conviction that because of "the bond which unites us to one another in the Mystical Body, all of us, though not personally responsible and without encroaching on the judgment of God, who alone knows every heart,

bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us." John Paul II adds: "As the successor of Peter, I ask that in this year of mercy the Church, strong in the holiness which she receives from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters."¹

In reiterating that "Christians are invited to acknowledge, before God and before those offended by their actions, the faults which they have committed," the Pope concludes, "Let them do so without seeking anything in return, but strengthened only by 'the love of God which has been poured into our hearts' (Rom 5:5)."² The requests for forgiveness made by the Bishop of Rome in this spirit of authenticity and gratuitousness have given rise to various reactions. The unconditional trust in the power of Truth which the Pope has shown has met with a generally favorable reception both inside and outside the Church. Many have noted the increased credibility of ecclesial pronouncements that has resulted from this way of acting. Some reservations, however, have also been voiced, mainly expressions of unease connected with particular historical and cultural contexts in which the simple admission of faults committed by the sons and daughters of the Church may look like acquiescence in the face of accusations made by those who are prejudicially hostile to the Church. Between agreement and unease, the need arises for a reflection which clarifies the reasons, the conditions, and the exact form of the requests for forgiveness for the faults of the past.

The International Theological Commission, in which a diversity of cultures and sensitivities within the one Catholic faith are

¹ *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 11.

² Ibid. In numerous prior statements, in particular, n. 33 of the Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* (TMA), the Pope has indicated to the Church the path forward for purifying her memory regarding the faults of the past and for giving an example of repentance to individuals and civil societies.

represented, decided to address this need with the present text. The text offers a theological reflection on the conditions which make acts of "purification of memory" possible in connection with the recognition of the faults of the past. The questions it seeks to address are as follows: Why should it be done? Who should do it? What is the goal and how should this be determined, by correctly combining historical and theological judgment? Who will be addressed? What are the moral implications? And what are the possible effects on the life of the Church and on society? The purpose of the text is, therefore, not to examine particular historical cases but rather to clarify the presuppositions that ground repentance for past faults.

Having noted the kind of reflection which will be presented here, it is important also to make clear what is referred to when the text speaks of the Church: it is not a question of the historical institution alone or solely the spiritual communion of those whose hearts are illumined by faith. The Church is understood as the community of the baptized, inseparably visible and operating in history under the direction of her Pastors, united as a profound mystery by the action of the life-giving Spirit. According to the Second Vatican Council, the Church "by a strong analogy is compared to the mystery of the Incarnate Word. In fact, as the assumed nature is at the service of the divine Word as a living instrument of salvation, indissolubly united to him, so also in a not dissimilar way, the social structure of the Church is at the service of the Spirit of Christ which vivifies it for the building up of the body" (cf. Eph 4:16).³ This Church, which embraces her sons and daughters of the past and of the present, in a real and profound communion, is the sole Mother of Grace who takes upon herself also the weight of past faults in order to purify memory and to live the renewal of heart and life according to the will of

³ *Lumen gentium*, n. 8.

the Lord. She is able to do this insofar as Christ Jesus, whose mystical body extended through history she is, has taken upon himself once and for all the sins of the world.

The structure of the text mirrors the questions posed. It moves from a brief historical revisiting of the theme (Chapter 1), in order to be able to investigate the biblical foundation (Chapter 2) and explore more deeply the theological conditions of the requests for forgiveness (Chapter 3). The precise correlation of historical and theological judgment is a decisive element for reaching correct and efficacious statements that take proper account of the times, places, and contexts in which the actions under consideration were situated (Chapter 4). The final considerations, that have a specific value for the Catholic Church, are dedicated to the moral (Chapter 5), pastoral and missionary (Chapter 6) implications of these acts of repentance for the faults of the past. Nevertheless, in the knowledge that the necessity of recognizing one's own faults has reason to be practiced by all peoples and religions, one hopes that the proposed reflections may help everyone to advance on the path of truth, fraternal dialogue, and reconciliation.

At the conclusion of this introduction, it may be useful to recall the purpose of every act of "purification of memory" undertaken by believers, because this is what has inspired the work of the Commission: it is the glorification of God, because living in obedience to Divine Truth and its demands leads to confessing, together with our faults, the eternal mercy and justice of the Lord. The "*confessio peccati*," sustained and illuminated by faith in the Truth which frees and saves ("*confessio fidei*"), becomes a "*confessio laudis*" addressed to God, before whom alone it becomes possible to recognize the faults both of the past and of the present, so that we might be reconciled by and to him in Christ Jesus, the only Savior of the world, and become able to forgive those who have offended us. This offer of forgiveness appears particularly meaningful when one thinks of the many persecutions

suffered by Christians in the course of history. In this perspective, the actions undertaken by the Holy Father, and those requested by him, regarding the faults of the past have an exemplary and prophetic value, for religions as much as for governments and nations, beyond being of value for the Catholic Church, which is thus helped to live in a more efficacious way the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation as an event of grace and reconciliation for everyone.

1. The Problem: Yesterday and Today

1.1. Before Vatican II

The Jubilee has always been lived in the Church as a time of joy for the salvation given in Christ and as a privileged occasion for penance and reconciliation for the sins present in the lives of the People of God. From its first celebration under Boniface VIII in 1300, the penitential pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul was associated with the granting of an exceptional indulgence for procuring, with sacramental pardon, total or partial remission of the temporal punishment due to sin.⁴ In this context, both sacramental forgiveness and the remission of temporal punishment have a personal character. In the course of the "year of pardon and grace,"⁵ the Church dispenses in a particular way the treasury of grace that Christ has constituted for her benefit.⁶ In none of the Jubilees celebrated till now has there been, however, an awareness in conscience of any faults in the Church's past, nor

⁴ Cf. *Extravagantes communes*, lib. V, tit. IX, c. 1 (A. Friedberg, *Corpus iuris canonici*, t. II, c. 1304).

⁵ Cf. Clement XIV, Letter *Salutis nostrae*, April 30, 1774, § 2. Leo XII in the Letter *Quod hoc ineunte*, May 24, 1824, §2 speaks of the "year of expiation, forgiveness and redemption, of grace, remission and of indulgence."

⁶ This is the sense of the definition of indulgence given by Clement VI when in 1343 he instituted the practice of having a Jubilee every fifty years. Clement VI sees in the Church's Jubilee "the spiritual accomplishment" of the "Jubilee of remission and of joy" in the Old Testament (Lv 25).

of the need to ask God's pardon for conduct in the recent or remote past.

Indeed, in the entire history of the Church there are no precedents for requests for forgiveness by the Magisterium for past wrongs. Councils and papal decrees applied sanctions, to be sure, to abuses of which clerics and laymen were found guilty, and many pastors sincerely strove to correct them. However, the occasions when ecclesiastical authorities — Pope, Bishops, or Councils — have openly acknowledged the faults or abuses which they themselves were guilty of, have been quite rare. One famous example is furnished by the reforming Pope Adrian VI who acknowledged publicly in a message to the Diet of Nuremberg of November 25, 1522, "the abominations, the abuses... and the lies" of which the "Roman court" of his time was guilty, "deep-rooted and extensive... sickness," extending "from the top to the members."⁷ Adrian VI deplored the faults of his times, precisely those of his immediate predecessor Leo X and his curia, without, however, adding a request for pardon. It will be necessary to wait until Paul VI to find a Pope express a request for pardon addressed as much to God as to a group of contemporaries. In his address at the opening of the second session of the Second Vatican Council, the Pope asked "pardon of God... and of the separated brethren" of the East who may have felt offended "by us" (the Catholic Church), and declared himself ready for his part to pardon offenses received. In the view of Paul VI, both the request for and offer of pardon concerned solely the sin of the division between Christians and presupposed reciprocity.

⁷ "Each of us must examine [his conscience] with respect to what he has fallen into and examine himself even more rigorously than God will on the day of his wrath" in *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, new series. III, 390-399 (Gotha, 1893).

1.2. The Teaching of the Council

Vatican II takes the same approach as Paul VI. For the faults committed against unity, the Council Fathers state, "we ask pardon of God and of the separated brethren, as we forgive those who trespass against us."⁸ In addition to faults against unity, it noted other negative episodes from the past for which Christians bore some responsibility. Thus, "it deplores certain attitudes that sometimes are found among Christians" and which led people to think that faith and science are mutually opposed.⁹ Likewise, it considers the fact that in "the genesis of atheism," Christians may have had "some responsibility" insofar as through their negligence they "conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion."¹⁰ In addition, the Council "deplores" the persecutions and manifestations of anti-Semitism "in every time and on whoever's part."¹¹ The Council, nevertheless, does not add a request for pardon for the things cited.

From a theological point of view, Vatican II distinguishes between the indefectible fidelity of the Church and the weaknesses of her members, clergy or laity, yesterday and today,¹² and therefore, between the Bride of Christ "with neither blemish nor wrinkle...holy and immaculate" (cf. Eph 5:27), and her children, pardoned sinners, called to permanent *metanoia*, to renewal in the Holy Spirit. "The Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of purification and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal."¹³

⁸ *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 7.

⁹ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 19.

¹¹ *Nostra aetate*, n. 4.

¹² *Gaudium et spes*, n. 43 §6.

¹³ *Lumen gentium*, n. 8; cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 6: "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reform of which she always has need, insofar as she is a human institution here on earth."

The Council also elaborated some criteria of discernment regarding the guilt or responsibility of persons now living for faults of the past. In effect, the Council recalled in two different contexts the non-imputability to those now living of past faults committed by members of their religious communities:

- "What was committed during the passion (of Christ) cannot be imputed either indiscriminately to all Jews then living nor to the Jews of our time."¹⁴

- "Large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church — at times not without the fault of men on both sides. However, one cannot charge with the sin of separation those who now are born into these communities and who in these are instructed in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church embraces them with fraternal respect and love."¹⁵

When the first Holy Year was celebrated after the Council, in 1975, Paul VI gave it the theme of "renewal and reconciliation,"¹⁶ making clear in the Apostolic Exhortation *Paterna cum benevolentia* that reconciliation should take place first of all among the faithful of the Catholic Church.¹⁷ As in its origin, the Holy Year remained an occasion for conversion and reconciliation of sinners to God by means of the sacramental economy of the Church.

1.3. John Paul IPs Requests for Forgiveness

Not only did John Paul II renew expressions of regret for the "sorrowful memories" that mark the history of the divisions among Christians, as Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council had done,¹⁸

¹⁴ *Nostra aetate*, n. 4.

¹⁵ *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 3.

¹⁶ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Apostolorum limina*, May 23, 1974 (*Enchiridion Vaticanum* 5, 305).

¹⁷ Paul VI, Exhortation *Paterna cum benevolentia*, December 8, 1974 (*Enchiridion Vaticanum* 5, 526-553).

¹⁸ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, May 25, 1995, n. 88: "To the extent that we are responsible for these, I join my predecessor Paul VI in asking forgiveness."

but he also extended a request for forgiveness to a multitude of historical events in which the Church, or individual groups of Christians, were implicated in different respects.¹⁹ In the Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*,²⁰ the Pope expresses the hope that the Jubilee of 2000 might be the occasion for a purification of the memory of the Church from all forms of "counter-witness and scandal" which have occurred in the course of the past millennium.²¹

The Church is invited to "become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children." She "acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters" and encourages them "to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency and slowness to act."²² The responsibility of Christians for the evils of our time is likewise noted,²³ although the accent falls particularly on the solidarity of the Church of today with past faults. Some of these are explicitly mentioned, like the separation of Christians,²⁴ or the "methods of violence and intolerance" used in the past to evangelize.²⁵

John Paul II also promoted the deeper theological exploration of the idea of taking responsibility for the wrongs of the past and

¹⁹ For example, the Pope, addressing himself to the Moravians, asked "forgiveness, on behalf of all Catholics, for the wrongs caused to non-Catholics in the course of history" (cf. Canonization of Jan Sarkander in the Czech Republic, May 21, 1995). The Holy Father also wanted to undertake "an act of expiation" and ask forgiveness of the Indians of Latin America and from the Africans deported as slaves (*Message to the Indians of America*, Santo Domingo, October 13, 1992, and *General Audience Discourse* of October 21, 1992). Ten years earlier he had already asked forgiveness from the Africans for the way in which they had been treated (*Discourse* at Yaounde, August 13, 1985).

²⁰ Cf. *TMA*, nn. 33-36.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 33.

²² *Ibid.*, n. 33.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 36.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 34.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 35.

of possibly asking forgiveness from one's contemporaries,²⁶ when in the Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, he states that in the sacrament of Penance "the sinner stands alone before God with his sin, repentance, and trust. No one can repent in his place or ask forgiveness in his name." Sin is therefore always personal, even though it wounds the entire Church, which, represented by the priest as minister of Penance, is the sacramental mediatrix of the grace which reconciles with God.²⁷ Also the situations of "social sin" — which are evident in the human community when justice, freedom, and peace are damaged — are always "the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins." While moral responsibility may become diluted in anonymous causes, one can only speak of social sin by way of analogy.²⁸ It emerges from this that the imputability of a fault cannot properly be extended beyond the group of persons who had consented to it voluntarily, by means of acts or omissions, or through negligence.

1.4. The Questions Raised

The Church is a living society spanning the centuries. Her memory is not constituted only by the tradition which goes back to the Apostles and is normative, for her faith and life, but she is also rich in the variety of historical experiences, positive and negative, which she has lived. In large part, the Church's past structures her present. The doctrinal, liturgical, canonical, and ascetical tradition nourishes the life of the believing community, offering it an incomparable sampling of models to imitate. Along the entire earthly pilgrimage, however, the good grain always remains inextricably mixed with the chaff; holiness stands side by

²⁶ This final aspect appears in *TMA* only in n. 33, where it is said that the Church "before God and man" acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters.

"John Paul II, Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, December 2, 1984, n. 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 16.

side with infidelity and sin.²⁹ And it is thus that the remembrance of scandals of the past can become an obstacle to the Church's witness today, and the recognition of the past faults of the Church's sons and daughters of yesterday can foster renewal and reconciliation in the present.

The difficulty that emerges is that of defining past faults, above all, because of the historical judgment which this requires. In events of the past, one must always distinguish the responsibility or fault that can be attributed to members of the Church as believers from that which should be referred to society during the centuries of 'Christendom' or to power structures in which the temporal and spiritual were closely intertwined. A historical hermeneutic is therefore more necessary than ever in order to distinguish correctly between the action of the Church as community of faith and that of society in the times when an osmosis existed between them.

The steps taken by John Paul II to ask pardon for faults of the past have been understood in many circles as signs of the Church's vitality and authenticity, such that they strengthen her credibility. It is right, moreover, that the Church contribute to changing false and unacceptable images of herself, especially in those areas in which, whether through ignorance or bad faith, some sectors of opinion like to identify her with obscurantism and intolerance. The requests for pardon formulated by the Pope have also given rise to positive emulation both inside and outside the Church. Heads of state or government, private and public associations, religious communities are today asking forgiveness for episodes or historical periods marked by injustices. This practice is far from just an exercise in rhetoric, and for this reason, some hesitate to do so, calculating the attendant costs — among which are those on the legal plane — of an acknowledgement of past

²⁹ Cf. Mt 13:24-30; 36-43; St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, I, 35: CCL 47, 33; XI, 1: CCL 48, 321; XIX, 26: CCL 48, 696.

wrongs. Also from this point of view, a rigorous discernment is necessary.

Nevertheless, some of the faithful are disconcerted and their loyalty to the Church seems shaken. Some wonder how they can hand on a love for the Church to younger generations if this same Church is imputed with crimes and faults. Others observe that the recognition of faults is for the most part one-sided and is exploited by the Church's detractors, who are satisfied to see the Church confirm the prejudices they had of her. Still others warn against arbitrarily making current generations of believers feel guilty for shortcomings they did not consent to in any way, even though they declare themselves ready to take responsibility to the extent that some groups of people still feel themselves affected today by the consequences of injustices suffered by their forbears in previous times. Others hold that the Church could purify her memory with respect to ambiguous actions in which she was involved in the past simply by taking part in the critical work on memory developed in our society. Thus she could affirm that she joins with her contemporaries in rejecting what the moral conscience of our time reproaches, though without putting herself forward as the only guilty party responsible for the evils of the past, by seeking at the same time a dialogue in mutual understanding with those who may feel themselves still wounded by past acts imputable to the children of the Church. Finally, it is to be expected that certain groups might demand that forgiveness be sought in their regard, either by analogy with other groups, or because they believe that they have suffered wrongs. In any case, the purification of memory can never mean that the Church ceases to proclaim the revealed truth that has been entrusted to her whether in the area of faith or of morals.

Thus, a number of questions can be identified: Can today's conscience be assigned 'guilt' for isolated historical phenomena like the Crusades or the Inquisition? Isn't it a bit too easy to judge

people of the past by the conscience of today (as the Scribes and Pharisees do according to Mt 23:29-32), almost as if moral conscience were not situated in time? And, on the other hand, can it be denied that ethical judgment is always possible, given the simple fact that the truth of God and its moral requirements always have value? Whatever attitude is adopted must come to terms with these questions and seek answers that are based in revelation and in its living transmission in the faith of the Church. The first question is therefore that of clarifying the extent to which requests for forgiveness for past wrongs, especially if addressed to groups of people today, are within the biblical and theological horizon of reconciliation with God and neighbor.

2. Biblical Approach

The investigation of Israel's acknowledgement of faults in the Old Testament and the topic of the confession of faults as found in the traditions of the New Testament can be developed in various ways.³⁰ The theological nature of the reflection undertaken here leads us to favor a largely thematic approach, centering on the following question: What background does the testimony of Sacred Scripture furnish for John Paul II's invitation to the Church to confess the faults of the past?

2.1. The Old Testament

Confessions of sins and corresponding requests for forgiveness can be found throughout the Bible — in the narratives of the Old Testament, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, as well as in the Gospels of the New Testament. There are also sporadic references in the Wisdom Literature and in the Letters of the New Testament. Given the abundance and diffusion of these testimonies, the question of how to select and catalogue the mass of significant

³⁰ On different methods of reading Sacred Scripture, see *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993).

texts arises. One may inquire here about the biblical texts related to the confession of sins: Who is confessing what (and what kind of fault) to whom? Put in this way, the question helps distinguish two principal categories of "confession texts," each of which embraces different sub-categories, viz., a) confession texts of individual sins, and b) confession texts of sins of the entire people (and of those of their forebears). In relation to the recent ecclesial practice that motivates this study, we will restrict our analysis to the second category.

In this second category, different expressions can be found, depending on who is making the confession of the sins of the people and on who is, or is not, associated with the shared guilt, prescinding from the presence or absence of an awareness of personal responsibility (which has only matured progressively: cf. Ez 14:12-23; 18:1-32; 33:10-20). On the basis of these criteria, the following rather fluid cases can be distinguished:

- A first series of texts represents the entire people (sometimes personified as a single "I") who, in a particular moment of its history, confesses or alludes to its sins against God without any (explicit) reference to the faults of the preceding generations.³¹

³¹ In this series, for example, are: Dt 1:41 (the generation of the desert recognizes that it had sinned by refusing to go forward into the promised land); Jgs 10:10,12 (in the time of the Judges the people twice say "we have sinned" against the Lord, referring to their service of the Baals); 1 Sm 7:6 (the people of Samuel's time say "we have sinned against the Lord!"); Nm 21:7 (this text is distinctive in that here the people of the generation of Moses admit that, in complaining about the food, they had become guilty of "sin" because they had spoken against the Lord and against their human guide, Moses); 1 Sm 12:19 (the Israelites of the time of Samuel recognize that — by having asked for a king — they have added this to "all their sins"); Ezr 10:13 (the people acknowledge in front of Ezra that they had greatly "transgressed in this matter" [marrying foreign women]); Ps 65:2-3; 90:8; 103:10; (107:10-11,17); Is 59:9-15; 64:5-9; Jer 8:14; 14:7; Lam 1:14, 18a, 22 (in which Jerusalem speaks in the first person); 3:42 (4:13); Bar 4:12-13 (Zion speaks of the sins of her children which led to her destruction); Ez 33:10; Mi 7:9 ("I"), 18-19.

Another group of texts places the confession - directed to God - of the current sins of the people on the lips of one or more leaders (religious), who may or may not include themselves explicitly among the sinful people for whom they are praying.³²

- A third group of texts presents the people or one of their leaders in the act of mentioning the sins of their forebears without, however, making mention of those of the present generation.³¹

³² For example: Ex 9:27 (Pharaoh says to Moses and Aaron: "This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right; I and my people are guilty"); 34:9 (Moses prays "forgive our iniquity and our sin"); Lv 16:21 (the high priest confesses the sins of the people on the head of the "scapegoat" on the day of atonement); Ex 32:11-13 (cf. Dt 9:26-29: Moses); 32:31 (Moses); 1 Kgs 8:33ff (cf. 2 Chr 6:22ff: Solomon prays that God will forgive the future sins of the people); 2 Chr 28:13 (the leaders of the Israelites acknowledge "our guilt is already great"); Ezr 10:2 (Shecaniah says to Ezra "We have broken faith with our God, by marrying foreign women"); Neh 1:5-11 (Nehemiah confesses the sins committed by the people of Israel, by himself, and by the house of his father); Est 4:17³¹ (Esther confesses: "We have sinned against you and you have delivered us into the hands of our enemies, because we have given glory to their gods"); 2 Mc 7:18-32 (the Jewish martyrs say that they are suffering because of "our sins" against God).

³³ Among the examples of this type of national confession are: 2 Kgs 22:13 (cf. 2 Chr 34:21: Josiah fears the anger of the Lord "because our fathers did not heed the words of this book"); 2 Chr 29:6-7 (Hezekiah says "our fathers have been unfaithful"); Ps 78:8ff (the psalmist recounts the sins of past generations from the time of the exodus from Egypt). Cf. also the popular saying cited in Jer 31:29 and Ez 18:2: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge."

- More frequent are the confessions that mention the faults of the forebears, linking them expressly to the errors of the present generation.³⁴

We can conclude from the testimonies gathered that in all cases where the "sins of the fathers" are mentioned, the confession is addressed solely to God, and the sins confessed by the people and for the people are those committed directly against him rather than those committed (also) against other human beings (only in Nm 21:7 is mention made of a human party harmed, Moses).³⁵ The question arises as to why the biblical writers did not feel the need to address requests for forgiveness to present interlocutors for the sins committed by their fathers, given their strong sense of solidarity in good and evil among the generations (one thinks of the notion of "corporate personality"). We can propose various hypotheses in response to this question. First, there is the prevalent theocentrism

³⁴ As in the following texts: Lv 26:40 (the exiles are called to "confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers"); Ezr 9:5b-15 (the penitential prayer of Ezra, v. 7: "From the days of our fathers to this day we have been deeply guilty"; cf. Neh 9:6-37); Tb 3:1-5 (in his prayer Tobit prays: "Do not punish me for my sins and for my errors and those of my fathers" [v. 3] and continues with the statement: "we have not kept your commandments" [v. 5]; Ps 79:8-9 (this collective lament implores God: "do not impute to us the offenses of our fathers... deliver us and forgive us our sins"); 106:6 ("both we and our fathers have sinned"); Jer 3:25 ("...we have sinned against the Lord our God... we and our fathers"); Jer 14:19-22 ("We acknowledge our iniquity and the iniquity of our fathers," v. 20); Lam 5 ("Our fathers sinned and they are no more, and we bear the penalty for their iniquities" [v. 7] — "woe to us for we have sinned" [v. 16b]; Bar 1:15 — 3:18 ("we have sinned against the Lord" [1:17, cf. 1:19, 21; 2:5,24] — "Remember not the iniquities of our fathers" [3:5, cf. 2:33; 3:4,7]); Dn 3:26-45 (the prayer of Azariah: "With truth and justice you have inflicted all this because of our sins": v. 28); Dn 9:4-19 ("on account of our sins and the iniquity of our fathers, Jerusalem [...has] become the reproach...", v. 16).

³⁵ These include failing to trust God (for example; Dt 1:41; Nm 14:10), idolatry (as in Jgs 10:10-15), requesting a human king (1 Sm 12:9), marrying foreign women contrary to the law of God (Ezr 9-10). In Is 59:13b the people say of themselves that they are guilty of "talking oppression and revolt, conceiving lying words and uttering them from the heart".

of the Bible, which gives precedence to the acknowledgement, whether individual or national, of the faults committed against God. What is more, acts of violence perpetrated by Israel against other peoples, which would seem to require a request for forgiveness from those peoples or from their descendants, are understood to be the execution of divine directives, as for example Gn 2-11 and Dt 7:2 (the extermination of the Canaanites), or 1 Sm 15 and Dt 25:19 (the destruction of the Amalekites). In such cases, the involvement of a divine command would seem to exclude any possible request for forgiveness.³⁶ The experiences of maltreatment suffered by Israel at the hands of other peoples and the animosity thus aroused could also have militated against the idea of asking pardon of these peoples for the evil done to them.³⁷

In any case the sense of intergenerational solidarity in sin (and in grace) remains relevant in the biblical testimony and is expressed in the confession before God of the "sins of the fathers," such that John Paul II could state, citing the splendid prayer of Azaria: "'Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers... For we have sinned and transgressed by departing from you, and we have done every kind of evil. Your commandments we have not heeded or observed' (Dn 3:26,29-30). This is how the Jews prayed after the exile (cf. also Bar 2:11-13^ accepting the responsibility for the sins

³⁶ Cf. the analogous case of the repudiation of foreign wives described in Ezr 9-10, with all the negative consequences which this would have had for these women. The question of a request for forgiveness addressed to them (and/or to their descendants) is not treated, since their repudiation is presented as a requirement of God's law (cf. Dt 7:3) in all these chapters.

³⁷ In this context, the case of the permanently strained relationship between Israel and Edom comes to mind. The Edomites as a people — despite the fact that they were Israel's "brother" — participated and rejoiced in the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (cf., for example, Ob 10-14). Israel, as a sign of outrage for this betrayal, felt no need to ask forgiveness for the killing of defenseless Edomite prisoners of war by King Amaziah as recounted in 2 Chr 25:12.

committed by their fathers. The Church imitates their example and also asks forgiveness for the historical sins of her children."³⁸

2.2. The New Testament

A fundamental theme connected with the idea of guilt, and amply present in the New Testament, is that of the absolute holiness of God. The God of Jesus is the God of Israel (cf. Jn 4:22), invoked as "Holy Father" (Jn 17:11), and called "the Holy One" in 1 Jn 2:20 (cf. Acts 6:10). The triple proclamation of God as "holy" in Is 6:3 returns in Acts 4:8, while 1 Pt 1:16 insists on the fact that Christians must be holy "for it is written: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy' (cf. Lv 11:44-45; 19:2). All this reflects the Old Testament notion of the absolute holiness of God; however, for Christian faith the divine holiness has entered history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Old Testament notion has not been abandoned but developed, in the sense that the holiness of God becomes present in the holiness of the incarnate Son (cf. Mk 1:24; Lk 1:35; 4:34; Jn 6:69; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30; Rev 3:7), and the holiness of the Son is shared by "his own" (cf. Jn 17:16-19), who are made sons in the Son (cf. Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:14-17). There can be no aspiration to divine sonship in Jesus unless there is love for one's neighbor (cf. Mk 12:29-31; Mt 22:37-38; Lk 10:27-28).

Love of neighbor, absolutely central in the teaching of Jesus, becomes the "new commandment" in the Gospel of John; the disciples should love as he has loved (cf. Jn 13:34-35; 15:12,17), that is, perfectly, "to the end" (Jn 13:1). The Christian is called to love and to forgive to a degree that transcends every human standard of justice and produces a reciprocity between human beings, reflective of the reciprocity between Christ and the Father (cf. Jn 13:34f; 15:1-11; 17:21-26). In this perspective, great

³⁸ John Paul II, *General Audience Discourse* of September 1, 1999; in *L'Osservatore Romano*, eng. ed., September 8, 1999, 7.

emphasis is given to the theme of reconciliation and forgiveness of faults. Jesus asks his disciples to be always ready to forgive all those who have offended them, just as God himself always offers his forgiveness: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mt 6:12; 6:12-15). He who is able to forgive his neighbor shows that he has understood his own need for forgiveness by God. The disciple is invited to forgive the one who offends him "seventy times seven," even if the person may not ask for forgiveness (cf. Mt 18:21-22).

With regard to someone who has been injured by another, Jesus insists that the injured person should take the first step, canceling the offense through forgiveness offered "from the heart" (cf. Mt 18:35; Mk 11:25), aware that he too is a sinner before God, who never refuses forgiveness sincerely entreated. In Mt 5:23-24, Jesus asks the offender to "go and reconcile himself with his brother who has something against him" before presenting his offering at the altar. An act of worship on the part of one who has no desire beforehand to repair the damage to his neighbor is not pleasing to God. What matters is changing one's own heart and showing in an appropriate way that one really wants reconciliation. The sinner, however, aware that his sins wound his relationship with God and with his neighbor (cf. Lk 15:21), can expect pardon only from God, because only God is always merciful and ready to cancel our sins. This is also the significance of the sacrifice of Christ who, once and for all, has purified us of our sins (cf. Heb 9:22; 10:18). Thus, the offender and the offended are reconciled by God who receives and forgives everyone in his mercy.

In this context, which could be expanded through an analysis of the Letters of Paul and the Catholic Epistles, there is no indication that the early Church turned her attention to sins of the past in order to ask for forgiveness. This might be explained by the powerful sense of the radical newness of Christianity, which

tended to orient the community toward the future rather than the past. There is, however, a more broad and subtle insistence pervading the New Testament: in the Gospels and in the Letters, the ambivalence of the Christian experience is fully recognized. For Paul, for example, the Christian community is an eschatological people that already lives the "new creation" (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), but this experience, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Rom 3:21-26; 5:6-11; 8:1-11; 1 Cor 15:54-57), does not free us from the inclination to sin present in the world because of Adam's fall. From the divine intervention in and through the death and resurrection of Jesus, it follows that there are now two scenarios possible: the history of Adam and the history of Christ. These proceed side by side and the believer must count on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (cf., for example, Rom 6:1-11; Gal 3:27-28; Col 3:10; 2 Cor 5:14-15) to be part of the history in which "grace overflows" (cf. Rom 5:12-21).

A similar theological re-reading of the paschal event of Christ shows how the early Church had an acute awareness of the possible deficiencies of the baptized. One could say that the entire "*corpus paulinum*" recalls believers to a full recognition of their dignity, albeit in the living awareness of the fragility of their human condition. "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). An analogous reason can be found in the Gospel narratives. It arises decisively in Mark where the frailties of Jesus' disciples are one of the dominant themes of the account (cf. Mk 4:40-41; 6:36-37, 51-52; 8:14-21, 31-33; 9:5-6, 32-41; 10:32-45; 14:10-11, 17-21, 27-31, 50; 16:8). Even if understandably nuanced, the same motif recurs in all of the Evangelists. Judas and Peter are respectively the traitor and the one who denies the Master, though Judas ends up in desperation for his act (cf. Acts 1:15-20), while Peter repents (cf. Lk 22:61) and arrives at a triple profession of love (cf. in Jn 21:15-19). In Matthew, even during the final appearance of the risen Lord,

while the disciples adore him, "some still doubted" (Mt 28:17). The Fourth Gospel presents the disciples as those to whom an incommensurable love was given even though their response was one of ignorance, deficiencies, denial, and betrayal (cf. Jn 13:1-38).

This constant presentation of Jesus' disciples, who vacillate when it comes to yielding to sin, is not simply a critical re-reading of the early history. The accounts are framed in such a way that they are addressed to every other disciple of Christ in difficulty who looks to the Gospel for guidance and inspiration. Moreover, the New Testament is full of exhortations to behave well, to live at a higher level of dedication, to avoid evil (cf., for example, Jas 1:5-8, 19-21; 2:1-7; 4:1-10; 1 Pt 1:13-25; 2 Pt 2:1-22; Jude 3:13; 1 Jn 5-10; 2:1-11; 18-27; 4:1-6; 2 Jn 7-11; 3 Jn 9-10). There is, however, no explicit call addressed to the first Christians to confess the faults of the past, although the recognition of the reality of sin and evil within the Christian people — those called to the eschatological life proper to the Christian condition — is highly significant (it is enough to note the reproaches in the letters to the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation). According to the petition found in the Lord's Prayer, this people prays: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Lk 11:4; cf. Mt 6:12). Thus, the first Christians show that they are well aware that they could act in a way that does not correspond to their vocation, by not living their Baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

2.3. The Biblical Jubilee

An important biblical precedent for reconciliation and overcoming of past situations is represented by the celebration of the Jubilee, as it is regulated in the Book of Leviticus (Ch. 25). In a social structure made up of tribes, clans, and families, situations of disorder were inevitably created when struggling individuals or

families had to "redeem" themselves from their difficulties by consigning their land, house, servants, or children to those who had more means than they had. Such a system resulted in some Israelites coming to suffer intolerable situations of debt, poverty, and servitude in the same land that had been given to them by God, to the advantage of other children of Israel. All this could result in a territory or a clan falling into the hands of a few rich people for greater or lesser periods of time, while the rest of the families of the clan came to find themselves in a condition of debt or servitude, compelling them to live in total dependence upon a few well-off persons.

The legislation of Leviticus 25 constitutes an attempt to overturn this state of affairs (such that one could doubt whether it was ever put into practice fully!). It convened the celebration of the Jubilee every fifty years in order to preserve the social fabric of the People of God and restore independence even to the smallest families of the country. Decisive for Leviticus 25 is the regular repetition of Israel's profession of faith in God who had liberated his people in the Exodus. "I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God" (Lv 25:38; cf. vss 42, 45). The celebration of the Jubilee was an implicit admission of fault and an attempt to re-establish a just order. Any system which would alienate an Israelite — once a slave but now freed by the powerful arm of God — was in fact a denial of God's saving action in and through the Exodus.

The liberation of the victims and sufferers becomes part of the much broader program of the prophets. Deutero-Isaiah, in the Suffering Servant songs (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12) develops these allusions to the practice of the Jubilee with the themes of ransom and of freedom, of return and redemption. Isaiah 58 is an attack on ritual observance that has no regard for social justice; it is a call for liberation of the oppressed (Is 58:6), centered

specifically on the obligations of kinship (v. 7). More clearly, Isaiah 61 uses the images of the Jubilee to depict the Anointed One as God's herald sent to "evangelize" the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to announce the year of grace of the Lord. Significantly, it is precisely this text, with an allusion to Isaiah 58:6, that Jesus uses to present the task of his life and ministry in Luke 4:17-21.

2.4. Conclusion

From what has been said, it can be concluded that John Paul II's appeal to the Church to mark the Jubilee Year by an admission of guilt for the sufferings and wrongs committed by her sons and daughters in the past, as well as the ways in which this might be put into practice, do not find an exact parallel in the Bible. Nevertheless, they are based on what Sacred Scripture says about the holiness of God, the intergenerational solidarity of God's people, and the sinfulness of the people. The Pope's appeal correctly captures the spirit of the biblical Jubilee, which calls for actions aimed at re-establishing the order of God's original plan for creation. This requires that the proclamation of the "today" of the Jubilee, begun by Jesus (cf. Lk 4:21), be continued in the Jubilee celebration of his Church. In addition, this singular experience of grace prompts the People of God as a whole, as well as each of the baptized, to take still greater cognizance of the mandate received from the Lord to be ever ready to forgive offenses received.³⁹

3. Theological Foundations

"Hence it is appropriate that as the second millennium of Christianity draws to a close the Church should become ever more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a

³⁹ Cf. *TMA*, nn. 33-36.

life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly *forms of counter-witness and scandal*. Although she is holy because of her incorporation into Christ, the Church does not tire of doing penance. Before God and man, she always *acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters*.⁴⁰ These words of John Paul II emphasize how the Church is touched by the sin of her children. She is holy in being made so by the Father through the sacrifice of the Son and the gift of the Spirit. She is also in a certain sense sinner, in really taking upon herself the sin of those whom she has generated in Baptism. This is analogous to the way Christ Jesus took on the sin of the world (cf. Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; 1 Pt 2:24).⁴¹ Furthermore, in her most profound self-awareness in time, the Church knows that she is not only a community of the elect, but one which in her very bosom includes both righteous and sinners, of the present as well as the past, in the unity of the mystery which constitutes her. Indeed, in grace and in the woundedness of sin, the baptized of today are close to, and in solidarity with, those of yesterday. For this reason one can say that the Church — one in time and space in Christ and in the Spirit — is truly "at the same time holy and ever in need of purification."⁴² It is from this paradox, which is characteristic of the mystery of the Church, that the question arises as to how one can reconcile the two aspects: on the one hand, the Church's affirmation in faith of her holiness, and on the other hand, her unceasing need for penance and purification.

3.1. The Mystery of the Church

"The Church is in history, but at the same time she transcends it. It is only 'with the eyes of faith' that one can see her in her

^WTMA, n. 33.

⁴¹ One thinks of the reason why Christian authors of various historical periods reproached the Church for her faults. Among these, one of the most representative examples is the *Liber asceticus* by Maximus the Confessor: PL 90, 912-956.

⁴² *Lumen gentium*, n. 8.

visible reality and at the same time in her spiritual reality as bearer of divine life."⁴³ The ensemble of her visible and historical aspects stands in relation to the divine gift in a way that is analogous to how, in the incarnate Word of God, the assumed humanity is sign and instrument of the action of the divine Person of the Son. The two dimensions of ecclesial being form "one complex reality resulting from a human and a divine element,"⁴⁴ in a communion that participates in the Trinitarian life and brings about baptized persons' sense of being united among themselves despite historical differences of time and place. By the power of this communion, the Church presents herself as a subject that is absolutely unique in human affairs, able to take on the gifts, the merits, and the faults of her children of yesterday and today.

The telling analogy to the mystery of the Incarnate Word implies too, nevertheless, a fundamental difference. "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled' (Heb 7:26), knew no sin (cf. 2 Cor 5:21), but came only to expiate the sins of the people (cf. Heb 2:17). The Church, however, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of purification and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal."⁴⁵ The absence of sin in the Incarnate Word cannot be attributed to his ecclesial Body, within which, on the contrary, each person — participating in the grace bestowed by God — needs nevertheless to be vigilant and to be continually purified. Each member also shares in the weakness of others: "All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners (cf. 1 Jn 1:8-10). In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time (cf. Mt 13:24-30). Hence the

⁴³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), n. 770.

⁴⁴ *Lumen gentium*, n. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. also *Unitatis redintegratio*, nn. 3 and 6.

Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness."⁴⁶

Already Paul VI had solemnly affirmed that the Church "is holy, though she includes sinners in her bosom, for she herself has no other life but the life of grace... This is why she suffers and does penance for these faults, from which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁷ The Church in her "mystery" is thus the encounter of sanctity and of weakness, continually redeemed, and yet always in need of the power of redemption. As the liturgy — the true "*lex credendi*" — teaches, the individual Christian and the community of the saints implore God to look upon the faith of his church and not on the sins of individuals, which are the negation of this living faith: "*Ne respicias peccata nostra, sed fidem Ecclesiae tuae* "!" In the unity of the mystery of the Church through time and space, it is possible to consider the aspect of holiness, the need for repentance and reform, and their articulation in the actions of Mother Church.

3.2. The Holiness of the Church

The Church is holy because, sanctified by Christ who has acquired her by giving himself up to death for her, she is maintained in holiness by the Holy Spirit who pervades her unceasingly: "We believe that the Church...is indefectibly holy. For Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as being 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his bride and gave himself up for her, so that she might be made holy (cf. Eph 5: 25), and has united her to himself as his body and has filled her with the gift of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God. For this reason, everyone

⁴⁶ CCC, n. 827.

⁴⁷ Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God* (June 30, 1968), n. 19 (*Enchiridion Vaticanum* 3, 264f)-

in the Church...is called to holiness."⁴⁸ In this sense, from the beginning, the members of the Church are called the "saints" (cf. Acts 9:13; 1 Cor 6:1; 16:1). One can distinguish, however, the *holiness of the Church from holiness in the Church*. The former — founded on the missions of the Son and Spirit — guarantees the continuity of the mission of the People of God until the end of time and stimulates and aids the believers in pursuing subjective personal holiness. The form which holiness takes is rooted in the vocation that each one receives; it is given and required of him as the full completion of his own vocation and mission. Personal holiness is always directed toward God and others, and thus has an essentially social character: it is holiness "in the Church" oriented towards the good of all.

Holiness *in* the Church must therefore correspond to the holiness *of* the Church. "The followers of Christ, called by God not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made truly children of God in the Baptism of faith and sharers in the divine nature, and thus are really made holy. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received from God."⁴⁹ The baptized person is called to become with his entire existence that which he has already become by virtue of his baptismal consecration. And this does not happen without the consent of his freedom and the assistance of the grace that comes from God. No one becomes himself so fully as does the saint, who welcomes the divine plan and, with the help of grace, conforms his entire being to it! The saints are in this sense like lights kindled by the Lord in the midst of his Church in order to illuminate her; they are a prophecy for the whole world.

⁴⁸ *Lumen gentium*, n. 39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 40.

3.3. The Necessity of Continual Renewal

Without obscuring this holiness, we must acknowledge that due to the presence of sin there is a need for continual renewal and for constant conversion in the People of God. The Church on earth is "marked with a true holiness," which is, however, "imperfect."⁵⁰ Augustine observes against the Pelagians: "The Church as a whole says: Forgive us our trespasses! Therefore she has blemishes and wrinkles. But by means of confession the wrinkles are smoothed away and the blemishes washed clean. The Church stands in prayer in order to be purified by confession and, as long as men live on earth it will be so."⁵¹ And Thomas Aquinas makes clear that the fullness of holiness belongs to eschatological time; in the meantime, the Church still on pilgrimage should not deceive herself by saying that she is without sin: "To be a glorious Church, with neither spot nor wrinkle, is the ultimate end to which we are brought by the Passion of Christ. Hence, this will be the case only in the heavenly homeland, not here on the way of pilgrimage, where 'if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves'..."⁵² In reality, "though we are clothed with the baptismal garment, we do not cease to sin, to turn away from God. Now, in this new petition ['forgive us our trespasses'], we return to him like the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:11-32) and, like the tax collector, recognize that we are sinners before him (cf. Lk 18:13). Our petition begins with a 'confession' of our wretchedness and his mercy."⁵³

Hence it is the entire Church that confesses her faith in God through the confession of her children's sins and celebrates his infinite goodness and capacity for forgiveness. Thanks to the bond established by the Holy Spirit, the communion that exists among

⁵⁰ Ibid., n. 48.

⁵¹ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 181, 5,7: *PL* 38; 982.

⁵² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* Ill q. 8 art. 3 *ad* 2.

⁵³ CCC, n. 2839.

all the baptized in time and space is such that in this communion each person is himself, but at the same time is conditioned by others and exercises an influence on them in the living exchange of spiritual goods. In this way, the holiness of each one influences the growth in goodness of others; however, sin also does not have an exclusively individual relevance, because it burdens and poses resistance along the way of salvation of all and, in this sense, truly touches the Church in her entirety, across the various times and places. This distinction prompts the Fathers to make sharp statements like this one of Ambrose: "Let us beware then that our fall not become a wound of the Church."⁵⁴ The Church therefore, "although she is holy because of her incorporation into Christ, ... does not tire of doing penance: Before God and man, she always acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters"⁵⁵ of both yesterday and today.

3.4. The Motherhood of the Church

The conviction that the Church can make herself responsible for the sin of her children by virtue of the solidarity that exists among them through time and space because of their incorporation into Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, is expressed in a particularly effective way in the idea of "Mother Church" ("*Mater Ecclesia*"), which "in the conception of the early Fathers of the Church sums up the entire Christian aspiration."⁵⁶ The Church, Vatican II affirms, "by means of the Word of God faithfully received, becomes a mother, since through preaching and baptism she brings forth children to a new and immortal life, who have

⁵⁴ St. Ambrose, *De virginitate* 8, 48; PL 16.278D: "*Caveamus igitur, ne lapsus noster vulnus Ecclesiae fiat.*" *Lumen gentium*, n. 11 also speaks of the wound inflicted on the Church by the sins of her children.

⁵⁵ TMA, 33.

⁵⁶ Karl Delahaye, *Ecclesia Mater chez les Peres des trois premiers siecles*, (Paris, 1964), p. 128; Cf. also Hugo Rahner, SJ, *Mater Ecclesia: Lobpreis der Kirche aus dem ersten Jahrtausend christlicher Literatur*, (Einsiedeln, 1944).

been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God."⁵⁷ Augustine, for example, gives voice to the vast tradition, of which these ideas are an echo: "This holy and honored mother is like Mary. She gives birth and she is a virgin, from her you were born - she generates Christ so that you will be members of Christ."⁵⁸ Cyprian of Carthage states succinctly: "One cannot have God as a father who doesn't have the Church as a mother."⁵⁹ And Paulinus of Nola sings of the motherhood of the Church like this: "As a mother she receives the seed of the eternal Word, carries the peoples in her womb and gives birth to them."⁶⁰

According to this vision, the Church is continually realized in the exchange and communication of the Spirit from one believer to another, as the generative environment of faith and holiness, in fraternal communion, unanimity in prayer, solidarity with the cross, and common witness. By virtue of this living communication, each baptized person can be considered to be at the same time a child of the Church, in that he is generated in her to divine life, and Mother Church, in that, by his faith and love he cooperates in giving birth to new children for God. He is ever more Mother Church, the greater is his holiness and the more ardent is his effort to communicate to others the gift he has received. On the other hand, the baptized person does not cease to be a child of the Church when, because of sin, he separates himself from her in his heart.

⁵⁷ *Lumen gentium*, 64.

⁵⁸ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 25, 8: *PL* 46, 938: "*Mater ista sancta, honorata, Mariae similis, et parit et Virgo est. Ex illa nati estis et Christum parit: nam membra Christi estis.*"

⁵⁹ St. Cyprian, *De Ecclesiae Catholicae unitate* 6: *CCL* 3, 253: "*Habere iam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem.*" St. Cyprian also states: "*Ut habere quis possit Deum Patrem, habeat ante ecclesiam matrem*" (*Epist.* 74, 7; *CCL* 3C, 572). St. Augustine: "*Tenete ergo, carissimi, tenete omnes unanimiter Deum patrem, et matrem Ecclesiam*" (*In Ps* 88, *Sermo* 2,14: *CCL* 39, 1244).

⁶⁰ St. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 25, 171-172; *CSEL* 30,243: "*Inde manet mater aeterni semine verbi / concipiens populos et pariter pariens.*"

He may always come back to the springs of grace and remove the burden that his sin imposes on the entire community of Mother Church. The Church, in turn, as a true Mother, cannot but be wounded by the sin of her children of yesterday and today, continuing to love them always, to the point of making herself responsible in all times for the burden created by their sins. Thus, she is seen by the Fathers of the Church to be the Mother of sorrows, not only because of persecutions coming from outside, but above all because of the betrayals, failures, delays, and sinfulness of her children.

Holiness and sin in the Church are reflected therefore in their effects on the entire Church, although it is a conviction of faith that holiness is stronger than sin, since it is the fruit of divine grace. The saints are shining proof of this, and are recognized as models and help for all! There is no parallelism between grace and sin, nor even a kind of symmetry or dialectical relationship. The influence of evil will never be able to conquer the force of grace and the radiance of good, even the most hidden good! In this sense the Church recognizes herself to be holy in her saints. While she rejoices over this holiness and knows its benefit, she nonetheless confesses herself a sinner, not as a subject who sins, but rather in assuming the weight of her children's faults in maternal solidarity, so as to cooperate in overcoming them through penance and newness of life. For this reason, the holy Church recognizes the duty "to express profound regret for the weaknesses of so many of her sons and daughters who sullied her face, preventing her from fully mirroring the image of her crucified Lord, the supreme witness of patient love and humble meekness."⁶¹

This expression of regret can be done in a particular way by those who by charism and ministry express the communion of the People of God in its weightiest form: on behalf of the local

TMA, n. 35.

Churches, Bishops may be able to make confessions for wrongs and requests for forgiveness. For the entire Church, one in time and space, the person capable of speaking is he who exercises the universal ministry of unity, the Bishop of the Church "which presides in love,"⁶² the Pope. This is why it is particularly significant that the invitation came from him that "the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children" and recognize the necessity "to make amends for... [the sins of the past], and earnestly beseech Christ's forgiveness."⁶³

4. Historical Judgment and Theological Judgment

The determination of the wrongs of the past, for which amends are to be made, implies, first of all, a correct historical judgment, which is also the foundation of the theological evaluation. One must ask: What precisely occurred? What exactly was said and done? Only when these questions are adequately answered through rigorous historical analysis can one then ask whether what happened, what was said or done, can be understood as consistent with the Gospel, and, if it cannot, whether the Church's sons and daughters who acted in such a way could have recognized this, given the context in which they acted. Only when there is moral certainty that what was done in contradiction to the Gospel in the name of the Church by certain of her sons and daughters could have been understood by them as such and avoided, can it have significance for the Church of today to make amends for faults of the past.

The relationship between "historical judgment" and "theological judgment" is therefore as complex as it is necessary and determinative. For this reason, it is necessary to undertake it without falsehoods on one side or the other. Both an apologetics that seeks

⁶² St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romanos*, *Prooem.*: SC 10,124 (Th. Camelot, Paris 1958²).

⁶³ *TMA*, nn. 33, 34.

to justify everything and an unwarranted laying of blame, based on historically untenable attributions of responsibility, must be avoided. John Paul II, referring to the historical-theological evaluation of the work of the Inquisition, stated: "The Church's Magisterium certainly may not intend to perform an act of natural ethics, which the request for pardon is, without first being exactly informed concerning the situation of that time. But, at the same time, neither may it rely on images of the past steered by public opinion, since these are frequently highly charged with passionate emotion which impedes serene and objective diagnosis... This is the reason why the first step consists in asking the historians, not to furnish a judgment of natural ethics, which would exceed the area of their competence, but to offer help toward a reconstruction, as precise as possible, of the events, of the customs, of the mentality of the time, in the light of historical context of the epoch."⁶⁴

4.1. The Interpretation of History

What are the conditions for a correct interpretation of the past from the point of view of historical knowledge? To determine these, we must take account of the complexity of the relationship between the subject who interprets and the object from the past which is interpreted.⁶⁵ First, their mutual extraneousness must be emphasized. Events or words of the past are, above all, "past." As such they are not completely reducible to the framework of the present, but possess an objective density and complexity that prevent them from being ordered in a solely functional way for present interests. It is necessary, therefore, to approach them by means of an historical-critical investigation that aims at using all of the infor-

⁶⁴ *Discourse* to the participants in the International Symposium of study on the Inquisition, sponsored by the Historical-Theological Commission of the Central Committee of the Jubilee, n. 4; October 31, 1998.

⁶⁵ Cf. for what follows, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 2nd ed. (Tubingen, 1965); Eng. trans. *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975).

mation available, with a view to a reconstruction of the environment, of the ways of thinking, of the conditions and the living dynamic in which those events and those words are placed, in order, in such a way, to ascertain the contents and the challenges that - precisely in their diversity - they propose to our present time.

Second, a certain *common belonging* of interpreter and interpreted must be recognized without which no bond and no communication could exist between past and present. This communicative bond is based on the fact that every human being, whether of yesterday or of today, is situated in a complex of historical relationships, and in order to live these relationships, the mediation of language is necessary, a mediation which itself is always historically determined. Everybody belongs to history! Bringing to light this communality between interpreter and the object of interpretation — which is reached through the multiple forms by which the past leaves evidence of itself (texts, monuments, traditions, etc.) — means judging both the accuracy of possible correspondences and possible difficulties of communication between past and present, as indicated by one's own understanding of the past words and events. This requires taking into account the questions which motivate the research and their effect on the answers which are found, the living context in which the work is undertaken, and the interpreting community whose language is spoken and to whom one intends to speak. For this purpose, it is necessary that the pre-understanding — which is part of every act of interpretation — be as reflective and conscious as possible, in order to measure and moderate its real effect on the interpretative process.

Finally, through the effort to know and to evaluate, an *osmosis* (a "fusion of horizons") is accomplished between the interpreter and the object of the past that is interpreted, in which the act of comprehension properly consists. This is the expression of what is judged to be the correct understanding of the events or words

of the past; it is equivalent to grasping the meaning which the events can have for the interpreter and his world. Thanks to this encounter of living worlds, understanding of the past is translated into its application to the present. The past is grasped in the potentialities which it discloses, in the stimulus it offers to modify the present. Memory becomes capable of giving rise to a new future.

This fruitful *osmosis* with the past is reached through the interwovenness of certain basic hermeneutic operations, which correspond to the stages of extraneousness, communality, and understanding true and proper. In relation to a "text" of the past (understood in a general sense as evidence which may be written, oral, monumental, or figurative), these operations can be expressed as follows: "1) understanding the text; 2) judging how correct one's understanding of the text is; and 3) stating what one judges to be the correct understanding of the text."⁶⁶ Understanding the evidence of the past means reaching it as far as possible in its objectivity through all the sources that are available. Judging the correctness of one's own interpretation means verifying honestly and rigorously to what extent it could have been oriented or conditioned in any way by one's prior understanding or by possible prejudices. Stating the interpretation reached means bringing others into the dialogue created with the past, in order both to verify its importance and to discover other possible interpretations.

4.2. Historical Investigation and Theological Evaluation

If these operations are present in every hermeneutic act, they must also be part of the interpretative process within which historical judgment and theological judgment come to be integrated. This requires, in the first place, that in this type of interpretation, maximum attention be given to the elements of differentiation and extraneousness between past and present. In particular, when one

Bernard Lonergan, SJ, *Method in Theology*, (London, 1972), p. 155.

intends to judge the possible wrongs of the past, it must be kept in mind that the historical periods are different, that the sociological and cultural times within which the Church acts are different, and so, the paradigms and judgments proper to one society and to one era might be applied erroneously in the evaluation of other periods of history, producing many misunderstandings. Persons, institutions, and their respective competencies are different; ways of thinking and conditioning are different. Therefore, responsibility for what was said and done has to be precisely identified, taking into account the fact that the Church's request for forgiveness commits the single theological subject of the Church in the variety of ways and levels in which she is represented by individual persons and in the enormous diversity of historical and geographical situations. Generalization must be avoided. Any possible statement today must be situated in the contemporary context and undertaken by the appropriate subject (universal Church, Bishops of a country, particular Churches, etc.).

Second, the correlation of historical judgment and theological judgment must take into account the fact that, for the interpretation of the faith, the bond between past and present is not motivated only by the current interest and by the common belonging of every human being to history and its expressive mediations, but is based also on the unifying action of the Spirit of God and on the permanent identity of the constitutive principle of the communion of the faithful, which is revelation. The Church - by virtue of the communion produced in her by the Spirit of Christ in time and space - cannot fail to recognize herself in her supernatural aspect, present and operative in all times, as a subject in a certain way unique, called to correspond to the gift of God in different forms and situations through the choices of her children, despite all of the deficiencies that may have characterized them. Communion in the one Holy Spirit also establishes a communion of "saints" in a diachronic sense, by virtue of which the baptized of today feel

connected to the baptized of yesterday and - as they benefit from their merits and are nourished by their witness of holiness - so likewise they feel the obligation to assume any current burden from their faults, after having discerned these by attentive historical and theological study.

Thanks to this objective and transcendent foundation of the communion of the People of God in its various historical situations, interpretation done by believers recognizes in the Church's past a very particular significance for the present day. The encounter with the past, produced in the act of interpretation, can have particular value for the present, and be rich in a "performative" efficaciousness that cannot always be calculated beforehand. Of course, the powerful unity between the hermeneutic horizon and the Church as interpreting agent exposes the theological vision to the risk of yielding to apologetic or tendentious readings. It is here that the hermeneutic exercise aimed at understanding past events and statements and at evaluating the correctness of their interpretation for today is more necessary than ever. For this reason, the reading undertaken by believers will avail itself of all possible contributions by the historical sciences and interpretative methods. The exercise of historical hermeneutics should not, however, prevent the evaluation of faith from questioning the texts according to its own distinctive vision, thus making past and present interact in the conscience of the one fundamental subject involved in these texts, the Church. This guards against all historicism that would relativize the weight of past wrongs and make history justify everything. As John Paul II observes, "an accurate historical judgment cannot prescind from careful study of the cultural conditioning of the times... Yet the consideration of mitigating factors does not exonerate the Church from the obligation to express profound regret for the weaknesses of so many of her sons and daughters..."⁶⁷ The

"TMA, 35.

Church is "not afraid of the truth that emerges from history and is ready to acknowledge mistakes wherever they have been identified, especially when they involve the respect that is owed to individuals and communities. She is inclined to mistrust generalizations that excuse or condemn various historical periods. She entrusts the investigation of the past to patient, honest, scholarly reconstruction, free from confessional or ideological prejudices, regarding both the accusations brought against her and the wrongs she has suffered."⁶⁸ The examples offered in the following chapter may furnish a concrete demonstration.

5. Ethical Discernment

In order for the Church to carry out an appropriate historical examination of conscience before God with a view to her own interior renewal and growth in grace and holiness, it is necessary that she recognize the "forms of counter-witness and of scandal" that have taken place in her history, especially in the past millennium. It is not possible to undertake such a task without being aware of its moral and spiritual significance. This entails defining some key terms, as well as making some necessary ethical clarifications.

5.1. Some Ethical Criteria

On the level of morality, the request for forgiveness always presupposes an admission of *responsibility*, precisely the responsibility for a wrong committed against others. Usually, *moral responsibility* refers to the relationship between the action and the person who does it. It establishes who is responsible for an act, its attribution to a certain person or persons. The responsibility may be *objective* or *subjective*. Objective responsibility refers to the moral value of the act in itself, insofar as it is good or evil, and

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *General Audience Discourse* of September 1, 1999; in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., September 8, 1999, p. 7.

thus refers to the imputability of the action. Subjective responsibility concerns the effective perception by individual conscience of the goodness or evil of the act performed. Subjective responsibility ceases with the death of the one who performed the act; it is not transmitted through generation; the descendants do not inherit (subjective) responsibility for the acts of their ancestors. In this sense, asking for forgiveness presupposes a contemporaneity between those who are hurt by an action and those who committed it. The only responsibility capable of continuing in history can be the objective kind, to which one may freely adhere subjectively or not. Thus, the evil done often outlives the one who did it through the consequences of behaviors that can become a heavy burden on the consciences and memories of the descendants.

In such a context, one can speak of a *solidarity* that unites the past and the present in a relationship of reciprocity. In certain situations, the burden that weighs on conscience can be so heavy as to constitute a kind of moral and religious memory of the evil done, which is by its nature a *common memory*. This common memory gives eloquent testimony to the solidarity objectively existing between those who committed the evil in the past and their heirs in the present. It is then that it becomes possible to speak of an *objective common responsibility*. Liberation from the weight of this responsibility comes above all through imploring God's forgiveness for the wrongs of the past, and then, where appropriate, through the "purification of memory" culminating in a mutual pardoning of sins and offenses in the present.

Purifying the memory means eliminating from personal and collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past, on the basis of a new and rigorous historical-theological judgment, which becomes the foundation for a renewed moral way of acting. This occurs whenever it becomes possible to attribute to past historical deeds a different quality, having a new and different effect on the present, in view of progress

in reconciliation in truth, justice, and charity among human beings and, in particular, between the Church and the different religious, cultural, and civil communities with whom she is related. Emblematic models of such an effect, which a later authoritative interpretative judgment may have for the entire life of the Church, are the reception of the Councils or acts like the abolition of mutual anathemas. These express a new assessment of past history, which is capable of producing a different characterization of the relationships lived in the present. The memory of division and opposition is purified and substituted by a reconciled memory, to which everyone in the Church is invited to be open and to become educated.

The combination of historical judgment and theological judgment in the process of interpreting the past is connected to the ethical repercussions that it may have in the present and entails some principles corresponding, on the moral plane, to the hermeneutic foundation of the relationship between historical judgment and theological judgment. These are:

a. *The principle of conscience.* Conscience, as "moral judgment" and as "moral imperative," constitutes the final evaluation of an act as good or evil before God. In effect, only God knows the moral value of each human act, even if the Church, like Jesus, can and must classify, judge, and sometimes condemn some kinds of action (cf. Mt 18:15-18).

b. *The principle of historicity.* Precisely inasmuch as every human act belongs to the subject who acts, every individual conscience and every society chooses and acts within a determined horizon of time and space. To truly understand human acts or their related dynamics, we need therefore to enter into the world of those who did them. Only in such a way can we come to know their motivations and their moral principles. This must be said without prejudice to the solidarity that binds the members of a specific community through the passage of time.

c. *The principle of "paradigm change."* While before the Enlightenment there existed a sort of osmosis between Church and State, between faith and culture, morality and law, from the eighteenth century onward this relationship was modified significantly. The result was a transition from a sacral society to a pluralist society, or, as occurred in a few cases, to a secular society. The models of thought and action, the so-called "paradigms" of actions and evaluation, change. Such a transition has a direct impact on moral judgments, although this influence does not justify in any way a relativistic idea of moral principles or of the nature of morality itself.

The entire process of purification of memory, however, insofar as it requires the correct combination of historical evaluation and theological perception, needs to be lived by the Church's sons and daughters not only with the rigor that takes account of the criteria and principles indicated above, but is also accompanied by a continual calling upon the help of the Holy Spirit. This is necessary in order not to fall into resentment or unwarranted self-recrimination, but to arrive instead at the confession of the God whose "mercy is from age to age" (Lk 1:50), who wants life and not death, forgiveness and not condemnation, love and not fear. The quality of *exemplarity* which the honest admission of past faults can exert on attitudes within the Church and civil society should also be noted, for it gives rise to a renewed obedience to the Truth and to respect for the dignity and the rights of others, most especially, of the very weak. In this sense, the numerous requests for forgiveness formulated by John Paul II constitute an example that draws attention to something good and stimulates the imitation of it, recalling individuals and groups of people to an honest and fruitful examination of conscience with a view to reconciliation.

In the light of these ethical clarifications, we can now explore some examples — among which are those mentioned in *Tertio*

*millennio adveniente*⁶⁹ — of situations in which the behavior of the sons and daughters of the Church seems to have contradicted the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a significant way.

5.2. The Division of Christians

Unity is the law of the life of the Trinitarian God revealed to the world by the Son (cf. Jn 17:21), who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, loving until the end (cf. Jn 13:1), communicates this life to his own. This unity should be the source and the form of the communion of mankind's life with the Triune God. If Christians live this law of mutual love, so as to be one "as the Father and the Son are one," the result will be that "the world will believe that the Son was sent by the Father" (Jn 17:21) and "everyone will know that these are his disciples" (Jn 13:35). Unfortunately, it has not happened this way, particularly in the millennium which has just ended and in which great divisions appeared among Christians, in open contradiction to the explicit will of Christ, as if he himself were divided (cf. 1 Cor 1:13). Vatican Council II judges this fact in this way: "Certainly such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, is a scandal to the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature."⁷⁰

The principal divisions during the past millennium which "affect the seamless garment of Christ"⁷¹ are the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches at the beginning of this millennium, and in the West - four centuries later - the laceration caused by those events "commonly referred to as the Reformation."⁷² It is true that "these various divisions differ greatly from

⁶⁹ Cf. *TMA*, nn. 34-36.

⁷⁰ *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, n. 13. *TMA* 34 states that "In the course of the thousand years now drawing to a close, even more than in the first millennium, ecclesial communion has been painfully wounded..."

⁷² *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 13.

one another not only by reason of their origin, place, and time, but above all by reason of the nature and gravity of questions concerning faith and the structure of the Church."⁷³ In the schism of the eleventh century, cultural and historical factors played an important role, while the doctrinal dimension concerned the authority of the Church and the Bishop of Rome, a topic which at that time had not reached the clarity it has today, thanks to the doctrinal development of this millennium. In the case of the Reformation, however, other areas of revelation and doctrine were objects of controversy.

The way that has opened to overcome these differences is that of doctrinal development animated by mutual love. The lack of supernatural love, of *agape*, seems to have been common to both the breaches. Given that this charity is the supreme commandment of the Gospel, without which all the rest is but "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1), such a deficiency needs to be seen in all its seriousness before the Risen One, the Lord of the Church and of history. It is by virtue of the recognition of this lack that Pope Paul VI asked pardon of God and of the "separated brethren," who may have felt offended "by us" (the Catholic Church).⁷⁴

In 1965, in the climate produced by the Second Vatican Council, Patriarch Athenagoras, in his dialogue with Paul VI, emphasized the theme of the restoration (*apokatastasis*) of mutual love, so essential after a history laden with opposition, mutual mistrust, and antagonism.⁷⁵ It was a question of a past that, through

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Opening Speech* of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council (September 29, 1964): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 1, [106], n. 176.

⁷⁵ Cf. the documentation from the dialogue of charity between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople in *Toinos Agdpes: Vatican - Phanar 1958-1970*, Rome - Istanbul, 1971).

memory, was still exerting its influence. The events of 1965 (culminating on December 7, 1965, with the abolition of the anathemas of 1054 between East and West) represent a confession of the fault contained in the earlier mutual exclusion, so as to purify the memory of the past and generate a new one. The basis of this *new memory* cannot be other than mutual love or, better, the renewed commitment to live it. This is the commandment *ante omnia* (1 Pt 4:8) for the Church in the East and in the West. In such a way, memory frees us from the prison of the past and calls Catholics and Orthodox, as well as Catholics and Protestants, to be the architects of a future more in conformity with the new commandment. Pope Paul VI's and Patriarch Athenagoras' testimony to this new memory is in this sense exemplary.

Particularly problematic for the path toward the unity of Christians is the temptation to be guided — or even determined — by cultural factors, historical conditioning, and those prejudices which feed the separation and mutual distrust among Christians, even though they do not have anything to do with matters of faith. The Church's sons and daughters should sincerely examine their consciences to see whether they are actively committed to obeying the imperative of unity and are living an "interior conversion," because "it is from newness of attitudes of mind (cf. Eph 4:23), from self-denial and generous love, that desires for unity take their rise and grow toward maturity."⁷⁶ In the period from the close of the Council until today, resistance to its message has certainly saddened the Spirit of God (cf. Eph 4:30). To the extent that some Catholics are pleased to remain bound to the separations of the past, doing nothing to remove the obstacles that impede unity, one could justly speak of solidarity in the sin of division (cf. 1 Cor 1:10-16). In this context the words of the Decree on Ecumenism

Unitahs redintegratio, n. 7.

could be recalled: "With humble prayer we ask pardon of God and of the separated brethren, as we forgive those who trespass against us."⁷⁷

5.3. The Use of Force in the Service of Truth

To the counter-witness of the division between Christians should be added that of the various occasions in the past millennium when doubtful means were employed in the pursuit of good ends, such as the proclamation of the Gospel or the defense of the unity of the faith. "Another sad chapter of history to which the sons and daughters of the Church must return with a spirit of repentance is that of the acquiescence given, especially in certain centuries, to intolerance and even the use of force in the service of truth."⁷⁸ This refers to forms of evangelization that employed improper means to announce the revealed truth or did not include an evangelical discernment suited to the cultural values of peoples or did not respect the consciences of the persons to whom the faith was presented, as well as all forms of force used in the repression and correction of errors.

Analogous attention should be paid to all the failures, for which the sons and daughters of the Church may have been responsible, to denounce injustice and violence in the great variety of historical situations: "Then there is the lack of discernment by many Christians in situations where basic human rights were violated. The request for forgiveness applies to whatever should have been done or was passed over in silence because of weakness or bad judgment, to what was done or said hesitantly or inappropriately."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ TMA, n. 35.

⁷⁹ John Paul II, *General Audience Discourse* of September I, 1999; in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. ed., September 8, 1999, p. 7.

As always, establishing the historical truth by means of historical-critical research is decisive. Once the facts have been established, it will be necessary to evaluate their spiritual and moral value, as well as their objective significance. Only thus will it be possible to avoid every form of mythical memory and reach a fair critical memory capable - in the light of faith - of producing fruits of conversion and renewal. "From these painful moments of the past a lesson can be drawn for the future, leading all Christians to adhere fully to the sublime principle stated by the Council: 'The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it wins over the mind with both gentleness and power.'"⁸⁰

5.4. Christians and Jews

The relationship between Christians and Jews is one of the areas requiring a special examination of conscience.⁸¹ "The Church's relationship to the Jewish people is unlike the one she shares with any other religion."⁸² Nevertheless, "the history of the relations between Jews and Christians is a tormented one... In effect, the balance of these relations over two thousand years has been quite negative."⁸³ The hostility or diffidence of numerous Christians toward Jews in the course of time is a sad historical fact and is the cause of profound remorse for Christians aware of the fact that "Jesus was a descendent of David; that the Virgin Mary and the

⁸⁰ TMA, 35. The citation from the Second Vatican Council is from *Dignitatis humanae*, n. 1.

⁸¹ The argument is rigorously treated in the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra aetate*.

⁸² Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, Rome (March 16, 1998), I, in *Information Service* of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, n. 97, 19. Cf. John Paul II, *Discourse at the Synagogue of Rome*, April 13, 1986; AAS 78 (1986), 1120.

⁸³ This is the judgment of the recent document of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, Rome (March 16, 1998), III, in *Information Service* of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, n. 97, 19.

Apostles belonged to the Jewish people; that the Church draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles (cf. Rom 11:17-24); that the Jews are our dearly beloved brothers, indeed in a certain sense they are 'our elder brothers.'"⁸⁴

The Shoah was certainly the result of the pagan ideology that was Nazism, animated by a merciless anti-Semitism that not only despised the faith of the Jewish people, but also denied their very human dignity. Nevertheless, "it may be asked whether the Nazi persecution of the Jews was not made easier by the anti-Jewish prejudices imbedded in some Christian minds and hearts... Did Christians give every possible assistance to those being persecuted, and in particular to the persecuted Jews?"⁸⁵ There is no doubt that there were many Christians who risked their lives to save and to help their Jewish neighbors. It seems, however, also true that "alongside such courageous men and women, the spiritual resistance and concrete action of other Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ's followers."⁸⁶ This fact constitutes a call to the consciences of all Christians today, so as to require "an act of repentance (*teshuva*),"⁸⁷ and to be a stimulus to increase efforts to be "transformed by renewal of your mind" (Rom 12:2), as well as to keep a "moral and religious memory" of the injury inflicted on the Jews. In this area, much has already been done, but this should be confirmed and deepened.

5.5. Our Responsibility for the Evils of Today

"The present age in fact, together with much light, also presents not a few shadows."⁸⁸ First among the latter, we might

⁸⁴ Ibid., V, 22.

⁸⁵ Ibid., IV, 20, 21.

⁸⁶ Ibid., IV, 21.

⁸⁷ Ibid., V, 22.

⁸⁸ TMA, n. 36.

mention the phenomenon of the denial of God in its many forms. What is particularly apparent is that this denial, especially in its more theoretical aspects, is a process that emerged in the western world. Connected to the eclipse of God, one encounters then a series of negative phenomena, like religious indifference, the widespread lack of a transcendent sense of human life, a climate of secularism and ethical relativism, the denial of the right to life of the unborn child sanctioned in pro-abortion legislation, and a great indifference to the cry of the poor in entire sectors of the human family.

The uncomfortable question to consider is in what measure believers are themselves responsible for these forms of atheism, whether theoretical or practical. *Gaudium et spes* responds with well-chosen words: "Believers themselves often share some responsibility for this situation. For, taken as a whole, atheism is not something original, but rather stems from a variety of causes, including a critical reaction against religious belief and in some places against the Christian religion in particular. Hence believers can have more than a little to do with the genesis of atheism."⁸⁹

The true face of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, and thus, Christians are offered the incommensurable grace to know this face. At the same time, however, Christians have the *responsibility* to live in such a way as to show others the true face of the living God. They are called to radiate to the world the truth that "God is love (*agape*)" (1 Jn 4:8,16). Since God is love, he is also a Trinity of Persons, whose life consists in their infinite mutual communication in love. It follows from this that the best way Christians can radiate the truth that God is love is by their own mutual love. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn 13:35). For this reason, it can be said of Christians that often "to the extent that they neglect their own

training in the faith, or teach erroneous doctrine, or are deficient in their religious, moral or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and of religion."⁹⁰

Finally, it must be emphasized that the mentioning of these faults of Christians of the past is not only to confess them to Christ the Savior, but also to praise the Lord of history for his merciful love. Christians, in fact, do not believe only in the existence of sin, but also, and above all, in the *forgiveness of sins*. In addition, recalling these faults means accepting our solidarity with those who, in good and bad, have gone before us on the way of truth. It offers to those of the present a powerful reason to convert to the requirements of the Gospel, and it provides a necessary prelude to the request for God's forgiveness that opens the way for mutual reconciliation.

6. Pastoral and Missionary Perspectives

In the light of these considerations, it is now possible to ask the question: What are the pastoral aims of the Church's taking responsibility for past faults committed in her name by her sons and daughters, and for which she makes amends? What are its implications for the life of the People of God? And what are the consequences in relation to the Church's missionary effort and her dialogue with various cultures and religions?

6.1. The Pastoral Aims

The following are some of the pastoral reasons for acknowledging the faults of the past.

First, these acts tend towards the *purification of memory*, which — as noted above — is a process aimed at a new evaluation of the past, capable of having a considerable effect on the present, because past sins frequently make their weight felt and remain

⁹⁰ **Ibid.**

temptations in the present as well. Above all, if the causes of possible resentment for evils suffered and the negative influences stemming from what was done in the past can be removed as a result of dialogue and the patient search for mutual understanding with those who feel injured by words and deeds of the past, such a removal may help the community of the Church grow in holiness through reconciliation and peace in obedience to the Truth. "Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past," the Pope emphasizes, "is an act of honesty and courage which helps us to strengthen our faith, which alerts us to face today's temptations and challenges, and prepares us to meet them."⁹¹ To that end, it is good that the remembering of faults also includes all possible omissions, even if only some of these are mentioned frequently today. One should not forget the price paid by many Christians for their fidelity to the Gospel and for their service to their neighbor in charity.⁹²

A second pastoral aim, closely connected to the first, is the promotion of the continual *reform of the People of God*. "Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies in moral conduct, in Church discipline, or even in the way in which doctrine is expressed (which must be carefully distinguished from the deposit of the faith itself), these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment."⁹³ All of the baptized are called to "examine their fidelity to the will of Christ concerning the Church, and as required, strenuously undertake the work of renewal and reform."⁹⁴ The criterion of true reform and of authentic renewal must be

⁹¹ *TMA*, n. 33.

⁹² One need only think of the sign of martyrdom: cf. *TMA*, n. 37.

⁹³ *Unitads redintegratio*, n. 6. It is the same text which states that "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reform (*ad banc perennem reformationem*) of which she always has need, insofar as she is a human institution here on earth."

⁹⁴ "...opus renovationis nee non reformationis...": *ibid.*, n. 4.

fidelity to the will of God regarding his people⁹⁵ that presupposes a sincere effort to free oneself from all that leads away from his will, whether we are dealing with present faults or the inheritance from the past.

A further aim can be seen to be the *witness* that the Church gives to the God of mercy and to his liberating and saving Truth, from the experience which she has had and continues to have of him in history. There is also the *service* which the Church in this way gives to humanity to help overcome current evils. John Paul II states that "many Cardinals and Bishops expressed the desire for a serious examination of conscience above all on the part of the Church today. On the threshold of the new millennium Christians need to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our day"⁹⁶ in order to help overcome them in obedience to the splendor of saving Truth.

6.2. Ecclesial Implications

What are the implications for the life of the Church of an ecclesial request for forgiveness? A number of aspects can be mentioned.

It is necessary above all to take into account the different processes of *reception* of acts of ecclesial repentance, because these will vary according to religious, cultural, political, social, and personal contexts. In this light, one needs to consider that events or words linked to a contextualized history do not necessarily have a universal significance, and vice versa, that acts conditioned by a determined theological and pastoral perspective have had powerful consequences for the spread of the Gospel (one thinks, for

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6: "Every renewal of the Church consists essentially in the increase of faithfulness to her vocation."

⁹⁶ TMA, n. 36.

example, of the various historical models of the theology of mission). Furthermore, there needs to be an evaluation of the relationship between the spiritual benefits and the possible costs of such acts, taking into account also the undue accentuation which the media may give to certain aspects of the Church's statements. One should always remember the apostle Paul's admonition to welcome, consider, and support the "weak in faith" with prudence and love (cf. Rom 14:1). In particular, attention must be given to the history, the identity, and the current situation of the Eastern Churches and those Churches which exist in continents or countries where the Christian presence is a minority.

It is necessary to specify the *appropriate subject* called to speak about the faults of the past, whether it be local Bishops, considered personally or collegially, or the universal Pastor, the Bishop of Rome. In this perspective, it is opportune to take into account - in recognizing past wrongs and the present day subjects who could best assume responsibility for these - the distinction between Magisterium and authority in the Church. Not every act of authority has magisterial value, and so behavior contrary to the Gospel by one or more persons vested with authority does not involve *per se* the magisterial charism, which is assured by the Lord to the Church's Bishops, and consequently does not require any Magisterial act of reparation.

It is necessary to underscore that *the one addressed* by any request for forgiveness is God and that any human recipients — above all, if these are groups of persons either inside or outside the community of the Church — must be identified with appropriate historical and theological discernment, in order to undertake acts of reparation which are indeed suitable, and also in order to give witness to them of the good will and the love for the truth of the Church's sons and daughters. This will be accomplished to the extent that there is dialogue and reciprocity between the parties, oriented toward a possible reconciliation connected with the

recognition of faults and repentance for them. However, one should not forget that reciprocity — at times impossible because of the religious convictions of the dialogue partner — cannot be considered an indispensable condition, and that the gratuity of love often expresses itself in unilateral initiatives.

Possible gestures of *reparation* must be connected to the recognition of a responsibility which has endured through time, and may therefore assume a symbolic-prophetic character, as well as having value for effective reconciliation (for example, among separated Christians). It is also desirable that in the definition of these acts there be joint research with those who will be addressed, by listening to the legitimate requests which they may present.

On the *pedagogical* level, it is important to avoid perpetuating negative images of the other, as well as causing unwarranted self-recrimination, by emphasizing that, for believers, taking responsibility for past wrongs is a kind of sharing in the mystery of Christ, crucified and risen, who took upon himself the sins of all. Such an interpretation, rooted in Christ's Paschal Mystery, is able in a particular way to produce fruits of liberation, reconciliation, and joy for all those who, with living faith, are involved in the request for forgiveness — both the subjects and those addressed.

6.3. The Implications for Dialogue and Mission

On the level of dialogue and mission, the foreseeable implications of the Church's acknowledgement of past faults are varied.

On the level of the *Church's missionary effort*, it is important that these acts do not contribute to a lessening of zeal for evangelization by exacerbating negative aspects. At the same time, it should be noted that such acts can increase the credibility of the Christian message, since they stem from obedience to the truth and tend to produce fruits of reconciliation. In particular, with regard to the precise topics of such acts, those involved in the

Church's mission *ad gentes* should take careful account of the local context in proposing these, in light of the capacity of people to receive such acts (thus, for example, aspects of the history of the Church in Europe may well turn out to have little significance for many non-European peoples).

With respect to *ecumenism*, the purpose of ecclesial acts of repentance can be none other than the unity desired by the Lord. Therefore, it is hoped that they will be carried out reciprocally, though at times prophetic gestures may call for a unilateral and absolutely gratuitous initiative.

On the *inter-religious* level, it is appropriate to point out that, for believers in Christ, the Church's recognition of past wrongs is consistent with the requirements of fidelity to the Gospel, and therefore constitutes a shining witness of faith in the truth and mercy of God as revealed by Jesus. What must be avoided is that these acts be mistaken as confirmation of possible prejudices against Christianity. It would also be desirable if these acts of repentance would stimulate the members of other religions to acknowledge the faults of their own past. Just as the history of humanity is full of violence, genocide, violations of human rights and the rights of peoples, exploitation of the weak and glorification of the powerful, so too the history of the various religions is marked by intolerance, superstition, complicity with unjust powers, and the denial of the dignity and freedom of conscience. Christians have been no exception and are aware that all are sinners before God!

In the dialogue with cultures, one must, above all, keep in mind the complexity and plurality of the notions of repentance and forgiveness in the minds of those with whom we dialogue. In every case, the Church's taking responsibility for past faults should be explained in the light of the Gospel and of the presentation of the crucified Lord, who is the revelation of mercy and the source of forgiveness, in addition to explaining the nature of ecclesial

communion as a unity through time and space. In the case of a culture that is completely alien to the idea of seeking forgiveness, the theological and spiritual reasons which motivate such an act should be presented in appropriate fashion, beginning with the Christian message and taking into account its critical-prophetic character. Where one may be dealing with a prejudicial indifference to the language of faith, one should take into account the possible double effect of an act of repentance by the Church: on the one hand, negative prejudices or disdainful and hostile attitudes might be confirmed; on the other hand, these acts share in the mysterious attraction exercised by the "crucified God."⁹⁷ One should also take into account the fact that in the current cultural context, above all of the West, the invitation to a purification of memory involves believers and non-believers alike in a common commitment. This common effort is itself already a positive witness of docility to the truth.

Lastly, in relation to *civil society*, consideration must be given to the difference between the Church as a mystery of grace and every human society in time. Emphasis must also be given, however, to the character of exemplarity of the Church's requests for forgiveness, as well as to the consequent stimulus this may offer for undertaking similar steps for purification of memory and reconciliation in other situations where it might be urgent. John Paul II states: "The request for forgiveness...primarily concerns the life of the Church, her mission of proclaiming salvation, her witness to Christ, her commitment to unity, in a word, the consistency which should distinguish Christian life. But the light and strength of the Gospel, by which the Church lives, also have the capacity, in a certain sense, to overflow as illumination and support for the

⁹⁷ This particular strong formulation comes from St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 1, 13, 28: CCL 50, 69, 13; *Epist.* 169, 2: CSEL 44, 611; *Sermo* 341A, \: *Misc. Agost.* 314, 22.

decisions and actions of civil society, with full respect for their autonomy... On the threshold of the third millennium, we may rightly hope that political leaders and peoples, especially those involved in tragic conflicts fuelled by hatred and the memory of often ancient wounds, will be guided by the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation exemplified by the Church and will make every effort to resolve their differences through open and honest dialogue."⁹⁸

Conclusion

At the conclusion of this reflection, it is appropriate to stress yet again that in every form of repentance for the wrongs of the past, and in each specific gesture connected with it, the Church addresses herself in the first place to God and seeks to give glory to him and to his mercy. Precisely in this way she is able to celebrate the dignity of the human person called to the fullness of life in faithful covenant with the living God: "The glory of God is man fully alive; but the life of man is the vision of God."⁹⁹ By such actions, the Church also gives witness to her trust in the power of the truth that makes us free (cf. Jn 8:32). Her "request for pardon must not be understood as an expression of false humility or as a denial of her 2,000-year history, which is certainly rich in merit in the areas of charity, culture, and holiness. Instead she responds to a necessary requirement of the truth, which, in addition to the positive aspects, recognizes the human limitations and weaknesses of the various generations of Christ's disciples."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ John Paul II, *Discourse* to the participants in the International Symposium of study on the Inquisition, sponsored by the Historical-Theological Commission of the Central Committee of the Jubilee, n. 5; October 31, 1998.

⁹⁹ "*Gloria Dei vivens homo: vita autem hominis visio Dei*": St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses* IV, 20, 7: SC 100/2, 648.

¹⁰⁰ John Paul II, *General Audience Discourse* of September 1, 1999; in *L'Osservatore Romano*, eng. ed., September 8, 1999, p. 7.

Recognition of the Truth is a source of reconciliation and peace because, as the Holy Father also states, "Love of the truth, sought with humility, is one of the great values capable of reuniting the men of today through the various cultures."¹⁰¹ Because of her responsibility to Truth, the Church "cannot cross the threshold of the new millennium without encouraging her children to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency and slowness to act. Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past is an act of honesty and courage..."¹⁰² It opens a new tomorrow for everyone.

¹⁰¹ *Discourse at the Centre de l'Organisation europeenne pour la recherche nucleaire*, Geneva (June 15, 1982) in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, V, 2, (Vatican, 1982), p. 2321.

¹⁰² *TMA*, 33.

DOCUMENTATION

The Roman Missal 2000 **CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP** **AND DISCIPLINES OF THE SACRAMENTS**

*On Holy Thursday, 2000, Pope John Paul II approved the revised *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, popularly known as the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The present revision replaces the 1975 edition of the *Institutio Generalis* and is now available in Latin from the Vatican Press and in an English language study edition from the NCCB Secretariat for the Liturgy.**

At the outset, it is important to understand that the revised *Institutio* stands in direct continuity with the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) of the Second Vatican Council, and the former *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (*Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*) of 1975. As with both these seminal documents, the prescriptions of the new *Institutio* are to be seen as concrete ways of specifying and underscoring the nature and importance of the sacred liturgy in the church's life (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 5).

The structure of the *Institutio* remains largely unchanged, though there are some significant exceptions. The number of paragraphs has been increased from 340 to 399. A ninth chapter

* As a service to our readers we are offering these pages which are reprinted from the Committee on the Liturgy of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) of the United States of America (<http://www.ncchuscc.org/liturgy1>).

of new material regarding "Adaptations which are the Competence of Bishops and Conferences of Bishops" has been developed in the light of the *Fourth Instruction on the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy* (March 29, 1994).

The introduction to the *Institutio* (1-15) contains the theological and spiritual rationale for what follows. These paragraphs deserve special attention because they show how this new document is an organic outgrowth of what has occurred since Vatican II in the reform of the liturgy, and they contain important theological insight about the central place of the Eucharist in the life of faith. As with the prior edition of the *Institutio*, its first chapter contains a general reflection on the "Importance and Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration." The second chapter then examines the "Structure, Elements and Parts of the Mass." The third chapter ("Offices and Ministries in the Mass") is divided into three sections also found in the previous edition, dealing with the role of the ordained, the gathered faithful and special ministries. A fourth division has been added to the new edition, addressing the "Distribution of Roles and Preparations for the Celebration."

Chapter four ("Different Forms of Celebration") has been significantly restructured. The first section regarding "Mass with a Congregation" is now divided into four parts: "Mass without a Deacon" (previously, "Basic Form of Celebration"); "Mass with a Deacon" (previously, "Functions of the Deacon"), "Functions of the Acolyte" and "Functions of the Reader." Part III (previously, "Mass without a Congregation") is now entitled "Mass at which only one Minister Assists."

Chapter five ("The Arrangement and Furnishing of the Church for the Celebration of the Eucharist") is now divided into three sections: I. "General Principles", II. "Arrangement of the Sanctuary for the Sacred Synaxis" (formerly, "Arrangement of the Church"), and III. "The Arrangement of the Church." The structure of chapters six, seven and eight remains substantially unchanged.

In other instances, paragraphs have been added which conveniently collect rubrical information found elsewhere throughout the *Institutio* or otherwise found in the Order of Mass. An example of this is found at number 90, which provides a convenient summary of the concluding rites.

While much of the revision in the new edition is stylistic and editorial, bringing greater precision to the *Institutio*, many of the changes are introduced to nuance or enhance the meaning of a particular passage. For example, the adjective "sacred" is added regularly to such words as ministers, celebrations, hosts, vestments and action, in keeping with the *Institutio*'s own general admonition that "[a]nything out of keeping with the sacred is to be avoided." (344) Likewise, the adjective "profound" has been added to the word "bow" in most instances and the adjective "liturgical" to the word "assembly" when suggested by the context.

Other more substantive changes are described under the following five categories: I. The Bishop, Priest and Deacon; II. Lay Ministers; III. Ritual Changes; IV. Sacred Things and V. Adaptation

I. The Bishop, Priest and Deacon

An introductory paragraph (91) has been added to the section on liturgical ministries, providing a context for ministries engaged in at the Eucharist. The *Institutio* recalls that the Eucharistic celebration is an action of Christ and the Church, that is, of "a holy people gathered together and ordered under the Bishop." Thus does the Eucharistic celebration belong to the whole Body of the Church:

Such a celebration manifests this same Body and affects it. As to the individual members of the Body, the eucharistic celebration touches them in different ways, according to their rank, office, and degree of participation in the Eucharist. In this way, the Christian people, "a chosen race,

a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own" demonstrates its cohesion and its hierarchical ordering. Therefore, all, whether ordained ministers or Christian faithful, by virtue of their function or their office, should do all and only those parts that belong to them.

A. The Bishop

At the center of every liturgical celebration is the diocesan Bishop, for "celebration of the Eucharist in a particular Church...is of the greatest importance." (22) Masses which he celebrates "with the participation of his presbyterate, deacons and the people" manifest the mystery of the Church and ought to be an example to the whole diocese. (22) He is "chief steward of the mysteries... moderator, promoter and guardian" of "the entire liturgical life" of his diocese, striving to assure that all "grasp interiorly a genuine sense of the liturgical texts and rites, and thereby are led to an active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist." (22)

Two ritual changes affecting the bishop are found in the revised *Institutio*. The bishop now enjoys the option of blessing the people with the *Book of the Gospels* after its proclamation. (175) Secondly, more specific wording is provided for the intercession for the bishop in the Eucharistic Prayers (149), including the reminder that while it is appropriate to pray for the co-adjutor and the auxiliary bishops, other bishops who may be present should not be mentioned.

B. The Priest

Because the celebration of the Eucharist is seen as the priest's principal office (19), it is recommended that every priest "celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice even daily, whenever possible." (19) Likewise, whenever he is present at Mass, the priest should participate as a vested concelebrant, unless excused for a good reason. (114)

When Mass is celebrated without a congregation, it should not be celebrated without a minister "except for a just and reasonable cause," in which case all greetings, instructions and the blessing at the end of Mass are omitted." (254)

Likewise, the priest, neither adding, removing nor changing anything on his own authority, may make choices in preparing the Mass (24) at the same time retaining "the right of directing everything that pertains to himself." (111) In choosing among the options provided in the Order of Mass "liturgical songs, readings, prayers, introductory comments and gestures which may respond better to the needs, degree of preparation and mentality of the participants..." (24) he is counseled to consider "the common spiritual good of the people of God, rather than be concerned about his own inclinations." (352)

The *Institutio* expands on the adaptations permitted to the priest celebrant usually expressed in the Order of Mass by the rubric, ...*these or similar words*. The purpose of such adaptations is to make the instructions during the liturgy more understandable to the faithful. (31) The priest must, however, "always respects the sense of the introduction given in the liturgical book and he should express it only in brief terms." (31) Thus the priest celebrant may adapt a very brief introduction to the Mass of the day, to the Liturgy of the Word, to the Eucharistic Prayer and make comments before the dismissal. (31)

Introductory Rites

A common confusion is addressed with regard to the Penitential Rite, with the statement that the absolution at the conclusion of this rite "lacks the efficacy of the sacrament of penance." (51) The widespread practice of the priest intoning the Gloria is recommended for the singing of this hymn of praise. (53, 68) It may, however, also be intoned by a cantor or choir. (53)

Liturgy of the Word

Priest concelebrants are reminded by the new *Institutio* that even the present practice at a concelebrated Mass without a deacon allows a priest concelebrant to proclaim the gospel. In the presence of a bishop, such a priest asks for and receives the blessing in the same manner as would a deacon. (212) "Nevertheless, this should not be done in a concelebration in which a priest presides." (212)

To the previous *Institutio's* explanation of the homily several sentences are added, describing the homily as a living commentary on the Word of God, to be "understood as an integral part of the liturgical action." (29) The homily may be given by the priest celebrant, by a concelebrating priest, or even by a deacon, "but never by a lay person." (66) "In particular cases and with just cause, the homily may even be offered by a Bishop or a priest who is present at the celebration, but cannot concelebrate." (66) Homilies are required on Sundays and holy days of obligation and may be eliminated from Mass with a congregation only for a grave reason. (66) The priest gives the homily in a standing position either "at the chair or at the ambo, or, when appropriate, in another suitable place." (136)

The priest celebrant introduces and concludes the intercessions from the chair. He introduces them with hands joined and prays the concluding prayer with hands extended. (138) At the offering of the gifts, the priest may choose to pray the blessing formulas aloud, but only when neither a song is sung nor the organ played. (142)

The priest is to pray the Eucharistic Prayer alone "in virtue of his ordination," while the people "associate themselves with the priest in silent faith, as well as by the prescribed acclamations in the Eucharistic Prayer, which are their responses in the Preface

dialogue, the *Sanctus*, the acclamation after the consecration and the great Amen after the final doxology, and also other acclamations approved by the Conference of Bishops and confirmed by the Holy See." (147) The priest is also encouraged to sing those parts of the Eucharistic Prayer provided with musical notation. (147)

A significantly expanded description of the sign of peace is included in numbers 82 and 154. The *pax* is defined as the rite "by which the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful offer some sign of their ecclesial communion and mutual love for each other before communicating by receiving the Sacrament." (82) In order to avoid a disruption to the rite, the priest may exchange a sign of peace only with others in the sanctuary. (154) (The form for the sign of peace is left to individual conferences of bishops.) Likewise, for the faithful, "it is suitable that each person offer the sign of peace only to those nearby and in a dignified manner." (82) As all in the congregation offer each other the sign of peace, they may say: *The peace of the Lord be with you always*. The response is: *Amen*. (154)

The section on the Breaking of the Bread is significantly expanded, noting that this rite "signifies that in sharing the one bread of life which is Christ, who died and rose for the salvation of the world, the many faithful are made one body (1 Cor. 10,17)." The rite is "reserved to the priest and the deacon;" it should not "be unnecessarily prolonged or its importance be overemphasized." (83) Thus the practice of extraordinary ministers sharing in the breaking of the bread and the filling of chalices with the Precious Blood is no longer allowed.

The option is given for elevating the host over the chalice at the *This is the Lamb of God (Ecce)*, thus holding both species before the assembly. Otherwise, the host may be held over the paten. The host by itself is never held aloft at the *Ecce*. (243, 157)

The manner in which the priest gives the final blessing is described in greater detail. After the greeting and response, the priest joins his hands, and then immediately places his left hand upon his breast, elevates his right hand and gives the blessing. (167)

C. The Deacon

A new section is added describing the ministry of the deacon, including both an enumeration of the particular responsibilities of the deacon at Mass, and several clarifications. When he carries the *Book of the Gospels* in the entrance procession, the book is "slightly elevated." (172) When arriving at the altar with the *Book of the Gospels*, he does not bow, but immediately places the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar and then kisses the altar at the same time the priest does. (173) When not carrying the *Book of the Gospels*, he reverences the altar in the customary fashion. (173) If incense is used at this point, he assists the priest. (173) Likewise, he "proclaims the gospel reading, sometimes preaches God's word, announces the intentions of the general intercessions, ministers to the priest, prepares the altar and serves the celebration of the sacrifice, distributes the Eucharist to the faithful, especially under the species of wine, and from time to time gives directions regarding the people's gestures and posture." (94)

When present, the deacon may exercise his function (116) and is counted, next to the priest, as the first among the ministers by reason of his sacred ordination. (94) While the dalmatic is the proper vesture for the deacon it may be omitted "for some necessity or on account of a lesser grade of solemnity." (338)

Greater detail is given to the deacon's role in the proclamation of the Gospel as well. He is to bow when asking for the blessing and when taking the *Book of the Gospels* from the altar. (175) A description of the optional kissing of the *Book of the Gospels* by the bishop is likewise included. The deacon may proclaim the readings, but only in the absence of a qualified reader (176) and he proclaims the intentions "as a rule from the ambo." (177)

During the Eucharistic Prayer the deacon "as a rule" kneels from the epiclesis to the elevation of the chalice. (179) For the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer, the deacon stands near the altar when his ministry involves the chalice and Missal. "Nevertheless, as much as possible, the deacon stands back from the altar, slightly behind the concelebrants." (215) When incense is used during the elevations of the host and chalice he places incense in the censer and, kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament. (179) In the absence of a deacon, paragraph 150 makes provision for another minister to perform this incensation.

At the Kiss of Peace, the deacon's invitation to exchange the sign of peace is given with his hands joined. (181) He then receives the sign of peace from the priest and exchanges it with the ministers who stand near him. (181)

At Communion, the priest himself gives communion to the deacon under both kinds (182). When Communion is given to the faithful under both kinds, the deacon ministers the chalice. After Communion has been distributed, the deacon, at the altar, reverently consumes any of the Blood of Christ which remains. (182)

More explicit note is made of the deacon's admonition, "Bow your head and pray for God's blessing," before a solemn blessing and he is instructed to give the final admonition, "Go in the peace of Christ," with hands joined. (185)

II. Lay Ministers

Lay ministers are also described in the new *Institutio*. They are to wear the alb or other vestment that is approved by the Conference of Bishops. (339) Chosen by the "pastor or rector of the church," they receive their ministry through a liturgical blessing or a temporary deputation. (107)

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion may be called forward by the priest only when a sufficient number of priests or deacons is not present. (162) First among those to be called forward are instituted acolytes, then those who have been commissioned as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, and last of all, those commissioned for the occasion. (162)

The *Institutio* describes in detail the way in which such extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion exercise their ministry. At Mass, they assist only with the distribution of Holy Communion. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion come to the altar only after the priest has received Communion (162) and always receive from the priest the vessel which contains the Blessed Sacrament which they will distribute. (162) The distribution of consecrated hosts and the Precious Blood to sacred vessels is reserved to the priest or deacon.

After Communion, the remaining consecrated wine is consumed by the deacon, or in his absence, by the priest. (163) The deacon or priest or instituted acolyte are likewise charged with the purification of sacred vessel immediately after Mass. (279) No provision is made for the purification of vessels by an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

Readers

The duties of the instituted reader are described as specific to him and "he alone ought to perform [them], even though ordained ministers may be present." (99) In the absence of an instituted reader, other truly qualified people may proclaim the scriptures, provided they have been carefully prepared. (101) The functions of the master of ceremonies (106), musicians, (103), sacristan (105) commentator (105), collectors and ushers/greeters (105) are likewise described.

An expansion of the roles relating to the Word of God recalls that because the office of reading the Scriptures is a ministerial, not a presidential function, "the readings should be delivered by a reader, the Gospel being proclaimed by the deacon or by a priest other than the celebrant." (59)

In the absence of a deacon, the reader, "wearing the appropriate vesture, may carry the *Book of the Gospels* slightly elevated" in the entrance procession. (194) Upon entering the sanctuary, he places the *Book of the Gospels* on the altar. Then, he takes up his position in the sanctuary with the other ministers. (195) *The Lectionary*, however, is never carried in procession. (120)

Acolytes

The instituted acolyte has "special duties" (98) which he alone ought to perform and which should ideally be distributed among several acolytes. (187) If an instituted acolyte is present, he should perform the most important functions, while the others may be distributed among several ministers. (187) These "special duties" are described in detail in 187-193, many of which are exercised only in the absence of a deacon, and include incensation of the priest and people at the preparation of the gifts (190), and administration of the chalice at communion. (191) Unlike other extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the instituted acolyte may help the priest or deacon cleanse the sacred vessels at a side table. (192) In the absence of an instituted acolyte, lay ministers may serve at the altar, assisting the priest or deacon. "They may carry the cross, candles, ashes, censer, bread, wine and water" or serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. (100) The Bishop may issue norms concerning the function of such altar servers. (107)

The Congregation

The revised *Institutio* significantly expands the section on gestures and postures at Mass, which "allow the whole celebration

to shine with dignity and noble simplicity, demonstrating the full and true meaning of each of their diverse parts, while fostering the participation of all." (42) Thus

greater attention needs to be paid to what is laid down by liturgical law and by the traditional practice of the Roman Rite, for the sake of the common spiritual good of the people of God rather than to personal inclination or arbitrary choice. The uniformity in posture to be observed by all taking part is a sign of the unity of the members of the Christian community gathered for the sacred Liturgy: it both expresses and fosters the spiritual attitude of those assisting. (42)

The postures of the assembly are then described in detail, as in the previous *Institutio*. The new document, however, makes several minor adjustments to these directives, noting that the faithful stand from the invitory, *Pray that our sacrifice...*, and not from the prayer over the gifts, as in the previous *Institutio*. (43) "Reasons of health" have been added to the list of exceptions when people may stand at the consecration (43) and the *Institutio* now directs that those standing at the consecration "ought to make a profound bow when the priest genuflects after the consecration." Finally, the new *Institutio* notes that "where it is the custom that the people remain kneeling from the end of the Sanctus until the end of the Eucharistic Prayer [as in the United States] this is laudably retained." (43)

Two paragraphs define the meaning and practice of two primary gestures. Genuflection "which is made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration." Genuflection is reserved to "the Most Blessed Sacrament and to the Holy Cross, from the solemn adoration in the liturgy of Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil." (274) The priest genuflects three times during Mass: after the showing of the Eucharistic bread, the

chalice and before communion. As in the previous *Institutio*, a genuflection is made by all the ministers upon arriving at and departing from the altar at the beginning and end of Mass if the tabernacle is located in the sanctuary, "but not during the celebration of Mass itself." (274) "Ministers who are carrying the processional cross or the candles bow their heads in place of a genuflection." (274) Bowing is seen as an expression of reverence and honor towards "persons or what represents those persons." (275) The revised Institution refers to two types of bows: a profound bow, and a bow of the head.

III. Ritual Changes

A. Liturgy of the Word

Several articles from the recently revised introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* have been added, including the insistence that the order of readings be strictly adhered to (357) and that non-biblical texts never be substituted for the Lectionary text. (57) The division of any readings into parts, except for the Passion, is prohibited by the new *Institutio*. (109) The readings are always given from the ambo in Masses with a congregation. (58) While the new *Institutio* recommends the singing of the Responsorial psalm (61), it notes that "if the psalm cannot be sung, then it should be recited in a way more suited to fostering meditation on the word of God." (61)

The profession of faith is described by the new *Institutio* as "a way for all the people gathered together to respond to the word of God" by which "the great mysteries of the faith may be recalled and confirmed before their celebration in the Eucharist is begun." (67) Likewise, the General Intercessions are seen as a response to the Word of God by the faithful who, "exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation

of all." (69) To the prior descriptions of this prayer is added the recommendation that the intentions be sober, discrete and brief, "expressing the needs of the whole community." (71)

Silence

The *Institutio's* section on sacred silence has been expanded, recommending that "even before the celebration itself, it is praiseworthy for silence to be observed in church, in the sacristy and adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves for the sacred rites which are to be enacted in a devout and fitting manner." (45) Admonishing that the Liturgy of the Word "must be celebrated in such a way as to promote meditation," (56) the *Institutio* cautions against "any kind of haste which impedes recollection" and recommends brief moments of silence throughout the liturgy, especially after the readings and the homily so that the word of God may be "taken into the heart by the fostering of the Holy Spirit." (56)

Music

Following an introduction almost identical to the 1975 edition which commends and contextualizes sacred music at Mass, (40) the new *Institutio* recalls that liturgical law requires the use of music on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation, but the complete absence of singing on weekdays should be guarded against. (40) A re-emphasis on the privileged place of Gregorian chant as "more proper to the Roman liturgy" is included, though "other kinds of sacred music, polyphony in particular, are not in any way to be excluded, provided that they correspond with the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful." (41)

A preference for singing many parts of the Mass is expressed in the new *Institutio* by the introduction of the phrase "is either sung or recited" at the profession of faith (137), the *Lamb of God*

(155), *Preface* (216), the *Kyrie* (125) and the *Gloria*. (126) Songs or hymns may never be substituted for either the *Agnus Dei* or the other chants of the Mass. (366) Finally, more specific direction for the use of the organ during Advent (used with moderation) and Lent (permitted for accompanying sustained singing) is included. (313)

B. Liturgy of the Eucharist

The sections of the *Institutio* recommending the reception by the faithful of Communion consecrated at that Mass "just as the priest himself is bound to do," (85) on the reciting of the Communion antiphon "either by the faithful, or by a group of them, or by a reader" (87) and care for providing for the reception of Communion by cantors (86) have been slightly expanded.

Communion under both kinds

In the light of the significant growth of the practice of the reception of the Eucharist under both kinds, the new *Institutio* has restructured and expanded this section. The occasions on which Communion under both kinds may be permitted, in addition to those found in the ritual books, now include:

- a. for priests who are not able to celebrate or concelebrate;
- b. for the deacon and others who perform some role at Mass;
- c. for community members at their conventual Mass or what in some places is known as the "community" Mass, for seminarians, for all who are engaged in spiritual exercises or are participating in a spiritual or pastoral conference. (283)

In addition, the bishop may establish norms for the distribution of Communion under both kinds for his own diocese "which must be observed even in the churches of religious orders and in celebrations with small groups." (283) A broader authority is also

given to the diocesan Bishop to permit Communion under both kinds "whenever it seems appropriate to the priest to whom charge of a given community has been entrusted as their own pastor, provided that the faithful have been well instructed and there is no danger of the profanation of the Sacrament or that the rite would be difficult to carry out on account of the number of participants or for some other reason." (283) Norms established by a Conference of Bishops in regard to how the Eucharist is distributed to the faithful are to be confirmed by the Apostolic See. (283)

Cleansing of Sacred Vessels

Several changes regarding the cleansing of sacred vessels are also introduced. Whatever remains of the Precious Blood after Communion is completely consumed at the altar by the priest, deacon or instituted acolyte, who ministers the chalice. (284b, 279) The vessels may be left on a side table, placed on a corporal to be cleansed immediately after Mass by the priest, deacon, one of the concelebrants, or an instituted acolyte. (163, 279) The extraordinary minister is noticeably omitted from the list of those entrusted with the cleansing of the sacred vessels.

In every Mass, Communion should be offered under the form of bread (284c), and care should be taken that no surplus of the Blood of Christ remains after Communion. (285a) More detailed directions concerning the procedure for the distribution of Communion by institution are also given. (285b)

The sacrarium, only incidentally referenced in prior liturgical documents, is recommended and described as the place in the sacristy "into which water from the cleansing of sacred vessels and linens is poured." (334)

IV. Sacred Things

The sanctuary is defined as "the place where the altar stands, the word of God is proclaimed, and the priest, deacon and other ministers exercise their offices." (295)

The Altar

As a rule, every church should have a single, fixed and dedicated altar (303) which "signifies to the assembly of the faithful the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the Church" (303) and "represents Christ Jesus, the Living Stone (1 Peter 2:4; see Eph. 2:20) more clearly and permanently" (298) than does a moveable altar.

The *Institutio* admits, however, of instances in the renovation of churches when an old altar, impossible to move without compromising its artistic value, "is so positioned that it makes the participation of the people difficult." (303) In such instances, another fixed and dedicated altar may be erected. The old altar is then no longer decorated in a special way and the liturgy is celebrated only on the new fixed altar. (303)

A new paragraph is added cautioning that nothing should be placed upon the altar except for an indicated list of what is required for the celebration of Mass. (306) Even flowers are to be arranged modestly and with moderation around the altar but never on top of it. (305) A paragraph on the arrangement of altar flowers likewise notes that during Lent the decorating of the altar with flowers is prohibited, except on Laetare Sunday, solemnities and feast days. In the same way, a certain moderation is exercised during the Advent Season when altar flowers convey "the character of the season but which should not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord." (305)

The Altar Cross

Where the previous *Institutio* spoke only of an altar or processional cross, the revised *Institutio* speaks always of "a cross with the figure of Christ crucified upon it." (308, 122) This cross, "positioned either on the altar or near it," should be clearly visible not only during the liturgy, but at all times recalling "for the faithful the saving passion of the Lord, [and] remaining] near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations." (308)

The Ambo

To the previous descriptions of the ambo is added the summary observation that "the dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should approach it." (309) Likewise, as often as possible, the readings should be delivered from the ambo. (58)

The Chair for the priest Celebrant and Other Chairs

The new *Institutio* reiterates the statement from the 1975 edition that "the best place for the chair is at the head of the sanctuary," (310) but to the previous list of exceptions are added instances "where the tabernacle is positioned medially behind the altar." (310) To this section is also added a description of sanctuary chairs for concelebrants and priests present in choir (310), the deacon ("near that of the celebrant") and the seats for other ministers which are to be arranged so that "the ministers are easily able to fulfill the office assigned to them," and yet are "clearly distinguished from the seats for clergy." (3⁴⁰)

The Tabernacle

The section on the place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament has been adjusted and expanded. (314-317) It begins by recalling the instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* 54 with the general statement that "the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church which is noble,

worthy, conspicuous, well decorated and suitable for prayer." (314) The requirements summarized in the previous *Institutio* are repeated: that there should be only one tabernacle, which is immovable, solid, unbreakable, locked, and not transparent.

A paragraph on the location of the tabernacle then begins by citing the *Eucharisticum Mystrium* 55, recalling that "the tabernacle in which the Most Blessed Sacrament is reserved not be on the altar on which Mass is celebrated." (315) This is immediately followed by a reminder that the location of the tabernacle should always be determined "according to the judgment of the diocesan Bishop." (315) Two options for such a location follow:

- a. either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in the most suitable form and place, not excluding on an old altar which is no longer used for celebration;
- b or even in another chapel suitable for adoration and the private prayer of the faithful, and which is integrally connected with the church and is conspicuous to the faithful.

A description of the sanctuary lamp (316) is then followed by the admonition that "none of the other things prescribed according to the norm of law concerning the reservation of the Most Blessed Sacrament should be forgotten." (317)

Sacred Vessels

The paragraphs on sacred vessels (327-333) have been rewritten, with a stronger emphasis on the character of sacred vessels as "clearly distinguished from those [vessels] designed for every day use." (332) Described as holding a place of honor at the eucharistic celebration, these vessels "in which the bread and wine are offered, consecrated and consumed," (327) are to be made "from noble metal." (328) If the metal is of a lesser quality or produces rust, the interior is to be fully gold-plated. (328) It is only following a formal action of the Conference of Bishops and confirmation by

the Apostolic See that "other solid materials which, in the common estimation of the region are regarded as noble" (329) may be used. Preference "is always to be given to materials that do not break easily or deteriorate." (328)

Sacred Images

A new introductory paragraph has been added to the section on sacred images, setting their use in an eschatological frame:

In the earthly liturgy, the Church participates in a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy, which is celebrated in the holy city Jerusalem, towards which she tends as a pilgrim and where Christ sits at the right hand of God. By so venerating the memory of the saints, the Church hopes for some small part and company with them. (318)

This is followed by an expanded description of the purpose of these "images of the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the saints" which are "displayed in sacred buildings for the veneration of the faithful, and may be so arranged that they guide the faithful to the mysteries of the faith which are celebrated there." (318) While the cautions of the previous document regarding limiting the number and placement of images in churches are retained, their duplication has been prohibited "as a rule." (318)

Bread for the Eucharist

The paragraph on the composition of bread for the Eucharist is brought more closely into conformity with canon 924, with the added requirements that the bread must be made only from wheat and recently baked. (320)

Incense

Incense is explained at greater length in the new *Institutio* observing that "incensation is an expression of reverence and prayer as signified in the Sacred Scriptures (cf. Ps. 140:2; Rev. 8:3)." (276)

After placing incense in the censer, the priest blesses the incense with a silent sign of the cross (277) and makes a profound bow before and after incensing a person or thing. (277)

Blessing of **Sacred** Things

There is an increased emphasis throughout the revised *Institutio* on the care of all things destined for liturgical use, including everything associated with the altar (350), and liturgical books, which should be "revered in the liturgical action as signs and symbols of supernatural things, and hence, retain true dignity, beauty and distinction." (350) Thus the tabernacle (314), organ (313), ambo (309), presidential chair (310), vestments for priests deacons and lay ministers (335), sacred vessels (333), and all things destined for use in the liturgy should receive the requisite blessing.

V. Adaptations and Inculturation

The ninth chapter of the *Institutio Generalis* summarizes the "Adaptations which are the competence of Bishops and Conferences of Bishops." Adaptations in the liturgy are seen as a response to the Council's call to foster that "full, conscious and active participation which is required by the nature of the Liturgy itself and to which the faithful, in virtue of their state, have a right and duty." (386) Thus have certain points of "accommodation and adaptation" been assigned to "the judgment either of the diocesan Bishop or of the Conference of Bishops." (386)

The role of the diocesan bishop is then revisited, for from him "in some sense the life in Christ of [the] faithful is derived and is dependent." (387) He must, therefore, "foster[^] govern and watch over the liturgical life in his diocese." (387) In addition to his primary task of nourishing all with the spirit of the sacred Liturgy, the *Institutio* assigns him four actions in adapting the liturgy to the life of his diocese:

1. the governance of the discipline of concelebration;
2. the establishment of norms for altar servers;
3. the establishment of norms for distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds;
4. the establishment of norms for the construction and ordering of church buildings.

Other tasks of adaptation are within the competence of Conferences of Bishops:

1. to prepare and approve a complete edition of the *Roman Missal* in the vernacular language and to submit it for the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See; (389)
2. to define, with the *recognitio* of the Apostolic See, those adaptations to the *Roman Missal* which are indicated in the *Institutio*, (390) such as:
 - a. gestures and posture of the faithful;
 - b. gestures of veneration to the altar and the *Book of the Gospels*;
 - c. texts of various chants;
 - d. readings from Sacred Scripture for special circumstances;
 - e. the form of the gesture of peace;
 - f. the manner of receiving Holy Communion;
 - g. material for the altar and the sacred furnishings, especially the sacred vessels, and also materials, form and color of the liturgical vestments;
 - h. inclusion in the *Missal* of Directories or Pastoral Instructions; (390)

3. to carefully prepare translations of biblical texts for use at Mass, in a language "which responds to the capacity of the faithful and which is suitable for public proclamation, while maintaining those characteristics that are proper to the different manners of speaking employed in the biblical books"; (391)
4. to prepare translations of other liturgical texts " in such a way that while respecting the nature of each language, the sense of the original Latin text is fully and faithfully rendered. In carrying this out, it is well to keep in mind the different literary genres which are employed in the Missal, such as the presidential orations, the antiphons, acclamations, responses, litanic supplications, and so on." (392) The proclamatory dimension of such texts is not to be neglected, for such texts are destined to be "read aloud or sung in the course of a celebration." (392) The language used should be accommodated to the faithful, but should be "nevertheless noble and marked by literary quality." (392)
5. to approve appropriate melodies for the Mass and to judge which "musical forms, melodies, and musical instruments may be admitted into divine worship, in that they are truly apt for sacred use or can be rendered apt." (393)
6. to draw up a proper calendar for the country to be approved by the Apostolic See. In such calendars "only celebrations of the greatest importance should take precedence" over Sunday, and the liturgical year should not be obscured by secondary elements. (394) Similarly, "each diocese should have its own calendar and Proper of Masses." (394)
7. to propose "variants and points of deeper adaptation in order that the sacred celebration" facilitate the participation and spiritual good of a people in light of their mentality and

customs in accord with article 40 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. (395) A series of steps to be followed in such proposals are then outlined in keeping with the Holy See's Instruction, *Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy*. (395) The *Institutio* then recalls the indispensable need for the "instruction of the clergy and faithful in a wise and orderly fashion" (396) in preparation for receiving any such adaptations.

The *Institutio* then cautions that such adaptations not compromise the accord between each particular Church and the Church universal, "not only as to the doctrine of the faith and the sacramental signs, but even as to the usages universally admitted by apostolic and unbroken tradition." (397) Such common usages are maintained "not only so that errors may be avoided, but even with the purpose of handing on the faith in its integrity." (397)

The *Institutio* concludes by describing the "notable and valuable part of the liturgical treasure and patrimony of the Catholic Church" which is the Roman Rite, admonishing that any diminishing of this treasure would gravely harm the universal Church.

Through the centuries, the Roman Rite has not only "conserved the liturgical usages that had their origin in the city of Rome, but has also in a deep, organic and harmonious way incorporated into itself certain others, thus acquiring a certain '*supra-regional* character.'" (397) Both the identity and unity of the Roman Rite are today expressed in the Latin typical editions and the approved and confirmed vernacular editions derived from them. (397)

Thus the *Institutio* insists that the liturgy should not be changed in the interest of inculturation unless "a real and certain need of the Church demands it and with all proper care that new forms in some way grow organically from already existing forms." Thus understood, "inculturation requires a necessary amount of time, lest in a hasty and incautious manner the authentic liturgical

tradition suffer contamination." (398) Inculturation is not aimed at creating new rites, and approved innovations may not be "at variance with the distinctive character of the Roman Rite." (398) The *Institutio* closes with a summary description of the *Missale Romanum*: "Thus the Roman Missal, although in a diversity of languages and in a certain variety of customs, must in the future be maintained as a means to the integrity and unity of the Roman Rite, and as its outstanding sign." (399)

Jubilee of Consecrated Life

JOHN PAUL II

An estimated 40,000 consecrated men and women from every part of the world joined Pope John Paul II in St. Peters Square on Wednesday, 2 February, for the Jubilee of Consecrated Life. The liturgy for the feast of the Presentation of the Lord included the blessing of candles, a procession led by representatives of 30 congregations and institutes, thanksgiving for the gift of consecration and renewal of the commitment to follow Christ. Concelebrating with the Pope were superiors and officials of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and the Committee for the Great Jubilee, along with 11 Superiors General and a representative of the World Conference of Secular Institutes.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.... And there was a prophetess Anna" (Lk 2: 25-26, 36).

These two figures, Simeon and Anna, witnessed the presentation of Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. The Evangelist stresses that each of them, in his or her way, is a precursor of the event. Both express the longing for the Messiah's coming. Both in some way bear within them the mystery of the temple in Jerusalem. Thus they are both present there - in a way that can be called providential - when Jesus' parents take him to the temple, 40 days after his birth, to offer him to the Lord.

Simeon and Anna represent the expectation of all Israel. It is granted to them to meet the One whom the prophets had foretold for centuries. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the two elderly people see the long-awaited Messiah in the Child that Mary and Joseph have brought to the temple as prescribed by the law of the Lord.

Simeon's words have a prophetic tone: the old man *looks at the past and foretells the future*. He says: "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for mine eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2: 29-32). Simeon expresses the fulfillment of the expectation that was his reason for living. The same thing occurs with the prophetess Anna, who rejoices at the sight of the Child and speaks of him "to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2: 38).

Your presence has prophetic value for all Christians

2. Every year a vast throng of consecrated persons assembles at the Tomb of Peter for today's liturgical feast. Today, this throng has become a multitude, because consecrated persons have come here from every part of the world. Dear brothers and sisters, today you are celebrating your Jubilee, the *Jubilee of Consecrated Life*. I welcome you with the Gospel embrace of peace!

I greet the men and women Superiors of the various congregations and institutes, and I greet all of you, dear brothers and sisters, who have wished to experience the Jubilee by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door in the Patriarchal Vatican Basilica. In you I see all your brothers and sisters throughout the world: my affectionate greeting also goes to them.

Assembled at the Tomb of the Prince of the Apostles in this Jubilee Year, you wish to express with special emphasis *the deep bond that links consecrated life to the Successor of Peter*. You are here to place upon the altar of the Lord the hopes and problems of your respective institutes. In the spirit of the Jubilee, you give thanks to God for the good he has wrought and, at the same time, you ask his forgiveness for the failings that may have marked the life of your religious families. You are asking yourselves at the beginning of a new millennium about the most effective ways to contribute, while respecting your foundational charism, to the new evangelization by reaching out to the many people who still do not know Christ. With this in mind, your fervent prayer rises to the Lord of the harvest that he will awaken in the hearts of many young men and women the desire to give themselves totally to the cause of Christ and the Gospel.

I gladly join in your prayer. Having been a pilgrim in so many parts of the world, I have been able to appreciate *the prophetic value of your presence* for all Christian people. Men and women of this generation have a great need to meet the Lord and his liberating message of salvation. On this occasion I am also pleased to note the example of *generous Gospel dedication* offered by your countless brothers and sisters, who often work in difficult situations. In Christ's name they devote themselves unreservedly to serving the poor, the outcast and the lowly.

Many of them, even in recent years, *have paid with the supreme witness of blood* for their choice of fidelity to Christ and

to man, without surrender or compromise. They deserve the tribute of our admiration and gratitude!

3. Jesus' presentation in the temple sheds particular light on the choice you have made, dear brothers and sisters. Do you too not live *the mystery of the expectation of Christ's coming*, expressed and as it were personified by Simeon and Anna? Do not your vows express with particular intensity that expectation of meeting the Messiah which these elderly Israelites cherished in their hearts? Old Testament figures standing on the threshold of the New, they reveal an inner attitude that is never out-of-date. You have made it your own, as you look with expectation for the second coming of the Bridegroom.

Eschatological witness is part of your vocation. The vows of poverty, obedience and chastity for the kingdom of God are a message that you proclaim to the world about man's ultimate destiny. It is a valuable message: "Those who vigilantly await the fulfillment of Christ's promises are able to bring hope to their brothers and sisters who are often discouraged and pessimistic about the future" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 27).

4. "It had been revealed to him by the Spirit" (Lk 2: 26). What the Evangelist said of Simeon can easily be applied to you whom the Spirit leads towards a special experience of Christ. By the renewing power of his love, he wants to make you effective witnesses to conversion, penance and new life.

To have your heart, affections, interests and feelings centred on Jesus is the most important aspect of the gift that the Spirit works within you. He conforms you to the chaste, poor and obedient Jesus. And the evangelical counsels, far from being an impoverishing renunciation, are *a choice that frees a person for a fuller realization of his potential*.

Make your praise resound in the Church

The Evangelist notes that the prophetess Anna "did not depart from the temple" (Lk 2: 37). The first vocation of those who endeavour to follow Jesus with an undivided heart is "to be with him" (Mk 3: 14), to *be in communion with him*, listening to his words in constant praise of God (cf. Lk 2: 38). I am thinking at this moment *of prayer*, particularly liturgical prayer, *which rises from so many monasteries and communities of consecrated life* in every corner of the earth. Dear brothers and sisters, make your praise resound in the Church with humility and constancy, and the hymn of your life will echo deeply in the heart of the world.

5. The joyful experience of meeting Jesus, the exultation and praise which flow from the heart, cannot remain hidden. The service given to the Gospel by institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, in the variety of forms which the Holy Spirit has stirred up in the Church, *is always born of an experience of love and a living encounter with Christ*.

It arises from sharing his efforts and his ceaseless offering to the Father. Invited to leave everything to follow Christ, you, consecrated men and women, no longer define your life by family, by profession or by earthly interests, and you choose the Lord as your only identifying mark. *Thus you acquire a new family identity*. The divine Teacher's words apply particularly to you: "Here are my mother and my brethren" (cf. Mk 3: 35). The invitation to renunciation, as you know well, is not meant to leave you "without a family" but to make you the first and distinctive members of the "new family", a witness and prophetic example for all whom God wishes to call and bring into his house.

6. Dear friends, at every moment of your life may *the Virgin Mary* be close to you as an example and support. Simeon disclosed to her the mystery of the Son and the sword that would "pierce through your own soul also" (Lk 2: 35). Today I entrust to her

those of you here and all consecrated persons who are celebrating their Jubilee.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ
and of the Church,
look upon the men and women
whom your Son has called to follow
him in total consecration to his love:
may they always let the Spirit
guide them;
may they be tireless in giving of
themselves and in serving the Lord,
so as to be faithful witnesses to
the joy that flows from the Gospel,
and preachers of the Truth
that leads human beings
to the springs of immortal life.
Amen!

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases & Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

A VALIDATION OF CIVIL MARRIAGE?

A Catholic couple got married in a civil ceremony fifty years ago. Last month, this couple approached the parish priest of a certain parish and told him that they wanted to offer a thanksgiving Mass for their 50th wedding anniversary. They also asked the priest if they could renew their vows during the Mass. The priest, thinking that they were married in the Church, granted their request. The scheduled time came and the couple attended the Mass (they also received the Body and Blood of Christ) and they "renewed" their marriage vows. A week later, the couple came back to the same parish priest, this time asking him for their marriage certificate. Obviously, the concerned priest did not issue what they were asking because he knew it was not proper. My questions are the following:

- 1- *Did a real renewal take place at that ceremony?*
- *•• *If it did not, could this supposed renewal be considered as their actual sacramental marriage?*
- *If we consider it as such, could we say that this marriage was a sort of simple validation contemplated in canon 1160?*

I have the opinion that there was no renewal because there was nothing to be renewed; as far as the Church is concerned their marriage, their civil marriage, is considered invalid and therefore it is unthinkable to have a so-called invalid marriage renewal. However, as regards the actual sacramental marriage and validation, I am not so sure. There could not be an actual sacramental marriage if their intention was just to renew the vows they had made 50 years ago, which canonically we consider non-existent. But there could be a real sacramental marriage if they intended and considered the ceremony as their "contracting anew." If such was their intention, then, we could also consider it as simple validation contemplated in canon 1160.

What is your opinion on this case?

A Parish Priest

In giving an answer to your questions, I will simply state my own opinion on the case, opinion that is always subject to a better judgment.

1. Did a real renewal take place at that ceremony?

I don't think so. On this point I agree with you that there was no renewal because "there was nothing to be renewed." In fact we are referring here to canonical marriage, which among baptized (in this case Catholics) is by itself sacramental. Such was not the kind of marriage contracted by the couple fifty years earlier and now supposedly renewed.

Note, however, the statement you add: "as far as the Church is concerned their marriage, their civil marriage, is considered invalid and therefore it is unthinkable to have a so-called invalid marriage renewal." The statement seems to be only partially correct. In fact, to the mind of the Church the civil marriage of Catholics

is not just "invalid" but actually *null* or simply *non-existent* because it lacks one of the three requirements, namely, the canonical form. (In canon law, for a marriage to be invalid needs at least to have the resemblance of validity; such resemblance, in the case of canonical marriage of Catholics, comes from the external celebration in accordance with the canonical form described in cc. 1108-1123).

2. Could this be considered as their actual sacramental marriage?

My answer is also in the negative. I do not think the ceremony held could be considered as their actual sacramental marriage. In the first place, they did not have the intention of contracting a new marriage, but simply to renew the vows they had made fifty years earlier. As you said, "their intention was just to renew their vows they made 50 years ago, which we consider non-existent."

There could have been a real actual sacramental marriage had their intention and arrangement been such, that is, to celebrate a true marriage in accordance with Church law. This would have implied accepting and agreeing upon with the parish priest that they were not actually married in the Church. Then the whole matter should have been properly arranged by the parish priest, who would have prepared the corresponding papers, following the ordinary procedures as in a new marriage. But such was not the case here.

3. Could we say that this marriage was a sort of simple validation contemplated in canon 1160?

My answer is likewise "no." The ceremony our couple held in their fiftieth anniversary could perhaps be considered as a sort of "blessing" on their (civil) marriage, but not the simple validation contemplated in canon 1160. This canon literally states: *"For a marriage which is invalid because of defect of form to become valid,*

it must be contracted anew in the canonical form, without prejudice to the provisions of can. 1127 §2."

Notice that when the canon speaks of "contracting anew" presupposes that the marriage *had been contracted before, although invalidly because of [...] a defect of form*. In other words, the canon speaks of defect of form, not of lack of form, as it is in the present case. Therefore, canon 1160 is not applicable here.

If then a marriage that has been invalidly contracted because of a defect of form cannot be a case for simple *validatio*, but a new celebration is required (cf. c. 1160), how much more when a marriage is null because of lack of form, as it is our present case!

No wonder the perplexity and refusal of the parish priest to issue the marriage certificate the couple was asking for. I consider his decision correct.

4. Possible solutions

Assuming the negative answer to the three questions above, *what should our couple do in order to have their marriage sanctioned by the Church and consequently registered in the parish books?*

a) The surest and fastest way is to address the problem directly; and since they are not married in the Church, what they have to do is simply contracting a marriage according to the provisions of canon law. Normally in these cases the most appropriate thing to do is to arrange with their parish priest a "simple wedding", that is, a wedding ceremony without much external fanfare. A good number of Catholic couples married only civilly do that. After submitting to the parish office their civil marriage certificate and having fulfilled the other pertinent requirements, they have their consent renewed in a religious ceremony (with or without Mass)

in the presence of some witnesses or sponsors. This is for all the effects of a new wedding.

b) There would be, if ever, another possibility, namely, granting retroactive validation (*sanatio in radice*) to their marriage in accordance with cc. 1161-1165. Accordingly, the competent ecclesiastical authority would dispense them retroactively from the requirement of the canonical form, without the renewal of consent. This is done in some very special cases, when there may be scandal involved, or other proportionate reasons. Canon 1163 §1 states: "*A marriage which is invalid because of.. defect of the legal form, can be validated retroactively, provided the consent of both parties persists.*" The canon uses again the term "defect" of form, not "lack" of it, what makes us wonder to what extent this solution would be applicable here. In the best of the cases, we would have first to answer the question on *whether civil marriages can be retroactively validated or not*. This question is not easy to answer, as some authors claim, based precisely on the above quoted canon 1163. Not easy, at least as long as the Church considers the civil marriages of Catholics not just *invalid* but *inexistent*.

I believe the first of the two alternatives, namely, the arrangement of a new marriage in the Church, would be the most advisable solution to your present case.

Homilies for January 2001

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

January 1, 2001

Mary, Mother of God

(Readings: Num 6:22-27/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21)

Many times it may have happened to you that on stepping into a church to hear Mass, you come to know it's the feast of this or that saint because the priest has announced it so. I would not be surprised, therefore, if many people would not have been aware that on this first day of the year Catholics all over the world celebrate the solemn feast of Mary, Mother of God if it were not because they have stepped into the church for Mass and the priest had announced it so. The first day of the year had always been for them New Year's Day with the traditional noise-making, horn-tooting, fire-cracking, kettle-banging. This oversight can easily be excused because the solemn feast of Mary, Mother of God is relatively recent, some 25 years ago only, compared to her other feasts like Immaculate Conception, Presentation, Nativity, Assumption, Visitation, Annunciation.

Yet the belief, that Mary is the Mother of God, is as old as Christianity itself and its expression could be traced back to some passages in the New Testament like the Gospel of St. Luke, the book of Acts, the letter of Paul to the Galatians. But there was no formal, separate, exclusive feast celebrating that belief until the Second Vatican Council authorized it. What is more significant is that the Church set the celebration of this recent feast on the very first day of each year. If the Church can have her way, January 1 will be known and called not New Year's Day but the Day of Mary, Mother of God.

Now, we may ask why all this innovation, a new feast, and its scheduling on the first day of the year. I am directing this question to the older Catholics not to the younger ones who may not have been aware of the changes but have taken them as a given fact. Was it because Mother Church wanted to put an embankment, a dike against the rising flood of disrespect to and violation of motherhood, marriage, conjugal fidelity, children's rights, sacredness of the human body and other related matters? Possibly. The fact-sheet and the bill of complaints are true.

But it will be more appropriate to say that we were given this new feast so that we can have a clearer understanding and appreciation of the person of Mary, her qualities and virtues, her role and participation in God's plan of salvation for mankind. All this can be summarized in one statement: Mary is the Mother of God. What, how, why is Mary the Mother of God? To answer those questions we need to go back to the eternal counsels of the Blessed Trinity, then secret and impossible to know, but eventually made known to us through revelation in the holy bible and sacred tradition.

Accordingly, the Father had decided in his eternal love to send his Word, his Son to redeem mankind that had gone wayward. But the Son was to fulfill his task by "recapitulating" (Paul's expres-

sion), that is, by summarizing all mankind in himself. He needs, therefore, to have a human nature, a human body like us. Where will he get it? How, and who will give it to him? He could have created one right then and there when the time came. But then it would not be "recapitulating" mankind. It would be extrinsic, disconnected from mankind. So, an angel was sent from God to a virgin in the village of Nazareth, whose name is Mary. Would she want to be the Mother of God's Son? Would she consent to give him flesh from her flesh, blood from her blood, body from her body? Having been informed that the power of the Holy Spirit would overshadow and envelope her to produce the miracle of a virgin becoming a mother while remaining always a virgin, Mary gave this reply, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to his word."

And so Mary became, and is, and ever will be the Mother of God. With her motherhood went the duties and privileges of parenting and being parented by God, of educating and being educated by the Lord, of guiding and protecting her Son and being guided and protected by him, of giving and receiving companionship from him in this life's journey all the way through Calvary, the Mount of Ascension, to heaven where they are now still together, Mother and Son.

And because Jesus, to whom Mary gave his human nature, "recapitulates" all mankind in himself, thus Mary became the Mother of all men and women, especially the Christians, you and me. Her universal, spiritual motherhood has transferred to her the former duties she performed on earth for her Son, those of parenting, educating, guiding, protecting, accompanying all of them on their journey from this earth to heaven.

Significantly, the feast was set on the first day of the year, January 1, as the "recapitulation" of all the other 364 days in a bid to express that the whole year and even our whole life have

been entrusted to the protection and care of the Mother of God who is also our Mother.

Mary, Mother of God

Alternative homily

(Readings: Num 6:22-27/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21)

Today we mark the first day of another year. It used to be called by various names: Octave of Christmas, feast of the Circumcision, feast of New Year. However, it seemed none of the foregoing names satisfied the modern Catholics. So, with the reform of the Church calendar of feasts, it is called today Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

I believe there is no spectacle more grandiose and more touching than that of a mother and child seen in mutual embrace. No words will be necessary for either of the two to express the intensity of love, the ecstasy of happiness, the union of lives, going on between them as they clutch one another in tight embrace.

This is the spectacle that comes before my eyes as we celebrate the feast of divine motherhood of Mary. I cannot think of Mary without thinking also of Jesus, and I cannot think of Jesus without thinking also of Mary, his mother. By acknowledging Mary's divine motherhood, we admit perforce that God really became man, took on the condition of a slave, and for a time led a life indistinguishable from other slaves, under the discipline of guardians as Paul says in today's second reading (Gal. 4).

He says further that God submitted to this kind of demotion so that he may promote us to the status of freedmen and sons/inheritors of God in such a way that, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we may address God with the sweet name of "Father, Our Father." Luke, in today's third reading (Chap. 2), notes also this

self-humiliation of the Son of Mary by informing us that on the 8th day after birth, the child was circumcised to signify his subordination to the laws and traditions of the Hebrew race.

The Son of God, by condescending to become the son of a woman, has elevated Mary to the status of divine motherhood. One feels overwhelmed with the realization that Mary, a mere creature, could be and actually is the Mother of God. Here we have the case of a mother embracing her baby who is God, her God, and of God embracing his mother who is a mere creature. What a spectacle! It defies the imagination. What motherhood! It resists any definition.

God is wonderful in his work. Each motherhood is already a masterpiece in itself. Still God the consummate artist raises the motherhood of Mary into a super masterpiece never more to be equaled much less surpassed by any other motherhood now and forever.

We cannot expect similar care and exquisiteness from the hands of man. On the contrary, man (that includes male and female) seems bent on trivializing if not denigrating, motherhood by encouraging liaisons without commitment and contraceptive practices along with abortions. Man wants to destroy the masterpieces of God.

Why does Mother Church invite us to look at Mary right at the beginning of a new year? She wants to present Mary as the model for our conduct throughout the year. She also believes that abundant blessings will come our way from Mary's Son. If the pronouncements of blessing by the Old Testament priests are efficacious, as stated in the first reading (Numbers 6), how much greater blessings may we not expect from him who is the fruit of Mary's womb. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

Mary, Mother of God

Alternative homily

(Readings: Num 6:22-27/Gal 4:4-7/Lk 2:16-21)

There is one custom that is practical around this time of the year, which I approve, but with certain reservations. It is relatively recent for I did not know it in my childhood, and therefore is sophisticated and highbrow. Things were simpler before. But, because it is a human custom, it must be subject to critique and judicious assessment.

I am not talking about firecrackers, noise barrage, midnight revelries, party bashing, painting the town red and the like. I am referring to the custom of distributing calendars on or before New Year's Day. Calendars go in various sizes: pocket-calendars, desk-calendars, wall-calendars, and electronic-calendars. They are given away by friends, politicians, government offices, department stores, business companies and the like. They come in with different pictures depending on who the donors are and their purpose and intention in giving.

Some calendars are designed with great taste, and you feel proud to display them. Others, with poor taste or no taste at all, so you just keep them in the shelf or use them as wrappers. But most are done with sophistication. If the donor people are car dealers, expect a calendar with prominent pictures of automobiles, racecars and state-of-the-art autos. If they are people connected with tourism expect a calendar with exquisite picture of places and buildings in the country or abroad. Other donors may not have any explicit intention expect to catch your attention to their business products, and so they give calendars with photos of beautiful women in various poses and diminishing stages of attire.

Whichever kind of pictures, they have been placed on the calendars with a hidden agenda: they want to make you think on the New Year and throughout about cars, about places to visit, or just about women. As the days wear on, you do not even pay attention to the pictures anymore but to the numbers below.

Mother Church has also a calendar to give away today, New Year's Day. But it is a special and unique one because it has neither numbers nor printed photos on it. It is meant to be of service not only during the year but also for one's lifetime. It is not accompanied by any image or copy or picture, but the reality itself, of the image, copy, picture you might imagine. On this first day of the year, Mother Church invites us to fix the eyes of our mind on Mary, the Mother of God. I deliberately said "to fix" because we should never take away our gaze of faith from her. The Mother of God has her real eyes fixed on us lovingly, concernedly, and permanently from the time it was said to her: "Woman, behold your son," and then to us it was said, "Son, behold your Mother."

In the calendar of our life, let us try to catch our Blessed Mother's gaze upon us (don't we always pray, "turn then most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy upon us"?) and having caught her gaze let us not for a moment remove our eyes from her, so that as banished children of Eve to her do we unceasingly cry, and to her we continuously send up our sighs.

Mary is the Mother of God because she conceived, gave birth, nurtured, protected, educated, accompanied Jesus who possesses divine nature and is Son of God. Although most of those functions are over, Mary continues to be the Mother of God because her love for him as a mother goes on now and forever. Another mother cannot substitute for this role of Mary to love her son as a mother. A mother's love for a son is his mother's love for him and not another woman's. It simply cannot be done by another. Mary is also the Mother of all men, especially the Christians, because

we are members of the mystical body of Jesus. As such, Mary, in a spiritual way, continues to conceive, give birth, nurture, protect, educate, accompany and, above all, love each one of us coming into this world. In respect to us, Mary's motherly function of nurturing and caring is never over.

This is the reason why on this first day of the year the Church wants us to celebrate and greet Mary, Mother of God and also our Mother. Calendars are a useful tool to guide us throughout the year. But for myself, I want a calendar with a picture of Mary on it. If I don't get such, I look for one so as to be reminded I have a mother whose face I can contemplate, whose life I can imitate, whose assistance I can rely on, whose love I can always experience everytime I want to find out what day of the week and month I am on.

January 7, 2001

Epiphany Sunday After January 1

(Readings: Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12)

In some countries, children await the feast of Three Kings more eagerly than Christmas itself because they get more gifts on that day than on Christmas day. In most countries, however, Three Kings day is the anti-climax, the curtain call, the finis to the wonderful season of Christmas. The fever of excitement, the pace of activities, the pitch of expectation gradually settle down and announce the resumption of normal life and the daily grind of work and duty.

Of course, all talk about the barometer of the Christmas season, the ups and downs, the heat and the cooling, the intensification and normalization of feelings and activities, pertains to the social, external and temporary aspects of its celebration. We need to go deeper into the meaning of Christmas and the other feasts related to it. We have to listen to its religious message.

For example, what message does the feast of Three Kings convey to us? What is its religious meaning? That's about all anyway that remains to this feast nowadays. Some of us, of the older generation, can still remember when Three Kings was celebrated on the fixed day of January 6 when we had to go to Mass just as on any holy day of obligation. But its joy began even before we went to church, right there at home when on rising from sleep we scampered to the window sill to see what the Three Kings had inserted into our shoes which we left there expectantly the night before.

Today, few people would go to church on January 6 unless it coincided with a Sunday. That's why the liturgy has transferred the celebration of Three Kings to the Sunday next to New Year's Day. The beautiful custom of giving gifts to children on Three Kings has disappeared mercifully for the harried parents, especially during these times of financial difficulties. What is left of it is its religious message.

Mother Church brings together three readings that can help us grasp the religious meaning of today's feast. Of these readings, the first and the third are related to each other as prediction and fulfillment. The second reading, meanwhile, gives the theological explanation for both. Let us then ask ourselves the following questions: What was Isaiah's purpose (first reading) in predicting that Jerusalem, God's city, will experience great joy and satisfaction in beholding an endless stream of visitors coming from far places to bring to it their gifts of homage and goodwill? Why did Matthew (third reading) take care to record in his gospel the particular event of the visit of Three Wise Men to Bethlehem? Was it not to prove that what Isaiah predicted about Christ was in substance fulfilled by this visit?

Above all, what importance has this visit, predicted by Isaiah and fulfilled according to Matthew's gospel, for our lives anyway?

In his letter to the Ephesians (second reading), St. Paul clinches for us the answers to all the above questions. He gives, as I hinted earlier, the theological explanation to the feast of Three Kings. He calls it a divine secret, a hidden plan of God, the knowledge of which Paul personally considered as a grace coming his way. Actually, God's secret (whatever it was) is a grace, a gift for all men.

This secret plan of God, now revealed through Paul is that all men, irrespective of race, origin, status and culture, have equal chances and opportunities to share in God's blessings, promises, inheritance and happiness. It is one thing is to be offered equal opportunities, and another thing is to actually avail oneself, to take advantage of those opportunities. We already have the former; let us do the latter.

Epiphany

Alternative homily

(Readings: Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12)

The "popular" and the "official" names given to the feast we are celebrating today can increase our understanding of the faith and the role we, as believers, are supposed to play. First the "popular" names. They are various and originate from the perceptive interpretation of the people, hence the term "popular". Feast of the Three Kings is one, Feast of the Magi is another, Feast of the Three Wise Men is a third.

They are all acceptable titles and have foundation on the data supplied by Matthew's story in the third reading. Hence, those visitors from the East were at the same time kings, magis and wise men who, guided by a star, came to worship the baby born to be the King of the Jews. The lesson we can draw from these popular designations of the feast is that all dignities, ranks, authorities,

wisdom and knowledge must recognize and serve the one and only true King and Messiah — Jesus Christ our Lord.

The popular titles, however attractive and exciting they sound, have the inconvenience that they may carry us too far in paying more attention to the persons of the three kings rather than to the person of Jesus; for we ask what their names were, whether they rode on camels or horses, how they were dressed, which was their country, etc. Hence, an "official" title of the feast, originating from the teaching authority of the Church, is needed to create a balance.

The "official" title is Epiphany of the Lord. The word is unexciting and strange to you, but translated, it simply means Revelation of the Lord. The assumption is that the Lord or some aspect of himself is hidden, and it takes a revelation to bring into evidence and knowledge that which is hidden. The official title of today's feast, therefore, focuses our attention upon God. He is hidden or some aspect of him. Our curiosity is aroused, our attention is called. We like to know this hidden thing about God. Fortunately, there is a revelation, an epiphany that makes evident the hidden things about God.

Paul in Eph. 3 (second reading) is particularly helpful. He admits that there existed from the beginning of history, a hidden truth, a secret. It was only in Paul's time or thereabouts that this secret, this hidden truth was to be brought to light. But what overwhelmed Paul was his realization that God has chosen him to reveal and make known this secret. What was this secret?

It was God's plan of salvation, initially promised to the Hebrews but in which Gentiles would equally participate and share. Briefly, no one, whatever¹ his color or background, is excluded from God's plan to save. This truth is corroborated in the third reading by Matthew's story of the magi-kings who were non-Hebrews.

Likewise, Isaiah 60 (first reading) foresaw the epiphany or revelation of this hidden truth. He composed a splendid piece of

literature intended to be sung joyously to celebrate the changed fortune of Jerusalem. No longer the accursed city, the desolate mother, Jerusalem recovers her original glory because of the indwelling God, and a multitude of foreigners (i.e. Gentiles) streams towards her, along with her returning children (i.e. Hebrews), bringing gifts and riches to her.

Thus, biblical literature, our three readings today, affirms the universality of salvation by stating that Hebrews and Gentiles (a scriptural distinction comprising all humanity) will be reconciled and saved under the one kingship of Jesus. If that distinction doesn't please you, we have this other one (the poor and the rich) which while also comprising all of humanity today, has a basis on biblical data.

The shepherds of Bethlehem were poor people. The kings from the East were rich people. Both shepherds and kings acknowledged and worshipped the Savior Jesus. So, poor or rich, we are all included in God's plan of salvation. Our role is to share this discovered truth with our poor or rich contemporaries, just as the shepherds and kings had done in their time.

The poor will perhaps seek salvation from their poverty through programs and actions that do not take Jesus into account. The rich will perhaps feel they don't need salvation through anyone since they believe they can take care of themselves. Both attitudes are mistaken. Let us proclaim that everyone needs salvation coming from Jesus. That is what he was sent for into our world; that is why he was called by the name Jesus which means: "God saves"; that is the reason why we are celebrating the Epiphany of the Lord.

Epiphany

Alternative homily

(Readings: Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12)

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, the popular and official names given to the feast we are celebrating today, can increase our understanding of the faith and the role we are supposed to play as Christians.

What are the popular names? They are various, and they originated from the perceptive interpretation of the people. Hence, the term "popular". Some of the names are: Feast of the Three Kings, Feast of the Magi, and Feast of the three Wise Men.

They are all acceptable titles, and leave foundation on the data supplied by Matthew's story you have listened to in the third reading. Therefore, those visitors from the East are at the same time kings, Magi and Wise Men who, guided by a star, came to worship the baby born to be the King of the Jews.

The lesson we can draw from these popular designations of today's feast is that all dignities, ranks, authorities, wisdom and knowledge, in whatever place and degree we exercise them, should acknowledge and serve the only true King and Messiah, which is Jesus Christ.

The popular titles, however attractive and exciting they may sound, have the inconvenience that they may carry us too far in paying more attention to the personalities of the Three Kings rather than to the person of Jesus. We ask what their names were, whether they rode in camels or horses, how they were dressed, which was their country and so forth.

Hence, an official title of the feast, originating from the teaching authority of the Church, is needed to create a balance. And the official title is the Epiphany of the Lord.

The word is unexciting and strange to many of you, but translated, it simply means the Revelation of the Lord. The assumption is that the Lord or some aspect of Himself is hidden from us and it takes a revelation to bring to evidence that which is hidden.

So, thanks to its official title, today's feast focuses our attention upon God. He is hidden or some aspects of Him. Our curiosity is aroused. Our attention is called. Fortunately, there is a revelation, an epiphany that brings to evidence the hidden thing about God.

Mother Church facilitates the revelation by bringing to our consideration the three bible readings of today's feast. Paul, in Ephesians 3 (the 2nd reading) is particularly instructive.

He admits that there existed a secret, a hidden truth from the beginning of human history, in fact, from all eternity, and it was only in Paul's time or thereabouts that the secret, the hidden truth, was brought to light. What really overwhelmed Paul was the realization that God chose him to reveal and make known this secret.

What was this secret, this hidden truth? It was God's plan of salvation, initially promised to the Hebrew race, but which Jews and Gentiles equally are to participate and share in. In other words, no one, whatever is her color, race, status and background, is excluded from God's plan to save all human beings.

Today's three bible readings affirm the universality of salvation from God by stating that Jews and Gentiles (an old distinction that comprises all humanity) will be reconciled and saved under the one kingship of Jesus. If that distinction does not suffice we have another (the poor and the rich) which while comprising today all of humanity, has also a basis on biblical data.

The shepherds of Bethlehem were poor people. The kings from the East were rich people. Both shepherds and kings acknowledge and worshipped Jesus. So, whether poor or rich, we all are included in God's plan of salvation. Our role is to share this discovered truth with our poor and rich brethren, just as the shepherds and the Three Kings had done in their time.

But above all, we must assure ourselves that we, too, participate and share in God's salvation by surrendering, in spirit and in truth, all that we are and have, to his Son, the Messiah and the Christ. That was the very thing that the Three Wise Men did when they offered their gifts, and adored Jesus after finding him.

Epiphany

Alternative homily

(Readings: Is 60:1-6/Eph 3:2-3, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12)

If you tell your child that we are celebrating the feast of Epiphany today, he/she might give you a strange look. But if you tell him that today is feast of the Three Kings or the Magi from the East then his/her eyes will shine with glee and perhaps, also with expectation that you have not forgotten to put some gifts in their stockings or shoes, a custom that existed a generation or two ago. You and I are all familiar with the story of the Three Kings or Magi, and we love to hear it re-told at this time of the year.

There is no story of the Magi without the mention of a star, if only to say that their profession is precisely to study the stars. Star-gazing, as well as astrology and astronomy, are not hobbies or professions of modern times. They are as old as our Magi in the story, and even older. Stars have always attracted the attention and wonder of peoples, young and old, modern and ancient. When you were all children, were you not taught to learn and sing the song, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star; how I wonder what you are"?

A star is not only like a diamond in the sky, as the song beautifully says, but also like a window through which, from this vast but dark world below, we can peep into the bright, happy, eternal kingdom of God beyond.

Unfortunately, we can't reach a star to look through it into the enchanted kingdom hidden beyond. Should we then give up? Would there be another way open to us? Could it be by hitching our wagon to a star, as one favorite expression goes. But it has to be a special star if one desires to get far. In the inspired book of Numbers 24:17, it was predicted, "A star will come out of Jacob." Then in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, it is written, "I, Jesus, ... am the Root and the Offspring of David, and (I am) the bright morning star." In that Twinkle, Twinkle song you have asked, "Little star, how I wonder what you are." The books of Numbers and Revelation have given you the reply; Jesus, the Messiah, is the star that came out of Jacob, the bright morning star descended from King David.

We now have the necessary backgrounder to talk more seriously and theologically about the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. Let us accept the name, although it sounds intimidating coming from Greek for it explains why only Matthew recorded in his gospel the story of the Magi or Kings from the East. They studied the vast heavens for signs and meanings. On discovering a special star, they knew it signified and meant for them the birth of a new King of the Jews who will offer both Jews and Gentiles eternal salvation. It was, therefore, through a star that God manifested himself to the Gentiles. Such manifestation through meaningful signs is called epiphany.

In one of his letters, John says God will manifest himself to us when we see him face to face. That will be the clearest and greatest manifestation or epiphany of himself. But that is reserved for the next life, not for this life. No one can see God and continue

to live on this earth. Still, God can manifest himself otherwise by means of signs such as through this created universe, through his powerful works of miracles, through the sacraments especially the Eucharist but above all in the person of Jesus Christ who is the image of the invisible God, the very imprint of divinity (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

So it was that through a star, through this created jewel, a diamond placed in the sky, God manifested himself to the Magi. It kept on guid'ng them until they finally reached Bethlehem, and there they saw the infant Jesus, the living star, that bright Morning Star that came out from Jacob and Offspring of David. It was the greatest Manifestation or Epiphany of God possible for them and for us mortals walking on earth. It is an initial reward that is offered to each and all those who study and look for signs of God's epiphanies, as the Magi had been doing, and to those who keep those signs in their hearts to ponder over them, like Mary and Joseph did. The definitive reward will be given them in the next life when we will see God face to face in his clearest manifestation.

Isaiah, in today's first reading, keeps alive in our hearts the desire to see God with words like these, "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you... Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow."

January 14, 2001	
Sunday After Epiphany	Cycle C
Baptism of the Lord	
(Readings Is 42: 1-4, 6-7/Acts 10:34-38/Lk 3: 15-16, 21-22)	

Nothing seems to be the most logical thing in the world than what we are celebrating now, and that is the baptism of the Lord after we have celebrated his birth last Christmas. That is what we

do in the case of our children. After they have been born we prepare them for baptism. And apparently we seem to be more eager for our children to receive the sacrament of baptism as early as possible than they to have it for we do not wait for them to grow up as adults to be given baptism.

That was, in fact, an ancient practice in the church. It was changed so that the present general custom is infant baptism, for practical and validly theological reasons. In itself, receiving baptism is a fundamental act on the part of the human being that devotes him/her to serious and permanent commitments even as it elevates his/her status into the divine sphere.

Obviously, an infant cannot make serious and permanent commitments; the parents and the godparents make them, on behalf of the baptized infants in the supposition that the baby will not object if it had full knowledge of what baptism is all about. It is also the supposition that the parents and godparents will religiously comply with their duty to educate, train, guide and encourage the child during its growth period so that in becoming a young adult he/she will live up voluntarily and cheerfully to the baptismal commitments. These are the promises to reject sin, Satan and all his works, and to live a perfect life because God our Father is perfect; to abide in holiness because He is holy.

Unfortunately, not all parents and godparents manage to perform their duty of nurturing and educating the Christian life in their children, although this was expected of them when they presented their infants for baptism. It will be fortunate if the infants themselves, when they grow up, come to discover the riches that the sacrament of baptism had deposited in their souls; unless Satan, through his poms and works succeeded to rob them of these riches first.

Hence, on instituting for today the feast of the Lord's baptism a few Sundays away from the feast of the Lord's birth, holy Mother

Church has in mind, not only to celebrate the mystery of his baptism but also to teach more truths about our own baptism. This is all the more necessary because, although baptisms are frequent occurrences in our Christian communities, many misunderstandings have cropped up about the sacrament. They are, for example, the hardly justifiable delay in presenting the infants for baptism; the uncritical selection of godparents using more as basis of their money and influence than of their faith and exemplary lives; the imposition of strange names for the children, which are hard to pronounce and harder to spell.

All three readings of today's mass are worth listening to in order to understand the value of baptism. Isaiah (first reading), Peter in Acts (second reading), and Luke (third reading) are unanimous in reporting that the Holy Spirit dominated the event of the baptism of Jesus and, for that matter, also the baptisms of all Christians. A baptized Christian is one whom the Holy Spirit claims as His own, to be his strong and efficient instrument for bringing justice, knowledge, hope and courage to the world.

Also, all three readings are unanimous in witnessing to God's immense pleasure and goodwill over whomever baptism has been conferred. In the baptism of Jesus, God the Father showed His extreme pleasure when He was overheard to exclaim, "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rest." Every baptized Christian also enjoys the pleasure and goodwill of God the Father. For as Paul said, we who have been baptized have put on Christ, have been clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27) so that we resemble him and, as it were, we move the Father to exclaim, "You are my beloved children; on you my favor rests." In witness of this, St. John writes in his letter, "See how much the Father loves us! His love is so great that we are called God's children, and we are so, in fact (1 John 3:1).

January 21, 2001

Sto. Nino

Cycle **C**

Sunday After Baptism

(Readings: Is 9:1-6/Eph 1:3-6, 15- 18/Lk 2:41-52)

Christmas has been for most such a beautiful and joyous experience that the question asked, especially by children, "Why can we not have a Christmas that lasts forever?" Actually, this is not wishful thinking for a believer. The Baby Jesus has not disappeared from our lives. As a matter of fact, with today's feast of the Sto. Nino, we are privileged to touch with our faith a growing-up person — the Boy Jesus.

The setting may not be the nostalgic town of Bethlehem but the more prosaic village of Nazareth. Just the same, it is the very Jesus whom we saw as a baby on Christmas day, and now we see as the boy twelve years later. It may not be a Christmas forever but it is Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. If we pursue this line of thought, we can say that the teen-age years of Jesus, the period of his young adulthood and the final stage of his maturity are all accessible for observation through the eyes of our faith.

Again, this would not be wishful thinking nor a flight of fancy because we have ample data furnished by the bible to feed our faith with the solid food of eternal truths. Christmas is not gone although Jesus was born in point of time that is past. His boyhood, his teen-age years, his young adulthood, his maturity age is not gone although these stages of his life all happened in the past. Nor are gone the important events in Jesus' life such as the finding in the temple, his long and hidden stay in Nazareth spent in quiet work and under the rule of parental authority, his preaching in Galilee and Judea, his passion and death and resurrection in Jerusalem although all these took place in the past.

Why are they not one with time? Because their memories endure, their impact is ever recurring, their results continue forever. And the reason is because Jesus Christ, the subject and object of all these past events remains the same yesterday, now and forever, as St. Paul would say. You can see from this that our faith has a mysterious hold on the slippery hands of time, making the past, present and future somehow a living and current reality so that we can, so to speak, touch, taste, see and enjoy them. This is what the third reading says of Mary who watched and saw the happenings around her Son and thought about them all in her heart.

We celebrate over and over again Christmas, Epiphany, Childhood, Hidden Life, Passion, Death and Resurrection so that the conviction about Jesus being a true man may sink deeper into our consciousness. Jesus is completely like us, except sin, and we can touch, see and listen to Him, converse with Him in faith. With this conviction that he really is a true man, of real flesh and blood, and not an indefinable or formless substance in the air, we are led unmistakably to the God we cannot see or touch or hear.

For this is how God wanted to be seen, listened to and talked with — through the humanity of Jesus. There is no other way we can get to God except through Jesus. God is in Jesus talking to us and we to him. God is in Jesus listening to us and we to him. God is in Jesus touching us and we him. For God is Jesus and Jesus is God.

But let us go back to the childhood days of Jesus, which is what today's feast is all about — feast of the Santo Nino, feast of the saintly boy. The prophet Isaiah (chapter 9, first reading) could discern in the Child Jesus the dawning of a brilliant light for peoples living in the darkness of sin and the shadow of death. That remarkable Boy would bring joy and freedom to nations carrying the burden of oppression and the yoke of slavery of any kind.

Paul in Eph. 1 (second reading) exhorts his Christian communities to render continuous thanksgiving to God for granting us EVERY spiritual blessing there is to give from heaven above through our union with Christ his Son. One instance of that union is the human nature we share in common with Jesus. And Luke in chapter 2 of his gospel (third reading) has traced the program of life that we should all follow, whether old or young, adult or child — a life of dutiful obedience to God and superiors, of honest work, of graceful converse with fellowmen, of growth in wisdom, of selfless and unyielding loyalty to God and his concerns to the point of sacrificing even the most legitimate ties of friendship and family. In Luke's childhood story of Jesus, the Boy Jesus showed a maturity that astonished even his parents. How many of us, even in our mature age, still retain marks of childishness in not wanting to follow a life of Christian discipline and magnanimity.

January 28, 2001

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle C

(Readings: Jer 1:4-5, 17-19/1Cor 12:31- 13:13/Lk 4:21-30)

Between the stories of Jeremiah and of Jesus, narrated in today's bible readings, we find this common denominator: both were prophets of no mean caliber and reputation, and both were rejected, nonetheless, by their respective contemporaries. It appears from this that prophethood is a risky and perilous career, an occupation that one takes if one has a stout heart and steely nerves.

Hence, with respect to Jeremiah, we read that God tells him not to be afraid to say everything he was commanded to speak, for the Lord will mark him like a fortified city, an iron pillar, a bronze wall to repel all attacks, persecutions, and insults. And with respect to Jesus, we read that his crazed townmates dragged him off to the edge of a very high cliff intending to cast him down from there, but Jesus just slipped from their hands and walked away through the middle, unperturbed and unfazed.

Truly, Jeremiah and Jesus deserve our admiration for their courage. And why not say also our compassion for their maltreatment by those ingrates? It is easy to feel compassion for others when we ourselves are spared of their predicament. But what if we find ourselves on the same boat that is being swamped by big waves and battered by strong winds? Then we will have no use for compassion but we will need courage.

Perhaps you are not well aware of this. We Christians are, by vocation and occupation all prophets of God. Hence, we are tributaries also of the consolations and trials, of the joys and sorrows, of the pleasures and pains of the great prophets Jeremiah and Jesus.

This was what Pope John Paul II told to the four million Catholics gathered in Luneta in January 1995, and through them the rest of the 51 million Catholics of the Philippines and the one billion Catholics in the world today. As the Father has sent Jesus, the Pope said, so is Jesus sending us all to speak God's Word to all mankind. As the Father constituted Jesus his apostle and prophet, so has Jesus constituted us his apostles and prophets. Hence, the Pope concluded: "Be not afraid. Fear not to speak, go tell the Good News of God's love for mankind."

When God revealed to Jeremiah his plan to make him a prophet, the latter begged off with this excuse, "Look, God. I don't know how to speak. I am only a child." Do you feel like excusing yourself also? Do you fear to speak for God? Why are you afraid?

Language is not only of the mouth and the tongue. There is such a thing as body language, isn't there? You need not speak with your mouth, if that is the reason for your fear. You can speak with your example. Perhaps that is the trouble of our times. We talk too much. What we need is action, good example. Unfortunately, there is not too much of this.

Most of us care about our neighbors, our families, our communities, and our society. We are truly concerned about the growing immorality, the break-up of families, the disloyalty in marriage, the incidence of crime, the dishonesty in government, the indifference to religion, the filth in media, the deterioration of environment. But we are held back from protesting. We are afraid to speak out. Why is this so?

There are several reasons. First, we think it is useless for us to go against the current. Problems are so big that our small, individual efforts amount to nothing. Secondly, we think we are too busy and have little time to do something about the problems. Thirdly, we have deluded ourselves into thinking that somebody else could do it better than we. So why bother? Another reason is that we are too scared to speak in public. We are intimidated at the thought of having to get up and express our opinion before the staring eyes and inquisitive ears. We worry about the impression we will make.

To overcome fear, let us just speak from the heart. When you are excited or thrilled about something you want to tell the people, you are able to forget your fears and share your ideas. You are able to overcome your pessimism and do something constructive. The advice of Paul concerning love is relevant on this matter. He says, "Love is kind and patient. Love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope and patience never fail."

St. Thomas Aquinas

January 28

(Readings: Sir 39: 6-11/Eph 3: 8-12/Mt 5: 13-16)

Surely you recall the story of the young, rich man who ran up to Jesus and knelt before him asking how he could gain eternal life? He had been observing God's commandments from his youth,

but wanted to know if there was something more he must do to merit the eternal joys of heaven. Then Jesus, who said he was the way, the truth and the life, replied lovingly to the young lad, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (Mk 10: 21)

I am reminded of this story because St. Thomas Aquinas, whose feast we are celebrating today, was very much like that young man — up to a certain point. Nay, he improved on whatever achievements the young man had done. When the choice to sell everything and follow Christ had to be made, it was then that both persons parted ways.

St. Thomas began his training to obey God, worship and love him since he was five years old, for his mother took him to the Benedictine monastery of Montecassino as an oblate or offering to God much as Hannah of the Old Testament took her young boy Samuel to the temple to serve God. Thomas came from a very rich family, born in a castle befitting the nobility in those times. At the age of 14, he started his university studies in Naples where he came to know the Dominicans who were, at that time, getting famous for their learning and sanctity.

At the age of 19, he made the crucial decision of leaving everything behind and donned the Dominican habit. His mother and the family were infuriated by this step, not because Thomas became a religious (remember that he was given to the Benedictines), but because he chose a mendicant order where they had to beg for food as a matter of sacrifice. He followed Christ to the letter who "became poor although he was rich" (2 Cor 8: 9).

His imposing stature, massive built and fresh complexion commanded attention. But his humility, non-confrontational attitude, and silence at scholarly disputations earned from his classmates the nickname of "the dumb Sicilian ox". St. Albert the Great,

Thomas' mentor and friend, knowing there was genius hidden in that bulky figure, was reported to have predicted in defense of his favorite student, "The bellowings of the ox will soon be heard all around the world."

Thus it came to be. Thomas' bellowings filled the whole world, calling the attention of thinkers, past and present, to the harmony which exists between faith and reason inasmuch as both the light of faith and the light of reason come from God. Therefore, there can be no contradiction between them. For St. Thomas, faith has no fear of reason, but seeks it out to show that there is reasonableness in the truths of faith. Similarly, reason has no fear of faith because it is neither annulled nor debased in assenting to the contents of faith.

Aside from being a pioneer, a trail-blazer of the new path of philosophy and universal culture, St. Thomas perceived with great insight the role of the Holy Spirit in the process by which knowledge matures into wisdom. He distinguished wisdom that is acquired through study of which he was a phenomenal example, and wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Spirit of which he was immensely endowed. St. Thomas was impartial in his love of truth; he sought it from whatever source it came and demonstrated its universality, its objectivity and its transcendence. Thus, he produced not merely a philosophy of "what seems to be" but a philosophy of "what is". (John Paul II, Faith and Reason)

Using the words of the Old Testament wisdom-writer Sirach, we can say of St. Thomas that it pleased the Lord Almighty to fill him with the spirit of understanding, to pour forth words of wisdom on him, to direct his knowledge and his counsel. Many will praise his understanding; his fame can never be effaced; unfading will be his memory, through all generations his name will live. St. Thomas fulfilled perfectly also the injunction of the Lord we heard in today's gospel, "You are the salt of the earth... you

are the light of the world. Let your light shine before men so that they may see goodness in your act and give praise to your heavenly Father."

Because of his passion for truth, his belief in the harmony between faith and reason, St. Thomas was declared by Pope Leo XIII patron of all Catholic universities, colleges and schools; was proposed as master and model for Catholic theologians by Pope Paul VI; and was called "Apostle of Truth" by John Paul II. He can as well be tutor and exemplar for Filipinos in their habits of thinking and intellectual attitudes, especially that it has been found out (courtesy of Pulse Asia) that the majority of them are greatly influenced by the paranormal, the unearthly, the superhuman and ghastly than the serious and scientific modes of thinking. St. Thomas embraced both faith and science as sources of truth. He effected a reconciliation between the secularity of the world and the radicality of the Gospel.

INDEX OF BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

January-December 2000

Volume LXXVI, Nos. 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821

I. Authors

APPENDIX

Programme (Inter-Religious Dialogue) . . . 157

BALTAZAR, MARIO (O.P.)

Homilies for January 2001 771

BALUMA, ARTEMIO

Division of a Diocese and Patrimonial Goods . 163

BRANSOM, CHARLES JR.

Philippine Episcopology — Addenda-Corrigenda, 1999 . 398

CAJILIG, VICENTE (O.P.)

1672-2000: Years between Martyrdom and Beatification
of Bisayo Martyr 216

Mary o f the Bicolandia 540

On-going Formation of the Clergy 420

Parameters of Movements around the Church of Asia
for the Third Millennium 2

Rallies for Peace 652

The Ministry of Preaching for the Third Millennium. 309

CAJOT, RODEL

The Diamond Jubilee of Our Lady of Penafrancia . . 540

CBCP

Building a Culture of Peace by Respecting Life and Human Rights.561
Pastoral Statement on the Defense of Life and Family 569
Pastoral Exhortation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines for the Great Jubilee Year 2000	338

CHURCHES FOR THE GREAT JUBILEE YEAR

List of Proclaimed Jubilee Churches/Shrines 299
---	-------

COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION BUREAU — CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF DELHI

Press Statement: Pope Blesses India in Papal High Mass159
--	------

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND DISCIPLINES OF THE SACRAMENTS

New General Instruction Issued for Missal 735
---	-------

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium 423
---	-------

D' SOUZA HENRY

Concluding Address at the 7th Plenary Assembly of FABC.	360
---	-----

DARMAATMADJA, JULIUS (Card.)

A New Way of Being Church in Asia149
---	------

DELEGATES

Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries 262
---	-------

FABC	
A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service	240
GONZALEZ, JAVIER (O.P.)	
A Validation of Civil Marriage	766
Marriage Between Cousins	274
On Interstices	403
On The Lectorate Ministry	401
Presumed Death of Spouse	512
HOLY YEAR CALENDAR 2000	288
INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION	
Memory and Reconciliation:	
The Church and the Faults of the Past	678
JOHN PAUL II	
Beatification of the 44 Servants of God	499
Ecclesia in Asia	5
Homily.	115
Incarnationis Mysterium	311
Jubilee of Consecrated Life	760
Letter to Priests	542
Meeting with Representatives of Other Religious and Other Christian Confessions	121
Signing and Publication of Ecclesia in Asia	110
KROEGER, JAMES (M.M.)	
Challenging Asian Mission Statistics.	218
LEGASPI, LEONARDO (D.D.)	
Capital Punishment from a Jubilee Year Perspective	223

LUBICH, CHIARA	
The Spirituality for Common Living.	. 368
MARAMBA, BENILDUS (O.S.B.)	
Anticipated Mass to Fulfill Sunday Obligation	. 614
MCVEY, CHRIS (O.P.)	
The Mission of the Order of Preachers Today	. 379
MIJARES, EMMANUEL	
The Co-Essentiality between the Institutional and Charismatic Dimension of the Church	. 477
QUEVEDO, ORLANDO (D.D., O.M.I.)	
NDEA Schools and the Third Millennium	. 489
The Challenges of a Pastoral Approach to the Environment	. 576
A Renewed Church in Asia: Vision and Challenge.	350
RIVERA, EFREN (O.P.)	
Ecclesia in Asia in Homiletic and Bibliarasal for March-April 2000.	. 167
Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for May-June 2000	. 276
Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for July-August 2000	. 404
Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for November-December 2000	. 621
Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for September-October 2000	. 515
SAMAHA, JOHN (S.M.)	
The Priestly Function of Mary's Mission	. 599

SHAN, PAUL (Card.)	
Presentation of Ecclesia in Asia	. 125

SIN, JAIME (Card.)	
Ang Pagtatalaga ng Bayang Filipino sa	
Kalinis-linisang Puso ni Maria	. 653
Circular: Blessed Pedro Calungsod,	
Catechist and Martyr	. 505
Homily on the Ecumenical Service for the	
Jubilee o f Ecumenism	. 509
Homily on the Occasion of the Thanksgiving Mass	
for the Beatification of Pedro Calungsod	. 335
On the Phenomenon of Pregnant Brides	. 589
Pastoral Message on the Commercial Sexual	
Exploitation o f Children	. 586

TAURAN, JEAN-LOUIS	
The Defense of Life in the Context of	
International Policies and Norms	. 657

II. Sections and Topics

CASES & INQUIRIES	
A Validation of Civil Marriage	. 766
Division of a Diocese and Patrimonial Goods	. 163
Marriage Between Cousins	. 274
On Interstices	. 403
On The Lectorate Ministry	. 401
Presumed Death of Spouse	. 512

CHURCHES FOR THE GREAT JUBILEE YEAR	. 299
-------------------------------------	-------

DOCUMENTATION	
New General Instruction Issued for Missal	. 735

DOCUMENTATION [Continuation]

Jubilee o f Consecrated Life	760
Letter t o Priests	542
The Diamond Jubilee of Our Lady of Penafrancia .	554
Beatification of the 44 Servants of God .	499
Circular: Blessed Pedro Calungsod, Catechist and Martyr	505
Homily on the Ecumenical Service for the Jubilee o f Ecumenism	509
The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. .	356
Concluding Address at the 7th Plenary Assembly of FABC.	360
The Spirituality for Common Living. .	368
The Mission of the Order of Preachers Today .	379

EDITORIAL

1672-2000: Years between Martyrdom and Beatification of Bisayo Martyr	216
Mary o f the Bicolandia	540
On-going Formation of the Clergy	420
Parameters of Movements around the Church of Asia for the Third Millennium .	2
Rallies for Peace	652
The Ministry of Preaching for the Third Millennium	309

ENCYCLICAL

Incarnationis Mysteriorum	311
-------------------------------------	-----

HOMILIES

Advevnt I (C).	631
Advent II (C).	635
Advent IV (C)	641

Baptism of the Lord	787
Christmas	645
Easter II (B)	209
Easter III (B)	276
Easter IV (B)	278
Easter V (B)	279
Easter VI (B)	280
Easter .	203
Epiphany	778
Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas.	794
Feast of Sto. Nino	790
Feast of the Holy Family	648
Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord	412
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time .	407
Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	406
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)	792
Jubilee of Missionaries — World Mission Sunday (Twenty Ninth in Ordinary Time)	533
Jubilee of Public Servants and Professionals (Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time)	621
Jubilee of Schools, Colleges and Universities	517
Jubilee of Sports People/Jubilee of Prisoners — Prison Awareness Sunday (Thirtieth Sunday i n Ordinary Time)	535
Jubilee of the Agricultural Word/Jubilee of the Military and the Police (Thirty Third Sunday i n Ordinary Time-B)	627
Jubilee of the World of Entertainment (Advent III-C).	. 638
Lent I (B) .	. 172
Lent II (B) .	. 179
Lent III (B) .	. 184
Lent IV (B) .	. 190
Lent V (B)	. 196

Mary Mother of God (New Year's Day)	. 771
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	. 414
Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 167
Palm Sunday (B)	. 201
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	. 410
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	. 409
Solemnity of Christ the King (B)	. 630
Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ	. 286
Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension (B)	. 282
Solemnity of the Most Blessed Trinity	. 285
Solemnity of the Pentecost	. 283
Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time	. 404
Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 624
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time	. 415
Twenty Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 530
Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 522
Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 417
Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 519
Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 515
Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 526
Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)	. 524

HOLY YEAR CALENDAR 2000	288
-------------------------	-----

PASTORAL WORDS

A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service	. 240
A Renewed Church in Asia: Vision and Challenge	. 350
Ang Pagtatalaga ng Bayang Filipino sa Kalinis-linisang Puso ni Maria	. 653
Building a Culture of Peace by Respecting Human Life and Human Rights	. 561
Capital Punishment from a Jubilee Year Perspective	. 223

PASTORAL WORDS [Continuation]	
Challenging Asian Mission Statistics.	218
Homily on the Occasion of the Thanksgiving Mass for the Beatification of Pedro Calungsod	335
Memory and Reconciliation:	
The Church and the Faults of the Past	678
NDEA Schools and the Third Millennium .	489
On the Phenomenon of Pregnant Brides	589
Pastoral Exhortation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines for the Great Jubilee Year 2000	338
Pastoral Message on the Commercial Exploitation of Children	586
Pastoral Statement on the Defense of Life and Family	569
Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries .	262
The Challenges of a Pastoral Approach t o the Environment	576
The Co-Essentiality between the Institutional and Charismatic Dimension of the Church	477
The Defense of Life in the Context of International Policies and Norms .	657
The Priestly Function of Mary's Mission	599
To Proclaim the Year of the Lord's Favor	344

POPE IN ASIA

Ecclesia in Asia5
Signing and Publication of Ecclesia in Asia .	110
Homily.	115
Meeting with Representatives of other Religious and Other Christian Confessions	121
Presentation of Ecclesia in Asia	125

POPE IN ASIA [Continuation]

A New Way of Being Church In Asia	.125
Programme (Inter-Religious Dialogue)	.157
Press Statement: Pope Blesses India in Papal High Mass	.159

VATICAN DOCUMENTS

The Priest and The Third Christian Millennium	. 423
---	-------

WORDS FROM THE PAST

Philippine Episcopology —	
Addenda-Corrigenda 1999	. 398

Trie Xibte Song

*It's a time of joy, a time of peace
A time when hearts are then set free
A time to heal the wounds of division.*

*It's a time of grace, a time of hope
A time of sharing the gifts we have
A time to build the world that is one-
It's the time to give thanks
To the father, son and spirit.
And with Mary, our Mother
We sing this song:*

*Open your hearts to the Lord
And begin to see the mystery
That we are all together
As one family - no more walls,
No more chains, no more selfishness
And closed doors-
For we are in the fullness
of God's time-
It's the time of the Great Jubilee.*

*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.*

*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.*