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THE PRIEST AND THE THIRD
CHRISTIAN MILLENNIUM
Congregation for the Clergy

MESSAGE FOR THE 34TH WORLD
COMMUNICATION DAY
John Paul II

WHAT THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
CAN DO FOR BISHOPS
Most Rev. Leonardo Legaspi, DD

MESSAGE OF THE NATIONAL PASTORAL
CONSULTATION ON CHURCH RENEWAL
NPCCR Delegates

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

EDITOR	FR. VICENTE CAJILIG, O.P.
ASSOCIATE EDITOR	FR. HONORATO CASTIGADOR, O.P.
EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS	FR. FAUSTO GOMEZ, O.P. FR. JOSE MA. (INOKO, O.P.
BUSINESS MANAGER	FR. ROBERTO PINTO, O.P.
PUBLICATION ASSISTANTS	ANGELITA R. GUINTO ARNOLD S. MANALASTAS

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Renewal: As Gift of God and Response of Community

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Over 300 delegates of cardinals, bishops, priests, religious, lay men & women gathered together from January 22-27, 2001 to discuss the situation of the Church in the past 10 years. Dating back to the holding of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, the gathering was serious and convivial.

The delegates brought with them the reports of the different ecclesiastical territories. A summary of advantages and obstacles obtaining in the different local churches read from some 80 reports where exposed in the assembly hall and deepened in details during the small group encounters. The small groupings were organized more or less according to regions. Some invited experts accompanied the groups through their respective ways.

It should be noted that the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR) took place just after the People Power II. In fact the opening mass was held in the cathedral to thank the Lord for the bloodless Edsa Power II as well as to ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit so that the organizers and participants would have the consultation endeavors according to divine will and providence.

A message came out with the title *"Behold I make things new."* The message which discusses the contemporary context of the Church leads to the identification of some pastoral priorities namely: *Integral Faith Formation, Empowerment of the Laity towards social transformation, Active presence and participation of the poor in the Church, The family as focal point of evangelization, Building and strengthening of participatory communities that make up the parish as a community of communities, Integral renewal of the clergy, Journeying with the Youth, Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, Animation and Formation for Mission "ad gentes"*.

In the abovementioned enumerated priorities, the one of *building and strengthening of participatory communities that make up the parish as a community of communities* appears to be the core element, because the Church in the Philippines can only move if every sector will be in the parish level in the basic communities will be planning its role in promoting energizing activities for faith life.

The prophetic element is the reference to the priority on ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. This task is rooted in the canonical mission received from Christ. It states:

We shall undertake our renewal efforts in fidelity to Jesus' will for unity among believers. Rooted in Christ, we shall strive to eradicate prejudices and to grow in deeper understanding and appreciation of other ecclesial communities and religious traditions, especially the followers of Islam. We shall engage in a dialogue of life, faith, prayer and national unity, we shall encourage among all sectors of society.

Following the Apostolic Exhortation *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the Church once again dare to follow the word of the Master, "Put out into the, deep water and let down your nets for a catch... Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." (Luke 5:2-11)

The delegates moved by the Spirit accepted the understanding of renewal as a gift of God. But more than a gift it is the response of the community, that is, the commitment that each diocese, parish, school, organization, basic ecclesial community, family, and person would be willing to contribute its share in the building of the local churches.

Message of the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal

NPCCR DELEGATES

BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

(Rev. 21:5)

1. In 1991 the Church in the Philippines sought to receive God's gift of renewal in the event of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. The Council confronted the shadows of Philippine society, as well as the failures and sins of the Church. Hearing God's call in these realities, it boldly challenged the Church in the Philippines to be a *Community of Disciples, a Church of the Poor*, committed to the mission of *renewed integral evangelization*, toward the building up of a new *civilization of life and love* in this land. Ten years later, from January 22 to 27, we, representatives of the vicariates, prelatures, dioceses and archdioceses of the Philippines gathered at the San Carlos Pastoral Formation Complex, Makati City for the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR).^{*} We reflected on how far we as a Church have fulfilled the grand vision and mission

^{*} The breakdown of delegates to the NPCCR: Lay Faithful, 89; Religious Sisters, 19; Priests, 176; Bishops, 85; a total of 369 delegates.

proposed by PCP II and the National Pastoral Plan. We looked at the past, we confronted the present, we discerned where the Spirit is leading us on this pilgrimage of renewal. Through this message, we want to share with you, sisters and brothers in the faith, the important concerns raised in the consultation.

Renewal as God's Gift and Our Response

2. "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5). Renewal is God's dream and desire. It is God's ongoing work in the world. Already, God has made all things new in Jesus Christ. In his ministry, Jesus brought a new way of relating with God, a new way of being community, and a new way of being human. In his death and resurrection, Jesus is the beginning of the new creation, conquering sin and death by love. God's renewing Spirit moves through this suffering world, offering the gift of newness to all (cf. Rom 8). The same Creator Spirit animates a new family of God to be the sign and servant of the renewal of all things in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:10).

3. A decade after PCP II, we have come to recognize more clearly that the great challenges of PCP II — *Community of Disciples, Church of the Poor, Renewed Integral Evangelization* — were not obligations or projects we imposed on ourselves. Rather, they are a gift of newness and fullness of life offered to our Church and our people by the God of love. But we have to see more clearly too that the gift of renewal calls for a courageous response of faith and conversion (cf. Mk 1:15). The gift must be boldly received by men and women—at the cost of letting go of old ways, of dying to old selves, of daring to risk new and unfamiliar paths and patterns (cf. Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:22-24; Rom 6:4-6).

A Faith Reading of the Changing Context

4. Following the pattern of PCP II, we sought to discern God's call to renewal within our changing historical and ecclesial context

of PCP II pointed to the strengths and gifts of the Filipino people. It also indicated the ills of the nation stemming from tragically unbalanced economic and political structures and ambivalent cultural traits. Unfortunately much of what was said then is still true today. New causes and factors have spawned new forms of the old ills. The global economy, in tandem with superb new technologies and means of social communications, has produced a global culture that has been radically changing the culture of Filipinos, especially of the young, even in rural areas. Individualism, materialism, a "feel good" morality are eroding civic and religious values. Respect for tradition, committed relationships and self-sacrificing love are often sacrificed on the altar of pragmatism. New forms of oppression of the poor are appearing, systematically blinding and enslaving their minds and hearts. Corruption in government has reached scandalous proportions, as demonstrated by the scandal of a presidential impeachment trial.

5. The Church in the Philippines has, to our shame, also remained unchanged in some respects. Due to weakness in formation and education, the lack of defined diocesan pastoral directions and programs, and deficiencies in structures, many prescriptions of PCP II have not been implemented. But beyond these factors, we see that failures in renewal have come from a deeper source: our hardness of heart and resistance to conversion. We confess that among those who make up the Church, even among some in positions of leadership and responsibility, the new attitudes, options, and lifestyles demanded by a Church that is Community of Disciples and Church of the Poor have all too often been honored in words but rejected in life. Moreover, largely due to inaction, uncritical acceptance of values and patterns of behavior of the dominant society, lack of consistent witnessing, we, as Church have to confess some responsibility for many of the continuing ills of Philippine society.

6. We rejoice, however, in the perseverance and increase of many movements of renewal in Philippine society that have promoted the causes of women, the youth, farmers, laborers, fisher folk, the urban poor, overseas workers, families, tribal communities and the environment. We rejoice, too, that in the Church many committed lay people, religious women and men, priests, bishops, Catholic communities and institutions have sustained efforts to effect renewal through faith formation, the building of Basic Ecclesial Communities, livelihood and political education programs, and election monitoring, to name a few. Furthermore, the just concluded Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 and the three years of intensive preparation before filled our local churches with the blessings of purification of memory, active love of the poor and the earth, renewed awareness of and commitment to mission, and deepened hope. Still more recently, in the dramatic events of People Power II, we witnessed and experienced the gift of national and moral renewal which God empowered the Filipinos to receive.

Some Pastoral Priorities

7. Reflecting on our contemporary context, we experienced the presence and action of God who has remained faithful to us in spite of our infidelities. We praise God's goodness, we beg for forgiveness, we hear anew God's call to renewal. We experienced God leading us toward a more participatory Church, a Church more authentically of the Poor, and a truly missionary Church helping form a more just society. For this reason we shall focus on nine pastoral priorities. Each of these priorities calls for a radical conversion of mind and heart. Their realization demands deep prayer and union with Christ, especially in the Eucharist.

- A. *Integral Faith Formation.* We affirm that at the heart of pastoral renewal is a faith formation, rooted in prayer and the Eucharist, that enables us to live more faithfully our vocation and mission as a community of Christ's disciples.

In our context, our faith has to be a faith that does justice, a faith that liberates, a faith that is joyfully celebrated and effectively shared even in moments of difficulties, pressures and trying circumstances. Ours has to be a discerning faith that helps us see the dynamic action of God in our personal lives, in our communities, in the world. The Catechism for Filipino Catholics shall surely help us in realizing this priority.

- B. *Empowerment of the Laity towards social transformation.*
We shall support and strengthen the exercise of the gifts and charisms of lay people for the fulfillment of their role as co-responsible agents of renewal of society. They must be empowered to engage in greater dialogue and discernment with the clergy and religious concerning social, economic, political, and cultural issues, in order to take the leading role in the transformation of society. We shall promote an ever active role of women in the Church and in society, while keeping ourselves open to exploring possible new roles. We shall consult a wide range of women's experience in different life situations and learn from them new approaches to dialogue cooperation.
- C. *Active presence and participation of the poor in the Church.*
In order to make authentic our commitment to becoming a Church of the Poor, we must be evangelically poor. Therefore, we shall seek to liberate ourselves from mentalities, values, behaviors and lifestyles that discriminate against the materially poor. We shall listen to them and with them create conditions in which they are heard and can enjoy the blessings of God's creation. As poor, among the poor, with the poor, we shall understand, live, celebrate and share our common faith in Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

- D. *The family as focal point of evangelization.* Since the family is the basic cell of the Church and Society, the Gospel has first to be shared in the family. We affirm that in the family integral faith formation of children, youth and parents must take place. We also recognize that the family is the origin of many cultural distortions that lie at the root of our problems as a people. We shall therefore commit ourselves to a more intensive evangelization of the family, so that the family might become not just object, but agent of proclaiming the Gospel.
- E. *Building and strengthening of participatory communities that make up the parish as a community of communities.* We shall support the growth and strengthening of Basic Ecclesial Communities and other forms of faith-communities, such as lay associations and movements, as vehicles of renewal. We shall strive to integrate our communities into parish life and activities, and seek to develop structures of coordination and participatory decision-making.
- F. *Integral renewal of the clergy.* We recognize that some of the clergy, by contrary lifestyles, have failed to promote the formation of a Community of Disciples that is a Church of the Poor. We shall therefore ensure deeper dialogue of life between the clergy and the poor, so that clerical lifestyle may truly witness to poverty after the manner of the poor Christ. We shall seek creative ways of ongoing clergy formation in the areas of human development and spirituality, Scripture, theology, pastoral care and mission towards the formation of true servant-leaders in the spirit of PCP II.
- G. *Journeying with the Youth.* Sociologically, the youth are the most numerous in our population and as well as some of the most active in our Church. They are also most

vulnerable to the developments in our rising technological society. We shall engage in dialogue with the youth, strive to enter their world and journey with them towards Christian maturity. We shall affirm their gifts and immense capacity to pursue the Christian ideal.

- H. *Ecumenism and Interreligious dialogue.* We shall undertake our renewal efforts in fidelity to Jesus' will for unity among believers. Rooted in Christ, we shall strive to eradicate prejudices and to grow in deeper understanding and appreciation of other ecclesial communities and religious traditions, especially the followers of Islam. We shall engage in a dialogue of life, faith, prayer and common action with them. As a way to healing, reconciliation and national unity, we shall encourage dialogue among all sectors of society.
- I. *Animation and Formation for Mission "ad gentes."* We shall respond to the Holy Father's challenge that Filipinos become "the missionaries for all of Asia" in the third millennium. For this purpose we shall ensure that mission animation and formation will be integral to religious formation in the family, schools and other institutes of formation.

An Appeal

8. These are general priorities that must be appropriated in and by local communities and made operational in concrete plans. Thus, we enjoin all communities of faith to engage in contextualized pastoral reflection, dialogue, discernment, planning, and action based on these nine priorities. We repeat our invitation to all to the conversion and prayer that alone makes renewal possible.

Conclusion

9. *Due in ahum. "Put out into the deep."* (Lk 5:4) These are the words that the Holy Father used to introduce his apostolic exhortation, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, at the close of the Jubilee Year. These are words Jesus addressed to Peter. Peter has caught nothing after fishing all night, yet at Jesus' word, he put out his nets and was surprised by the miraculous catch of fish.

The challenge for us, the Church in the Philippines, is to do the same. We are called to put out into the depths of Philippine life and society, to put out into the depths of our life as Church, to put out our nets into the unknown depths of the future. Like Peter, we know the frustration of having caught nothing. But like Peter, we know that the One who directs us is the Lord who has renewed all things by his life, death and resurrection. And so we dare to begin again in the task of renewal. May Mary, star of evangelization, be with us in our journey to the new creation we so deeply desire.

The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

*Vatican City, 19 March 1999
Solemnity of St. Joseph
Patron of the Universal Church*

*Your Eminence,
Your Excellency,*

The entire Church prepares to enter the third millennium since the Incarnation of the Word in a spirit of penance, and, by the continued Apostolic solicitude of the Successor of Peter, is stimulated to an ever more lively recollection of the will of her divine Founder.

At its Plenary Assembly of 13-15 October 1998, the Congregation for the Clergy, in a spirit of intimate communion with that objective, decided to entrust the enclosed circular letter to every Ordinary, for transmission to their priests. On that occasion, the Holy Father said. "The prospective of New Evangelization reaches a high point in commitment to the Great Jubilee. Here, providentially, we retrace the paths laid out in *Tertio Millennia Adveniente*, in the Directories for Priests and Permanent Deacons, in the Instruction on the collaboration of the lay faithful with the pastoral ministry of priests and in the fruits of this

Plenaria. With a convinced universal application of these documents, what is expressed by the now familiar term "new evangelization" can be more easily translated into effective reality".

Bearing in mind actual circumstances, this document is designed to lead individual priests as well as presbyterates to an examination of conscience, remembering that, in concrete terms, love means fidelity. This document reiterates the teachings of the Council, and of the Popes and it refers to the other documents already mentioned by the Holy Father. These documents are fundamental for an authentic response to the demands of our time and for an effective mission of evangelization.

The questionnaires at the end of each section are intended as an aid to discerning everyday reality in the light of the teaching contained in the aforementioned documents. It is not intended that any replies should be sent to this Congregation. Priests may use them in whatever manner they find most helpful for them.

We are aware that no missionary activity can be realistically undertaken without the enthusiastic support of priests, who are the first and most valued collaborators of the Order of Bishops. This letter is also intended as a help for priests attending study days, retreats, spiritual exercises and priestly meetings being promoted in each ecclesiastical circumscription during this time of preparation for the Great Jubilee, and especially during the Jubilee Year.

May the Queen of Apostles, the bright Morning Star, guide her beloved priests, sons of her Son, into the path of effective communion, fidelity and generous, integral exercise of their indispensable ministry.

With sentiments of fraternal esteem, I remain
Yours sincerely in Christ,

Darfo Card. Castrillón hoyos
Prefect

Csaba Ternyik
Titular Archbishop of Eminenza
Secretary

INTRODUCTION

Catholic doctrinal tradition describes the priest as *teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Christian community entrusted to him*. This is the starting point of all reflection on the identity and mission of the priest in Church. In the light of *new evangelization*, to which the Holy Spirit calls all the faithful through the person and authority of the Holy Father, this unchanging yet ever-new doctrine must again be reflected upon with faith and hope.

The whole Church is called to greater apostolic commitment which is both personal and comunitarian, renewed and generous. Encouraged by the personal example and clear teaching of John Paul II, both pastors and faithful must but realize ever more incisively that the time has come to hasten their preparations, with renewed apostolic spirit, to cross the threshold of the twenty-first century and to throw open the door of history to Jesus Christ, who is our God and only Saviour. Pastors and faithful in the year 2000 are called to proclaim with renewed force: "*Ecce natus est nobis Salvator mundi*".¹

"In countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a 'new evangelization' or a 're-evangelization'".² New Evangelization, therefore, is firstly a maternal reaction of the Church to the weakening of the faith and obscuring of the demands of the Christian moral life in the conscience of her children. Many of

¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio adveniente*, 10 November 1994, n. 38: AAS 87 (1995) 5-41; n. 30.

² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, n. 33: AAS 83 (1991), p. 279.

the baptized live in a world indifferent to religion. While maintaining a certain faith, these practically live a form of religious and moral indifferentism, alienated from Word and Sacraments which are essential for the Christian life. There are others, although born of Christian parents and baptized, who have never received a foundation in the faith and live in practical atheism. The Church looks on all of these with love and is particularly sensitive to the pressing duty to draw these people to that ecclesial communion where, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they rediscover Jesus Christ and the Father.

Together with new evangelization which seeks to rekindle the faith in the Christian conscience of many and cause the joyful proclamation of salvation to resound in society, the Church is also especially conscious of her perennial mission *ad gentes* — the rightduty to carry the Gospel to all men who do not yet know Christ or participate in his salvific gifts. For the contemporary Church, Mother and Teacher, the mission *ad gentes* and new evangelization are inseparable aspects of her mandate to teach, sanctify and guide all men to the Father. Fervent Christians also need loving and continuous encouragement in their quest for personal holiness, to which they are called by God and by the Church. This is the true impetus of new evangelization.

All the Christian faithful, children of the Church, should be impelled by this common and pressing responsibility. In a particular way, priests have this duty since they have been specially chosen, consecrated and sent to make evident the presence of Christ whose authentic representatives and messengers they become.³ It is, therefore, necessary to assist both secular and religious priests in assuming the "important pastoral responsibility of new evan-

³ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 7: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1994, p. 11.

gelization"⁴ and, in the light of this commitment, to rediscover the divine call to serve that portion of God's people entrusted to them as teachers of the Word, ministers of the Sacraments and pastors of the flock.

Chapter One: **IN THE SERVICE OF NEW EVANGELIZATION**

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain" (John 15:16)

1. New Evangelization, responsibility of the entire Church

Being called and sent by the Lord have always been relevant but in contemporary historical circumstances they acquire a particular importance. The end of the twentieth century, from a religious perspective, is marked by contrasting phenomena. On the one hand, intense secularization in society results in rejection of God and all reference to the transcendent, while the other is marked by the emergence of a greater religious sensitivity which seeks to satisfy the innate aspiration for God which is present in the hearts of all mankind but which sometimes fails to find satisfactory expression.

"The mission of Christ the Redeemer which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the second millennium after Christ's coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service".⁵ Today, this missionary task is carried out largely in the context of the new evangelization of many countries which have had long Christian traditions but in which the Christian understanding of

⁴ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Daoo Vobis*, 25 March 1992, n. 18: AAS 84 (1992), p. 685.

⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1: *I.e.*, p. 249.

life appears to be in decline. It is also carried out in the general context of mankind, in which not everyone has yet heard and understood the proclamation of the salvation brought by Christ.

It is a sad but evident reality that many have heard of Christ but seem to know and accept his teaching merely as a set of general ethical norms rather than as concrete life commitments. Large numbers of the baptized have abandoned following Christ and live by the tenets of relativism. In many instances, the role of the Christian faith is reduced to that of a purely cultural factor often limited to a merely private sphere and without any social relevance in individual or national life.⁶

After twenty centuries of Christianity there is still no shortage of wide missionary fields. All Christians should be aware that, in virtue of their baptismal priesthood (cf. / *Pt* 2, 4-5.9; *Ap* 1, 5-6. 9-10; 20, 6), they are called to collaborate, in so far as their personal circumstances permit, in the new evangelizing mission which is a common ecclesial undertaking.⁷ Responsibility for missionary activity "is incumbent primarily on the College of

⁶ "The Christian religion is often regarded as just one religion among many or reduced to nothing more than a social ethic at the service of man. As a result its amazing novelty in human history is quite often not apparent. It is a emystery', the event of the coming of the Son of God who becomes man and gives to those who welcome him the 'power to become children of God' (*John* 1, 12)" (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 46: *I.e.*, pp. 738-739).

⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 2; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 13: *I.e.*, 677-678; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, nn. 1, 3, 6: *I.e.*, pp. 7, 9, 1011; Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997) on some aspects of the collaboration of the lay faithful with the ministry of priests, Forward: AAS 89 (1997), p. 852.

Bishops presided over by its head, the Successor of Peter".⁸ "Priests, who are collaborators with the bishop in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders, are called to share responsibility for the mission".⁹ Thus it can be said that, in a certain sense, they bear primary responsibility for this new evangelization of the third Millennium".¹⁰

Encouraged by scientific and technical advances, contemporary society has developed a profound sense of critical independence from secular and religious authority and doctrine. This situation requires thorough explanation and presentation of the Christian message of salvation which always remains a mystery. Such must be done with respect, and with the power and capacity of the first evangelization, while making prudent use of all suitable methods afforded by modern technology. However, it should never be forgotten that technology is no substitute for the witness of holiness of life. The Church needs true witnesses to communicate the Gospel in every sector of society. From this derives the need for all Christians in general, and for priests in particular, to acquire a profound and proper training in philosophy and theology" which enables them to render account for their faith and hope. Such also alerts them to the importance of presenting the faith constructively by means of personal dialogue and understanding. Proclamation of the Gospel, however, cannot be reduced to dialogue alone. The courage of the truth is, in fact, an ineluctable challenge when confronted with temptation to conform, or to seek facile popularity or personal convenience.

⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 63: *I.e.*, p. 311.

⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 67: *I.e.*, p. 315.

¹⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, Introduction: *I.e.*, p. 4. Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 2 and 14: *I.e.*, pp. 659-660; 678-679.

" Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio*, 14 September 1998, n. 62.

When evangelizing, it must be remembered that some of the traditional ideas and vocabulary of evangelization have become unintelligible to the greater part of contemporary culture. Certain contexts are impervious to the positive Christian sense of terms such as original sin and its consequences, redemption, the cross, the need for prayer, voluntary sacrifice, chastity, sobriety, obedience, humility, penance, poverty, etc. New evangelization, in fidelity to the doctrine of the faith constantly taught by the Church and with a strong sense of responsibility with regard to the vocabulary of Christian doctrine, must discover means of expressing itself to the contemporary world so as to help it rediscover the profound meaning of these Christian and human terms. In this effort, new evangelization cannot discard the established formulations of faith which have already been arrived at and which are summarized in the Creed.¹²

2. The necessary and indispensable role of priests

While the Pastors of the Church "know that they themselves were not established by Christ to undertake alone the whole salvific mission of the Church to the world",¹³ they do exercise and absolutely indispensable evangelizing role. New evangelization needs urgently to find a form for the exercise of the priestly ministry really consonant with contemporary conditions so as to render it effective and capable of adequately responding to the circumstances in which it is exercised. This, however, can only be done by constant reference to Christ, our only model, who enables us to move in contemporary conditions without losing sight of our final goal. Genuine pastoral renewal is not motivated solely by socio-cultural considerations but, more importantly, by a burning love for Christ and his Church. The end of all our efforts is the definitive Kingdom of Christ, recapitulation of all created things

¹² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 171.

¹³ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 30.

in Him. This will only be fully achieved at the end of time but already it is present through the power of the life-giving Spirit through whom Jesus Christ constituted his body, the Church, as universal sacrament of salvation.¹⁴

Christ, head of the Church and Lord of all creation, continues his salvific work among men. The ministerial priesthood is properly located within this operative framework. In drawing all things to Himself (cf. *John* 12, 32), Christ desires to involve his priests in a special way. This is the divine plan (God wills that the Church and her ministers should be involved in the work of redemption) which, although evident from a doctrinal and theological perspective, can be particularly difficult for modern man to accept. Sacramental mediation and the hierarchical structure of the Church, are often questioned today. The need for sacramental mediation or for the hierarchical structure of the Church as well as the reasons for them are also called into question.

As the life of Christ was consecrated to the authentic proclamation of the loving will of the Father (cf. *John* 17, 4; *Heb* 10, 7-10) so too the life of priests should be consecrated, in his name, to the same proclamation. "In word and deed" (cf. *Acts* 1, 1) the Messiah devoted his public life to preaching with authority (cf. *Mt* 1, 29). Such authority derived, in the first place, from his divine condition but also, in the eyes of the people, from his sincere, holy and perfect example. Likewise, the priest is obliged to complement the objective spiritual authority which is his in virtue of sacred ordination¹⁵ with a subjective authority deriving from sincerity and holiness of life,¹⁶ and that pastoral charity which

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 48.

¹⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 21: *I.c.*, pp. 688-690.

¹⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 12; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 25: *I.e.*, pp. 695-697.

manifests the love of Christ.¹⁷ Gregory the Great's exhortation to his priests is still relevant: "The Pastor must be pure in thought, exemplary in his actions, discreet in his silence and useful in his words. He should be close to all in his compassion and, above all, dedicated to contemplation. He should be the humble ally of all who do good. In justice, he should be inflexibly opposed to the vice of sinners. He should neither neglect the interior life through exterior preoccupations nor omit provision of exterior needs through solicitude for interior good".¹⁸

In our times, as always in the Church, "heralds of the Gospel are needed who are expert in humanity, profoundly knowing the heart of contemporary man, who share his joys and hopes, his fears and sorrows, and, at the same time, who are contemplatives in love with God." The Holy Father, specifically referring to the re-Christianization of Europe but in terms valid everywhere, affirms that "the saints were the great evangelizers of Europe. We must pray the Lord to increase the spirit of holiness in the Church and to send saints to evangelize the contemporary world".¹⁹ Many of our contemporaries, it must not be forgotten, arrive at ideas of Christ and the Church above all through their contact with her sacred ministers. Hence the need for their authentic witness to the Gospel becomes all the more pressing since it is "a living and transparent image of Christ the priest".²⁰

In the context of Christ's saving action, two inseparable objectives can be highlighted: an intellectual objective, on the one hand, which seeks to teach, instruct the crowds without shepherds

¹⁷ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, *Tota Ecclesia*, n. 43: *I.e.*, p. 42.

¹⁸ St. Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis*, II, 1.

" John Paul II, Allocution to the VI Symposium of European Bishops, 11 November 1985, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII 2 (1985), pp. 918-919.

²⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 12: *L.c.*, pp. 675-677.

(cf. *Mt* 9, 36) and move the intelligence towards conversion (cf. *Mt* 4, 17), and, on the other, the desire to move the hearts of those who listened to him to sorrow and penance for their sins thereby opening the way to divine forgiveness. This continues to be true today: "the call to new evangelization is primarily a call to conversion"²¹ and when the Word of God has taught the intellect of man and moved his will to reject sin, evangelizing activity attains its goal in fruitful participation in the sacraments, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. Paul VI taught that "the role of evangelization is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments of faith — and not to receive them passively or reluctantly".²²

Evangelization consists of proclamation, witness, dialogue and service. It is based on three inseparable elements: preaching the Word, sacramental ministry and leading the faithful.²³ Preaching would be senseless unless it include continuous formation of the faithful and participation in the sacraments. Likewise, participation in the sacraments without sincere conversion of heart, full acceptance of the faith and of the principles of Christian morality is also meaningless. From a pastoral perspective, the primary action of evangelization is, logically, considered to be preaching.²⁴ From the perspective of intentionality, however, the primary element of evangelization must be celebration of the sacraments, especially

²¹ John Paul II, Inaugural Allocution to the IV General Conference of CELAM, Santo Domingo, 12 October 1992, n. 1: AAS 85 (1993), p. 808; cf. Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 2 December 1984, n. 13, AAS 77(1985), pp. 208-211.

²² Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n. 47: AAS 68 (1976), p. 37.

²³ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 28.

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nn. 5, 13, 14; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 26: *I.e.*, pp. 697-700.

of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.²⁵ The integrity of the pastoral ministry of priests in the service of new evangelization is to be found, however, in a harmonious fusion of both of these functions.

Ecumenical formation of the faithful is another aspect of new evangelization of growing importance. The Second Vatican Council encouraged all the faithful "to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism" and "to esteem the truly Christian endowments of our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren".²⁶ At the same time, however, it must be noted that "nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenecism which harms the purity of Catholic doctrine and obscures its genuine and certain meaning".²⁷ Priests should ensure that ecumenism is always conducted in fidelity to the principles established by the Magisterium of the Church, avoid divisions and promote harmonious continuity.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER ONE

1. Is the need for and urgency of new evangelization really felt in our ecclesial communities and especially among our priests?
2. Is it frequently preached? Does new evangelization feature at clergy meetings, in pastoral programmes and in continuing formation?
3. Are priests especially involved in promoting a new evangelizing mission — new in its "ardour, methods and expression"²⁸ — *both ad intra and ad extra in the Church?*

²⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nn. 5, 13, 14; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 23, 26, 48: I.e., 691-694; 694-700; 742-745; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 48: I.e., pp. 48ff.

²⁶ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 11.

²⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Allocution to the Bishops of CELAM, 9 March 1983: *Insegnamenti*, VI, 1 (1983), p. 698; Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 18: I.e., pp. 684-686.

4. Do the faithful regard the priesthood as a divine gift both for those who receive it and for their communities, or do they regard the priesthood merely as an administrative function? Are prayers for vocations to the priesthood sufficiently encouraged as well as prayers for that generosity which responds affirmatively to a vocation?
5. In preaching the Word of God and in catechesis is the necessary proportion between instruction in the faith and sacramental practice maintained? Is the evangelizing activity of priests characterized by a complementarity between preaching and sacraments, the "munus docendi" and the "munus sanctificandi"?
6. What can be done to help priests become ministers who harmoniously build the prophetic, liturgical and charitable community which is the Church?
7. From the preparations for the Great Jubilee of 2000 do priests derive opportunities and ideas for a realistic programme of new evangelization?

Chapter Two: TEACHERS OF THE WORD

"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16, 15)

1. Priests, ministers of the Word "nomine Christi et nomine Ecclesiae"

A correct understanding of the pastoral ministry of the Word begins with a consideration of God's divine Revelation in itself. "By this revelation, the invisible God (cf. *Col* 1, 15; *1 Tim* 1, 17), from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends (cf. *Es* 33, 11; *John* 15, 14-15) and moves among them in order

to invite and receive them into his company".²⁹ The proclamation of the Kingdom in Scripture not only speaks of the glory of God but also spreads that same glory by its very proclamation. The Gospel preached by the Church is not just a message but a divine and life-giving experience for those who believe, hear, receive and obey the message.

Revelation, therefore, is not limited to instruction about God who lives in inaccessible light since it also recounts the marvelous things that God does for us with his grace. The revealed Word, made present and actualized "in" and "through" the Church, is an instrument through which Christ acts in us with his Spirit. It is both judgment and grace. In hearing the Word, the actual encounter with God himself calls to the heart of man and demands a decision which is not arrived at solely through intellectual knowledge but which requires conversion of heart.

"It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all men...(so as to)... set up and increase the People of God".³⁰ Precisely because preaching the Gospel is not merely an intellectual transmission of a message but "the power of God for the salvation of all who believe" (*Rm* 1, 16), accomplished for all time in Christ, its proclamation in the Church requires from its heralds a supernatural basis which guarantees its authenticity and its effectiveness. The proclamation of the Gospel by the sacred ministers of the Church is, in a certain sense, a participation in the salvific character of the Word itself, not only because they speak of Christ, but because they proclaim the Gospel to their hearers with that power to call which comes from their participation in the consecration and mission of the incarnate Word of God. The words of the Lord still resound in the ears of his ministers: "Whosoever listens to you listens to me;

²⁹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 2.

³⁰ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinatio*, n. 4.

whosoever despises you despises me" (*Lk* 10, 16). Together with St. Paul they can testify: "the Spirit we have received is not the world's spirit but God's Spirit, helping us to recognize the gifts he has given us: We speak of these not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, thus interpreting spiritual things in spiritual terms" (7 *Cor* 2, 12-13).

Proclaiming the Gospel is a ministry deriving from the Sacrament of Orders and is exercised by the authority of Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee all the acts of sacred ministers in the same way. In the administration of the sacraments this guarantee is assured to the extent that not even the sinful condition of a minister can impede the fruit of grace. There are many other acts in which the human qualities of the minister acquire notable importance. Those qualities can serve to promote or impede the apostolic effectiveness of Church.³¹ While the entire *munus pastorale* must be characterized by service, it is especially necessary that service characterize the minister of preaching since the salvific effectiveness of the Word becomes more operative when its minister, who is never master of the Word, increasingly becomes its servant.

Service demands a personal dedication on the part of the minister to the preached Word. Such dedication ultimately is made to God "to whom I render worship in my heart by preaching the Gospel of his Son" (*Rm* 1, 9). The minister may not place obstacles in its path by pursuing objectives extraneous to its mission, or relying on human wisdom, or by promoting subjective experiences that can obscure the Gospel. The Word of God can never be manipulated. Rather, preachers "should firstly become personally familiar with the Word of God...and be the first "believers" in the

Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1550.

Word, fully conscious that the words of their preaching are not their own, but those of the one who sent them".³²

There is an *essential relationship between personal prayer and preaching*. From meditating on the Word of God in personal prayer, comes that spontaneous "primacy of witness of life which discovers the power of the love of God and makes his word convincing."³³ Effective preaching is another fruit of personal prayer. Such preaching is effective not only because of its speculative coherence but because it comes from a prayerful, sincere heart which is aware that sacred ministers are bound not to impart their own wisdom but the Word of God and ceaselessly to invite all to conversion and holiness".³⁴ The preaching of Christ's sacred ministers, to be effective, requires that it be based on their spirit of filial prayer: "*sit orator antequam dictator*".³⁵

Personal prayer provides priests with support and encouragement for their sense of the ministry, their vocation in life, and for their living and apostolic faith. In personal prayer they draw daily zeal for evangelization. Once personally convinced of this, it is translated into persuasive, coherent and convincing preaching. Praying the *Liturgy of the Hours* thus is not simply a matter of personal piety nor is it the totality of the Church's public prayer. It is of great pastoral use³⁶ since it is a special opportunity to interiorize and become familiar with biblical, patristic, theological and magisterial teaching which can subsequently be returned to the People of God through preaching.

³² John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 26: *Lc*, p. 698.

³³ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 45: *I.e.*, p. 44.

³⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 4.

³⁵ St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4, 15, 32: *PL* 34, 100.

³⁶ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Laudis Canticum*, 1 November 1970, n. 8: *AAS* 63 (1971), pp. 533-534.

2. Towards an effective proclamation of the Word

New evangelization has to underline the importance of bringing to maturity the meaning of the baptismal vocation of the faithful thereby bringing the faithful to an awareness that they have been called by God closely to follow Christ and personally to collaborate in the Church's mission. "Transmitting the faith means awakening, proclaiming and deepening the Christian vocation, that is, God's call to all men as He makes known to them the mystery of salvation...".³⁷ The task of preaching, therefore, is to present Christ to all men because He alone, "the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling".³⁸

New evangelization together with a vocational sense of existence go hand in hand for the Christian. This is the "good news" which must be preached to the faithful without any reductionism in what concerns its goodness and the demands which are made in accomplishing it. It must always be remembered that "the Christian is certainly bound by need and by duty to struggle with evil through many afflictions and to suffer death; but as one who has been made a partner in the paschal mystery and configured to the death of Christ, he will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection".³⁹

New evangelization demands a zealous ministry of the Word which is complete and well-founded. It should have a clear theological, spiritual, liturgical and moral content, while bearing in mind the needs of those men and women whom it must reach. This is not to succumb to any temptation to intellectualism which could obscure rather than enlighten the intelligence of Christians,

³⁷ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 45: I.e., p. 43.

³⁸ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

rather it requires a genuine intellectual charity through continuous patient catechesis on the fundamentals of Catholic faith and morals and on their influence on the spiritual life. Christian instruction is foremost among the spiritual works of mercy: salvation comes by knowing Christ since "there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (*Acts* 4, 12).

Catechetical proclamation cannot be achieved without use of a solid theology since it requires not only presentation of revealed doctrine but also formation of the intelligence and conscience of the faithful by means of revealed doctrine so that they can authentically live the demands of their baptismal calling. New evangelization will be achieved not only in the measure that the Church as a whole and its institutions but each and every Christian live the faith authentically, thereby giving credible witness to that same faith.

Evangelizing means announcing and spreading the contents of revealed truth by every available good and congruent means (Christological and Trinitarian faith, the meaning of the dogma of creation, the eschatological truths, the doctrine concerning the Church, man, the sacraments and other means of salvation). It is also important to teach people how concretely to translate these truths into life by means of spiritual and moral formation so that they become a witness to life and missionary commitment.

The task of spiritual and theological formation (and that of permanent formation of priests, deacons and the lay faithful) is both inescapable and enormous. Hence, the ministry of the Word and its ministers must be able to respond to current circumstances. While its effectiveness is essentially dependent on the help of God, it also requires the highest possible degree of human perfection. A renewed doctrinal, theological and spiritual proclamation of the Christian message, aimed primarily to enthuse and purify the conscience of the baptized, cannot be achieved through irrespon-

sible or indolent improvisation. Less still can it be brought about if there is an unwillingness on the part of priests to assume directly their responsibilities for the proclamation of the Gospel — especially those relating to the homiletic ministry which cannot be delegated to the non-ordained⁴⁰ nor easily entrusted to those ill prepared for its exercise.

Preaching, as always has been insisted, requires the priest to give particular attention to the importance of *remote preparation*. This can be concretized by such things as study and the pursuit of those things which can help the sacred ministers in their preparation. Pastoral sensitivity on the part of preachers must always be aware of the problems preoccupying the contemporary world and be able to identify possible solution for them. "Moreover, if priests are to give adequate answers to the problems discussed by people at the present time, they should be well versed in the statements of the Church's magisterium and especially those of the Councils and the Popes. They should also consult the best approved writers in theology"⁴¹ as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Insistence must also be placed on the importance of the permanent formation of the clergy and especially on its content which should be in accord with the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*.^{*2} Efforts in this regard will always

⁴⁰ Cf. The Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, Interdicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de Mystero* on some questions concerning the collaboration of the lay faithful with the ministry of priests, 15 August 1997, article 3: AAS 89 (1997), p. 852ff.

⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 19.

⁴² Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 70ff: I.e., pp. 778ff; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, *Tota Ecclesia*, nn. 69ff: I.e., pp. 72ff.

reap a rich harvest. In addition to the foregoing, attention must be given to the proximate preparation needed to preach the Word of God. Apart from exceptional circumstances where nothing else is possible, humility and industry require, at the very least, a careful plan of what the priest intends to preach.

The principle source for preaching is naturally Sacred Scripture, deeply meditated in personal prayer and assimilated through study and adequate contact with suitable books.⁴³ Pastoral experience well demonstrates the capacity of the power and eloquence of the Sacred text to stir the hearts of those who hear it. The Fathers of the Church and the other great writers of the Catholic tradition teach us how to penetrate the meaning of the revealed Word and communicate it to others.⁴⁴ This is far removed from any form of "biblical fundamentalism" or mutilation of the divine message. The pedagogy with which the Church reads, interprets and applies the Word of God throughout the liturgical seasons should also be a point of reference for preaching. The lives of the saints, their struggles and heroism, have always produced positive effects in the hearts of the Christian faithful who, today, have special need of the heroic example of the saints in their self-dedication to the love of God and, through God, to others. Reference to the lives of the saints has renewed significance in contemporary circumstances where the faithful are often assailed by equivocal values and doctrines. All of these are helpful for evangelization as indeed is the promotion of a sense of the love of God among the faithful, a solidarity with everyone and spirit of service and generous self-giving for others. Christian conscience comes to maturity through constant reference to charity.

⁴³ Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 26 and 47: *I.e.*, pp. 697-700, 740-742; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, *Tota Ecclesia*, n. 46: *I.e.*, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Church Fathers in the Formation of Priests* (10 November 1989), nn. 26-27: AAS 82 (1990), pp. 618-619.

The priest should also cultivate the formal aspects of preaching. We live in an information era characterized by rapid communication. We frequently hear experts and specialists on the television and radio. In a certain sense the priest (who is also a social communicator) has to compete with these when he preaches to the faithful. Hence his message must be presented in an attractive manner. His apostolic spirit should move him to acquire competence in the use of the "new pulpits" provided by modern communications and ensure that his preaching is always of a standard congruent with the preached Word. Universities today have witnessed a resurgence of interest in rhetoric. A similar interest should be aroused among priests as well as a desire to acquire a noble and dignified self presentation and poise.

Like that of Christ, priestly preaching should be positive, stimulating and draw men and women to the goodness, beauty and truth of God. Christians are bound to make known "the divine glory which shines on the face of Christ" (2 *Cor* 4, 6) and present revealed truth in a captivating way. Is it not impossible to deny the strong attractive, though serene, nature of Christian existence? There is nothing to fear in this. "From the moment when, in the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about man's life, the Church has made her way along the path of the world proclaiming that Jesus Christ is 'the way, the truth and the life' (*John* 14, 6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: *the diaconia of service to the truth*".⁴⁵

Elegant accurate language, comprehensible to contemporary men and women of all social backgrounds, is always useful for preaching. Banal commonplace language should be eschewed.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 14 September 1998, n. 2.

⁴⁶ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, *Tota Ecclesia*, n. 46: *I.e.*, p. 46.

While preachers must speak from an authentic vision of faith, a vocabulary must be employed which is comprehensible in all quarters and must avoid specialized jargon or concessions to the spirit of materialism. The human "key" to effective preaching of the Word is to be found in the professionalism of the preacher who knows what he wants to say and who is always backed up by serious remote and proximate preparation. This is far removed from the improvisation of the dilettante. Attempts to obscure the entire force of truth are insidious forms of irenecism. Care should therefore be taken with the meaning of words, style and diction. Important themes should be highlighted, without ostentation, after careful reflection. A pleasant speaking voice should be cultivated. Preachers should know their objectives and have a good understanding of the existential and cultural reality of their congregations. Theories and abstract generalizations must always be avoided. Hence every preacher should know his own flock well and use an attractive style which, rather than wounding people, strikes the conscience and is not afraid to call things for what they really are.

Priests engaged in different pastoral tasks should help each other with fraternal advice on these and other matters such as the content of preaching and its theological and linguistic quality, style, the duration of homilies which should always be reasonable, the proper use of the ambo, the development of an unaffected normal tone of voice and its inflection while preaching. Humility is necessary if the priest is to be helped by his brother priests and, indirectly, by the faithful who cooperate in his pastoral activities.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER TWO

1. Do we really appreciate the real effect of the ministry of the Word on the life of our communities? Are we anxious to use this essential instrument of evangelization with the best possible professionalism?

2. Is sufficient attention given to perfecting the diverse forms of proclamation of the Word in permanent formation courses?
3. Are priests encouraged to study sound theology and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, the Doctors of the Church and of the Saints? Are positive efforts made to know and make known the great masters of Christian spirituality?
4. Is the formation of good libraries for priests encouraged which reflect a solid doctrinal outlook?
5. Is it possible locally to access libraries available on the internet? Are priests aware of the electronic library which has been set up by the Congregation for the Clergy (www.clerus.org)?
6. Do priests use the catechesis and teaching of the Holy Father and the various documents published by the Holy See?
7. Is there an awareness of the necessity to train people (priests, permanent deacons, religious and laity) capable of using well the means of communication which are key aspects of the evangelization of contemporary culture?

Chapter Three: MINISTERS OF THE SACRAMENTS

"Christ's servants, stewards of the entrusted with the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4, 1)

1. "In persona Christi Capitis"

"The Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, **make present, and spread the** mystery of the communion of **the** Holy Trinity".⁴⁷ This sacramental dimension of the whole mission

⁴⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 738.

of the Church springs from her very nature as a reality which is "both human and divine, visible yet endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world but as a pilgrim".⁴⁸ In the context of the Church as "universal sacrament of salvation",⁴⁹ in which Christ "manifests and actualizes the mystery of God's love for men",⁵⁰ the sacraments, privileged moments in communicating the divine life to man, are at the very core of priestly ministry. Priests are especially conscious of being living instruments of Christ, the Priest. Their function, in virtue of sacramental character, is that of men complying with the action of God through shared instrumental effectiveness.

Configuration to Christ in sacramental ordination places the priest at the heart of God's people. It allows him to participate in a way proper to him, and in conformity with the whole structure of the ecclesial community, in the triple *munus Christi*. The priest, acting in *persona Christi Capitis*, feeds the flock, the people of God, and leads them to sanctity.⁵¹ Hence the need for credible witness to the faith in all aspects of priestly life and in his respect for and celebration of the sacraments.⁵² The classic doctrine, repeated by the Second Vatican Council, must always be borne in mind: "while it is true that God can accomplish the work of salvation through unworthy ministers, God nevertheless, ordinarily prefers to manifest his greatness through those who are more docile to the promptings and direction of the Holy Spirit, so much so that they can say of the apostolate, thanks to their own intimate

⁴⁸ Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 2.

⁴⁹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48.

⁵⁰ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, 45

⁵¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of priests. Tota Ecclesia*, 7b-c: *I.e.*, pp. 11-12.

⁵² Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 5 May 1993, *Insegnamenti XVI*, 1 (1993), p. 1061.

union with Christ and holiness of life: 'it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'" (*Gal* 2, 20).⁵¹

Priests, in celebrating the sacraments, act as ministers of Christ and, through the Holy Spirit, participate in His priesthood in a special way.⁵⁴ Hence the sacraments are moments of worship of singular importance for new evangelization. It must be recalled that they have become the only effective moments for transmitting the contents of the faith. While this is true for all the faithful, it is even more true for those who, having lost the practice of the faith, occasionally participate in the liturgy for family or social reasons (baptisms, confirmations, marriages, ordinations, funerals etc.). A credible life-style on the part of priests should be complemented "with a high standard of ceremony and liturgical celebration:⁵⁵ it should not seek spectacle but truly ensure that "the human is directed toward and subordinate to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, this present world to the city yet to come".⁵⁶

2. Ministers of the Eucharist: core of priestly ministry

"Jesus called his Apostles "friends". He also calls us friends since we share in his Priesthood by virtue of the Sacrament of Orders (...) Could Jesus have expressed his friendship for us in a more eloquent way than by allowing us, priests of the New Covenant, to act in his name, to act in *persona Christi Capitis*? This is what happens in all our priestly service, when we administer the sacraments and especially when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. We repeat the words spoken by Him over the bread and wine, and, through our ministry we effect the same consecration as

⁵³ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 12.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 5.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience 12 may 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1197.

⁵⁶ Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 2.

effected by Christ. Can there be a more complete expression of friendship than this? This is what is at the very core of our priestly ministry".⁵⁷

New evangelization must also signal a new clarity about the centrality of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the entire Christian life, to the faithful.⁵⁸ "No Christian community can be built up unless it grow from and hinges on to the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist"⁵⁹ because "the other sacraments and indeed all ecclesial ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. For in the most Blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church".⁶⁰

The Eucharist is also the object of the pastoral ministry. The faithful must participate in it if they are to draw fruit from it. While it is necessary to inculcate a "worthy, careful and fruitful" preparation for the liturgy among the laity, it is also necessary to bring them to an awareness that they are "invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation with Christ. For this reason the Eucharist appears as the source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel".⁶¹ From this truth many consequences follow for the pastoral ministry.

Formation of the faithful concerning the essence of the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar is vitally important as is the need to encourage them to participate fruitfully in the Eucharist.⁶² Insistence must be

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Priests on Holy Thursday 1997* (16 March 1997), n. 5: AAS 89 (1997), p. 662.

⁵⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 2; 10.

⁵⁹ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 5.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibidem*.

⁶² Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 12 May 1993, *Insegnamenti* XVI, 1 (1993), pp. 1197-1198.

made on the observance of the Sunday obligation⁶³ and on frequent, if not daily, participation in the celebration of the Mass and holy communion. Emphasis must be placed on the grave obligation to fulfill the spiritual and corporeal conditions governing reception of the Body of Christ — especially individual sacramental confession for those conscious that they are not in a state of grace. The strength of Christian life in every particular Church and parish community depends, in large measure, on rediscovery of the great gift of the Eucharist in faith and adoration. When the link between daily life and the Eucharist is not clearly manifested in the priest's doctrinal teaching, preaching and life, participation begins to fall into abeyance.

In this respect, the example of the priest-celebrant is fundamentally important: "celebrating the Eucharist well is an important form of primary catechesis on the Holy Sacrifice".⁶⁴ While this is not the immediate intention of the priest, it is important for the faithful to see him prepare well by recollecting himself before celebrating the Holy Sacrifice. They should be able to witness the love and devotion that he has for the Eucharist and, following his example, they should learn to remain, for a while, in thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

While an essential part of the Church's work of evangelization is to teach men and women to pray to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, new evangelization entails the recovery and consolidation of pastoral practices which manifest belief in the real presence of Our Lord under the eucharistic species. "The priest has a mission to promote the cult of the eucharistic presence, also outside of the celebration of the Mass, thereby making of his

⁶³ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, 31 May 1998, n. 46: AAS 90 (1998), p. 742.

⁶⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, A9.

own church a Christian "house of prayer".⁶⁵ The faithful should be well instructed with regard to the indispensable conditions for the reception of Holy Communion. It is important to encourage their devotion to Christ who awaits them in the tabernacle. A simple but effective form of eucharistic catechesis is the material care of everything concerned with the church and especially the altar and tabernacle: cleanliness and decor, worthy vestments and vessels, care in celebrating the liturgical ceremonies,⁶⁶ genuflection etc. An atmosphere of recollection should pervade the Blessed Sacrament chapel. This is a centuries old tradition guaranteeing that silence which facilitates dialogue with the Lord. The heart of our churches is the Blessed Sacrament chapel or the area in which the Eucharistic Christ is reserved and adored. Access to it should be evident and easily facilitated. It should be open for as much of the day as possible and it should be well decorated.

All these are signs deriving not from some form of "spiritualism" but from a well tested theological tradition of devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. They are possible only if the priest is a man of prayer and genuinely devoted to the Holy Eucharist. Only the pastor who prays will know how to teach others to pray and bring God's grace on those in his pastoral charge, thereby evincing conversions, more fervent resolution for life, priestly vocations and special consecration. Only the priest who has daily experience of the "conversatio in coelis" and whose life is motivated by friendship with Christ can make genuine advances towards authentic and renewed evangelization.

⁶⁵ John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 12 May 1993, *Insegnamenti* XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1198.

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibidem*; Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 112, 114, 116, 120, 122-124, 128.

3. Ministers of Reconciliation with God and the Church

In a world in which the sense of sin has declined⁶⁷ it is most necessary to insist that lack of love for God obscures our perception of the reality of sin and evil. The initiation of conversion, not just as a momentary interior act but as a stable disposition, begins with authentic knowledge of God's merciful love. "Those who come to know and see God in this way cannot live other than in continual conversion toward Him. Thus they live in a state of conversion".⁶⁸ Penance is an essential constituent of the patrimony in the ecclesial life of the baptized. It is, however, marked by the hope of pardon: "you who were once excluded from mercy have now received mercy" (1 Pt 2, 10).

New evangelization calls for renewed efforts to bring the faithful to the Sacrament of Penance.⁶⁹ This pastoral task is absolutely indispensable. The Sacrament of Penance "opens the way for everyone, especially those borne down by grave sin, individually to experience mercy, that love which is stronger than sin".⁷⁰ We should never fail to encourage and promote the sacrament while striving intelligently to renew and revitalize age old beneficial Christian traditions. As a first step, with the help of the Holy Spirit, this should bring the faithful to that conversion which leads to sincere and contrite recognition of those moral flaws or deficiencies found in everyone's daily life. It is essential to insist

⁶⁷ Cf. Pius XII, Radio message to the National Catechetical Congress of the United States, 26 October 1946: *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi*, VIII (1946), p. 288; John Paul II Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 18: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 224-228.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 13: AAS 72 (1980), pp. 1220-1221.

⁶⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience 22 September 1993: *Insegnamenti* XVI, 2 (1993), p. 826.

⁷⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 13: *I.e.*, p. 1219.

upon the importance of frequent individual confession in arriving, where possible, at authentic personal spiritual direction.

Without confusing the sacramental moment with spiritual direction, priests should know how to identify opportunities to initiate spiritual dialogue outside of the celebration of the Sacrament. "Rediscovery and promotion of this practice, also during the various moments of the Sacrament of Penance, is a major benefit for the contemporary Church".⁷¹ Such leads to an awakening of the sense and effectiveness of the Sacrament and creates the conditions necessary to overcome the present crisis. Personal spiritual direction forms true apostles, capable of activating new evangelization in society. The success of the mission to re-evangelize so many of the faithful who are estranged from the Church requires a solid formation for those who have remained close to her.

New evangelization depends on an adequate number of priests; experience teaches that many respond positively to a vocation because of spiritual direction as well as the example given by priests who are interiorly and exteriorly faithful to their priestly identity. "In his pastoral work each priest will take particular care concerning vocations, encouraging prayer for vocations, doing his best in the work of catechetics and taking care of the formation of ministers. He will promote appropriate initiatives through a personal rapport with those in his care, allowing him to discover their talents and to single out the will of God for them, permitting a courageous choice in following Christ... It is desirable that every priest be concerned with inspiring at least one priestly vocation which could thus continue the ministry."⁷²

⁷¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 54, *I.e.*, p. 54; cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 31: *I.e.*, pp. 257-266.

⁷² Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 32: *I.e.* p. 31.

Giving the faithful a real possibility of coming to confession implies much dedication.⁷³ Fixed times during which the priest is available in the confessional are warmly to be encouraged. They should be well published and availability on the priest's part should not be just theoretical. Sometimes the mere fact of having to search for a confessor is sufficient to delay or postpone confession. The faithful, on the other hand, willingly approach the sacrament in places where they know confessors are available.⁷⁴ Parish churches and those open for public worship should have a good, well-lit confessional chapel, suitable for hearing confessions. A regular organized schedule of confessions should be provided and implemented by the priests. In order to facilitate the faithful in their desire to approach the Sacrament care should be taken to maintain the confessionals by frequent cleaning, ensuring that they are clearly visible and by affording the possibility of using a grill to those who wish to remain anonymous.⁷⁵

It is not always easy to maintain these pastoral practices, but this is no excuse to overlook their pastoral effectiveness or not to reinstitute them where they have fallen into disuse. Cooperation between the diocesan clergy and religious should be encouraged so as to ensure this pastoral priority. In the same context, recognition must be given to the daily service provided in the confessional by many older priests who are true masters of the spiritual life in the various Christian communities.

⁷³ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 52: *I.e.*, pp. 52-53.

⁷⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 52: *I.e.*, p. 53; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13.

⁷⁵ Cf. Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legal Texts, *Risposta circa il can. 964 § 2 CIC*, 7 July 1998, in AAS 90 (1998), p. 711.

This service to the Church would, of course, be more easily accomplished when priests themselves are the first to approach the Sacrament of Penance regularly.⁷⁶ Personal recourse to the Sacrament by the priest, as penitent, is an indispensable condition for a generous ministry of Reconciliation.

"All priestly existence undergoes an inexorable decline if the priest, through negligence or whatever other reason, neglects frequent recourse, inspired by genuine faith and devotion, to the Sacrament of Penance. If a priest no longer goes to confession or makes a bad confession, very quickly this will affect his priestly ministry and be noticed by the community of which he is Pastor".⁷⁷

"The ministry of priests is above all communion and a responsible and necessary cooperation with the Bishop's ministry, in concern for the universal Church and for the individual particular Churches, for whose service they form with the Bishop a single presbyterate".⁷⁸ The brethren in the presbyterate should always be the special object of the priest's pastoral charity, by helping them materially and spiritually, by affording the opportunity for confession and spiritual direction, by encouraging their service, by helping them in their necessities, by offering fraternal support in their difficulties, old-age or infirmity. This is truly an area for the exercise of priestly virtue.

⁷⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 18; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 26, 28: *I.e.*, pp. 697-700, 742-45; Catechesis at the General Audience of 26 May 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1331; Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 31: *I.e.* pp. 257-266; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 53: *I.e.*, p. 54.

⁷⁷ John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 31, VI: *I.e.*, p. 266.

⁷⁸ John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 17: *I.e.*, p. 683.

Pastoral prudence is a fundamental virtue for fruitful exercise of the ministry of Reconciliation. Thus when the minister imparts absolution he participates as an effective instrument in the sacramental action. His task in the penitential rites is to place the penitent *before Christ*, thereby facilitating an encounter of mercy with the utmost discretion. Disagreements which do not take into account the reality of sin should be avoided. Hence the confessor should have opportune knowledge.⁷⁹ However, the penitential dialogue should always be imbued with that understanding which gradually leads to conversion. It should not, however, lapse into a so called "graduality of moral norms".

When the practice of confession diminishes, in some cases, to the detriment of the moral life and the conscience of the faithful, the danger sometimes arises of a decline in the theological and pastoral quality of the exercise of the ministry of confession. Confessors should always pray to the Paraclete for the ability to fill this salvific moment⁸⁰ with supernatural meaning and to transform it into an authentic encounter with the all merciful and forgiving Jesus for the penitent. He should also avail of confession to form the conscience of the faithful correctly — an extremely important task — by asking, where necessary, those questions which secure the integrity of confession and the validity of the sacrament. He should help the penitent to thank God for His mercy and assist him in making a firm purpose of amendment for his conduct of the moral life. He should never fail to encourage the penitent appropriately, offering him comfort and motivating him to do works of penance which are satisfaction for his sins and which help him to grow in virtue.

⁷⁹ In this regard, a solid preparation on those matters which arise more frequently in confession is asked of priests. A useful aid in this respect is the *Vademecum per i confessori su alcuni temi morali attinenti alia vita conjugate* (Pontifical Council for the Family, 12 February 1997, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1997).

⁸⁰ Cf. *ibidem*.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER THREE

1. The essence and saving meaning of the sacraments are invariable. Starting out from a firm conviction of this position, how can sacramental pastoral care be renewed and how can it be placed at the service of new evangelization?
2. Is our particular community a "Church of Eucharist and Penance"? Is eucharistic devotion in all its forms nourished and promoted? Is the practice of personal confession facilitated and encouraged?
3. Is habitual reference made to the real presence of Our Lord in the tabernacle and, for example, is the fruitful practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament encouraged? Are there frequent acts of eucharistic worship? Do our Churches have an atmosphere which encourages prayer before the Blessed Sacrament?
4. In a true pastoral spirit is special care given to the proper maintenance of the Church? Do priests respect the canonical (cf. canons 284, 669; the Directory for the Life and Ministry Priests.) and liturgical norms by vesting properly and reverently for divine worship and by wearing all of the prescribed vestments? (cf. canon 929).
5. Do priests go to confession regularly and do they make themselves available for this important ministry?
6. In the exercise of their pastoral ministry what pastoral efforts are being made in the area of Reconciliation and Penance? Do churches and sanctuaries have an established time for hearing confessions? Is it respected and followed?
7. What initiatives are taken in permanent formation to perfect and assist priests in their ministry of confessors? Are they encouraged to update themselves properly for this indispensable ministry?

8. Are confessors reminded of the norms pertaining to prudence in the confessional regularly and the need for reserve when dealing with all penitents? Among other things, in this respect, is the traditional discipline of the confessional employed?

9. Given the importance for new evangelization of a renewal of individual confession, are the canonical norms concerning general absolution observed? Are penitential ceremonies in the various churches and chapels prepared with prudence and pastoral charity? Are opportunities made available for a number of examinations of conscience bearing in mind the diversity of age and states of life?

10. What concrete initiatives are being made to encourage the faithful to attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation?

Chapter Four: LOVING PASTORS OF THE FLOCK

***"The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep"*
(John 10, 11)**

1. With Christ, incarnating and spreading the mercy of the Father

"The Church lives an authentic life when she *professes* and *proclaims mercy* — the most stupendous attribute of the creator and of the Redeemer — and when she brings people close to the sources of the Saviour's mercy, of which she is trustee and dispenser"⁸¹. This reality essentially distinguishes the Church from other human institutions dedicated to the promotion of solidarity and philanthropy. Even when imbued with a religious spirit, by themselves, such institutions cannot effectively dispense the mercy of God. The mercy of God as offered by the Church, in contrast

⁸¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 30 November 1980, n. 13c: *L.c.*, p. 1219.

with secularized concepts of mercy which fail to transform man interiorly, is primarily forgiveness and salvific healing. Its effectiveness on man requires his acceptance of the entire truth concerning his being, his action and his guilt. Hence derives the need for sorrow and encounter with the proclamation of mercy and the fullness of truth. Such affirmations are vitally important for priests who are called to a particular vocation, by the Church and in the Church, to reveal and effect the mystery of the Father's love in their ministry, lived in charity according to the truth (*Ef* 4, 15) and in docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The mercy of God, manifested by His paternal love, is encountered in Christ. He reveals his messianic role (cf. *Lk* 4, 18) as the Father's mercy for all who are in need, especially sinners who need forgiveness and interior peace. "It is especially for these last that the Messiah becomes a particularly clear sign of God who is love, a sign of the Father. In this visible sign the people of our time, just like people then, can see the Father".⁸² God "who is love" (7 *John* 4, 16) cannot but reveal Himself as mercy.⁸³ Through the sacrifice of His Son, God the Father, in His love, implicated Himself in the drama of man's salvation.

While in the preaching of Christ mercy acquires many striking characteristics which surpass human realization — as emerges in the parable of the Prodigal Son (cf. *Lk* 15, 11-32) — it is in his sacrifice on the cross that its meaning is most especially revealed. The crucified Christ is the radical manifestation of the Father's mercy, of that "love which goes against the very source of evil in human history: countering sin and death".⁸⁴ The Christian spiritual tradition regards the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which draws

⁸² *Ibid.*, n. 3: *I.e.*, p. 1183.

⁸⁵ Cf. n. 13: *I.e.*, pp. 1218-1221.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 8: *I.e.*, p. 1204.

priestly hearts to itself, as a profound, mysterious synthesis of the Father's infinite mercy.

The soteriological dimension of the entire priestly *munus pastorale* is centered on the eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of Jesus' offering up of his life. "There exists, in fact, an intimate rapport between the centrality of the Eucharist, pastoral charity and the priest's unity of life. He finds in this rapport the decisive indications for the way to holiness to which he has been specifically called... If the priest lends to Christ, Most Eternal High Priest, his intelligence, will, voice and hands so as to offer through his own ministry the sacrifice of redemption to the Father, he should make his own the dispositions of the Master and, like him, live those *gifts* for his brothers in the faith. He must therefore learn to unite himself intimately to the offering, placing his entire life on the altar of sacrifice as a revealing sign of the gratuitous and anticipatory love of God".⁸⁵ In the permanent gift of the eucharistic Sacrifice, memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus, priests have sacramentally received the unique and singular ministerial capacity to bring the witness of God's infinite love to men, which will be confirmed as more powerful than sin in salvation history. The paschal Christ is the definitive incarnation of mercy and its living sign, both in salvation history and eschatologically.⁸⁶ According to the Cure d'Ars, the priesthood is "the love of the heart of Jesus".⁸⁷ In virtue of the consecration and their ministry, with Christ, priests are living and effective signs of this great love, described by St. Augustine as the "amoris officium".⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 48: *I.e.*, p. 49.

⁸⁶ Cf John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 8: *I.e.*, pp. 668-669.

⁸⁷ Cf. Jean-Marie Vianney, *cure d'Ars: sa pensee, son coeur*, presents par Bernard Nodet, Le Puy 1960, p. 100.

⁸⁸ St Augustine, *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 123, 5: CCL 36, 678.

2. *Sacerdos et Hostia*

Essential to authentic mercy is its gratuitous nature. It is received as an unmerited gift which has been freely and gratuitously given and which is completely unmerited. Such liberality is part of the Father's saving plan. "This is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us when he sent his son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away" (7 *John* 4, 10). The ordained minister, in precisely this context, finds his *raison d'être*. No one can confer grace of himself; it is always given and received. This presupposes that there are ministers of grace, authorized and empowered by Christ. In the Church's tradition, the ordained ministry is referred to as "sacrament", since through the ministry those sent by Christ, by God's gift, effect and offer that which they themselves can neither effect nor give.⁸⁹

Priests should therefore regard themselves as living signs and bearers of that mercy which they offer, not as though it were their own, but as a free gift from God. They are thus servants of God's mercy. The desire to serve is an essential element of priestly ministry and requires the respective moral disposition in the subject. The priest makes Jesus, the Pastor who came to serve and not be served (*Mt* 20, 28) present to men. The priest primarily serves Christ, but that service necessarily passes through the Church and her mission.

"He loves us and sheds his blood to wash away our sins: *Pontifex qui dilexisti nos et lavasti a peccatis in sanguine tuo*. He gave himself for us: *tradidisti temetipsum Deo oblationem et hostiam*. Christ introduces the sacrifice of himself, ransom for our redemption, into the eternal sanctuary. The offering, the sacrificial victim, is inseparable from the priest".⁹⁰ While only Christ is

⁸⁹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 875.

⁹⁰ John Paul II, Letter to Priests on Holy Thursday 1997 (16 march 1997), n. 4: AAS 89 (1997), p. 661.

simultaneously *Sacerdos et Hostia*, his minister who partakes in the dynamic of the Church's mission, is sacramentally priest and permanently called to become a *Hostia* and thereby assimilate "the same sentiments that Jesus had" (*Phil* 2, 5). The effectiveness of all evangelizing activity depends on this unbreakable unity of priest and sacrificial victim,⁹¹ or priesthood and Eucharist. Today, the work of divine mercy, contained in Word and Sacraments, depends on the unity, in the Holy Spirit, of Christ and his minister, who does not substitute for Him but relies on Him and allows Him to act in and through him. The significance of St. John's Gospel can be applied to this link between the ministry of the priest and Jesus: "I am the vine...cut off from me you can do nothing" (*John* 15, 14).

The call to become, like Jesus, a *Hostia* underlies the compatibility of the commitment to celibacy with the priestly ministry in the Church. It implies the incorporation of the priest in the sacrifice with which "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her so as to make her holy" (*Eph* 5, 25-26). The priest is called to be "a living image of Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Church" and to make his entire life an offering for her".⁹² "Priestly celibacy, then, is the gift of self *in* and *with* Christ to his Church and expresses the priest's service in and with the Lord".⁹³

3. The Pastoral Ministry of Priests: service of leading in love and strength

"Priests exercise the function of Christ as Pastor and Head in proportion to their share of authority. In the name of the bishop they gather the family of God as a brotherhood endowed with the

⁹¹ Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3.

⁹² John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 22: I.e., p. 691.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 29: I.e., p. 704.

spirit of unity and lead it through Christ in the Spirit to God the Father".⁹⁴ The indispensable exercise of the *munus regendi* by the priest, far from being a mere sociological concept or organizational capacity, derives also from the sacramental priesthood: "in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest (*Heb* 5, 1-10; 7, 24; 9,11-28) they are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament".⁹⁵

Since priests participate in the authority of Christ they differ notably from the faithful. These realize, however, that "the presence of Christ in their ministry is not to be understood as if... (they) were preserved from all human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error and even sin".⁹⁶ The word and guidance of ministers are subject to greater or lesser effectiveness depending on their natural or acquired qualities of intelligence, will, character and maturity. This awareness together with a realization of the sacramental origins of the pastoral ministry, inspires them to imitate Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and makes pastoral charity indispensable for a fruitful exercise of the ministry.

"The essential object of their action as pastors and of the authority conferred on them" is "to bring the communities entrusted to them to full spiritual and ecclesial development".⁹⁷ However, "the community dimension of pastoral care...the needs of each of the faithful...Jesus himself, the Good Shepherd, calls "his sheep one by one" with a voice well known to them (*John* 10, 3-4). By his example he has set the first canon of individual pastoral care: knowledge of the people and friendly relations with them."⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 6.

⁹⁵ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 28.

⁹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1550.

⁹⁷ John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 19 May 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1254.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 4., *i.e.*, pp. 1255-1256.

In the Church, a community vision of the pastoral ministry must be in harmony with this personal pastoral care. Indeed, in building up the Church the pastor always moves from a personal to a community dimension. In relating to individuals and communities, the priest cares for all "*eximia humanitate*".⁹⁹ He can never be the servant of an ideology or of a faction.¹⁰⁰ He is obliged to treat men "not according to what may please men, but according to the demands of Christian doctrine and life".¹⁰¹

Today more than ever, the style of pastoral action needs to be such as can address the demands arising in traditionally Christian communities which have become largely secularized. In this context, consideration of the *munus regendi*, in its original missionary sense, acquires greater significance. The *munus regendi*, however, should never be confused with a merely bureaucratic or organizational task. It requires a loving exercise of strength on the part of priests — the model for which is the pastoral activity of Jesus Christ. He, as is clear from the Gospels, never refused to assume that responsibility deriving from his messianic authority and exercised it with charity and strength. This authority is not an oppressive domination but a spirit of and a willingness to serve. This dual aspect — authority and service — is the reference point for the *munus regendi* of the priest who must always commit himself to a coherent exercise of his participation in the condition of Christ, Head and Shepherd of the flock.¹⁰²

The priest, with and under the Bishop, is also a pastor of the community entrusted to him. Moved by pastoral charity he should not fear to exercise proper authority in those areas where he is obliged to exercise it for he has been constituted in authority

^w Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 6a.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 6g.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6a.

¹⁰² Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, *Tota Ecclesia*, n. 17: *I.e.*, pp. 18-20.

for this very purpose. It must be recalled that when authority is duly exercised it is done "non tam praeesse quam prodesse" (not so much to command but to serve).¹⁰³ Those in authority must overcome the temptation to exempt themselves from this responsibility. If they do not exercise authority, they no longer serve. In close communion with his Bishop and with his faithful, the priest should avoid introducing into his pastoral ministry all forms of authoritarianism and forms of democratic administration which are alien to the profound reality of the ministry, for these lead to a secularization of the priest and a clericalization of the laity.¹⁰⁴ Behind such approaches to the ministry there is often a hidden fear of assuming responsibility or making mistakes, of not being liked or of being unpopular or indeed a reluctance to accept the cross. Ultimately these spring from an obscuring of the real source of priestly identity which is assimilation to Christ, the Shepherd and Head of the flock.

New evangelization requires that the priest make his authentic presence evident in the community. They should realize that the ministers of Jesus Christ are present and available to all men.¹⁰⁵ Thus their amicable insertion into the community is always important. In this context it is easy to understand the significance

¹⁰³ St Augustine, *Ep.* 134, 1: *CSEL* 44, 85.

¹⁰⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 19; John Paul II Allocution at the Symposium "Collaboration of the Laity with the pastoral ministry of priests" (22 April 1994), n. 4; *Sacrum Ministerium* 1 (1995) 64; cf. Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legal Texts, Interdicasterial Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* on some questions concerning the collaboration of the lay faithful with the ministry of priests, 15 August 1997, Forward: *AAS* 89 (1997), p. 852.

¹⁰⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 66: *I.e.*, pp. 67-68.

and pastoral role of the discipline concerning clerical garb, to which the priest should always conform since it is a public proclamation of his limitless dedication to the brethren and to the faithful in his service to Jesus Christ. The more society is marked by secularization, the greater the need for signs.

The priest should avoid falling into the contradictory position of abdicating exercise of his specific authority so as to involve himself in temporal, social or even political matters,¹⁰⁶ which God has left to the free disposition of man.

The priest enjoys a certain prestige amongst the faithful and, in some places, with the civil authorities. He should, however, be aware that such prestige should be lived in humility and used correctly for the promotion of the "salus animarum" while remembering that Christ is the real head of the people of God. It is to Him that the faithful must be directed and not to any attachment to an individual priest. The faithful belong to Christ alone, for only He has redeemed them by His precious blood, to the glory of God the Father. He is thus Lord of all supernatural goods and Teacher who teaches with authority. In Christ and the Holy Spirit, the priest is but an administrator of the gifts entrusted to him by the Church. He has no right to omit or deviate them or remodel them to his own liking.¹⁰⁷ He has received, for example, no authority to teach the Christian faithful that only some of the truths of the Christian faith have been given to him so as to obscure

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2442; *CIC*, canon 227; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 33: *I.e.*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 22; *CIC*, canon 846; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of priests, Tota Ecclesia*, nn. 49 and 64: *I.e.*, pp. 49 and 66.

or ignore others which he personally considers more difficult to accept or "less relevant".¹⁰⁸

Concerning new evangelization and the pastoral leadership given by priests,, all need to undertake a sincere and careful discernment. The attitude of "not wishing to impose", etc., may well mask a misconception of the very theological substance of the pastoral ministry or a lack of character which seeks to escape responsibility. Neither undue attachment to persons or particular ministerial positions nor misguided desires for popularity nor lack of proper intention can be underestimated when making this discernment. Pastoral charity, void of humility, is empty. Pride or need to crave attention can mask seemingly motivated rebellion, reticence in the face of pastoral changes desired by the Bishop, eccentric preaching and celebration of the liturgy, refusal to wear ecclesial garb or alteration of ecclesiastical garb for personal convenience.

New evangelization demands a renewal of commitment to the pastoral ministry, especially on the part of priests. "As the Council points out 'the spiritual gift which priests have received in ordination does not prepare them merely for a limited and circumscribed mission, but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation to the end of the earth. The reason is that every priestly ministry shares in the fullness of the mission entrusted by Christ to the Apostles'.¹⁰⁹ Numerical shortages of clergy, experienced in some countries, coupled with the mobility of the contemporary world makes it particularly necessary to be

¹⁰⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 26: *I.e.*, pp. 697-700; Catechesis at the General Audience 21 April 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 938; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 45: *I.e.*, pp. 43-45.

¹⁰⁹ John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 18: *I.e.*, p. 684; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 10.

able to call on priests who are willing to change not only pastoral assignments but also cities, regions, countries in response to various needs and to undertake whatever mission may be necessary while renouncing personal plans and desires for the sake of the love of God. "By the very nature of their ministry they should therefore be penetrated and animated by a profound missionary spirit and 'with that truly Catholic spirit which habitually looks beyond the boundaries of diocese, country or rite, to meet the needs of the whole Church, being prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere'".¹¹⁰ A correct sense of the particular Church, especially in permanent formation, should never obscure a sense of the universal Church and should always be in harmony with it.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. How can the Mercy of God of those in need be made more clearly evident through our communities and especially through our priests? Is sufficient emphasis given to the practice of the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy as a means of attaining Christian maturity and of evangelizing?
2. Is pastoral charity in all its dimensions really "the soul and dynamism of the permanent formation" of our priests?
3. Are priests encouraged to care for their brother priests with a sincere fraternal spirit, especially the sick and the old or those who find themselves in difficulty? Are there forms of common life available?
4. Do our priests understand and exercise their proper and correct function as spiritual leaders of the communities entrusted to them? In what concrete form is this exercised?

¹¹⁰ **John Paul II**, Post Synodal Apostolic **Exhortation** *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 18: *I.e.*, p. 684; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Optatam Totius*, n. 20.

5. Given the urgency of the apostolic mission on the threshold of the Third Millennium when all the faithful must be asked to have the courage to show that they are followers of Christ by manifesting themselves as believers, how can emphasis be given to the need for priests to make ever more evident, even externally, their specific presence among men?
6. Is sufficient emphasis given to the missionary dimension of the sacred ministry and to the Church's universal dimension in the spiritual formation of priests?
7. Do we factually omit preaching on certain truths of the faith or particular moral principles simply because they are regarded as difficult to accept?
8. Are all priests encouraged to teach Christian morality in its integrity?
9. One of the demands of the pastoral ministry is to unite initiatives in promoting the mission of evangelizing. Are all the vocations present in the Church encouraged and their specific charisms respected?

CONCLUSIONS

"New evangelization needs new evangelizers and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path toward holiness".¹¹¹ To accomplish this it is fundamentally important that every priest rediscover the absolute need for personal sanctity. "Before purifying others, they must purify themselves; to instruct others they must be instructed; they have to become light in order to illuminate and become close to God in order to bring others closer to Him; they have to be sanctified in order to sanctify".¹¹² This commitment is made concrete in a

¹¹¹ John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 82f, *I.e.*, p. 801.

¹¹² St Gregory Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 2, 71: PG 35, 480B.

profound *unity of life* which leads the priest to be and live as another Christ in all the circumstances of his life.

The faithful in the parish and those who collaborate in various pastoral activities see, observe, feel, and listen not only when the Word of God is preached but also when the liturgy is celebrated, especially the Mass, when they are received in the parochial office (which should be comfortable and welcoming)¹¹³; when the priest eats and when he rests and they are edified by his temperance and sobriety; when they visit his home and they rejoice in his simplicity and priestly poverty;¹¹⁴ when they talk with him and discuss common interests and are comforted by his spiritual outlook, his courtesy and his behaviour in treating humble people with priestly nobility. "The grace and charity of the Altar are diffused at the ambo, in the confessional, in the parish archive, in the schools and oratories, in the homes of the faithful, in the streets and at the hospitals, on public transport and in the media. The priest has an opportunity to fulfill his role as Pastor everywhere. In every instance it is his Mass which is diffused. His spiritual union with Christ, Priest and Host, causes him to be the grain of God that is to become the true bread of Christ — as St. Ignatius of Antioch says (*Epist. ad Romanos*, IV, 1) — for the good of the brethren".¹¹⁵

Thus the priest of the Third Millennium will be able to repeat again the reaction of the disciples at Emaus, who, having heard Jesus, the Divine Teacher, explain the Scriptures, could not but

¹¹³ Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 43: *I.e.*, pp. 731-733.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 17; *CIC*, canon 282; John Paul II Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 30: *I.e.*, pp. 705-707; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, rota Ecclesia*, n. 67: *I.e.*, pp. 68-70.

¹¹⁵ John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 7 July 1993, n. 7: *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 2 (1993), p. 38.

ask themselves "did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" {Lk 24, 32). We pastors should entrust ourselves to Mary, Queen and Mother of the Church, so that, united with the Vicar of Christ, we may discover new ways to evince a sincere desire for renewal among the Church's priests in their tasks as teachers of the Word, ministers of the Sacraments and leaders of the community. Let us ask the Queen of Evangelization for the Church to discover anew the path which the mercy of God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, has prepared from all eternity to draw all men, including our own generation, into communion with Him.

*Rome, at the Palace of the Congregations, 19 March 1999,
Solemnity of St. Joseph, Patron of the universal Church.*

Darfo Card. Castrillon Hoyos
Prefect

Csaba Ternydk
Titular Archbishop of Eminenziana
Secretary

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

MARY,

Star of the New Evangelization,

who from the outset gladdened and renewed the hearts of the apostles and their helpers in their spreading the Gospel, at the dawn of the third millennium, cause to grow in priests an increasing realization that they are primarily responsible for new evangelization.

MARY,

First of the evangelized and first evangelizer,

who with incomparable faith, hope and charity responded to the Angel, intercede for those configured to your Son, Christ the Priest, so that they too may respond in the same spirit to the Holy Father's urgent call made to them in the Father's name on the occasion of the great Jubilee.

MARY,

Teacher of lived faith, who accepted the divine Word in total availability, teach priests to know the Word in prayer and to devote themselves to his service in humility and love, so that the same Word may continue to exercise his all saving power in the third millennium.

MARY,

Full of grace and Mother of grace, protect your priestly sons who, like you, are called to be collaborators of the Spirit who causes Jesus to be born in the hearts of the faithful. Teach them to be faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God during this anniversary of the birth of your Son, so that with your help they may open the way of reconciliation to sinners, make the Eucharist the summit of their lives and of the lives of those entrusted to them.

MARY,
Morning Star of the Third Millennium,
continue to guide the priests of Jesus Christ in following your
example of love of God and love of neighbour. May they know
how to be true pastors. May they guide the footsteps of all men
to your Son, true light enlightening all men (*John* 1, 9). May priests
and through them, all God's people, listen lovingly to his call on
the eve of a new millennium in the history of salvation: "Do what
he tells you" (*John* 2, 5). The Vicar of Christ tells us that "with
renewed force, the year 2000 should echo the proclamation of the
truth: *Ecce natus est nobis Salvator Mundi*".

Message for the 34th World Communications Day

JOHN PAUL II

*Theme: "Proclaiming Christ in the Media at the Dawn
of the New Millennium"*

Sunday, June 4, 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The theme of the thirty-fourth World Communications Day, Proclaiming Christ in the Media at the Dawn of the New Millennium, is an invitation to look ahead to the challenges we face, and also back to the dawn of Christianity itself, for the light and courage we need. The substance of the message which we proclaim is always Jesus himself: "the whole of human history in fact stands in reference to him: our own time and the future of the world are illumined by his presence" (*Incarnationis Mysteriorum*, 1).

The early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles contain a moving account of the proclamation of Christ by his first followers — a proclamation at once spontaneous, faith-filled, and persuasive, and carried out through the power of the Holy Spirit.

First and most important, the disciples proclaim Christ in response to the mandate he had given them. Before ascending into heaven he tells the Apostles: "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). And even though these are "uneducated, common men" (Acts 4:13), they respond quickly and generously.

Having spent time in prayer with Mary and other followers of the Lord, and acting at the Spirit's prompting, the Apostles begin the work of proclamation at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2). As we read about those marvellous events, we are reminded that the history of communication is a kind of journey, from the pride-driven project of Babel and the collapse into confusion and mutual incomprehension to which it gave rise (cf. Gen 11:1-9), to Pentecost and the gift of tongues: a restoration of communication, centred on Jesus, through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Proclaiming Christ therefore leads to a meeting between people in faith and charity at the deepest level of their humanity, the Risen Lord himself becomes a medium of genuine communication among his brothers and sisters in the Spirit.

Pentecost is only the beginning. Even when threatened with reprisals, the Apostles are not deterred from proclaiming the Lord: [We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard," Peter and John tell the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:20). Indeed, trials themselves become instrumental to the mission. When a violent persecution breaks out in Jerusalem after Stephen's martyrdom, forcing Christ's followers to flee, "those who were scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

The living heart of the message which the Apostles preach is Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection — life triumphant over sin and death. Peter tells the centurion Cornelius and his household: "They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest... And he commanded

us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:39-43).

It goes without saying that circumstances have changed enormously in two millennia. Yet the same need to proclaim Christ still exists. Our duty to bear witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus and to his saving presence in our lives is as real and pressing as was the duty of the first disciples. We must tell the good news to all who are willing to listen. Direct, personal proclamation — one person sharing faith in the Risen Lord with another — is essential; so are other traditional forms of spreading the word of God. But, alongside these, proclamation today must take place also in and through the media. "The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means" (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 45).

The impact of the media in today's world can hardly be exaggerated. The advent of the information society is a real cultural revolution, making the media "the first Areopagus of the modern age" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 37), where facts and ideas and values are constantly being exchanged. Through the media, people come into contact with other people and events, and form their opinions about the world they live in. — indeed, form their understanding of the meaning of life. For many, the experience of living is to a great extent an experience of the media (cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Aetatis Novae*, 2). The proclamation of Christ must be part of this experience.

Naturally, in proclaiming the Lord, the Church must make energetic and skillful use of her own means of communication - books, newspapers and periodicals, radio, television, and other means. And Catholic communicators must be bold and creative in developing new media and methods of proclamation. But, as

much as possible, the Church also must use the opportunities that are to be found in the secular media. Already the media contribute to spiritual enrichment in many ways — for example, the many special programmes being carried to worldwide audiences through satellite telecasts during the year of the Great Jubilee. In other cases, however, they display the indifference, even hostility, to Christ and his message that exist in certain sectors of secular culture. Often though, there is a need for a kind of "examination of conscience" on the part of the media, leading to a more critical awareness of a bias or a lack of respect for people's religious and moral convictions.

Media presentations which call attention to authentic human needs, especially those of the weak, the vulnerable and the marginalized, can be an implicit proclamation of the Lord. But besides implicit proclamation, Christian communicators should also seek out ways to speak explicitly of Jesus crucified and risen, of his triumph over sin and death, in a manner suited to the medium used and to the capacities of audiences. To do this well demands professional training and skill. But it also requires something more. In order to witness to Christ it is necessary to encounter him oneself and foster a personal relationship with him through prayer, the Eucharist and sacramental reconciliation, reading and reflection on God's word, the study of Christian doctrine, and service to others. And always, if it is authentic, this will be the Spirit's work much more than our own.

To proclaim Christ is not only a duty but a privilege. "The journey of believers towards the third millennium is in no way weighed down by the weariness which the burden of two thousand years of history could bring with it. Rather, Christians feel invigorated, in the knowledge that they bring to the world the true light, Christ the Lord. Proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth, true God and perfect Man, the Church opens to all people the prospect of

being 'divinized" and thus of becoming more human" (*Incarnationis Mysteriorum*, 2).

The Great Jubilee of the 2000th anniversary of Jesus' birth at Bethlehem must be an opportunity and a challenge for the Lord's disciples to bear witness in and through the media to the extraordinary, consoling Good News of our salvation. In this "year of favour", may the media give voice to Jesus himself, clearly and joyously, with faith and hope and love. To proclaim Christ in the media at the dawn of the new millennium is not only a necessary part of the Church's evangelizing mission; it is also a vital, inspiring and hope-filled enrichment of the media's message. May God abundantly bless all those who honour and proclaim his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the vast world of the means of social communication.

One in Spirit, Together in Action*

ASYG

INTRODUCTION

We, the 96 Asian students and youths, representing 18 countries in the Asia-Pacific region from 5 ecumenical youth organizations, namely Asia Alliance of YMCAs (AAYMCAs), Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) - Youth, World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) - Asia Pacific, International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) - Asia Pacific, International Young Christian Students Movement (IYCS) - Asia as well as international guests, gathered at YMCA of Chiang Mai, Thailand from 21st - 25th January 2000 with the theme "Review, Reflect, Renew: Building Sustainable Communities".

We decided to gather at the beginning of this millennium that marks drastic changes in our world of which the Christian youth are called to respond. We gathered here to review critically the challenges of globalization in our region, to reflect on relevant responses and renew our commitment for building a just and sustainable community.

* Statement of the Ecumenical Asian Students and Youth Gathering (ASYG) 21-28 January 2000, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The spirit of unity and solidarity of Asian ecumenical youth is traced back to the Asian Youth Assembly in New Delhi, India in 1984 and the Asian Students and Youth Gathering (ASYG) in Bangalore, India in 1993, the regional gathering in preparation for the Ecumenical Global Gathering for Youth and Students (EGGYS). The ASYG 2000 regional gathering followed numerous national gatherings held between January - December 1999.

In our discussions and deliberations, we were specifically concerned about the negative impacts of globalization on youth and students in our region. In particular, we struggled with the issues of polarization between the North and the South as well as the rich and the poor, rapid environmental degradation, cultural erosion, consumerism, gender inequality and ethnic and religious conflicts.

OUR VISION AND COMMITMENT

As students and youth in Asia, inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, we renew our commitment towards a society of social equity, eco-friendliness, gender-fairness and life-affirmation. We envision a society where no one being marginalized, oppressed and impoverished, and every human being live with dignity. We seek a global community where alternative values such as people's participation and cooperation, generosity and tolerance, diversity and spirituality are accepted as the prime organizing principles of the society.

To realize our vision in our own contexts, we commit ourselves to the following:

On Environment and Sustainable Communities

We commit ourselves to:

- Practice and promote the 5R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Refuse) among our family, friends and community
- Build awareness and launch campaigns on crucial environ-

mental issues, and organize eco-events on 'Earth day', 'Environment day', 'No Waste/Traffic day', etc.

- Organize study programs to help youth and students to get in touch with ecology, local wisdom, traditional knowledge, cultural roots and heritage in our search for alternative lifestyles
- Boycott environmentally unfriendly products and promote eco-friendly products such as organic products

We urge:

- Our churches to develop clear Biblical and Theological perspectives on environmental issues
- Our governments to establish environment-friendly policies and laws.

On Higher Education

We commit ourselves to:

- Endeavor to create a space in universities/colleges for the students' voices to be heard
- Encourage students to be concerned with holistic human development as well as intellectual development

We urge:

- Our churches and social movements to create awareness among youth and students about the impact of globalization on higher education
- Our governments to uphold their responsibility to provide quality and affordable higher education
- Our governments and universities to adopt a curriculum that is holistic to human development and meeting genuine local needs
- **Our** governments to implement the statement made in the **UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education**

On Strengthening Rural Communities

We commit ourselves to:

- Organize groups with concerned youth for the sustainable development of rural communities
- Network with other student movements, Non Government Organizations (NGOs), social movements and churches to support rural issues
- Expose young people to the realities of rural communities and encourage them to respond to these issues urgently
- Promote the use of local products
- Explore Biblical foundations for strengthening their commitment to rural communities issues

We urge:

- Church leaders to lead and motivate congregations to practice simple lifestyles
- Our governments to adopt a balanced development policy preserving the sustainability of rural communities

Qm Gender

We commit ourselves to:

- Be critical to mass media and its projection on women's image
- Raise awareness on women's issues and rights among our organizations, create community for both genders to work in partnership, and support- initiatives for women empowerment
- Work with women in vulnerable situations such as in prostitution, migration, and with HIV/AIDS, etc.

We urge:

- Our churches to have equal respect for women and men, to encourage and support women's programs in the churches, to open the same opportunity for both genders
- Our churches to make prayers, hymns and other documents to be gender sensitive
- Our governments to put a gender awareness course in the education curriculum

- Our governments to take the following actions: to stop the use of sex workers to promote tourism, to create laws against sexual violence and gender discrimination to ensure fair representation of women in legislative assembly and all government institutions and also to protect the rights of female domestic workers

On Indigenous People

We commit ourselves to:

- Organize various educational programs on indigenous people's issues, and provide leadership development programs for indigenous youth
- Support the inclusion of indigenous language and culture in schools and in public life

We urge:

- Our governments to adopt the UN charters on indigenous peoples rights
- Our churches to promote indigenous Theology

On Working with People of Other Faiths

We commit ourselves to:

- Encourage ourselves to develop a deep spirituality that enables us to have an open attitude towards other faiths
- Ensure that our organization's activities are open to and in dialogue with other faiths
- Work for reconciliation where there are religious/ethnic conflicts
- Network with people of other faith towards achieving common goals

We urge:

- Our churches to promote inter-religious dialogue
- Our governments to allow freedom to practice one's own beliefs
- Our governments not to use religion for political purposes

CONCLUSION

We firmly believe that actions speak louder than words. With the blessing and guidance of our God, and inspired by individuals and groups working towards sustainable communities, action plans were drawn up at National, Sub-regional and Regional level to concretize our commitments. The implementation of these plans will also be in the spirit of the Ecumenical collaboration renewed, initiated and strengthened through ASYG 2000.

We commit ourselves to put the above action plans into practice to the best of our abilities within our own contexts. To bring changes towards the society which we endeavor to achieve, we feel that it is a critical moment for us as students and youth to respond to the call of God through our own practice, actions and continued reflections.

Being in one spirit of Jesus Christ, our Liberator, we will pray and work together with our sincere belief and aspirations towards a Biblical Vision, that is: *"Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream"* (Amos 5:24).

What the bishops' conference can do for bishops

MOST REV. LEONARDO LEGASPI, DD

As the local ordinary of Caceres (based in Naga City, 255 kilometers southeast of Manila), my areas of concern cover the traditional spheres of diocesan work relating to worship, catechesis and formation, social action and temporalities. But knowing that my diocese is not operating in a vacuum, I have to be aware of how political, economic and technical factors impringe on my "micro" diocesan work.

I expect, then, that in the crucial years ahead of us, the CBCP would work on the macro aspects insofar as they affect a bishop's diocesan work. But the manner, the *modus operandi*, of the CBCP must be faithful to its identity as a Church institution. This requires fidelity to pastoral principles, not to ideological or political perspectives. Otherwise, it would be difficult to link diocesan work with CBCP initiatives.

We face a continuing situation today where "Caesar," the State and its politics, has taken the initiative in defining the issues of the day. We must strive to reject the illusion that only the issues of politics and economics are the critical ones, which the Church has to address if it is to be considered relevant. Ours is a constant

struggle to maintain our identity and integrity as bishops who have a Gospel to announce and not a political platform.

One important facet of our identity as bishops is to avoid imposing the power of our institutional life upon this world. The lordship of Jesus Christ is not promoted through triumphalistic power plays but through sacrificial love. The ministry of a bishop, whose function it is to be "the visible principle and foundation of unity in his particular church," must safeguard those values which promote communion in his diocese, the values of peace, harmony, and charity.

We, the Church, must carefully select the issues we critique. We need not fall into the media-manipulated temptation of making pronouncements on every political issue. And when we do have to make a statement, let our statement be pastoral rather than colored politically to the delight of some sectors in media. A pastoral statement is grounded on pastoral principles. It does not judge prematurely, leaves room for conversion and avoids scandalizing or confusing the faithful. Our public statements must be based on prudent judgments which might at times point toward postponing conclusions when not all the facts are in or known.

During the dark years of martial rule, the Philippine Church learned to relate to the State mainly in adversarial ways. Perhaps it is time to pass on to less confrontational approaches. During the [late president Ferdinand] Marcos era, the Church rightly and courageously stressed the demands of justice above all. But the times call for a new balance between the demands of justice and those of charity.

PCP-II gave us a guiding framework in its National Pastoral Plan. The pastoral principles and perspectives should underlie our CBCP public pronouncements. The plan defined the Church in the Philippines as being called to be a "Church of the poor" whose vision is to be a "community of disciples" and whose response is "renewed integral evangelization."

In view of this plan, what studies can the CBCP undertake to help a diocese become a "Church of the poor"? What surveys can the conference undertake to find out the pulse of the People of God on matters related to worship, formation, and social action? Above all, how can the CBCP help us diocesan bishops realize our common vision to be an authentic community of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ? In other words, can its studies and pastoral letters and public initiatives help us build this community?

The CBCP could also prioritize three key issues in the next three years such as the follow-through of the important initiatives taken by the Mindanao [southern Philippines] bishops in the area of peace. Other issues could be related to our youth apostolate and helping dioceses evaluate their implementation of key PCP-II decrees.

In the mid-1960's Jesuit psychologist Father Jaime Bulatao described a "split-level Christianity" of Filipinos living their faith on two levels, the conceptual and the behavioral. Filipinos, he noted, appeared to be able to compartmentalize and operate contradicting value systems. "The Churches are full, and so are the brothels. The politicians who receive communion on Sunday receive kickback commissions on Monday," Father Bulatao observed.

He speculated that their origins and the way they are assimilated might explain this easy cohabitation of two value sets. The Christian part is learned in the institutional setting of a church or school and probably conceptualized or verbalized in a foreign language, he said.

Today we also see a resurgence of spiritual energies among the so-called "born again" Christians. We have lost and continue to lose a good number of our youth and working groups to these sects. One reason for their success is that they speak the idiom of the masses. Thus, sadly, their witness to the Gospel might be more relevant than ours is to our common people.

Inspired by the Mindanao experience, diocese in Luzon [northern Philippines] have formed regional bodies for better coordination and cooperation. The products of these regional initiatives should be fed to other ecclesial regions through the CBCP.

Perhaps we bishops should now give witness through collective action. Such action must involve a personal sacrifice by each and every one of the bishops. We shall then be living symbols of what it means to be bishops, servants of the community of the disciples whose actions as well as words remind the faithful of the humility and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Road Ahead

MOST REV. ORLANDO QUEVEDO, O.M.I.

Crisis and Questions

We are coming to the end of our National Consultation. It has been a very hectic and productive week. Coming at the heels of national crisis and the People Power II, the Consultation took on greater importance and urgency as the questions were raised with great concern. What can we do as Church to respond to the manifest malaise of the country? What can we do to assure that People Power III or IV or V will not happen again? Can we really do away with the evils of our society? Are they not part and parcel of our damaged culture? Did we as Church somehow contribute to what we are now as a people, eager to develop but making the wrong choices of those we want to lead us? Even as we say, rightly so, that we have somehow contributed through solidarity with people of other faiths and other members of civil society to defeat evil once again, should we not say *mea culpa* for whatever weaknesses and sins we have as Church, for our silence or complicity, for some lack of active resolve to renew the social order? What can we really do in the light of our mission to evangelize? We came to this consultation with so many questions of great import for the Church and for the country.

Revisiting PCP-II and our Pastoral Plans

So we looked at the road we have traveled in the past ten years since the Second Plenary Council. We revisited the task and the process of renewal set out by PCP-II, the efforts of our dioceses, apostolic vicariates, and prelatures, the efforts of all sectors of the Church to renew ourselves and our society. We reminded ourselves of the vision-mission statement of the Church in the Philippines. Realistically we saw efforts that failed. But we were buoyed up by many more stories of success in the task of renewal, many of which were somehow inspired and given impetus by the renewing Spirit of PCP-II. We began to realize that the plans resulting from Synods, Councils, and Assemblies of local Churches can, like the bare bones in the Valley of the Dead in the story of Ezekiel, become alive and help make the Church rise and become even more vibrantly alive as a moral force for social transformation. If PCP-II had described the Church as flawed but potent. Surge, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi has said at PCP-II. In the past ten years we have realized how true those words are. The road of renewal is long, arduous, a road of disappointments as well as of great bursts of enthusiasm and impelling conviction. That road reminds us of the rhythm of Christian life, of the paschal mystery of our Lord Jesus.

Today once again we have certainly placed ourselves as God's people on the road toward Damascus, the road of conversion and transformation. Our road leads us to Jerusalem the city of peace and yet the city of struggle and of conflict. There Jesus struggled with the elemental powers of darkness, a struggle so fierce as to cause him great spiritual anguish at the garden of Gethsemane. After Gethsemane was calvary, and the empty tomb. Triumph over death. We experience in our lives, the life of the Church, an infinitesimal bit of that passion, death and resurrection. They are but temporal completions of God's gracious interventions in our individual lives as well as in society. The accomplishments of this

National Pastoral Consultation reflected in a renewed understanding of the vision-mission statement of PCP-II, in the formulation of nine pastoral priorities that would guide us in the next decade, and hopefully in an invigorated spirit of renewal are such temporal victories of God's grace. But we know that these bits of exciting victories were squeezed out of passionate discussion and debate, out of painful listening to opposite opinions.

Now at our National Consultation we have arrived at the lake of Galilee. Like the people during Jesus time who had gathered beside the Lake, so we likewise have heard Jesus speak to us — at the Liturgy, at our meetings and workshops, in our fraternal exchanges with one another. In many ways, he has re-announced the Good News of his Father's Kingdom to us, the Good News of himself. And now he is saying once again, ***Due in altum! Put out into the deep!***

Once again he is bidding us to cast our nets. He promises a catch of marvelous surprises. That is the future ahead of us, a future of the wonderful works of God.

Conditions of Renewal toward Authentic Community and Discipleship

But the story of Jesus, Simon Peter and his companions tell us some of the qualitative pre-requisites of renewal. On the road ahead of us:

1. We have to center our lives on Jesus. We are disciples, not of anyone else, not of any ideology, not of any temporal cause - but disciples of Jesus, God-made-human, God-made-poor.

2. All renewal efforts in Church and in society have an ultimate meaning, that all may be restored to Christ, that all may be conformed to the will of God. That is basically of holiness. Renewal efforts then are not only for the purpose of effective evangelization. Holiness is the ultimate objective.

3. A humble, contrite realization our sinfulness and weakness is truly necessary. This is why upon encountering Jesus at the Lake, Simon Peter said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." This is also the reason that the beginning of the Third Millennium, at tomorrow's Eucharistic celebration, we shall have a purification of memories, acknowledging our sins as individuals and as Church. Yet Simon's plea is really a prayer for guidance, for strength to respond to God's grace, for his hunger for God to be satiated. This is why the road of discipleship and of renewal must never cease to be strewn with prayer, contemplation and longing to see the face of God.

4. We must be sensitive to the bidding of God. After the incident at the Lake, Simon Peter and his companions, responding to the invitation of Jesus quickly left their nets, changed their whole lifestyle as farmers, and became disciples of Christ.

And those convictions I believe would have to guide us on the road of renewal.

God calls us today to put out into the deep and cast our net in the murky waters of Philippine culture, life, and society with nothing but the Word of God as our net. He will surely surprise us. From our puny human efforts, we shall have a tremendous catch. We shall be transformed. Our society, our nation shall be transformed. God's love will "sustain us. God is with us. His Mother, our own Blessed Mother, will be our guide. With them by our side, accompanying us on the journey, we cannot fail.

Thanks

Cardinal Sin, Bishop Yalung, and Bishop Yalung's collaborators, committees, Priests, Lay people and their organizations, Sisters, and Brothers.

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The drafting Committee.

Most of all the participants — without you nothing could have happened. You have offered yourselves to the Spirit and she has made use of you, your talents, your time, your heart.

Once again — Due in altum!

Liturgical Inculturation: From *Vere Dignum* to *Viang na Loob*

VIRGILIO T.J. SUERTE FELIPE

INTRODUCTION

Inculturation was one theological theme that constantly emerged in the twenty-two lectures of Theology Week sponsored by the Faculty of Sacred Theology of the University of Santo Tomas from April 10 to 15, 2000. It was mentioned by Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo in his keynote address, by Fr. Rolando dela Rosa as one of the reform areas for Asian Catholics, by Fr. Efren Rivera on his call to investigate Asian religions and cultures in search for the historical Jesus, by Fr. Vicente Cajilig as one of the challenges posed by Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia*, of course, by Msgr. Moises B. Andrade on liturgical inculturation and by Msgr. Luis D. Balquiedra as a way of linking popular religiosity and the official liturgy of the Church.

The Magisterium of the Church defines inculturation as "the incarnation of the Gospel in autonomous cultures and at the same time the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church."¹

¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Slavorum Apostolic* 2 June 1985, n. 21.

Inculturation is called for in the many areas of the life of the Church.

In this article, we shall discuss inculturation as applied to the *culmen et fons* (summit and font) of Christian life which is the liturgy.² Hence, the main title: "Liturgical Inculturation."

More specifically, we intend to make a precise evaluation of the Tagalog translations of the Protocol of the Preface especially in the official Tagalog Roman Missal, the *Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma*,³ and examine the depth or extent of its inculturation. For, "the first significant measure of inculturation is the translation of liturgical books into the language of the people."⁴

The problem, then, of this paper is whether or not the Tagalog translation of the Latin Protocol is expressive of the genius of Filipino culture. For, translation of liturgical texts is something more than the mere means of interpreting ideas. It is not just looking for the meaning of the words in the dictionary. It presupposes a whole culture prevalent in a given age.⁵

At the outset, we wish to point out, as our analysis will reveal, that the Tagalog translation of the Latin Protocol is not expressive of the genius of Filipino culture. We shall propose a new translation of the Protocol. Hence, the subtitle of the paper: "From *Vere Dignum* to *Utang na Loob*."

² "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1964), n. 10 in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., 1981 Edition (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975). (Hereafter referred to as SC).

³ *Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma* (Manila: Regional Committee for Tagalog in the Liturgy, CBCP, 1981).

⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Roman Liturgy and Inculturation*, (Rome: Vatican Press, 1994), n. 53, 24.

⁵ Cf. Salvatore Marsili, "Liturgical Texts for Modern Man," trans. Anthony M. Buono, in *Concilium: Theology in the Age of Renewal*, Vol. 42 (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), 49-70.

I. LITURGICAL INCULTURATION

Fr. Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, a well-known expert in liturgy, describes liturgical inculturation "as the process whereby the texts and rites used in worship by the local Church are so inserted in the framework of culture, that they absorb its thought, language, and ritual patterns."⁶

As a process, it involves the interaction between the *terminus a quo*, or point of departure, and the *terminus ad quern*, or point of arrival.⁷ The method involved in the process is dynamic equivalence which "consists in replacing an element of the Roman liturgy with something in the culture that has an equal meaning or value."⁸

"The *terminus a quo* of dynamic equivalence is the Roman rite as presented by the new *editio typica* of liturgical books."⁹ This is a basic requirement mandated by Vatican II.

"Within the limits set by typical editions of the liturgical books it shall be for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority ... to specify adaptations, especially as regards the administration of the sacraments, sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music, and the arts ..."¹⁰

The result of the interaction is the *terminus ad quern* of dynamic equivalence which is the liturgy of the local Church. In other words, liturgical inculturation involves translation "of the

⁶ Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, *Liturgies of the Future: The Process and Methods of Inculturation* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 29.

⁷ Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis*, A Pueblo Book (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹ Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future*, 35.

¹⁰ SC, n. 39. (Emphasis supplied).

terminus a quo, which is the Latin text, and of the *terminus ad quern*, which is the vernacular language."

II. THE PROTOCOLS IN GENERAL

Since Protocol is but a part of one unit of prayer in the whole Eucharistic Prayer, it is helpful first to situate it by providing the general framework or structure of the Preface.

The Preface is the first part of the Eucharistic Prayer, the center and summit of the celebration of the Mass.¹² "It indicates a proclamation, a speaking out before God and the faithful"¹³ of the *mirabilia Dei*, the marvels that God did in the creative and redemptive work of his Son Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Its function as a whole is to give expression to the precise motives of praise and thanksgiving in a particular eucharistic celebration.¹⁵

The Preface has a five-part structure:

1. The introductory dialogue.
2. The protocol.
3. The embolism.
4. The eschatocol.
5. The acclamation: Sanctus.¹⁶

¹¹ Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future*, 44.

¹² *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 54. (Hereafter referred to as **GIRM**).

¹³ "Pastoral Introduction to the Order of Mass," n. 116 in *The Sacramentary. Segment Three: Order of Mass* (International Commission on English in the Liturgy, August 1994).

¹⁴ Cf. Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J., *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* (*Missarum Sollemnia*), trans. Francis A. Brunner, C.Ss.R., **Vol. II** (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, Inc., 1986; originally published in Austria, 1948), 115-128.

¹⁵ GIRM, n. 55.

¹⁶ Anthony Ward, SM, and Cuthbert Johnson, OSB, *The Prefaces of the Roman Missal: A Source Compendium with Concordance and Indices*, Congregation for Divine Worship (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1989), 14.

In the Introductory Dialogue, the presider greets and invites the congregation to an active and full participation for the prayer of thanksgiving. In the Protocol, the thanksgiving addressed to the Father formally begins. In the Embolism, the reasons for thanksgiving are enunciated. In the Eschatocol, heaven and earth are as if were joined leading the assembly to the great expression of praise and thanksgiving to the Father. The triple repetition of the Sanctus (Holy) concludes the Preface.

In this paper, we shall concentrate on the Protocol which introduces the Embolism. As in the older sacramentaries of the Roman liturgy, in the present Roman Missal, *Missale Romanum*,¹⁷ all the Protocols are always introduced by the words: **Vere dignum.** We shall analyze the most extensive formula of the Protocols because the other formulae take their form either from the first two or first three lines of this extensive formula.

*Vere dignum et iustum est, aequum et salutare,
nos tibi, sancte Pater, semper et ubique
gratias agere
per Filium dilectionis tuae Iesum Christum.*

The English *Sacramentary*TM translates the above Protocol thus:

Father, it is our duty and our salvation
always and everywhere
to give you thanks
through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ *Missale Romanum ex thereto sacrosancti oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum, editio typica altera* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975). (Hereafter referred to as MR).

¹⁸ *The Sacramentary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1974).

III. ANALYSIS OF THE LATIN PROTOCOL

1. "*Were dignum et iustum est, aequum et salutare, semper et ubique, nos tibi gratias agere*"

The act of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) in the Mass is concentrated in the Preface, more particularly in the Protocol. This is expressed by the Latin words: "*nos tibi gratias agere*" (We give you thanks). The giving of thanks is qualified as "*vere dignum et iustum*" (truly right and just). *Dignum* and *iustum* are synonymous words.¹⁹ Thanksgiving is also "proper" (*aequum*) which conveys the idea of "our duty" (*aequitas*).²⁰

Thanksgiving is also "helpful toward salvation" (*salutare*). This salutary value of thanksgiving is explained by the fact that "the only proper response to the *euangelion* is the *eucharistia*,"²¹ for the gift we have received from God cannot be repaid except by a profound thanksgiving to be repeated constantly, "always and everywhere" (*semper et ubique*).

These words are characteristically Roman, i.e., juridical.²²

"When Rome accepted the gospel, the whole style and genius of the Roman culture, including its juridical conception of religion, affected the way in which the Roman Church prayed ... The *pax deorum* controlled the religious thinking of Romans. Roman religious vocabulary was, therefore, inevitably rich in juridical terms."²³

¹⁹ Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1986), 42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Jungmann, 11:115.

²² Mazza, 42.

"*Ibid.*, 42-43. This sense of the Roman juridic precision is further explained by Marsili: 'The accumulation of titles and the most detailed requests in such prayers denote the concern that the prayer be the most complete, and express and signify everything, without leaving anything uncertain,' 54-55.

These Roman, juridical terms signify that the thanksgiving being offered is truly a conscious, deliberate and free human act. It is a complete and perfect worship whereby human beings carry out their duty to God.

2. "*Sancte Pater*"

The prayer of thanksgiving is addressed to the "Holy Father" (*sancte Pater*). This address is common to all Latin Protocols, a long tradition expressing the theocentricity of the Eucharistic Prayer.²⁴

This traditional address to the Father is, of course, rooted in the instruction which Jesus himself gave on prayer. But more importantly, at the Last Supper, Jesus prayed thanking the Father and at the end of which, he commanded his disciples to "do this in memory of me." Not only the celebration of the Last Supper as a whole but his very prayer of thanksgiving addressed to the Father should serve as our model in proclaiming the Great Prayer of Thanks.

However, the English *Sacramentary* has dropped the word "holy" (*sancte*) in addressing the "Father" (*Pater*). "*Sancte Pater*" is a constant address used in all the Protocols of the 1975 *Missale Romanum*.²⁵ "Holy Father" is the address used in the *Didache*: "We give thanks to you, holy Father, for your holy name ..." ²⁶ It is also the address which Christ used in John 17:1: "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are." In Johannine theology:

The Father's holy name is, as it were, a temple wherein Jesus would have believers kept ... To be "kept in the Father's Name" or to be "sanctified in truth"

²⁴ Jungmann. 11:126.

²⁵ MR, 353-443.

²⁶ *Didache* 10. 2.

means to be preserved in a filial life and in communion with the Father by means of communion with Christ. If we compare John 17:3 ("This is eternal life, that they know thee") with John 17:26 ("I make known to them thy name, and I will make it known"), we discern a thematic parallelism which allows us to say that the revelation of God's fatherhood and the consequent knowledge and acceptance of it are a saving event and redemption in itself.²⁷

Thus, the Johannine invocation "Holy Father" is a proclamation of the filial status of believers, as a place of sanctification, salvation and redemption mediated by Jesus Christ, his beloved Son.

3. "*Per Filium dilectionis tuae Iesum Christum*"

Christ's mediatorship is eloquently expressed in the offering of thanksgiving by the whole Mystical Body of Christ to the Father.²⁸ The biblical basis of the expression under consideration is St. Paul's letter to the Colossians 1:13-14 ("He [the Father] delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the *kingdom of his beloved Son*, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins").²⁹

The kingdom of the beloved Son of God is not the kingdom of God, but the kingdom or reign which Christ has acquired through his resurrection. "This 'rule' of Christ is as it were, an already present, representative 'forerunner' of the *Basileia tou theou* (rule of God) and is exercised by the exalted Christ."³⁰ Once he has

²⁷ Mazza, 160.

²⁸ Cf. Joseph Jungmann, S.J., *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. A. Peler (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1965), 6-7.

²⁹ Ward and Johnson, 291. (Emphasis supplied).

³⁰ Note n. 43 in E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, trans. W.R. Poehlmann and R.J. Karris (Philadelphia, 1971, 38). Here Lohse is citing H.A. Wilcke.

defeated all his enemies, Christ will hand over his kingdom to the Father whose eschatological reign will never end.

The term "beloved," which describes the intimate relation between the Father and the Son, also shows that the kingdom of the Son is ultimately the kingdom or reign of God. Thus, the relevance of the passage in Mark 9:7 ("This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.").³¹ The "beloved Son" is to be heeded because he is the very Word of God.

IV. TAGALOG TRANSLATIONS OF THE PROTOCOL

Currently, there are two Tagalog sacramentaries being used in the Tagalog dioceses: the *Sakramentario*³² and the *Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma*.³³ Let us look at the translations of the Protocol in the two Tagalog Roman Missals.

A. *Sakramentario*

Translated by Msgr. Jose Abriol, the *Sakramentario* is an older Tagalog translation of the Roman Missal. Its Order of Mass including the three alternative Eucharistic Prayers and the new Prefaces introduced into the Roman rite in 1968 was confirmed by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship for the ecclesiastical Province of Manila on 7 August 1969 under Prot. n. 929/69.³⁴ It has undergone several reprintings and editions, the latest of which was the 1997 edition, published by the Archdiocese of Manila.

"The parallel passage is Matthew 17:5 ("This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him").

³² *Sakramentario*^ Inihanda ni Msgr. Jose C. Abriol, P.A., Ikalimang Limbag (Manila: Arkidiosis ng Maynila at Reyes Publishing, Inc., 1997).

³³ Although identified with Msgr. Moises B. Andrade, the *Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma* was the work of several priests from the different Tagalog dioceses.

³⁴ Sacra Congregatio Pro Cultu Divino, "Summarium Decretorum (15 maii — 30 augusti 1969)." *Notitiae*, Vol. V (Citta del Vaticano. 1969), 357.

Let us now put side by side the Latin original and Msgr. Abriol's Tagalog translation of the Protocol.

MISSALE ROMANUM

*Vere dignum et iustum est,
aequum et salutare,
nos tibi, sancte Pater, semper et na magpasalamat kaming lagi sa
ubique gratias agere
per Filium dilectionis tuae
Iesum Christum.*

SAKRAMENTARIO

*Tunay ngang marapat at matuwid,
angkop at nakagagaling
iyo, Amang banal,
alang-alang kay Jesucristong
Anak mong mahal.*

It is evident in the parallelism that Msgr. Abriol's Tagalog translation is very literal. It is a word for word translation. Likewise, some expressions are inaccurately translated, like "*aequum*" which is translated as "*angkop*" (suitable) and "*salutare*" as "*nakagagaling*" (curative or therapeutic).

Most importantly, what is theologically objectionable is Msgr. Abriol's failure to express Christ's mediatorship. "*Alang-alang kay Jesucristong Anak mong mahal*" is literally "on behalf of Jesus Christ your beloved Son." To mediate in Tagalog is "*mamagitan*." "*Alang-alang*" in Tagalog is "on behalf of/in consideration of."

Hence, the Regional Committee for Tagalog in the Liturgy deemed it necessary to make a new translation of the Protocol when they worked on the 1975 *Missale Romanum*.

B. Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma

When the Regional Committee for Tagalog in the Liturgy finished the complete Tagalog translation of the 1975 second typical edition of the *Missale Romanum* and eventually approved and confirmed by competent ecclesiastical authorities, the *Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma* has supplanted the *Sakramentario* of Msgr. Abriol. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines emphatically declares:

The Tagalog translation *Pagmimisa sa Roma* was approved by the CBCP on April 18, 1978 and subsequently confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship under Prot. CD 925/78 and CD 915/81. With the Congregation's confirmation the older translation by Msgr. Abriol, which at earlier date had been approved *ad interim* by the Holy See, has been superseded.

In view of the aforementioned facts, the Episcopal Commission wishes to remind all that the *Pagmimisa sa Roma* is the SOLE CANONICALLY APPROVED Tagalog translation of the Roman Missal of Paul VI.³⁵

Let us now juxtapose the Latin original and the official Tagalog translation of the Protocol. Here, we have to underline the words that are parallel because of some alterations in the sequence of expressions in the Tagalog translation.

MISSALE ROMANUM

Were dignum et iustum est, aequum
et salutare,
nos tibi,
sancte Pater, semper et ubique
gratias agere
per
Filium dilectionis tuae
Iesum Christum.

PAGMIMISA SA ROMA

Ama naming makapangyarihan,
tunay ngang marapat

na ikaw ay aming

pasalamatan
sa pamamagitan

ni Hesukristo
na aming Panginoon.

Unlike Msgr. Abriol's literal translation, the Regional Committee for Tagalog in the Liturgy's version has shortened the Latin

³⁵ Episcopal Commission on Liturgy, "Translation of Liturgical Texts," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos*, Vol. LXXIV, n. 809 (Manila: U.S.T. Press, November-December 1998), 815. (Emphases in the original).

Protocol. It is so attenuated that it has retained only the essentials of the Latin original. Moreover, we observe that substitutions in the title of the Father and of the Son have been made in the Tagalog translation. Instead of "*banal*" (*sancte*), "*makapangyarihan*" (almighty) is used. In lieu of "*minamahal mong Anak*" (*Filium dilectionis tuae*), "*aming Panginoon*" (our Lord) has been adopted.

Explaining this shift of titles, Msgr. Moises Andrade, then Tagalog Missal project director, explained:

The "Our Father" can be considered as a shortened Eucharistic Prayer while the Eucharistic Prayer can be called an elaboration of the "Our Father." All the other prayers such as the Opening Prayer (Collect), Prayer Over the Gifts (formerly called Secret), and Prayer after Communion (Postcommunion) are either partial anticipations or specific replications of portions of the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Opening Prayer anticipates the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer; hence, both begin with the words "*Ama naming makapangyarihan*."³⁶

Omitting the title "*Filium dilectionis tuae*" (your beloved Son) and substituting the significant title of the Risen Savior, "*Panginoon*" (Lord), the Tagalog Protocol is here "attesting to the indubitable and continuous profession of faith to the presence of the Risen Lord during the eucharistic celebration."³⁷

³⁶ Fr. Moises B. Andrade, Jr., "*Ama Namin*" in Tagalog Daily Missal Explained," *Philippine Daily Express* (January 9, 1982), 13. Also in Ricardo Cardinal Vidal's "Notes on the Tagalog Translation of the Roman Missal" in the *CBCP Monitor*, Vol. II, n. 5 (May 1982) and in the *Notitiae* 191-192, Vol. 18, n. 6-7 (Citta del Vaticano: Iunio — Iulio 1982), 368.

³⁷ Msgr. Moises B. Andrade, "The Institution Narrative's Consecration of the Bread in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Filipino Mass: An Example of Textual Adaptation of the Roman Liturgy in the Philippines," masteral thesis submitted to the Pontifical Liturgical Institute, Rome, 1981 and published in the *Philippiniana Sacra*, Part I, XIX (May-August 1984), 213.

What is most significant in this official Tagalog translation of the Protocol is its deliberate avoidance of the repetitive, legal exactness of the Roman-Latin formulation of the Protocol. The long qualification of thanksgiving (*Vere dignum et iustum est, aequum*) has been simply put as "*tunay ngang marapat*" (It is truly right).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

We can conclude that from the literal translation of Msgr. Abriol of the Latin Protocol to the attenuated version of the Regional Committee for Tagalog in the Liturgy, there has been an improvement and development in the rendition into Tagalog of the Latin original. However, we still observe the presence of the Roman-Latin style which is juridical and legalistic in both Tagalog translations. More obvious in the *Sakramentario*, it is toned down in the *Aklat ng Pagmimisa sa Roma*.

The Tagalog Protocol is thus formulated with the spirit of the Roman-Latin style, i.e., juridical. Although an innovation has been introduced addressing the "Father" as "*Ama namin*" to make the Protocol easily familiar and recognizable with the help of the common prayer, "The Lord's Prayer" (*Ama Namin*), the whole Protocol is still couched in the Roman-Latin style.

Probably, this is one instance that made the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines significantly remarked in July 1999 in its very first pastoral exhortation in Pilipino, *Landas ng Pagpapakabanal*: "*Ang kaloobang Pilipino [ay] hindi nakukuntento sa napaka-pormal at may pagkadayuhang liturhiya ng Simbahan.*"³⁸ (The inner spirit of the Filipino is not at ease with a too formal and apparently foreign liturgy of the Church).

³⁸ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Landas ng Pagpapakabanal* (Hulyo 1999), n. 66.

Although it has been already in our native tongue for several years, our liturgy still appears foreign to us. We respectfully submit that one explanation for this unfortunate situation is that the formulation of our prayers, with its thought-pattern and cultural context and values, is still the Roman-Latin style. This is revealed by our investigation of the Tagalog Protocol.

Hence, to deepen more the substantial progress already made in improving and in inculturating the Protocol, we propose the following emendations.

Since "ours is a highly personalistic culture"³⁹ and not juridical as that of the Romans and since "we Filipinos are moved especially by personal relationships"⁴⁰ and not by obligation, we submit, that the dynamic equivalence of "*dignum et iustum est, aequum*" is "*bilang pagtanaw ng utang na loob*" (as debt of gratitude/volition).

Here we are further supported by another significant statement of the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines in the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*: "Proclaiming God as Father, as *Ama* ... We recognize the tremendous **utang na loob** we owe God our Father."⁴¹

Pastorally, we judge that there is wisdom in maintaining the address to the Father as "*Ama namin*" (Our Father) and the attribute to the Father, "*makapangyarihan*" (almighty). In addition to the reason put forward by Msgr. Andrade, we can only add that since the Tagalog clergy has been accustomed to such address in every Mass in which they preside, it is pastorally advisable not "to rock the boat" by changing the customary address.

³⁹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture" (January 1999), n. 19 in the *CBCP on the Threshold of the Next Millennium*, ed. Pedro C. Quitorio III (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 1999), 198.

⁴⁰ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life Publications, 1997), n. 1685, 483.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n. 282, 82. (Emphasis in the original).

However, we deem it proper to bring back the salutary value of the thanksgiving and the Christological title "your beloved Son" for the theological reasons already discussed and to be more faithful to the original Latin.

We provide below our proposed version of the Protocol. We have to begin with the Introductory Dialogue because "*dignum et iustum est*" is first expressed there and repeated and echoed in the Protocol. "*Sursum corda*" is rendered as "*ipaubaya*" which is an adoption from the *Misa ng bayang Pilipino*.⁴² The emendations are underlined.

Pari: *Sumainyo ang Panginoon.*

Bayan: *At sumaiyo rin.*

Pari: *Ipaubaya ang ating mga alalahanin sa Diyos.*

Bayan: *Ipinauubaya na namin nang lubos.*

Pari: *Taos-pusong pasalamat natin ang Panginoong ating Diyos.*

Bayan: *Bilang pagtanaw ng utang na loob.*

Ama naming makapangyarihan,
bilang pagtanaw ng utang na loob
taos-pusong pasasalamat sa 'yo'y lagi naming handog
na kaligtasan namin ang dulot
sa pamamagitan ng minamahal mong Anak.
ang Panginoong Hesukristo na Tagapagligtas.

Finally, Pope John Paul II has asked that the Jubilee Year "be intensely Eucharistic."⁴³ It is hoped that this paper has contributed in its own small way to the Pope's invitation. By

⁴² For the explanation of "*ipaubaya*" as dynamic equivalent of "*sursum corda*," see Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB, "A Filipino Adaptation of the Liturgical Language," *Studia Anselmiana* 68, Extractum Eulogia Miscellanea Liturgica (Roma: Editrice Anselmiana), 46.

⁴³ Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), n. 55, Third Printing (Pasay City, Philippines: Daughters of Saint Paul, 1996), 66.

employing the genius of Tagalog values and idiomatic expressions, we intend to make the Eucharist intensely Filipino. Thus, welling up from the Filipino "*kalooban*," the singing of the Protocol in every Eucharist truly becomes to the Filipino a "Jubilee Song." "It's the time to give thanks to the Father, Son and Spirit."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ From the Jubilee Song composed by Fr. Carlo Magno of the Archdiocese of Manila.

Revisiting Models in Theology: An Exploration into Theological Method

JAMES KROEGER, MM*

Over twenty-five years have passed since Jesuit Avery Dulles, who was recently made a cardinal by Pope John Paul II, published a book on comparative ecclesiology that had a wide influence in many areas of theology, religious education, and pastoral practice. *Models of the Church* (1974) had the subtitle "A Critical Assessment of the Church in all its Aspects"; in it Dulles sifted out five major approaches as he struggled to present a popular, yet balanced and integrated, theology of the church.

Dulles' work saw a second edition in 1987; he added one new chapter: "The Church: Community of Disciples." According to Dulles, this additional chapter was designed "to bring the book

* Doctor of Missiology (Gregorian University), has served mission in Asia (Philippines and Bangladesh) since 1970 and is currently professor of Systematic Theology, Missiology, and Islamics at the Loyola School of Theology in Manila. Author of *Living Mission* and *Asia-Church in Mission* (Orbis Books - New York; Claretian - Manila), he also serves as the secretary-convenor of the Asian Mission Societies forum (AMSAL), in collaboration with the Asian Bishops' Office of Evangelization. Father Kroeger has edited two books in conjunction with the Philippine National Mission Congress 2000. *Tell the World* and *Telling God's Story* (Claretian-Manila).

into alignment with my current thinking" (13). Dulles also noted the "potentialities" of the discipleship approach "as a basis for a comprehensive ecclesiology" (207).

Dulles himself wrote another "models" book: *Models of Revelation*: it too appeared in various editions: 1983, 1985, 1994. Other theologians have employed the "models" approach in various areas of theology and church life. Some few examples are: *Models of God* (S. McFague), *Models of Jesus* (J. O'Grady), *Models of the Kingdom* (H. Snyder), *Models of Theological Reflection* (R. Collins), *Models of Holiness* (C. Duquoc & C. Floristin), *Models of Contextual Theology* (S. Bevans).

A variety of questions may arise as one considers employing models within theology and related areas of church life. Are "models" a valid approach to express theological ideas and insights into the faith? Are they too analytical? Do they result in fragmenting theology? Are they an effective means to clearly communicate the various dimensions of a complex subject (e.g. Christ, Church, Revelation)? Is this models approach still to be promoted or was it only a "passing fad" in theology? Does it have universal applicability?

THE MODELS APPROACH. The first section of this essay focuses on the use of models as a methodology for approaching a particular area or body of knowledge (theological subjects included). The "models method" aims to be a simple and helpful approach; it can certainly be complemented and enriched with other materials and methods. Experientially, a models approach has much to recommend it.

Even before employing models within theology, one should note that the phenomenon of "modeling" applies to all areas of human knowing and human symbolism: it relates to the attempts of the human mind and human imagination to both **grasp** and **express** our realities. Several examples illustrate this point.

It is valid to speak of models or approaches in the area of the fine arts, e.g. painting, music, literature, architecture, design. For example, there can be a classical, modern, and religious "model" or type of music or literature; one can have African, Western, and Oriental painting or fashion.

Human behavior can follow various patterns. Models of leadership could be termed as directive, participative, *laissez faire*, or even dictatorial. People everywhere are accustomed to the various models of consumer goods, e.g. vehicles, household appliances, electronic equipment. In a word, the use of models in human thought and daily life is a common experience.

This approach of models emerges from the recognition that a single definition or description is usually inadequate to grasp a complex body of knowledge or experience. Employing various models / perspectives / insights enables one to systematically investigate a multi-faceted subject in a step-by-step or phase-by-phase approach. Each perspective brings additional clarity. Each model adds new insight and further understanding. The subject under investigation becomes clearer and better understood with each additional perspective that is added.

A concrete example drawn from the field of psychology can serve to illustrate how models progressively provide an increasing clarity of perception. What is the human personality? What are those special characteristics that compose and distinguish a particular person? How is one's personality formed as the sum total of various distinctive individual and social character traits?

Authors in the area of human psychology have explored and enriched our understanding of the human person. By sketching various models of the individual, each author has contributed some unique insight. Skinner showed how "conditioning" affects humans. Frankl explored the centrality of "meaning" for persons. Dollard and Miller are associated with the "learning" theory. Piaget and

Kohlberg are linked in the area of "moral-ethical development." Rogers focused on "client-centered" dimensions. Glasser developed "reality" themes and therapy.

Each of these writers brought to light their own "model" of human personality growth. Thus, a variety of integrated theories based on the human reality manifests the complexity of the human person. Each model adds its own valid insight into the multi-faceted nature of human identity. As the field of psychology illustrates, using a variety of insights enriches the overall perception of the subject (in this case, the human person and personality). And yet, all the insights together do exhaust the mystery and uniqueness of the human person.

DESCRIPTIONS OF A MODEL. Building upon the foregoing material that presents the approach of models and notes how "modeling" is a common life experience, some descriptive definitions of a model can now be presented. A model is a conceptual or symbolic representation / system / framework by which a reality or a part of reality is both *grasped* and *expressed*. As thinking persons, humans seek to put order, structure, and intelligibility into their experience and knowledge; models facilitates this process.

Dulles himself described a model in his book *Models of Revelation* as "a relatively simple, artificially constructed case which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated" (30).

A model functions by encompassing several elements in one heuristic structure; it progressively opens one to a complex—and even mysterious — reality. Because all reality is multi-dimensional, employing a variety of forms (models) enables greater focus and specificity. Models have proven their validity in mathematics and in the natural and social sciences; many theologians are convinced of their relevance within theological disciplines.

APPLICATIONS WITHIN THEOLOGY. Eight book titles were mentioned in an earlier section of this essay. To illustrate how a models approach is concretely applied to an area of theology, a return to some of those titles proves helpful. Hopefully, this brings a concreteness to the "theory of models" that has been elucidated thus far.

Cardinal Dulles proposes five models of the church. The Institutional Model focuses on the church's structure, hierarchy, organization, rules and doctrines. The Community Model explores the communion and unity dimensions with a strong focus on people. The Church as universal sign of God's presence and salvation in the world is central in the Sacramental Model. God's Word, its proclamation and the centrality of the scriptures are pivotal in the Herald Model. The Servant Model highlights the church's serving function in society (e.g. justice, peace, ecology, health, education, etc.). Viewing the Church as "Community of Disciples," though only one perspective, helps to integrate the insights of the other approaches. As a result, a comprehensive, integrated ecclesiology emerges.

In *Models of Revelation* Dulles sets forth five models. The "doctrinal" model is centered on God's authoritative teaching and humanity's attentive and docile reception of that teaching. The "historical" model explores, God's revelatory action in history through signs given to his people. Immediate interior experience of God's divine presence and the prayerful openness of the recipient are central in the "experiential" model. In the "dialectical" model, revelation occurs through a powerful, transforming word, such as the proclamation of the Cross and the Resurrection. Finally, in the "awareness" model, revelation takes the form of a divine breakthrough in human consciousness and awareness. As one explores these five models, a theology of revelation—in all its beauty and richness—becomes manifest.

In his *Models of Theological Reflection* R. Collins analyzes five dimensions; he explores the Efficiency, Ecclesial, Christological, Scriptural, and Anthropological models of faith-reflection. H. Synder (*Models of the Kingdom*) presents eight approaches: Kingdom as ... Future Hope, Inner Spiritual Experience, Mystical Communion, Institutional Church, Counter-system, Political State, Christianized Culture, and Earthly Utopia. *Models of God* by S. McFague proposes "Models of God for an Ecological. Nuclear Age": they are God as Mother, as Lover, and as Friend. S. Bevans' *Models of Contextual Theology* provides both an overview and examples to explore the translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, and transcendental approaches to contextualizing theology.

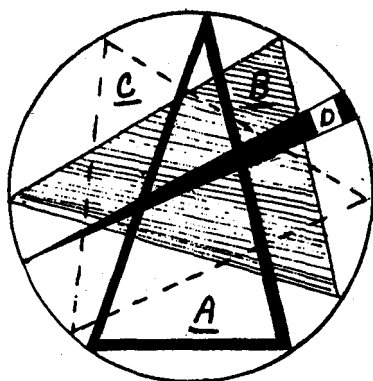
These various authors represent but a sampling of the variety of ways in which models can constructively be employed to mine the rich treasures found in various areas of theology. Any competent use of the models approach helps clarify the core reality or subject under investigation: it simultaneously shows the interrelatedness of each model with the others. Models are not exclusive of one another and should not be viewed as different or independent ways of approaching the subject. It is incorrect to either dismiss or canonize any of the models. They are to be understood heuristically as a means for deeper insights (both from a descriptive as well as a critical point of view). As a result of this process, areas of contact and divergence are more clearly seen—all within the framework of the total subject-matter.

DIAGRAM OF THE MODELS APPROACH. The models methodology (something now familiar and acceptable in theology as well as in the social sciences and mathematics) stands to benefit much from a clear diagram or illustration. The diagram given below (see figure 1) brings the various elements of a "theory of models" into sharper focus, illustrating the dynamic interplay among all aspects of the approach. The author of this piece has frequently employed this diagram both in the classroom setting and in

religious education sessions; its effectivity has also been proven within several areas of theology and missiology. Pedagogically, this diagram affords a visual representation for the reader or student: thus, the "models" theory becomes readily graspable, precisely because it can be visualized.

The following is a succinct presentation of the functional relationships of the models method. From the author's point of view, this is the core insight of this paper; it deserves careful exploration. It is, in fact, the "models-method" in a nutshell.

DIAGRAM OF THE "MODELS" METHOD



Triangle & (bold lines) = "Model A"

Triangle § (shaded) = "Model B"

Triangle C (dotted lines) = "Model C"

Triangle D (blackened) = "Model D"

Figure 1

CIRCLE >> The full circle represents the **totality** of the reality, the phenomenon, the subject (e.g. Christ, Church, Revelation, Kingdom) that one is trying to describe.

TRIANGLE >> Each individual triangle represents **one** important dimension, one insight, one "model" of the total reality; it is inscribed within the circle; it validly captures true aspects of the total reality. Models are not meant to be only abstract formulations—they have their basis in reality and are helpful in comprehending that reality.

SEVERAL TRIANGLES >> Every triangle expresses a true insight. Model (triangle) A covers a basic core of the full reality; model B highlights another dimension; model C brings additional focused insights... and so on. Many models reflect the richness of the subject as well as theological vitality, they do not imply theological confusion.

INTERSECTING TRIANGLES >> Each model brings its own insight, but also interacts with and reinforces the other models. Various models bring greater depth of insight and a type of synergy results.

BLANK SPACES >> While employing several models to express one's insight into the reality (e.g. Church, God, Revelation, Christ), one finds "unreached" or blank areas; the totality of Christian truth (*mysterion*) is never completely expressed theologically—even with several models. *Deus est maior*.

LARGE TRIANGLES >> One chooses those models that encompass a large part of the reality they intend to describe; a "narrow triangle" (small model) (e.g. Triangle D) is not as useful as a larger (more comprehensive) model.

SUPER-TRIANGLE? >> As noted, several models are helpful—each adding further clarification. All models cannot be compressed into one—each model manifests something unique about the mystery [*mysterion*] (e.g. Christ, Spirituality, Church). In a word, there is no "super-model" (one model that encompasses all other models).

Employing the models approach is, admittedly, one among many methods that can deepen and enrich theological investigation. As any method, it has its advantages and limitations. It is noteworthy that several of the books mentioned in this essay all devote entire chapters to a basic explanation of the models

methodology; they also carefully describe the specific application within their chosen subject (e.g. Church, Kingdom, Jesus). To illustrate this point, one finds that Bevens has a chapter on "The Notion and Use of Models"; Dulles writes chapters on "The Use of Models in Ecclesiology" and "The Use of Models in Revelation Theology."

Probably, the greatest contribution of the models approach within theology is the clarity of thought and communication that it promotes. Seeing the unique emphases and insights of each model is crucial; having several models interact and mutually reinforce each other brings integration of thought and vision; keeping all models within the total area of study (e.g. Church, Kingdom) speaks of the richness of theological investigation. In addition, this method of integrating theology moves easily across historical and cultural divergences of the theologizing enterprise.

And yet, there are cautions and caveats to be recognized (as in any theological methodology). Kosuke Koyama noted in *Water Buffalo Theology* (1974 & 1999): "Theology can only stammer about the person and work of Jesus Christ" (1999: 134). The totality of Christian truth and faith will never be completely expressed theologically — even with several models or many theological methodologies. God-Christ-Church - Kingdom remain mysteries, with all their revealed intelligibility and limited human comprehension.

CONTINUING RELEVANCE? In the introduction of this essay, a question was posed: Is this models approach still to be promoted or was it only a "passing fad" in theology? A variety of responses may be forthcoming, yet a convincing positive response to the continuing relevance of the models method was given by Avery Dulles himself in early 1999 (the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Models of the Church*).

"The Ecclesiology of John Paul II" was the topic of an address by Dulles at the Catholic University of America in Washington on March 27, 1999. Dulles examined the pope's theology of the church, describing John Paul II as "pre-eminently a pope of the Second Vatican Council" (759). Dulles examined the pope's writings on such matters as holiness, collegiality, primacy, reconciliation, evangelization, ecclesiastical office, human dignity, the laity, and church service. He based his presentation predominantly on the pope's 137 catechetical lectures on the church delivered at his weekly public audiences between July 1991 and August 1995.

Dulles writes: "The ecclesiology of John Paul II may perhaps be characterized in terms of five familiar models: the church as mystical communion, institution, sacrament, herald and servant. In explaining what the church is in itself, John Paul II attends to its reality as communion, institution, and sacrament. The remaining two models, however, are prominent in the pope's treatment of the church's mission to evangelize and to serve as a leavening influence in secular society." Dulles adds: "John Paul II's preferred category for ecclesiology is evidently that of communion" (759).

One may validly draw the conclusion that when an eminent ecclesiologist chooses to frame the extensive theology of the current pope within a models approach, he is convinced of the validity and utility of this particular theological method. Models of theology as a serviceable method probably needs no further justification; what remains undone is the clear communication of its usefulness (strengths and weaknesses) as a methodological approach within theology [yes, a good explanatory diagram will certainly facilitate this endeavor].

ASIAN CHURCH MODELS. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has been the most influential body in the local Churches of Asia since the Second Vatican Council. The origins of the FABC are located in the November 1970 historic

visit of Pope Paul VI to Manila; 180 Asian bishops gathered with the pope to exchange experiences and to explore the common challenges facing the Asian local churches in the last decades of the second Christian millennium. To probe the vision, insights, pastoral and missionary concerns of the FABC is to discover an "ecclesiology of the Asian churches."

Over the past three decades (1970-2001) a "new way of being church" has emerged in Asia. A renewed consciousness has emerged; the vivifying action of the Spirit has been palpable.

When the more than 200 participants of the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly gathered in Thailand in January 2000, they explored the theme: "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service." The assembly identified seven pivotal emphases that have characterized the Church in Asia since the Second Vatican Council. These identifying characteristics or core themes could validly be seen as seven models of the Church in Asia. Each brings its insight, drawn from pastoral experience; together they portray a renewed church in Asia.

Asia-Church sees herself as a pilgrim church that expresses its identity as: (1) a Church of the Poor and a Church of the Young; (2) a truly local, indigenous, and inculturated Church; (3) a Church of prayer, interiority, and contemplation; (4) a genuine community, a community of communities, particularly through the BECs; (5) a missionary Church that emphasizes integral evangelization; (6) a participatory Church that empowers women and men; and, (7) a "life-serving" Church with a deep sense of the sacred. Yes, these seven thematic models capture the heart of FABC's "new way of being Church in Asia."

CONCLUSION. This piece has focused heavily on a presentation of the use and serviceability of models within the theological enterprise; it has shown the wide applicability of the "models method" for elucidating central themes of all branches

of theology. A comprehensive diagram brought added focus to this approach. Two sketches were presented (John Paul II's ecclesiology and the FABC vision of the church), showing how the models method continues to be employed for expressing theological insights. And yet, the models method is not an end in itself: the method, however valid, seeks another goal.

Any theological method or approach is only truly helpful when it facilitates depth reflection and exploration of the mystery (*mysterion* in the Pauline vision). As a theologian, missiologist or pastor, it is of crucial importance to remember that all methods or insights are to be **humble theological reflections**. All theology must move beyond its specific methodological practice or approach. All theology is to be **servant**, not master, to the glory of the "inexpressible gift" of Christ and the Church (II Cor 9:15). Theology - and all its methods - cannot exhaust or prove the depth of God's purpose in Christ and in the Church (Rom 11:33-35).

Theology worthy of the name facilitates the exploration of the *mysterion*. Ultimately, it must promote a deeper, more fruitful encounter with the mystery itself—with God. Theology necessarily becomes spirituality. Methods and approaches will pale before a genuine encounter with the living God. The theological project aims to become the actual living into the mystery of God. "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (I Cor 2:9).

ABSTRACT

In the quarter-century since Jesuit Cardinal Avery Dulles published *Models of the Church* (1974), "models" have been extensively employed as a theological approach or method. This essay is an extended presentation of the "models methodology" and its serviceability within theology; a practical and illuminating

diagram adds further clarity to the narrative explanation. The author presents the work of diverse theologians as they employ this approach; he also cites two very recent resources that demonstrate the continued relevance of the "models" approach. The ultimate goal of this method, like all theological approaches, is to foster a genuine encounter with the living God.

Juan Diego: Model for the Laity, Patron for the Lay Apostolate

JOHN SAMAHA, SM

God's plan for salvation needs the cooperation of us all. In the Guadalupe event God chose to give the miraculous image of Holy Mary, his Mother, to a humble, lonely widower. The engaging, simple story of Our Lady giving her picture to Juan Diego touches hearts, and disposes them for the grace of baptism. This is a special chapter in the evangelization of the world.

Today we find stirrings of new interest in the unchurched, the alienated, and the disenchanting. Faster travel and easier global communication portend a new fullness of time in spreading the gospel. Since the beginning God has depended on his creatures to fulfill his plan. Today there is a desire for unity among Christians. The work of the Holy Spirit is uniting them in prayer, love, and in works of charity.

In our century Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII began to re-emphasize the importance of the role of the laity. Long before John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council to renew all in Christ, the lay apostolate was a point of emphasis and concern.

One of the sixteen documents of Vatican II is the *Decree on the Laity* (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1965), and the role of the laity is treated in several of the other documents. Some years later Pope Paul VI sounded a prophetic call to evangelization with the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Our present pontiff, John Paul II has preached a new evangelization and following a Synod of Bishops issued an apostolic exhortation on *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People* (*Christifideles Laici*, 1989).

The Handmaid of the Lord, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, who first brought forth the Savior for us, will play her part in bringing his Good News to all. The nineteenth century apostle of Mary, Venerable William Joseph Chaminade, is among the strongest voices still reminding us of our baptismal obligation to participate in the apostolic mission of Mary. Like Juan Diego, all the faithful are called to spread the fragrance of the roses of Tepeyac wherever we are, whatever we do.

"Thy Kingdom come" the daily petition of the Our Father, has always needed for its fulfillment the work and collaboration of the laity. To all Christians is given the commission to make Christ and his teaching known, loved, and lived. "The Spirit breathes where he wills" (Jn 3:8), and the people of God have always had the charisms to help spread God's kingdom on earth.

Our times need strong-and dedicated Christian lay persons more than ever before. All fields of human progress are directed by the laity. Competence in the social, commercial, and political spheres is in the hands of the laity. Only they can bring the spirit of the gospel into these arenas. In the words of Paul VI, lay persons are "the bridge to the modern world."

Recognizing the ancient truth and the new need, Vatican II issued a decree on the apostolate of the laity. For the first time in the history of the Church a conciliar document expounded the

concept that the lay person is indispensable to the mission of the Church, that to be a real Christian is to be an apostle.

The Vatican II *Decree on the Laity* sets forth as the perfect example of the spiritual and apostolic life the Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles. "While leading on earth a life common to all, one filled with family concerns and labors, she was always intimately united with her Son and cooperated in the work of the Savior in a manner altogether special. Now that she has been taken up into heaven, with her maternal charity she cares for the brothers and sisters of her Son" (n. 4).

Consequently, it is appropriate that the Model for the Laity and the Patron of the Lay Apostolate be one who will lead others to Mary, who in turn will lead them to Christ. She is the perfect example of life on earth united to Christ and joined to his work.

To choose Juan Diego would stress the motherly concern of Mary, and highlight a special chapter in the loving care of the Queen of Apostles for her children. Juan Diego's life story exemplifies the meaning of the lay apostolate. He leads with singular and irresistible charm to our spiritual mother.

Juan Diego's story continues today as something living and enduring. It lives in the long lines of pilgrims, the most numerous for any shrine. It lives in the faith of a whole nation, and is celebrated in the entire western hemisphere. It endures in the continuing portrait not painted by human hands, but as Pius XII explained, "by brushes not of this world."

Vatican II taught that "union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule God's Church is an essential element of the Christian apostolate." Juan Diego received the charism. He was called by Mary. She sent him to the bishop: "Go to the Bishop of Mexico and tell him that I sent you." The Spirit breathed on Juan, but judgment and command were reserved to the bishop, as it still is today.

The Holy Spirit usually breathes in less dramatic ways. But the experience of Juan Diego shows that the inspirational grace for a great work may first come to a lay person, and that the chosen person then cooperates with the competent authorities.

Juan Diego's humble compliance with an unwelcome and embarrassing mission paved the way for an abundant bestowal of God's blessings. In addition the event clearly indicates that a layman pushed his point with a hierarch. The bishop needed convincing, and Mary herself told Juan to go back and try again.

Mary told Juan Diego that he was necessary for the execution of heaven's plan. When he protested his inability and urged the Holy Mary to send a person better known and respected, her answer was: "Listen, least of my sons. You must try to understand that I have many messengers and servants whom I could charge with the delivery of my message and cause to do my will. But it is altogether necessary that you yourself should undertake this entreaty and that through your own mediation and assistance my purpose should be accomplished.

The importance of the most humble person carrying out the divine plan can hardly be more clearly exemplified. Mary did not go directly to Bishop-elect Juan Zumarraga and inspire him Nor did she choose the messenger most suited according to the judgment of human standards. Mary chose one particular, unknown, middle-aged widower who would have preferred to be left alone. She told him that he was to be the instrument of Divine Providence for these poor people. This unlikely layman was the key to unlocking graces destined for a nation, and later for many nations.

Juan Diego was wholehearted and without guile. He was a living example of sincerity and simplicity. When children and adults hear about him they are fascinated, and love to hear the story retold. Juan Diego's conversations with Mary have a rare quality of tenderness, immediacy, genuineness, and uniqueness.

Translated into any language they will possess a special appeal. In the Aztec Indian idiom Mary called Juan her *xocoyte*, her favorite son, the least of her sons. He addressed her as *xocoyata*, his littlest daughter, his lady, and his child. Hearing this conversation one cannot help loving both Juan and his Lady.

Peoples of the emerging nations are able to identify very easily with Juan Diego. He was humble and poor, not enmeshed in political or cultural history. With improved and increased communication, we can expect the Church will proclaim its primary message more widely and wisely. And lay persons should be the primary field workers. Juan Diego, who has universal appeal, would be an inspiration for them and an example for those with whom they work.

Whom would you choose as Patron of the Lay Apostolate? Why not Juan Diego? His life story is a perfect example of how God's plans often require lay apostles, and how far-reaching the results can be. Our Lady promised, "I will make you worthy of the trouble you have taken." On January 9, 1987, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints declared him Venerable Juan Diego in acknowledgment of his heroic virtue. When visiting Mexico City In 1990 Pope John Paul II beatified him on May 6. Presently a movement is in progress under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Mexico City to nominate Blessed Juan Diego as Patron of Lay Apostles.

Juan Diego remained faithful until death. The results of his work remain with us. Juan Diego was childlike and humble in his relationship with the natural world and the supernatural order. He was very ordinary and natural, and he felt at home with Our Lady. His simple and human qualities touch us all. He is truly worthy to be Patron of Lay apostles, for he was the only person on earth to whom the greatest laywoman of all time gave her own picture.

The actual result of Our Lady of Guadalupe's message, in which Juan Diego played the key role, brought belief in Jesus Christ and the grace of baptism to countless native Indians of Aztec heritage. In the seven years following Mary's appearance at Tepeyac (1532-1538) eight million Indians were baptized into Christ.

During that period Blessed Juan Diego lived near the marvelous picture, quietly caring for it as Joseph had cared for Mary herself. He is part of the story of the magnificent Lady, her representative, a living proof that heaven had smiled on the poor and the lowly. As with St. Joseph, we do not know all the details. But we do know the quality of this layman's charity was magnetic. "By this will all know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13:35). He was Mary's "singing eagle" telling her story over and over to his fellow countrymen.

Absolution of Reserved Sins

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

Circular No. 2000-29
31 March 2000

Acting on the mandate from the Holy Father, the Apostolic Penitentiary issued an Instruction dated December 3, 1999 regarding the grant through the Ordinaries of the Place to priests-confessors of certain faculties during the great Jubilee Year.

By virtue of this document, I hereby grant to the priests of the Archdiocese of Manila, furnished with the faculty to hear confessions, the concession to avail of the powers of the Penitentiary as provided in can. 508, par. 1 of the Code of Canon Law. This means that they can absolve in the sacramental forum undeclared *latae sententiae* censures not reserved to the Apostolic See people even outsiders within the archdiocese, and outside the archdiocese subjects belonging to Metro Manila.

The confessors, having admonished the penitents of the gravity of their sins to which is attached a censure or a reservation, are to impose a proportionate sacramental penance, such penances

which should be most conducive to a permanent conversion of morals and, according to the nature of the cases, they are also to impose the necessary reparation of any scandal or damages, if there are.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

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JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

/ have yet to brush up on De Religiosis, etc. I am to officiate at a Profession of Vows of some Religious Sisters. I got a feedback from a Liturgical Committee that Profession of Temporary vows and Profession of Perpetual vows may not be done together.

Please enlighten me on this.

A bishop

Honestly, I wonder how did you get the feedback from a Liturgical Committee that "profession of temporary vows and profession of perpetual vows may not be done together." It is the first time I hear that. Unless it is the same person professing both temporary and perpetually in the same ceremony (!) I do not see any problem about having a celebration where some Religious Sisters profess temporary and others perpetually. (I myself have witnessed that kind of ceremony, and even when I was ordained priest, in the same celebration the officiating bishop ordained first some deacons and then some priests, using obviously the corresponding rituals for each one). To have a second opinion, I commented your question to an expert in Liturgy, and he did not see either any conflict about officiating both religious professions together. This is my opinion, subject always to *melior judicio*.

MARRIAGES WITH MUSLIMS

/ have a question. Is there any present agreement between the Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Muslims regarding mixed marriages? In any case, do you know of any praxis on this regard for a Filipino Catholic who wants to contract marriage with a "Moro"?

Thank you in advance for your answer.

A parish priest

1. My answer on whether there is or not an existing agreement between the Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Muslims is negative: As far as I know, there is no any especial agreement between the Church and them. After some searching I have found nothing on this regard.

2. Therefore, the existent praxis for a Filipino Catholic who wants to contract marriage with a Muslim follows the general procedure applied to disparity of worship marriages (i.e. between a Catholic and an non-baptized party). In such cases:

- a) Dispensation from the matrimonial impediment (can. 1086) has to be sought as well as, if circumstances require it, dispensation from the canonical form (can. 1127 §2).
- b) Concerning the place of the wedding ceremony, it may be the church or, with the corresponding permission, "another suitable place" (can. 1118 §3).
- c) Regarding the "*Cautiones*" or declarations done in these cases, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has determined that they should be done in writing not only by the Catholic party but also, if possible, by the non-Catholic. For a sample form of it see F. Testera, *Canon Law*

Digest of the Philippine Catholic Church (Manila: UST Printing Press), under the word "Marriage" (p. 91-93).

But, as I said, these are the ordinary requisites for disparity of cult marriages, not especial laws for Catholic-Muslims.

The Family Code of the Philippines has a particular law for marriages with Muslims.

SUICIDE AND CATHOLIC BURIAL

This is to humbly ask you some question regarding the Church ruling on Catholics who have committed suicide. Are they still not allowed by the Church to have a Catholic burial?

A Sister

In answer to your question "Are they [Catholics who have committed suicide] *still not allowed by the Church to have a Catholic burial?*" I will tell you that the Church's ruling on Catholics who have committed suicide has changed with the present Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1983.

1. In the old Code, one of the instances in which Church funeral was denied was to "those who have deliberated committed suicide." In the present (1983) Code, that phrase does not appear any more.

Thus, the present legislation on those to whom the funeral may be denied is as follows:

1° *"Church funeral rites are to be denied to the following, unless they gave some signs of repentance before death:*

notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics;

2° *those who for anti-christian motives chose that their bodies be cremated;*

3° *other manifest sinners to whom a Church funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful."* (Canon 1184 §1)

There is no mention then about people who commit suicide among those to whom the Church funeral rites may be denied. In any case, the provision adds that "If any doubt occurs, the local ordinary is to be consulted and his judgment followed." (§2)

Very often people who commit suicide are sick, depressed, etc., deserving more pity and prayers than condemnation on our part.

2. To complete this information, I will add that suicide (attempted) is presently considered only as an irregularity for the reception and the exercising of Orders: The norms read as follows:

"The following persons are irregular for the reception of Orders:

...5° one who has gravely and maliciously mutilated himself or another, or who has attempted suicide." (Can. 1041)

"The following are irregular for the exercise of orders already received: 3° one who committed any of the offences mentioned in can. 1041, nn. 3°, 4°, 5° and 6°." (Can. 1044: §1)

Homilies for May-June 2001

MARIO BALTAZAK, OP

May 6, 2001

Fourth Sunday of Easter Cycle C

(Readings: Acts 13:14,43-52/ Apoc 7:9,14-17/Jn 10:27-30)

One reason why the bible has a universal appeal and makes for interesting reading to many is because it delivers its message in simple and familiar symbols that catch our imagination and facilitate comprehension of its meaning. However, the bible can be a difficult book if those symbols and figures, in which its messages are couched, recede from popular usage. The necessary task would then be to distinguish the message from its symbol, to pay more attention to the former, or to explain its meaning by using more current and appropriate figures or symbols.

I doubt if the Christians of today are just as powerfully affected by the symbols of shepherd and sheep as were the early Christians. Life then was more rural and pastoral; such symbols struck a responsive chord in the hearts of those people. But today life has become more industrial and technological where sheep,

lambs and shepherds have no place. How does the teaching of Jesus about his being the Good Shepherd and his followers the obedient sheep ring in the ears of the Christians of Metro Manila, for example? Here you do not see any sheep being led by a shepherd; all you see are cars, jeepneys, buses and trucks clogging the streets in most hours of the day.

Even so, the symbols of Jesus as the good shepherd and the Christians his obedient sheep have entrenched themselves in our psyche that we still find them lovable and appropriate, notwithstanding their diminished visibility in modern life. Thus, through the figures of shepherd and sheep (in John 10, third reading) Jesus sends the powerful message that he knows and calls each of us by our names, and cares for us so that nobody and nothing will snatch us away from him.

We get a similar message in Rev. 7 (second reading), when John describes a scene from heaven. An enormous crowd from every race, tribe, nation and language stood before the throne of God, dressed in long robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They will never again hunger and thirst, never again be scorched by the sun or heat because of their Shepherd, the sinless Lamb. Jesus takes good care of all those who had suffered on his account and for his sake.

Finally, Acts 13 (the first reading) delivers its message without symbols or figures. That is St. Luke's writing style. He is direct, factual, journalistic. He tells us that God decreed to save the world through preaching the word about Jesus Christ. This word was to be addressed first to the Jews because it was to them God promised first his salvation. Then the word was to be proclaimed to all the Gentiles so that every creature will have the chance to be saved.

Proclamation of the Word being the means chosen by God to some men and women, the question now arises: who are

proclaimers of the Word after Christ has gone to heaven and the apostles are already dead? You are correct if your answer is the Church. She has received the Word, and her permanent mission is to proclaim it everywhere and in all ages. All her children have the privilege and duty of passing the Word, each in their several ways. Still, the Church needs Christians who will dedicate their whole life exclusively for that purpose.

Aside from being called Good Shepherd Sunday, this Sunday also marks the World Day of Prayer for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. In many places of the world, priests are a very misunderstood people, maligned, underrated or simply ignored. So are women who give themselves to the consecrated life. The media ordinarily do not help clear the air either. They trivialize the calling or publicize scandals. Rarely attention is given to the many who have freely, deliberately and wholeheartedly chosen the life of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel, of proclaiming the Word who descended from the bosom of the Father, and became man through the Spirit, patiently enduring the frailties of his human nature, the indignities, insults, hatred, persecutions and death by crucifixion, but who rose again. And with the power of his transformed life and of his word he transformed his followers and will lead them back to their real home in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity. Priests and the religious walk on this journey to God, and help their fellowmen join in it.

May 13, 2001

Fifth Sunday of Easter Cycle C

(Readings: Acts 14:21-27/Apoc 21:1-5/Jn 13:31-35)

It is in our human nature to desire strongly new things, new experiences, and new undertakings. Sometimes this desire gets so overpowering that unthinkingly, we discard everything we regard

as old and uncritically, we embrace everything we figure as new. Sticking to the old just because it is old and adopting the new just because it is new are both extremes we should avoid. We should maintain the golden mean where the old of proven value is preserved and the new that has useful worth is adopted.

Nevertheless, a strong bias in favor of what is new is present in human nature. God must deliberately placed it there as an insurance against despair and a guarantee for hope because we live in an imperfect world and we ourselves are imperfect.

The three bible readings of today's Mass bring forward the theme of newness. The second reading concludes by saying emphatically that God will make all things new again. Four, six or eight billion years ago he brought forth the heavens and the earth in their newness by the miracle of creation. What did not exist before, it began to exist; and this is something new. Now these same things God will subject to a fresh newness by the wonder of a repeat-creation. Thus, in the second reading, John could say he saw a new heaven and a new earth, while the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer.

It seems that God, for all his enduring eternity, whose past can never be traced back to its beginnings, enjoys living in new tomorrows and doing ever new things. He does not tire of his creatures. In fact, he has given them the power to renew themselves in the freshness of existence. It might be constitutes hell and its attendant despair, is the inability of the condemned to renew themselves there.

We even hear Jesus (third reading) giving us a new commandment: to love one another. Although this commandment is as old as the Old Testament, yet a novelty, a newness, a freshness has been added to it when told we are to fulfill it in the manner Jesus

has practiced it. The Christian discovers a thrill, a joy, a happiness when he sets out to love his neighbor as Jesus loved.

Through elections, a democratic nation undergoes a test, climbs a critical stage on which to repose its hope for the future. It does this by introducing a newness, a freshness in its national life. There will be new faces, new names, new strength in the leadership equation. Whether with new faces or old, what is important is to infuse freshness and novelty into the leadership equation and the life of the nation.

After the election process, when citizens will extend the hands of friendship and full reconciliation, give each other mutual pardon, assure cooperation in endeavors for the common good, offer reciprocal encouragement, then that would be the novelty, the newness that God shall have done for the nation. Then, like the apostles (first reading) they can say and announce to the world that God has done a wonderful thing in their eyes by producing a new nations, by recreating new citizens who serve and love one another as Jesus did.

May 20, 2001

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Cycle C

(Readings: Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29/Rev 21: 10-14, 22-23/Jn 14: 23-29)

We are going to talk about the Holy Spirit because our three readings today mention the word Spirit. Truth to tell, all three readings of today's Mass speak about the role and activities of the Holy Spirit in regards to the first Christians, especially the apostles. In giving these readings for proclamation to us the present Christians and our authorities, Mother Church did not intend to satisfy our curiosity about Church history and its past. She wants that we understand this truth: what the Holy Spirit did for the early Church and its apostles, he continues to do so, even now, for the

present Church and its ministers, and will do so till the end of time.

What did the Holy Spirit do for the first Christians? On the basis of today's three readings, we can mention only a few of his accomplishments. To produce a complete list of his known achievements, all of which are extraordinary, we would have to read at least the entire New Testament (the 27 books that comprise it) for the Holy Spirit is mentioned in most every book of it as doing this extraordinary thing or that over 500 times.

Hence, the overall impression we get of the Holy Spirit from the New Testament (not to mention the Old Testament also) is that he is a doer. The Holy Spirit empowers you, he makes you do things. He brings into being what was not there before, whether this pertains to hard realities, cold facts, or attitudes, qualities, actions and lifestyles. He is fruitful and productive. In short, he is a doer, like I said.

So, for example, when your mind is heavy, slow, listless, the Holy Spirit can quicken and make it lively. Hence, we hear in the third reading (John 14) Jesus telling his disciples that the Holy Spirit, when he comes to them, will make them remember all that Jesus had taught them. This "remembering" is not limited only to recalling facts or truths that they may have forgotten. It also includes discovering all the implications of what Jesus had told them: such as insights, hidden meanings, fresh interpretations of his messages according to and in relation with changed conditions. It is the kind of "remembering" where the past sets the stage for a meaningful present, and the present prepares for a bright future. Dynamic as he is himself, the Holy Spirit makes the teachings and words and actions of Jesus alive and dynamic in our present time and for all ages.

In the second reading (Rev 21) we read that the Holy Spirit took control of John, the exiled and harassed visionary of the early

Church, and showed him the glorious future that awaits all Christians enduring persecutions, trials, anxieties like himself on account of the faith. What the Holy Spirit showed to John when taking powerful control of him is also meant for us present Christians likewise harassed, sorely tried, worried and anxious in the course of our life on earth. We may not actually see the glorious future that awaits us in all its vividness as John saw. Just the same, the Holy Spirit gives us that assurance for he controls our present and our future.

Finally, the first reading (Acts 15) tells us how the Holy Spirit, in concert with the apostles, solved a grave religious problem that arose in the community of the early Church. It was occasioned by a group of probably well-meaning, but misdirected Christians. Without authorization from the apostles, they set to evangelize communities imposing on them certain views and interpretation all their own, upsetting these communities and disturbing their peace of mind.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the apostles rejected roundly the intrusions of these troublemakers. We have also troublemakers in our own times. In the name of a more perfect, more elitist or exclusive Christianity, they attempt to upset our beliefs and practices. We must be alert, and reject their intrusions. We should be guided by the Holy Spirit and the teachings of the apostles. We belong to the Church that is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

May 27, 2001

**Ascension Sunday Common to Cycles A,B,C
except Gospel readings**

(Readings: Acts 1: 1-11/Eph 1: 17-23/Mt 28:16-20 or Mk 16:15-20 or Lk 24:46-53)

Today, Catholics all over the world celebrate the feast of Ascension. On the testimony of Scriptures and Mother Church,

we firmly believe that Jesus ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. By these words we mean that Jesus had changed his earthly mode of existence for a glorious state, that is, free forever from pain and sorrow enjoying eternal happiness and bliss, exercising full power and authority over all creation.

Did it ever occur to your mind that Jesus, risen and glorious, should rather have stayed here on earth to be with us, instead of going up to heaven and taking his place with the Father. One can cite several good reasons why his indefinite stay on earth would have been more advantageous to poor earthlings like us.

Earth is where you have all the troubles. There is the crime and corruption to fight against; the godlessness and greed to combat; the pride and prejudice to rout; the poverty and oppression to wrestle with; the injustice and ignorance to oppose. With Jesus personally leading the battle, victory of good over evil is assured. Are these not very good reasons for him to have stayed with us indefinitely?

No, they are not! We are laying down three conditions wherein it will be wrong for Jesus to grant. Firstly, we will be contradicting the Father's will and promise, revealed long before by Scriptures and Jesus himself, that it was necessary for him first to suffer and die and rise again on the third day, and so enter into his glory.

Secondly, we would be encouraging and feeding our own laziness by expecting Jesus to personally fight the battles we ourselves should fight. We would be reneging our responsibilities by placing the biggest share of the burden on the shoulders of Jesus.

Thirdly, we would be asking Jesus to be bodily present to each and every human being in all times and generations because the opportunities and occasions of evil are ever present in the hearts of each one and all.

What then is the right thing to do if we are not to ask Christ to continue his visible presence on earth? The instruction Jesus gave to his apostles before ascending into heaven is very appropriate also to us. "Wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised," said Jesus. "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

So that's it! You will be witnesses for Jesus in all places, in all times. You will fight the battles against evil by means of witnessing for Jesus. Incidentally, you do not witness for someone who is physically present; you witness for someone who is physically absent, as in the case of Jesus who is now physically in heaven. We do not become poorer or weaker because Jesus is physically absent from us. Paul, in the second reading, prayed to God that we might see how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises us his people, and how great is his power at work in us who have believed. Thus, power working in us is the same mighty power which God used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world.

June 3, 2001

Pentecost

(Readings: Acts 2:1-11/1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13/Jn 20:19-23)

Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, marking the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. We are called upon to celebrate it with joy. The problem is, we cannot produce at will the element of joy. One cannot command it to happen. There are times when we feel being more sad than joyful, like when it is too hot or too rainy.

Yet, we must celebrate with joy the feast of Pentecost. If this is the case, then the joy being called for must be of another kind — to be experienced in the spirit, if not in the body. Anyway, the purpose of this feast in honor of the Holy Spirit is to make us more spiritual, is it not? I know there are people who pride themselves of being called material or animal. And once, there was a very popular song entitled, "The material girl." For such people, the feast of Pentecost has no meaning.

But for us gathered this morning to offer Mass, it has a great significance. Today's three bible readings help us to discover the meaning and some deeper insights of this feast, and we experience, thereby, spiritual joy in our hearts. Firstly, according to the first reading (book of Acts), God determined that the first visible descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church should take place on the same day that the Hebrews celebrate a feast also called Pentecost.

Theirs was an expression of gratitude and joy for **the gifts** of the ancient Law and Covenant brought down, as it were, to them by Moses from Mt. Sinai. The coincidence in date of the two feasts makes us understand that in our Christian Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is the primary Law of Christians and our new Covenant validated by him, binds us to God and God to us. This is a reason for great rejoicing.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit willed to make his appearance in the form of a powerful wind and tongues of fire, signifying that he empowers whomever he chooses to descend upon to pray and speak powerfully about the great deeds of God. The book of Acts pointed to a particular moment of time and history, to a particular space on earth when Pentecost took place. To be sure, the Holy Spirit had filled the whole creation since the beginning of time. Were it not so, creation would not have been possible, and you and I would not be around now.

But it was only on Pentecost day that the Holy Spirit scheduled his first visible appearance on that privileged spot of Palestine, accompanied with great signs and power. Thus, Pentecost is traditionally correlated with manifestations of signs and wonders. When we pray for a new Pentecost, that is equivalent to saying, we desire for a renewal of strength, resolve and fruitfulness in our Christian life and vocation.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit according to the second reading, is the principle of a wonderful diversity of roles, functions and activities in the Church. At the same time, however, he is the principle of unity among believers lest their various and diversified actions lead to chaos and divisions.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit caters to our continual need for pardon and conversion. In the third reading, Jesus breathes, communicates the Spirit to his apostles so that they can forgive sins. Hence, we can pray for a daily Pentecost upon ourselves because we daily fall into sin. I urge you to try, from now on, praying to the Holy Spirit also directly and separately addressing him, just as you are accustomed to address directly and separately the Father or the Son. Perhaps we never did that before. Now, let us add something new to our accustomed ways of praying, by praying directly to the Holy Spirit. Mother Church also prays this way. We have an example of such prayer in the so-called Sequence Prayer of today's Mass — the ancient and beautiful prayer-song, "Veni, Creator Spiritus" ("Come, Holy Spirit").

June 3, 2001

Pentecost

Alternative homily

(Readings: Acts 2:1-11/1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13/Jn 20:19-23)

After listening to the Pentecost story narrated in the 1st reading (Act 2), has it not occurred to you to ask yourselves this question, "Why not to us also?" How nice if the Holy Spirit comes down to us gathered now for prayer. Deep in my heart, there would be some wishing such coming down of the Spirit to take place again on all the present Christian communities. Why not a repetition of Pentecost on the 3rd millennium?

Then, hopefully, many problems that affect our present Christian communities could be solved: such as the scant unity of hearts, minds and efforts among Christians for revealing God's presence and his loving plan to the world; the little enthusiasm and sincerity we notice in our praying assemblies; the tiny perseverance we put into our search for God in order to establish personal lives of communication with him amidst the hustle and bustle of life.

But then I realized that such a wish — for a phenomenal descent of the Holy Spirit like that which occurred to the early Church is not necessary, not proper. Firstly because, on the basis of the 3 readings today, the Holy Spirit has been present in the Church since the Pentecost event, and will forever be present in her. So why wish for him to descend when he already is with the Church? What John the Baptist told his contemporaries about Jesus being present to them without them recognizing him, can also be told to us. That the Holy Spirit is present among us, without our recognizing him.

Secondly we also have assertive kind of attitude towards God, perhaps unconsciously cultivated and kept but showing up at times. We expect God to make things happen the way we want and not the way He wants. We are like spoiled children who think their plans and actions are always better than those of their parents.

So when things go wrong for us, like our business going bad, losing our jobs and not finding others, our health becoming worse, our ambitions checked by oppositions, our loved ones getting into problems, our friends and relatives dying prematurely, we hardly can repress this question to rise from our hearts, "Why does God allow this to happen?"

Let us not wish, therefore, a spectacular Pentecost to happen today or soon for us also. Even if the sudden onrush of a strong wind and the appearance of tongues of fire and the ability to talk in foreign languages, should they occur once more, are impressive experiences and wonderful signs. What we should wish for and do, is to carry out Paul's exhortation in today's 2nd reading. Accordingly, let us find out and discover for ourselves, let us identify and recognize the gift or gifts the Holy Spirit has endowed each one of us for the service of fellow-Christians and fellow-beings. It is impossible to believe that we have not received from the Holy Spirit any assignment to perform and the ability to carry out that assignment. It would seem that we have not received the Holy Spirit himself at all. This is not true if we had been baptized sacramentally. In fact, it is by the loving service we give to others that the presence in us of the Holy Spirit is greatly shown.

So, in order not to think the unthinkable or not to believe the unbelievable, let us just say that each of us has received an assigned task to perform. The Holy Spirit is a silent achiever. His powerful presence is shown by the service we render to others. We cannot even say "Jesus is God" if the Holy Spirit does not help us to say it for our good and the good of others.

Paul, further says that the Holy Spirit is to Christians what the soul is to various parts and organs of the body. Thanks to the soul (always a silent, invisible, active principle), each part of the body performs the task assigned to it. Thus, the parts and the whole body itself get benefited. Similarly, thanks to the Holy Spirit (always the silent, invisible, active mover), each Christian performs the assigned task for his/her own good and the good of the whole church and the whole society, of which they are members.

Our gospel reading says that Jesus entered the room where the disciples had locked themselves in for fear of the Jews. He wanted to bring them peace by giving them the Holy Spirit. Have we not also been locking ourselves inside our small world for fear of getting involved in the task of transforming our communities; fear of commitment on necessary changes in society; fear of disturbing our contented and comfortable life-style so as to help our distressed neighbors? May the Holy Spirit enter the barred doors of our hearts to bring us peace and to say, "As Jesus has sent me, so I send you. Go out and change the world; create a civilization of justice, love, unity and peace."

June 3, 2001

Pentecost

Alternative homily

(Readings: Acts 2:1- 11/1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13/Jn 20:19-23)

You have just heard the narration of a wonderful happening to the early church in the first reading (Acts2). Of how the Holy Spirit descended upon all the disciples of Christ with sounds of strong wind blowing and in tongues of fire. Of how those disciples, after having been filled with the Holy Spirit, started to talk in different languages praising God and speaking about his mighty works.

You could now ask wistfully, "Why not us also?", "Why does the Holy Spirit not come down upon us with sounds of a strong wind and in the form of tongues of fire?" And to bolster your argument, you say, "Are we not gathered also now in the house of God, just like those early disciples?" "Does not the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit also cover us Christians of the twentieth-century, especially so, because we are more in need of his help due to problems weighing on us that the early Christians had never known?"

I guess your expostulations are legitimate. We are also experiencing the problems of the early Church, but aside from them we have newer, graver and more numerous in comparison. So we need another Pentecost to happen for our times.

But that exactly, dear brethren, is what the present-day church is desiring. That is what the present Pope is wishing and praying for, that Christians may experience a great renewal of spiritual life at the turn of the century, the year 2000.

However, in answer to your query of why the Holy Spirit is not coming down on us in the form of tongues of fire and with the sound of great winds blowing. It is because he has already come down and stayed with the Church as Jesus had promised. So there's no point in asking the Holy Spirit to come to the Church when he is already there and staying permanently in it until the end of time.

It is like having a treasure-box in the house, whose contents we have not cared to find out. All we have to do is simply to open it and make use of the treasures it contains. What perhaps we should ask is for individual Christians to search for the Holy Spirit who dwells in them, and once found, to stay with them. Then, perhaps they will start speaking in different languages and praising God for all his mighty works.

Actually, Luke in describing the event of Pentecost **wanted** to stress its deeper and more important realities by means of **the** visual images of fire, wind, ecstatic speech and the like. **What** realities? That the Holy Spirit has started a new era for the Church. Where under his permanent guidance, it moves in all directions of the earth to overcome divisions among peoples, to preach to them the Good News of salvation, to unite them into one people praising God and talking about his mighty works.

Hence, instead of asking God to let those visual images of fire, wind, ecstatic speech take place again in our times, something unnecessary and redundant for the reason that the Holy Spirit has already come to the Church and will never leave it no matter what happen. We should rather find out which are the Holy Spirit's expectations from us.

June 10, 2001

Trinity Sunday

Cycle C

(Readings: Prov 8:22-31/Rom 5:1-5/Jn 16:12-15)

Today is Trinity Sunday. When Blessed Trinity is mentioned, many Christians spontaneously are reminded how difficult it was for them to understand it, the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God, yet there is only one God not three Gods. It is the problematic aspect that enters first in the minds of many. But today, we have come together to celebrate the feast of the Blessed Trinity, and not to debate on whether or not these can be one, and one can be three. After all, we are Christians more than mathematicians. Yet, a correct understanding of the Trinitarian doctrine, no matter how difficult this is, will help us greatly to improve the quality of our celebration and worship of God now and in the future.

I can vouch for this if you just watch how Catholics make the sign of the cross, which is an outward expression of our belief in the Blessed Trinity. Some make the full-sign by touching the forehead, then the breast, then the two shoulders. Others make a short cut by tapping their forehead and breast only. Still others make a circular motion with their hand somewhere in front of their neck.

I think these various ways of making the sign of the cross reflect the level of their understanding about the Blessed Trinity. The greater the understanding the better the executing of the sign of the cross. The lesser appreciation of the mystery, the more you will look like a magician with his sleight of the hand. St. Bernadette Soubirous described how our Lady of the Immaculate Conception signed herself in a very deliberate and edifying manner. This is not surprising because our Lady of Lourdes sees in heaven the Trinitarian God face to face.

The Trinitarian doctrine is related not only to the praise and worship of God, but also the transformation of the baptized into Christ, and to his life in the Spirit. Thus, the belief in the Blessed Trinity makes the Christian a worshipper of God, a look-alike of Christ, and a partner of the Holy Spirit. Liturgy, Ethics, Spirituality and doctrine are all intimately and fruitfully bound together carrying us into the knowledge and life of the Blessed Trinity.

At the start of the mass, we all say together, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This calling upon God's name is essentially a doxology i.e., an expression of trust, of praise and of thanksgiving. When we call upon God's name we place ourselves before his presence, without trembling and fear like slaves but as his children in whom "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit" do abide, as the usual greeting at Mass puts it.

We praise and thank God during Mass for the good He has done in the history of the world of mankind, especially in Christ, the Messiah who is God's grace and gift for us. We praise and thank God for the love he has poured in our hearts through which we can call him with the sweet name of Father. We praise and thank God for granting us to enter into fellowship with the Holy Spirit that empowers us to reorder our relationship with others where discrimination based on status wealth, culture, education, color, appearance are overcome. For all that the Father's love for us has done, we say at the latter part of the Mass "through him (Jesus) and with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen."

Then, too, the Trinitarian doctrine reminds us of our vocation of being transformed in Christ. Christ is the image of the invisible God, the reflection of God's glory. As followers of Christ, we are exhorted to be his image in turn, to reflect his glory, even through sharing his sufferings; for it was through suffering that Christ was glorified. We have to become what Jesus Christ is, in his relationship with others. That relationship is defined by the kind of love he has shown a love that includes all, a love that heals and unites.

On being transformed in Christ, we know that we have shared in the divine nature, in God's life, as St. Peter writes (2 Pet 1:4). Our life is not anymore according to the flesh but in the Spirit. We lead a Trinitarian spirituality by which we strive to become what the Blessed Trinity is: viz. boundless, self-giving (that the Father) love poured out for the sake of life (that the Son), and that which creates inclusive communion among persons (and that the Holy Spirit). The "spiritualized" human being is the totally free human being, one who can embrace the enemy and help bring about the kingdom of God.

June 17, 2001
Corpus Christi

Cycle C

(Readings: Gen 14: 18-20/1 Cor 11: 23-26/Lk 9: 11-17)

A good mother is concerned not only with what her children use for wear, for play, for study and work, but also more importantly with the food they eat. She is aware that their little bodies are growing, are constantly using up their energy for all kinds of activities. Hence, the need of proper nutrition to keep their bodies strong and healthy.

When the children prefer to eat junk food, more delicious perhaps, but poor in nutritional value compared to regular meals, the mother should start to be more concerned and use all persuasive means to make her children eat more substantial food.

Similarly, Mother Church is concerned about the spiritual health and condition of her children. She wants the faithful to remain strong, energetic and resilient amidst a very trying and problem-laden world like ours. In this, she follows the lead of Jesus Christ who solemnly stated to his followers that unless they eat of the real food and take the real drink, they have no way of possessing eternal life.

As it is, however, the great majority of her children, the greater number of the followers of Jesus (find out if you are among them) seem to pay no great attention to the solemn warning of the Lord. They prefer "junk food." They find more delight in frivolous "products" of the world than in the solid food that leads to eternal life. As if "eternal life" (who does not want to live forever?) can be achieved by purely human initiatives.

So aside from the grave obligation she laid down for every adult Christian to receive Holy Communion at least once a year at Easter time, Mother Church also uses persuasive means to wake

us up to the truth of Christ's statement regarding the real food that gives eternal life and sustains it. One such means is the yearly celebration of the feast of *Corpus Christi* or the holy Body and Blood of Jesus, along with the very instructive bible readings assigned for this feast.

Through one of them, we see how the Holy Eucharist was foreshadowed in the story of the manna from heaven. Although the Israelites succeeded in safely crossing the Red Sea, they could all have perished while travelling through the desert of Sinai, had God not provided them with daily food from heaven.

Paul shows that the celebration of the Holy Mass and the partaking of Holy Communion signify and produce that unity which is essential for the personal and community life of all Christians. Jesus categorically states that his flesh is real food and his blood is real drink which alone can give eternal life. Hence, unless one eats of this food and drinks of this blood there will be no way for him/her to live eternally.

Let us, therefore, see whether we have been starving our souls to death by preferring junk food instead of the real thing. Speaking of means to attain integrity of mind, soul and body, junk food is anything that we mistake for providing momentary pleasure, thrill, excitement like drugs, alcohol, nicotine, pornography, immorality, gluttony and so forth. They bring death instead of life. Apply the remedy before it is too late. Let us ask Jesus to heal our wounds and revive our souls through confession of our grave sins and to convince us of the need to feed regularly on his body and blood, which is real food and real drink, so that as he stated very solemnly, we may have eternal life from him and raised up by him on the last day.

June 24, 2001

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Zech 12:10-11, 13:1/Gal 3:26-29/Lk 9:18-24)

Except for the 2 days when the nation needed to celebrate its centennial anniversary of Independence Day, generally dark and expanded clouds are very welcome. The darker and more expanded, the better it is for the country. They bring down more rains to greater areas and lower the temperature. Dark clouds then are not a necessary evil; quite the contrary, on this season of El Nino.

You will therefore, permit and excuse me if I compare our 3 readings today to compact not expanded dark clouds that do not threaten but bring good news of abundant graces. Seldom will you find so compact scripture passages that are pregnant with meaning and consequences as our 3 brief readings today. They appear portentous like dark clouds because of the mention in them of grieving, mourning, crying, also of suffering, rejection, carrying a cross, and death. But then, you do not get refreshing and life-giving rains from a cloudless sky or sparse and luminous clouds, do you? So, this is what we will attempt to do: to extract the rains from the seemingly dark passage of these Sunday's readings.

Whenever Luke tells us, as he does now at the start of the gospel, that Jesus is praying in seclusion, we know that something portentous is going to happen. What is that? After a suspenseful moment in concluding his prayer, Jesus turns to his disciples and asks them, "Who do you say that I am?" A short, direct, clear and simple question. "Who do you say I am?" And to ask this question, Jesus had to pray first? Yes, and he is asking that same question to you and to me, to everyone of us. He prayed first, before asking the question because (1) he knows who he is, and is determined to carry out to the end its implications and bear all

the consequences; (2) he wishes that our answer coincides with what he knows himself to be.

The answer of Peter is also short, direct, clear and simple, "The Messiah of God." Peter answered for his fellow-apostles. In fact, he answers for the entire Church, for all believers. And the entire New Testament speaks the same language as Peter, since all the 27 books that comprise the New Testament give the same answer to the fundamental question of Jesus, "Who do you say I am?" Just as Jesus prayed first before asking the question, so we also must pray first, we need the prayer of faith to be able to answer, "You are the Messiah of God," and to understand the implications and bear the consequences of that answer.

"Jesus, you are the Messiah of God or the Anointed of God or the Christ of God." These are faith-statements. You cannot say them with full conviction and true persuasion unless through faith. But, just what do you mean when you say, "Jesus, you are the Messiah of God?" Because you say "of God" then certainly he is the Messiah of nobody but God alone, not the Messiah of one's dreams, one's ambition, one's expectations as the Jews held. They also expected a Messiah but according to their image, a political, social, economic Messiah. In fact, there have been before, during and after Jesus' time such and such Messiahs. But they are not the Messiah of God; Jesus alone is! And my faith tells me so.

So, Jesus is the Messiah according to the image of God. Significant are Paul's words in his letter to the Colossians, "Jesus is the image of the invisible God." God who is spirit makes himself visible in Jesus. What Jesus feels, does and teaches is also what the invisible God feels, does and teaches. Through Jesus, we know concretely and specifically that God is merciful, compassionate, loving and concerned with all his creatures. In Jesus, God forgives sinners, heals the sick, receives the outcasts of society, helps the

poor, embraces the children, welcomes the women, raises the fallen, teaches the ignorant, consoles the despairing, seeks the lost, defends the persecuted, feeds the hungry.

But here's another aspect of the Messiah, of "Christ Jesus" as Paul puts it in today's 2nd reading. Since Jesus is Messiah according to the image of God, then, he must endure many sufferings, be rejected by the elders, high-priests and scribes, and be put to death. He shall be mourned and grieved over as Zechariah writes in the 1st reading. These are the dark clouds gathering over the Lord of the Messiah, and they will also loom over the lives of his followers. For Jesus says, "Whoever wishes to be my follower, must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps."

But when the dark clouds break, they bring down not death, not destruction, but refreshing rains, life-giving waters, a baptism of salvation. Paul says in today's second reading, "Each one of you is a Son of God." Because of your faith in Jesus, because of your baptism in Jesus, because of your union in Christ Jesus, in the Messiah Jesus, each one of you will inherit all that God had promised of his kingdom. Who will not welcome such dark clouds that bring on him/her such blessings? Surely, he or she will repeat the words of today's responsorial psalm, "Like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water, my flesh pines and my soul thirsts for you, O God."