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NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE
John Paul II

**PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY—
ADDENDA-CORRIGENDA, 2000**
Charles Bransom, Jr.

**STATEMENTS ON LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS
OUTSIDE PLACES OF WORSHIP**
Episcopal Commission on Liturgy

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN ASIAN CONTEXT
Vicente Cajilig, OP

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Easter Morning and Politics

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Today, Easter morning, just after saying my mass, I went to the bay along Roxas Boulevard in order to find out what the people who go there are doing. From a distance one could already see the mass of populace: many are enjoying the swim; others are just there to enjoy what the boulevard offers. Most of the people belong to the group whose means of livelihood are pedaled tricycle or the like. One can easily ascertain this: couples bring their children, even those who are just few months old. Some babies are even soundly sleeping on the seat of the tricycle.

The people must be the same ones who went to the churches during the days of the holy week. They are the ones who because of financial constrains could not go far, like going to Calamba, Batangas, Cebu, or Boracay and other places. Yet, they want to have a free relaxing day, just to break the monotony of the usual chores of daily life. I believe, this people deserve a better place to swim. The dirty water at the bay is certainly a health hazard element. Yet, the people there are just enjoying whatever is possible.

This is the same populace who would elect their local and national officials during election. The candidates are winning their support and votes. The politicians are all behaving like good girls and boys. They too make all kinds of promises. Their pictures are the best of their collections. One domestic helper said one time: "*ang guapo/guapa nila.*"

The easter morning brings hope to our people. Yet, does easter in politics appear really at sight? Will the winners in politics look into the amelioration of the environment, including the beheld bay, amelioration of job opportunities, when the pedaled tricycle will be put aside in favor of a motored one, or amelioration of housing, etc.?

The church is also asked with the similar question. In the past days sermons were said, rituals were celebrated, reasons for hope were cited. But do the church leaders pay attention to the sectors of society who are subject to different kinds of exclusion: exclusion from good schools, exclusion from good jobs, exclusion from acceptable social status.

During the retreat of a group of religious this holy week, this question of structural exclusion was recognized. The awareness of such exclusion should bring one a conviction and impulse to look into the situation of the poor. The church in the country has opted in favor of the poor and of the disadvantaged.

The social and communitarian projects of the catholic institutions, like schools, parishes, basic ecclesial communities, mandated organizations, and so forth should look into the social amelioration of the 70% of our people, less the morning of easter will pass away, and the evening will just remain, so that the promised hope of the newday will be buried simply in oblivion.

Novo Millennio Ineunte

JOHN PAUL II

*To my Brother Bishops,
To Priests and Deacons,
Men and Women Religious
and all the Lay Faithful.*

1. At the beginning of the new millennium, and at the close of the Great Jubilee during which we celebrated the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus and a new stage of the Church's journey begins, our hearts ring out with the words of Jesus when one day, after speaking to the crowds from Simon's boat, he invited the Apostle to "put out into the deep" for a catch: "*Due in altum*" (Lk 5:4). Peter and his first companions trusted Christ's words, and cast the nets. "When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish" (Lk 5:6).

Due in altum! These words ring out for us today, and they invite us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future with confidence: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8).

The Church's joy was great this year, as she devoted herself to contemplating the face of her Bridegroom and Lord. She became more than ever a pilgrim people, led by him who is the "the great Shepherd of the sheep" (*Heb* 13:20). With extraordinary energy, involving so many of her members, the People of God here in Rome, as well as in Jerusalem and in all the individual local churches, went through the "Holy Door" that is Christ. To him who is the goal of history and the one Saviour of the world, the Church and the Spirit cried out: "*Marana tha* — Come, Lord Jesus" (cf. *Rev* 22:17, 20; *1 Cor* 16:22).

It is impossible to take the measure of this event of grace which in the course of the year has touched people's hearts. But certainly, "a river of living water", the water that continually flows "from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (cf. *Rev* 22:1), has been poured out on the Church. This is the water of the Spirit which quenches thirst and brings new life (cf. *Jn* 4:14). This is the merciful love of the Father which has once again been made known and given to us in Christ. At the end of this year we can repeat with renewed jubilation the ancient words of thanksgiving: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love endures for ever" (*jPs* 118:1).

2. For all this, I feel the need to write to you, dearly beloved, to share this song of praise with you. From the beginning of my Pontificate, my thoughts had been on this Holy Year 2000 as an important appointment. I thought of its celebration as a providential opportunity during which the Church, thirty-five years after the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, would examine how far she had renewed herself, in order to be able to take up her evangelizing mission with fresh enthusiasm.

Has the Jubilee succeeded in this aim? Our commitment, with its generous efforts and inevitable failings, is under God's scrutiny. But we cannot fail to give thanks for the "marvels" the Lord has

worked for us: "*Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*" (Ps 89:2).

At the same time, what we have observed demands to be reconsidered, and in a sense "deciphered", in order to hear what the Spirit has been saying to the Church (cf. *Rev* 2:7,11,17, etc.) during this most intense year.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is especially necessary for us to direct our thoughts to the future which lies before us. Often during these months we have looked towards the new millennium which is beginning, as we lived this Jubilee not only as a *remembrance of the past*, but also as a *prophecy of the future*. We now need to profit from the grace received, by putting it into practice in resolutions and guidelines for action. This is a task I wish to invite all the local churches to undertake. In each of them, gathered around their Bishop, as they listen to the word and "break bread" in brotherhood (cf. *Acts* 2:42), the "one holy catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative".¹ It is above all in the actual situation of each local church that the mystery of the one People of God takes the particular form that fits it to each individual context and culture.

In the final analysis, this rooting of the Church in time and space mirrors *the movement of the Incarnation itself*. Now is the time for each local Church to assess its fervour and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities, by reflecting on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God in this special year of grace, and indeed in the longer span of time from the Second Vatican Council to the Great Jubilee. It is with this purpose in mind that I wish to offer in this Letter, at the conclusion of the Jubilee Year, the contribution of my Petrine

¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 11.

ministry, so that the Church may shine ever more brightly in the variety of her gifts and in her unity as she journeys on.

I MEETING CHRIST THE LEGACY OF THE GREAT JUBILEE

4. "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty" (*Rev* 11:17). In the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee I expressed the hope that the bimillennial celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation would be lived as "one unceasing hymn of praise to the Trinity"² and also "as a journey of reconciliation and a sign of true hope for all who look to Christ and to his Church".³ And this Jubilee Year has been an experience of these essential aspects, reaching moments of intensity which have made us as it were touch with our hands the merciful presence of God, from whom comes "every good endowment and every perfect gift" (*Jos* 1:17).

My thoughts turn first to the *duty of praise*. This is the point of departure for every genuine response of faith to the revelation of God in Christ. Christianity is grace, it is the wonder of a God who is not satisfied with creating the world and man, but puts himself on the same level as the creature he has made and, after speaking on various occasions and in different ways through his prophets, "in these last days ... has spoken to us by a Son" (*Heb* 1:1-2).

In these days! Yes, the Jubilee has made us realize that two thousand years of history have passed without diminishing the freshness of that "today", when the angels proclaimed to the shepherds the marvellous event of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem:

² Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium*, 3: AAS 91 (1999), 132.

³ *Ibid.*, 4: *loc. cit.*, 133.

"For to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (*Lk* 2:11). Two thousand years have gone by, but Jesus' proclamation of his mission, when he applied the prophecy of Isaiah to himself before his astonished fellow townspeople in the Synagogue of Nazareth, is as enduring as ever: "Today this scripture had been fulfilled in your hearing". (*Lk* 4:21). Two thousand years have gone by, but sinners in need of mercy — and who is not? — still experience the consolation of that "today" of salvation which on the Cross opened the gates of the Kingdom of God to the repentant thief: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (*Lk* 23:43).

The fullness of time

5. The coincidence of this Jubilee with the opening of a new millennium has certainly helped people to become more aware of the mystery of Christ within the great horizon of the history of salvation, without any concession to millenarian fantasies. *Christianity is a religion rooted in history!* It was in the soil of history that God chose to establish a covenant with Israel and so prepare the birth of the Son from the womb of Mary "in the fullness of time" (*Gal* 4:4). Understood in his divine and human mystery, Christ is the foundation and centre of history, he is its meaning and ultimate goal. It is in fact through him, the Word and image of the Father, that "all things were made" (*Jn* 1:3; cf. *Col* 1:15). His incarnation, culminating in the Paschal Mystery and the gift of the Spirit, is the pulsating heart of time, the mysterious hour in which the Kingdom of God came to us (cf. *Mk* 1:15), indeed took root in our history, as the seed destined to become a great tree (cf. *Mk* 4:30-32).

"Glory to you, Jesus Christ, for you reign today and for ever". With this song repeated thousands of times, we have contemplated Christ this year as he is presented in the Book of Revelation: "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and

the end" (*Rev* 22:13). And contemplating Christ, we have also adored the Father and the Spirit, the one and undivided Trinity, the ineffable mystery in which everything has its origin and its fulfillment.

The purification of memory

6. To purify our vision for the contemplation of the mystery, this Jubilee Year has been strongly marked by the *request for forgiveness*. This is true not only for individuals, who have examined their own lives in order to ask for mercy and gain the special gift of the indulgence, but for the entire Church, which has decided to recall the infidelities of so many of her children in the course of history, infidelities which have cast a shadow over her countenance as the Bride of Christ.

For a long time we had been preparing ourselves for this examination of conscience, aware that the Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, "is at once holy and always in need of being purified".⁴ Study congresses helped us to identify those aspects in which, during the course of the first two millennia, the Gospel spirit did not always shine forth. How could we forget *the moving Liturgy of 12 March 2000* in Saint Peter's Basilica, at which, looking upon our Crucified Lord, I asked forgiveness in the name of the Church for the sins of all her children? This "purification of memory" has strengthened our steps for the journey towards the future and has made us more humble and vigilant in our acceptance of the Gospel.

Witnesses to the faith

7. This lively sense of repentance, however, has not prevented us from giving glory to the Lord for what he has done in every

⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

century, and in particular during the century which we have just left behind, by granting his Church *a great host of saints and martyrs*. For some of them the Jubilee year has been the year of their beatification or canonization. Holiness, whether ascribed to Popes well-known to history or to humble lay and religious figures, from one continent to another of the globe, has emerged more clearly as the dimension which expresses best the mystery of the Church. Holiness, a message that convinces without the need for words, is the living reflection of the face of Christ.

On the occasion of the Holy Year much has also been done to gather together *the precious memories of the witnesses to the faith in the twentieth century*. Together with the representatives of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, we commemorated them on 7 May 2000 in the evocative setting of the Colosseum, the symbol of the ancient persecutions. This is a heritage which must not be lost; we should always be thankful for it and we should renew our resolve to imitate it.

A pilgrim Church

8. As if following in the footsteps of the Saints, countless sons and daughters of the Church have come in successive waves to Rome, to the Tombs of the Apostles, wanting to profess their faith, confess their sins and receive the mercy that saves. I have been impressed this year by the crowds of people which have filled Saint Peter's Square at the many celebrations. I have often stopped to look at the long queues of pilgrims waiting patiently to go through the Holy Door. In each of them I tried to imagine the story of a life, made up of joys, worries, sufferings; the story of someone whom Christ had met and who, in dialogue with him, was setting out again on a journey of hope.

As I observed the continuous flow of pilgrims, I saw them as a kind of *concrete image of the pilgrim Church*, the Church

placed, as Saint Augustine says, "amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God".⁵ We have only been able to observe the outer face of this unique event. Who can measure the marvels of grace wrought in human hearts? It is better to be silent and to adore, trusting humbly in the mysterious workings of God and singing his love without end: "*Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo!*".

Young people

9. The many Jubilee gatherings have brought together the most diverse groups of people, and the level of participation has been truly impressive — at times sorely trying the commitment of organizers and helpers, both ecclesiastical and civil. In this Letter I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone. But apart from the numbers, what has moved me so often was to note the intensity of prayer, reflection and spirit of communion which these meetings have generally showed.

And how could we fail to recall especially *the joyful and inspiring gathering of young people*? If there is an image of the Jubilee of the Year 2000 that more than any other will live on in memory, it is surely the streams of young people with whom I was able to engage in a sort of very, special dialogue, filled with mutual affection and deep understanding. It was like this from the moment I welcomed them in the Square of Saint John Lateran and Saint Peter's Square. Then I saw them swarming through the city, happy as young people should be, but also thoughtful, eager to pray, seeking "meaning" and true friendship. Neither for them nor for those who saw them will it be easy to forget that week, during which Rome became "young with the young". It will not be possible to forget the Mass at Tor Vergata.

⁵ *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII, 51, 2: PL 41, 614; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

Yet again, the young have shown themselves to be for Rome and for the Church *a special gift of the Spirit of God*. Sometimes when we look at the young, with the problems and weaknesses that characterize them in contemporary society, we tend to be pessimistic. The Jubilee of Young People however changed that, telling us that young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fullness in Christ. Is not Christ the secret of true freedom and profound joy of heart? Is not Christ the supreme friend and the teacher of all genuine friendship? If Christ is presented to young people as he really is, they experience him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept his message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross. For this reason, in response to their enthusiasm, I did not hesitate to ask them to make a radical choice of faith and life and present them with a stupendous task: to become "morning watchmen" (cf. *Is* 21:11-12) at the dawn of the new millennium.

The variety of the pilgrims

10. Obviously I cannot go into detail about each individual Jubilee event. Each one of them had its own character and has left its message, not only for those who took part directly but also for those who heard about them or took part from afar through the media. But how can we forget the mood of celebration of *the first great gathering dedicated to children*? In a way, to begin with them meant respecting Christ's command: "Let the children come to me" (*Mk* 10:14). Perhaps even more it meant doing what he did when he placed a child in the midst of the disciples and made it the very symbol of the attitude which we should have if we wish to enter the Kingdom of God (cf. *Mt* 18:2-4).

Thus, in a sense, it was in the footsteps of children that all the different groups of adults came seeking **the Jubilee** grace: from old people to the sick and handicapped, from workers in factories

and fields to sportspeople, from artists to university teachers, from Bishops and priests to people in consecrated life, from politicians to journalists, to the military personnel who came to confirm the meaning of their service as a service to peace.

One of the most notable events was *the gathering of workers* on 1 May, the day traditionally dedicated to the world of work. I asked them to live a spirituality of work in imitation of Saint Joseph and of Jesus himself. That Jubilee gathering also gave me the opportunity to voice a strong call to correct the economic and social imbalances present in the world of work and to make decisive efforts to ensure that the processes of economic globalization give due attention to solidarity and the respect owed to every human person.

Children, with their irrepressible sense of celebration, were again present for the *Jubilee of Families*, when I held them up to the world as the "springtime of the family and of society". This was a truly significant gathering in which numberless families from different parts of the world came to draw fresh enthusiasm from the light that Christ sheds on God's original plan in their regard (cf. *Mk* 10:6-8; *Mt* 19:4-6) and to commit themselves to bringing that light to bear on a culture which, in an ever more disturbing way, is in danger of losing sight of the very meaning of marriage and the family as an institution.

For me one of the more moving meetings was the one with *the prisoners at Regina Caeli*. In their eyes I saw suffering, but also repentance and hope. For them in a special way the Jubilee was a "year of mercy".

Finally, in the last days of the year, an enjoyable occasion was the meeting with *the world of entertainment*, which exercises such a powerful influence on people. I was able to remind all involved of their great responsibility to use entertainment to offer

a positive message, one that is morally healthy and able to communicate confidence and love.

The International Eucharistic Congress

11. In the spirit of this Jubilee Year the *International Eucharistic Congress* was intended to have special significance. And it did! Since the Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ made present among us, how could his *real presence* not be at the centre of the Holy Year dedicated to the Incarnation of the Word? The year was intended, precisely for this reason, to be "intensely Eucharistic",⁶ and that is how we tried to live it. At the same time, along with the memory of the birth of the Son, how could the memory of the Mother be missing? Mary was present in the Jubilee celebration not only as a theme of high-level academic gatherings, but above all in the great Act of Entrustment with which, in the presence of a large part of the world episcopate, I entrusted to her maternal care the lives of the men and women of the new millennium.

The ecumenical dimension

12. You will understand that I speak more readily of the Jubilee as seen from the See of Peter. However I am not forgetting that I myself wanted the Jubilee to be celebrated also in the particular churches, and it is there that the majority of the faithful were able to gain its special graces, and particularly the indulgence connected with the Jubilee Year. Nevertheless it is significant that many Dioceses wanted to be present, with large groups of the faithful, here in Rome too. The Eternal City has thus once again shown its providential role as the place where the resources and gifts of each individual church, and indeed of each individual nation and culture, find their "catholic" harmony, so that the one

⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 55: AAS 87 (1995), 38.

Church of Christ can show ever more clearly her mystery as the "sacrament of unity".⁷

I had also asked for special attention to be given in the programme of the Jubilee Year to the *ecumenical aspect*. What occasion could be more suitable for encouraging progress on the path towards full communion than the shared celebration of the birth of Christ? Much work was done with this in mind, and one of the highlights was the ecumenical meeting in Saint Paul's Basilica on 18 January 2000, when for the first time in history *a Holy Door was opened jointly* by the Successor of Peter, the Anglican Primate and a Metropolitan of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in the presence of representatives of Churches and Ecclesial Communities from all over the world. There were also other important meetings with Orthodox Patriarchs and the heads of other Christian denominations. I recall in particular the recent visit of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. In addition, very many members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities took part in the Jubilee meetings organized for various groups. The ecumenical journey is certainly still difficult, and will perhaps be long, but we are encouraged by the hope that comes from being led by the presence of the Risen One and the inexhaustible power of his Spirit, always capable of new surprises.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

13. And how can I not recall *my personal Jubilee along the pathways of the Holy Land*? I would have liked to begin that journey at Ur of the Chaldeans, in order to follow, tangibly as it were, in the footsteps of Abraham "our father in faith" (cf. *Rom* 4:11-16). However, I had to be content with a pilgrimage in spirit,

⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

on the occasion of the evocative Liturgy of the Word celebrated in the Paul VI Audience Hall on 23 February. The actual pilgrimage came almost immediately afterwards, following the stages of salvation history. Thus I had the joy of visiting Mount Sinai, where the gift of the Ten Commandments of the Covenant was given. I set out again a month later, when I reached Mount Nebo, and then went on to the very places where the Redeemer lived and which he made holy. It is difficult to express the emotion I felt in being able to venerate the places of his birth and life, Bethlehem and Nazareth, to celebrate the Eucharist in the Upper Room, in the very place of its institution, to meditate again on the mystery of the Cross at Golgotha, where he gave his life for us. In those places, still so troubled and again recently afflicted by violence, I received an extraordinary welcome not only from the members of the Church but also from the Israeli and Palestinian communities. Intense emotion surrounded my prayer at the Western Wall and my visit to the Mausoleum of Yad Vashem, with its chilling reminder of the victims of the Nazi death camps. My pilgrimage was a moment of brotherhood and peace, and I like to remember it as one of the most beautiful gifts of the whole Jubilee event. Thinking back to the mood of those days, I cannot but express my deeply felt desire for a prompt and just solution to the still unresolved problems of the Holy Places, cherished by Jews, Christians and Muslims together.

International debt

14. The Jubilee was also a great event of charity — and it could not be otherwise. Already in the years of preparation, I had called for greater and more incisive attention to the problems of poverty which still beset the world. The problem of the *international debt of poor countries* took on particular significance in this context. A gesture of generosity towards these countries was in the very spirit of the Jubilee, which in its original Biblical setting

was precisely a time when the community committed itself to re-establishing justice and solidarity in interpersonal relations, including the return of whatever belonged to others. I am happy to note that recently the Parliaments of many creditor States have voted a substantial remission of the bilateral debt of the poorest and most indebted countries. I hope that the respective Governments will soon implement these parliamentary decisions. The question of multilateral debt contracted by poorer countries with international financial organizations has shown itself to be a rather more problematic issue. It is to be hoped that the member States of these organizations, especially those that have greater decisional powers, will succeed in reaching the necessary consensus in order to arrive at a rapid solution to this question on which the progress of many countries depends, with grave consequences for the economy and the living conditions of so many people.

New energies

15. These are only some of the elements of the Jubilee celebration. It has left us with many memories. But if we ask what is the core of the great legacy it leaves us, I would not hesitate to describe it as the *contemplation of the face of Christ*: Christ considered in his historical features and in his mystery, Christ known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life's journey.

Now we must look ahead, we must "put out into the deep", trusting in Christ's words: *Due in altum!* What we have done this year cannot justify a sense of complacency, and still less should it lead us to relax our commitment. On the contrary, the experiences we have had should *inspire in us new energy*, **and** impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt. Jesus himself warns us: "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (*Lk 9:62*). In the

cause of the Kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for settling into laziness. Much awaits us, and for this reason we must set about drawing up an effective post-Jubilee pastoral plan.

It is important however that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of "doing for the sake of doing". We must resist this temptation by trying "to be" before trying "to do". In this regard we should recall how Jesus reproved Martha: "You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful" (*Lk* 10:41-42). In this spirit, before setting out a number of practical guidelines for your consideration, I wish to share with you some points of meditation on the mystery of Christ, the absolute foundation of all our pastoral activity.

II A FACE TO CONTEMPLATE

16. "We wish to see Jesus" (*Jn* 12:21). This request, addressed to the Apostle Philip by some Greeks who had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover, echoes spiritually in our ears too during this Jubilee Year. Like those pilgrims of two thousand years ago, the men and women of our own day — often perhaps unconsciously — ask believers not only to "speak" of Christ, but in a certain sense to "show" him to them. And is it not the Church's task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium?

Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first *contemplated his face*. The Great Jubilee has certainly helped us to do this more deeply. At the end of the

Jubilee, as we go back to our ordinary routine, storing in our hearts the treasures of this very special time, our gaze is more than ever *firmly set on the face of the Lord*.

The witness of the Gospels

17. The contemplation of Christ's face cannot fail to be inspired by all that we are told about him in Sacred Scripture, which from beginning to end is permeated by his mystery, prefigured in a veiled way in the Old Testament and revealed fully in the New, so that Saint Jerome can vigorously affirm: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ".⁸ Remaining firmly anchored in Scripture, we open ourselves to the action of the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 15:26) from whom the sacred texts derive their origin, as well as to the *witness of the Apostles* (cf. *Jn* 15:27), who had a first-hand experience of Christ, the Word of life: they saw him with their eyes, heard him with their ears, touched him with their hands (cf. *1 Jn* 1:1).

What we receive from them is a vision of faith based on precise historical testimony: a true testimony which the Gospels, despite their complex redaction and primarily catechetical purpose, pass on to us in an entirely trustworthy way.⁹

18. The Gospels do not claim to be a complete biography of Jesus in accordance with the canons of modern historical science. From them, nevertheless, *the face of the Nazarene emerges with a solid historical foundation*. The Evangelists took pains to represent him on the basis of trustworthy testimonies which they gathered (cf. *Lk* 1:3) and working with documents which were subjected to careful ecclesial scrutiny. It was on the basis of such

⁸ "Ignoratio enim Scripturarum ignoratio Christi est": *Commentarii in Isaiam*, Prologue: *PL* 24, 17.

⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 19.

first-hand testimony that, enlightened by the Holy Spirit's action, they learnt the humanly perplexing fact of Jesus' virginal birth from Mary, wife of Joseph. From those who had known him during the almost thirty years spent in Nazareth (cf. *Lk* 3:23) they collected facts about the life of "the carpenter's son" (*Mt* 13:55) who was himself a "carpenter" and whose place within the context of his larger family was well established (cf. *Mk* 6:3). They recorded his religious fervour, which prompted him to make annual pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem with his family (cf. *Lk* 2:41), and made him a regular visitor to the synagogue of his own town (cf. *Lk* 4:16).

Without being complete and detailed, the reports of his public ministry become much fuller, starting at the moment of the young Galilean's baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan. Strengthened by the witness from on high and aware of being the "beloved son" (*Lk* 3:22), he begins his preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God, and explains its demands and its power by words and signs of grace and mercy. The Gospels present him to us as one who travels through towns and villages, accompanied by twelve Apostles whom he has chosen (cf. *Mk* 3:13-19), by a group of women who assist them (cf. *Lk* 8:2-3), by crowds that seek him out and follow him, by the sick who cry out for his healing power, by people who listen to him with varying degrees of acceptance of his words.

The Gospel narrative then converges on the growing tension which develops between Jesus and the dominant groups in the religious society of his time, until the final crisis with its dramatic climax on Golgotha. This is the hour of darkness, which is followed by a new, radiant and definitive dawn. The Gospel accounts conclude, in fact, by showing the Nazarene victorious over death. They point to the empty tomb and follow him in the cycle of apparitions in which the disciples — at first perplexed and

bewildered, then filled with unspeakable joy — experience his living and glorious presence. From him they receive the gift of the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 20:22) and the command to proclaim the Gospel to "all nations" (*Mt* 28:19).

The life of faith

19. "The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" (*Jn* 20:20). The face which the Apostles contemplated after the Resurrection was the same face of the Jesus with whom they had lived for almost three years, and who now convinced them of the astonishing truth of his new life by showing them "his hands and his side" (*ibid.*). Of course it was not easy to believe. The disciples on their way to Emmaus believed only after a long spiritual journey (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35). The Apostle Thomas believed only after verifying for himself the marvellous event (cf. *Jn* 20:24-29). In fact, regardless of how much his body was seen or touched, *only faith could fully enter the mystery of that face*. This was an experience which the disciples must have already had during the historical life of Christ, in the questions which came to their minds whenever they felt challenged by his actions and his words. One can never really reach Jesus except by the path of faith, on a journey of which the stages seem to be indicated to us by the Gospel itself in the well known scene at Caesarea Philippi (cf. *Mt* 16:13-20). Engaging in a kind of first evaluation of his mission, Jesus asks his disciples what "people" think of him, and they answer him: "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (*Mt* 16:14). A lofty response to be sure, but still a long way — by far — from the truth. The crowds are able to sense a definitely exceptional religious dimension to this rabbi who speaks in such a spellbinding way, but they are not able to put him above those men of God who had distinguished the history of Israel. Jesus is really far different! It is precisely this further step of awareness, concerning

as it does the deeper level of his being, which he expects from those who are close to him: "But who do you say that I am?" (*Mt* 16:15). Only the faith proclaimed by Peter, and with him by the Church in every age, truly goes to the heart, and touches the "depth of the mystery: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt* 16:16).

20. How had Peter come to this faith? And what is asked of us, if we wish to follow in his footsteps with ever greater conviction? Matthew gives us an enlightening insight in the words with which Jesus accepts Peter's confession: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (16:17). The expression "flesh and blood" is a reference to man and the common way of understanding things. In the case of Jesus, this common way is not enough. A grace of "revelation" is needed, which comes from the Father (cf. *ibid.*). Luke gives us an indication which points in the same direction when he notes that this dialogue with the disciples took place when Jesus "was praying alone" (*Lk* 9:18). Both indications converge to make it clear that we cannot come to the fullness of contemplation of the Lord's face by our own efforts alone, but by allowing grace to take us by the hand. Only *the experience of silence and prayer* offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery which finds its culminating expression in the solemn proclamation by the Evangelist Saint John: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14).

The depth of the mystery

21. The Word and the flesh, the divine glory and his dwelling among us! It is *in the intimate and inseparable union of these two aspects* that Christ's identity is to be found, in accordance with the classic formula of the Council of Chalcedon (451): "one

person in two natures". The person is that, and that alone, of the Eternal Word, the Son of the Father. The two natures, without any confusion whatsoever, but also without any possible separation, are the divine and the human.¹⁰

We know that our concepts and our words are limited. The formula, though always human, is nonetheless carefully measured in its doctrinal content, and it enables us, albeit with trepidation, to gaze in some way into the depths of the mystery. Yes, Jesus is true God and true man! Like the Apostle Thomas, the Church is constantly invited by Christ to touch his wounds, to recognize, that is, the fullness of his humanity taken from Mary, given up to death, transfigured by the Resurrection: "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side" (*Jn* 20:27). Like Thomas, the Church bows down in adoration before the Risen One, clothed in the fullness of his divine splendour, and never ceases to exclaim: "My Lord and my God!" (*Jn* 20:28).

22. "The Word became flesh" (*Jn* 1:14). This striking formulation by John of the mystery of Christ is confirmed by the entire New Testament. The Apostle Paul takes this same approach when he affirms that the Son of God was born "of the race of David, according to the flesh" (cf. *Rom* 1:3; cf. 9:5). If today, because of the rationalism found in so much of contemporary culture, it is above all faith in the divinity of Christ that has become problematic, in other historical and cultural contexts there was a tendency to diminish and do away with the historical concreteness of Jesus' humanity. But for the Church's faith it is essential and

¹⁰ "Following the holy Fathers, unanimously, we teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, true God and true man ... one and the same Christ the Lord, the only-begotten, to be recognized in two natures, without confusion, immutable, indivisible, inseparable ... he is not divided or separated in two persons, but he is one and the same Son, the only-begotten, God, Word and Lord Jesus Christ": *DS* 301-302.

indispensable to affirm that the Word truly "became flesh" and took on *every aspect of humanity*, except sin (cf. *Heb* 4:15). From this perspective, the incarnation is truly a kenosis — a "self-emptying" — on the part of the Son of God of that glory which is his from all eternity (*Phil* 2:6-8; cf. *1 Pt* 3:18).

On the other hand, this abasement of the Son of God is not an end in itself; it tends rather towards the full glorification of Christ, even in his humanity: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (*Phil* 2:9-11).

23. "Your face, O Lord, I seek" (*Psalms* 27:8). The ancient longing of the Psalmist could receive no fulfillment greater and more surprising than the contemplation of the face of Christ. God has truly blessed us in him and has made "his face to shine upon us" (*Psalms* 67:1). At the same time, God and man that he is, he reveals to us also the true face of man, "fully revealing man to man himself."

Jesus is "the new man" (cf. *Eph* 4:24; *Col* 3:10) who calls redeemed humanity to share in his divine life. The mystery of the Incarnation lays the foundations for an anthropology which, reaching beyond its own limitations and contradictions, moves towards God himself, indeed towards the goal of "divinization". This occurs through the grafting of the redeemed on to Christ and their admission into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life. The Fathers have laid great stress on this soteriological dimension of the mystery of the Incarnation: it is only because the Son of God truly

" Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

became man that man, in him and through him, can truly become a child of God.¹²

The Son's face

24. This divine-human identity emerges forcefully from the Gospels, which offer us a range of elements that make it possible for us to enter that "frontier zone" of the mystery, represented by *Christ's self-awareness*. The Church has no doubt that the Evangelists in their accounts, and inspired from on high, have correctly understood in the words which Jesus spoke the truth about his person and his awareness of it. Is this not what Luke wishes to tell us when he recounts Jesus' first recorded words, spoken in the Temple in Jerusalem when he was barely twelve years old? Already at that time he shows that he is aware of a unique relationship with God, a relationship which properly belongs to a "son". When his mother tells him how anxiously she and Joseph had been searching for him, Jesus replies without hesitation: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's affairs?" (Lit 2:49). It is no wonder therefore that later as a grown man his language authoritatively expresses the depth of his own mystery, as is abundantly clear both in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. *Mt* 11:27; *Lk* 10:22) and above all in the Gospel of John. In his self-awareness, Jesus has no doubts: "The Father is in me and I am in the Father" (*Jn* 10:38).

However valid it may be to maintain that, because of the human condition which made him grow "in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Lit 2:52), his human awareness of his own mystery would also have progressed to its fullest expression in his glorified humanity, there is no doubt that already

¹² Saint Athanasius observes in this regard: "Man could not become divine remaining united to a creature, if the Son were not true God": *Oratio II contra Arianos*, 70: PG 26, 425 B.

in his historical existence Jesus was aware of his identity as the Son of God. John emphasizes this to the point of affirming that it was ultimately because of this awareness that Jesus was rejected and condemned: they sought to kill him "because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God" (*Jn* 5:18). In Gethsemane and on Golgotha Jesus' human awareness will be put to the supreme test. But not even the drama of his Passion and Death will be able to shake his serene certainty of being the Son of the heavenly Father.

A face of sorrow

25. In contemplating Christ's face, we confront *the most paradoxical aspect of his mystery*, as it emerges in his last hour, on the Cross. The mystery within the mystery, before which we cannot but prostrate ourselves in adoration.

The intensity of the episode of the agony in the Garden of Olives passes before our eyes. Oppressed by foreknowledge of the trials that await him, and alone before the Father, Jesus cries out to him in his habitual and affectionate expression of trust: "Abba, Father". He asks him to take away, if possible, the cup of suffering (cf. *Mk* 14:36). But the Father seems not to want to heed the Son's cry. In order to bring man back to the Father's face, Jesus not only had to take on the face of man, but he had to burden himself with the "face" of sin. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 *Cor* 5:21).

We shall never exhaust the depths of this mystery. All the harshness of the paradox can be heard in Jesus' seemingly desperate cry of pain on the Cross: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (*Mk* 15:34). Is it possible to imagine a greater agony, a more impenetrable darkness? In reality, the anguished "why" addressed

to the Father in the opening words of the Twenty-second Psalm expresses all the realism of unspeakable pain; but it is also illumined by the meaning of that entire prayer, in which the Psalmist brings together suffering and trust, in a moving blend of emotions. In fact the Psalm continues: "In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you set them free ... Do not leave me alone in my distress, come close, there is none else to help" (*Ps* 22:5,12).

26. Jesus' cry on the Cross, dear Brothers and Sisters, is not the cry of anguish of a man without hope, but the prayer of the Son who offers his life to the Father in love, for the salvation of all. At the very moment when he identifies with our sin, "abandoned" by the Father, he "abandons" himself into the hands of the Father. His eyes remain fixed on the Father. Precisely because of the knowledge and experience of the Father which he alone has, even at this moment of darkness he sees clearly the gravity of sin and suffers because of it. He alone, who sees the Father and rejoices fully in him, can understand completely what it means to resist the Father's love by sin. More than an experience of physical pain, his Passion is an agonizing suffering of the soul. Theological tradition has not failed to ask how Jesus could possibly experience at one and the same time his profound unity with the Father, by its very nature a source of joy and happiness, and an agony that goes all the way to his final cry of abandonment. The simultaneous presence of these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects is rooted in the fathomless depths of the hypostatic union.

27. Faced with this mystery, we are greatly helped not only by theological investigation but also by that great heritage which is *the "lived theology" of the saints*. The saints offer us precious insights which enable us to understand more easily the intuition of faith, thanks to the special enlightenment which some of them have received from the Holy Spirit, or even through their personal

experience of those terrible states of trial which the mystical tradition describes as the "dark night". Not infrequently the saints have undergone *something akin to Jesus' experience on the Cross* in the paradoxical blending of bliss and pain. In the *Dialogue of Divine Providence*, God the Father shows *Catherine of Siena* how joy and suffering can be present together in holy souls: "Thus the soul is blissful and afflicted: afflicted on account of the sins of its neighbour, blissful on account of the union and the affection of charity which it has inwardly received. These souls imitate the spotless Lamb, my Only-begotten Son, who on the Cross was both blissful and afflicted".¹³ In the same way, *Therese of Lisieux* lived her agony in communion with the agony of Jesus, "experiencing" in herself the very paradox of Jesus's own bliss and anguish: "In the Garden of Olives our Lord was blessed with all the joys of the Trinity, yet his dying was no less harsh. It is a mystery, but I assure you that, on the basis of what I myself am feeling, I can understand something of it".¹⁴ What an illuminating testimony! Moreover, the accounts given by the Evangelists themselves provide a basis for this intuition on the part of the Church of Christ's consciousness when they record that, even in the depths of his pain, he died imploring forgiveness for his executioners (cf. *Lk* 23:34) and expressing to the Father his ultimate filial abandonment: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (*Lk* 23:46).

The face of the One who is Risen

28. As on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Church pauses in contemplation of this bleeding face, which conceals the life of God and offers salvation to the world. But her contemplation of Christ's face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. *He*

¹³ Cf. n. 78.

¹⁴ *Last Conversations. Yellow Booklet* (6 July 1897): *Euvres completes* (Paris, 1996), p. 1025.

is the Risen One! Were this not so, our preaching would be in vain and our faith empty (cf. *1 Cor* 15:14). The Resurrection was the Father's response to Christ's obedience, as we learn from the Letter to the Hebrews: "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Son though he was, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (5:7-9).

It is the Risen Christ to whom the Church now looks. And she does so in the footsteps of Peter, who wept for his denial and started out again by confessing, with understandable trepidation, his love of Christ: "You know that I love you" (*Jn* 21:15-17). She does so in the company of Paul, who encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus and was overwhelmed: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (*Phil* 1:21).

Two thousand years after these events, the Church relives them as if they had happened today. Gazing on the face of Christ, the Bride contemplates her treasure and her joy. "*Dulcis lesus memoria, dans vera cordis gaudia*": how sweet is the memory of Jesus, the source of the heart's true joy! Heartened by this experience, the Church today sets out once more on her journey, in order to proclaim Christ to the world at the dawn of the Third Millennium: he "is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (*Heb* 13:8).

III STARTING AFRESH FROM CHRIST

29. "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28:20). This assurance, dear brothers and sisters, has accompanied the Church for two thousand years, and has now been renewed in our

hearts by the celebration of the Jubilee. From it we must gain *new impetus in Christian living*, making it the force which inspires our journey of faith. Conscious of the Risen Lord's presence among us, we ask ourselves today the same question put to Peter in Jerusalem immediately after his Pentecost speech: "What must we do?" (*Acts 2:37*).

We put the question with trusting optimism, but without underestimating the problems we face. We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: *I am with you!*

It is not therefore a matter of inventing a "new programme". The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium.

But it must be translated into *pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community*. The Jubilee has given us the extraordinary opportunity to travel together for a number of years on a journey common to the whole Church, a catechetical journey on the theme of the Trinity, accompanied by precise pastoral undertakings designed to ensure that the Jubilee would be a fruitful event. I am grateful for the sincere and widespread acceptance of what I proposed in my Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. But now it is no longer an immediate goal

that we face, but the larger and more demanding challenge of normal pastoral activity. With its universal and indispensable provisions, the programme of the Gospel must continue to take root, as it has always done, in the life of the Church everywhere. It is *in the local churches* that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified — goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources — which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture.

I therefore earnestly exhort the Pastors of the particular Churches, with the help of all sectors of God's People, confidently to plan the stages of the journey ahead, harmonizing the choices of each diocesan community with those of neighbouring Churches and of the Universal Church.

This harmonization will certainly be facilitated by the collegial work which Bishops now regularly undertake in Episcopal Conferences and Synods. Was this not the point of the continental Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops which prepared for the Jubilee, and which forged important directives for the present-day proclamation of the Gospel in so many different settings and cultures? This rich legacy of reflection must not be allowed to disappear, but must be implemented in practical ways.

What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization — a work involving all of us. As guidance and encouragement to everyone, I wish to indicate *certain pastoral priorities* which the experience of the Great Jubilee has, in my view, brought to light.

Holiness

30. First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to *holiness*. Was this not the

ultimate meaning of the Jubilee indulgence, as a special grace offered by Christ so that the life of every baptized person could be purified and deeply renewed?

It is my hope that, among those who have taken part in the Jubilee, many will have benefited from this grace, in full awareness of its demands. Once the Jubilee is over, we resume our normal path, but knowing that stressing holiness remains more than ever an urgent pastoral task.

It is necessary therefore to rediscover the full practical significance of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, dedicated to the "universal call to holiness". The Council Fathers laid such stress on this point, not just to embellish ecclesiology with a kind of spiritual veneer, but to make the call to holiness an intrinsic and essential aspect of their teaching on the Church. The rediscovery of the Church as "mystery", or as a people "gathered together by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit",¹⁵ was bound to bring with it a rediscovery of the Church's "holiness", understood in the basic sense of belonging to him who is in essence the Holy One, the "thrice Holy" (cf. *Is* 6:3). To profess the Church as holy means to point to her as *the Bride of Christ*, for whom he gave himself precisely in order to make her holy (cf. *Eph* 5:25-26). This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized.

But the gift in turn becomes a task, which must shape the whole of Christian life: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (i *Th* 4:3). It is a duty which concerns not only certain Christians: "All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity".¹⁶

¹⁵ Saint Cyprian, *De Oratione Dominica*, 23; *PL* 4, 553; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 40.

31. At first glance, it might seem almost impractical to recall this elementary truth as the foundation of the pastoral planning in which we are involved at the start of the new millennium. Can holiness ever be "planned"? What might the word "holiness" mean in the context of a pastoral plan?

In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: "Do you wish to receive Baptism?" means at the same time to ask them: "Do you wish to become holy?" It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5:48*).

As the Council itself explained, this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few "uncommon heroes" of holiness. The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living*: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction. It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine "*training in holiness*", adapted to people's needs. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance, as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church.

Prayer

32. This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in *the art of prayer*. The Jubilee Year has been a year of more intense prayer, both personal and communal. But we well know that prayer cannot be taken for granted. We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" (*Lk* 11:1). Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: "Abide in me and I in you" (*Jn* 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face. Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life,¹⁷ but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns continually to the sources and finds in them new life.

33. Is it not one of the "signs of the times" that in today's world, despite widespread secularization, there is *a widespread demand for spirituality*, a demand which expresses itself in large part as *a renewed need for prayer*? Other religions, which are now widely present in ancient Christian lands, offer their own responses to this need, and sometimes they do so in appealing ways. But we who have received the grace of believing in Christ, the revealer of the Father and the Saviour of the world, have a duty to show to what depths the relationship with Christ can lead.

The great mystical tradition of the Church of both East and West has much to say in this regard. It shows how prayer can

¹⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

progress, as a genuine dialogue of love, to the point of rendering the person wholly possessed by the divine Beloved, vibrating at the Spirit's touch, resting filially within the Father's heart. This is the lived experience of Christ's promise: "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (*Jn* 14:21). It is a journey totally sustained by grace, which nonetheless demands an intense spiritual commitment and is no stranger to painful purifications (the 'dark night'). But it leads, in various possible ways, to the ineffable joy experienced by the mystics as "nuptial union". How can we forget here, among the many shining examples, the teachings of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila?

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our Christian communities must become *genuine "schools" of prayer*, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly "falls in love". Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan.¹⁸

34. Christians who have received the gift of a vocation to the specially consecrated life are of course called to prayer in a particular way: of its nature, their consecration makes them more open to the experience of contemplation, and it is important that they should cultivate it with special care. But it would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, they would

¹⁸ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter on Certain Aspects of Christian Meditation *Orationis Fortnas* (15 October 1989): AAS 82 (1990), 362-379.

be not only mediocre Christians but "Christians at risk". They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined, and would perhaps end up succumbing to the allure of "substitutes", accepting alternative religious proposals and even indulging in far-fetched superstitions.

It is therefore essential that *education in prayer* should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning. I myself have decided to dedicate the forthcoming Wednesday catecheses to *reflection upon the Psalms*, beginning with the Psalms of Morning Prayer with which the public prayer of the Church invites us to consecrate and direct our day. How helpful it would be if not only in religious communities but also in parishes more were done to ensure an all-pervading climate of prayer. With proper discernment, this would require that popular piety be given its proper place, and that people be educated especially in liturgical prayer. Perhaps it is more thinkable than we usually presume for the average day of a Christian community to combine the many forms of pastoral life and witness in the world with the celebration of the Eucharist and even the recitation of Lauds and Vespers. The experience of many committed Christian groups, also those made up largely of lay people, is proof of this.

The Sunday Eucharist

35. It is therefore obvious that our principal attention must be given to the liturgy, "the summit towards which the Church's action tends and at the same time the source from which comes all her strength".¹⁹ In the twentieth century, especially since the Council, there has been a great development in the way the Christian community celebrates the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. It is necessary to continue in this direction, and to stress

¹⁹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

particularly *the Sunday Eucharist* and *Sunday* itself experienced as a special day of faith, the day of the Risen Lord and of the gift of the Spirit, the true weekly Easter.²⁰ For two thousand years, Christian time has been measured by the memory of that "first day of the week" (*Mk* 16:2,9; *Lk* 24:1; *Jn* 20:1), when the Risen Christ gave the Apostles the gift of peace and of the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 20:19-23). The truth of Christ's Resurrection is the original fact upon which Christian faith is based (cf. *1 Cor* 15:14), an event set *at the centre of the mystery of time*, prefiguring the last day when Christ will return in glory. We do not know what the new millennium has in store for us, but we are certain that it is safe in the hands of Christ, the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (*Rev* 19:16); and precisely by celebrating his Passover not just once a year but every Sunday, the Church will continue to show to every generation "the true fulcrum of history, to which the mystery of the world's origin and its final destiny leads".²¹

36. Following *Dies Domini*, I therefore wish to insist that *sharing in the Eucharist* should really be *the heart of Sunday* for every baptized person. It is a fundamental duty, to be fulfilled not just in order to observe a precept but as something felt as essential to a truly informed and consistent Christian life. We are entering a millennium which already shows signs of being marked by a profound interweaving of cultures and religions, even in countries which have been Christian for many centuries. In many regions Christians are, or are becoming, a "little flock" (*Lk* 12:32). This presents them with the challenge, often in isolated and difficult situations, to bear stronger witness to the distinguishing elements of their own identity. The duty to take part in the Eucharist every Sunday is one of these. The Sunday Eucharist which every week

²⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (31 May 1998), 19: AAS 90 (1998), 724.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2: *loc. cit.*, 714.

gathers Christians together as God's family round the table of the Word and the Bread of Life, is also the most natural antidote to dispersion. It is the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. Precisely through sharing in the Eucharist, *the Lord's Day also becomes the Day of the Church*,²² when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

37.1 am also asking for renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As you will recall, in 1984 I dealt with this subject in the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, which synthesized the results of an Assembly of the Synod of Bishops devoted to this question. My invitation then was to make every effort to face the crisis of "the sense of sin" apparent in today's culture.²³ But I was even more insistent in calling for a rediscovery of Christ as *mysterium pietatis*, the one in whom God shows us his compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with himself. It is this face of Christ that must be rediscovered through the Sacrament of Penance, which for the faithful is "the ordinary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sins committed after Baptism".²⁴ When the Synod addressed the problem, the crisis of the Sacrament was there for all to see, especially in some parts of the world. The causes of the crisis have not disappeared in the brief span of time since then. But the Jubilee Year, which has been particularly marked by a return to the Sacrament of Penance, has given us an encouraging message, which should not be ignored: if many people, and among them also many young people, have benefited from approaching this

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 35: *loc. cit.*, 734.

²³ Cf. No. 18: AAS 77 (1985), 224.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31: *loc. cit.*, 258.

Sacrament, it is probably necessary that Pastors should arm themselves with more confidence, creativity and perseverance in presenting it and leading people to appreciate it. Dear brothers in the priesthood, we must not give in to passing crises! The Lord's gifts — and the Sacraments are among the most precious — come from the One who well knows the human heart and is the Lord of history.

The primacy of grace

38. If in the planning that awaits us we commit ourselves more confidently to a pastoral activity that gives personal and communal prayer its proper place, we shall be observing an essential principle of the Christian view of life: *the primacy of grace*. There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (cf. *Jn* 15:5).

It is prayer which roots us in this truth. It constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration? We then share the experience of the disciples in the Gospel story of the miraculous catch of fish: "We have toiled all night and caught nothing" (*Lk* 5:5). This is the moment of faith, of prayer, of conversation with God, in order to open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its power: *Due in ahum!* On that occasion, it was Peter who spoke the word of faith: "At your word I will let down the nets" (*ibid.*). As this millennium begins, allow the Successor of Peter to invite

the whole Church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer.

Listening to the Word

39. There is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed *listening to the word of God*. Ever since the Second Vatican Council underlined the pre-eminent role of the word of God in the life of the Church, great progress has certainly been made in devout listening to Sacred Scripture and attentive study of it. Scripture has its rightful place of honour in the public prayer of the Church. Individuals and communities now make extensive use of the Bible, and among lay people there are many who devote themselves to Scripture with the valuable help of theological and biblical studies. But it is above all the work of evangelization and catechesis which is drawing new life from attentiveness to the word of God. Dear brothers and sisters, this development needs to be consolidated and deepened, also by making sure that every family has a Bible. It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives.

Proclaiming the Word

40. To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be "servants of the word" in the work of evangelization: this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium. Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a "Christian society" which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. Today we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of "globalization" and of the consequent new and uncertain

mingling of peoples and cultures. Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the *new evangelization*. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (7 *Cor* 9:16).

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of "specialists" but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as *the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups*. This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness.

In the Third Millennium, Christianity will have to respond ever more effectively to this *need for inculturation*. Christianity, while remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root. In this Jubilee Year, we have rejoiced in a special way in the beauty of the Church's varied face. This is perhaps only a beginning, a barely sketched image of the future which the Spirit of God is preparing for us.

Christ must be presented to all people with confidence. We shall address adults, families, young people, children, without ever hiding the most radical demands of the Gospel message, but taking into account each person's needs in regard to their sensitivity and

language, after the example of Paul who declared: "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (*1 Cor* 9:22). In making these recommendations, I am thinking especially of *the pastoral care of young people*. Precisely in regard to young people, as I said earlier, the Jubilee has given us an encouraging testimony of their generous availability. We must learn to interpret that heartening response, by investing that enthusiasm like a new talent (cf. *Mt* 25:15) which the Lord has put into our hands so that we can make it yield a rich return.

41. May the shining example of the many witnesses to the faith whom we have remembered during the Jubilee sustain and guide us in this confident, enterprising and creative sense of mission. For the Church, the martyrs have always been a seed of life. *Sanguis martyrum semen christianorum*:²⁵ this famous "law" formulated by Tertullian has proved true in all the trials of history. Will this not also be the case of the century and millennium now beginning? Perhaps we were too used to thinking of the martyrs in rather distant terms, as though they were a category of the past, associated especially with the first centuries of the Christian era. The Jubilee remembrance has presented us with a surprising vista, showing us that our own time is particularly prolific in witnesses, who in different ways were able to live the Gospel in the midst of hostility and persecution, often to the point of the supreme test of shedding their blood. In them the word of God, sown in good soil, yielded a hundred fold (cf. *Mt* 13:8, 23). By their example they have shown us, and made smooth for us, so to speak, the path to the future. All that remains for us is, with God's grace, to follow in their footsteps.

Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 50, 13: *PL* 1, 534.

IV WITNESSES TO LOVE

42. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (*Jn* 13:35). If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ, dear Brothers and Sisters, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the "new commandment" which he gave us: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (*Jn* 13:34).

This is the other important area in which there has to be commitment and planning on the part of the universal Church and the particular Churches: *the domain of communion (koinonia)*, which embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church. Communion is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the Eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us (cf. *Rom* 5:5), to make us all "one heart and one soul" (*Acts* 4:32). It is in building this communion of love that the Church appears as "sacrament", as the "sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the human race".²⁶

The Lord's words on this point are too precise for us to diminish their import. Many things are necessary for the Church's journey through history, not least in this new century; but without charity (*agape*), all will be in vain. It is again the Apostle Paul who in the *hymn to love* reminds us: even if we speak the tongues of men and of angels, and if we have faith "to move mountains", but are without love, all will come to "nothing" (cf. *1 Cor* 13:2). Love is truly the "heart" of the Church, as was well understood by Saint Therese of Lisieux, whom I proclaimed a Doctor of the Church precisely because she is an expert in the *scientia amoris*:

²⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

"I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was aflame with Love. I understood that Love alone stirred the members of the Church to act... I understood that Love encompassed all vocations, that Love was everything".²⁷

A spirituality of communion

43. To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.

But what does this mean in practice? Here too, our thoughts could run immediately to the action to be undertaken, but that would not be the right impulse to follow. Before making practical plans, we need *to promote a spirituality of communion*, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as "those who are a part of me". This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me". A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to "make

²⁷ *Manuscript B*, 3vo: *Euvres completes* (Paris, 1996), p. 226.

room" for our brothers and sisters, bearing "each other's burdens" (*Gal* 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, "masks" of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.

44. Consequently, the new century will have to see us more than ever intent on valuing and developing the forums and structures which, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's major directives, serve to ensure and safeguard communion. How can we forget in the first place those *specific services to communion* which are the *Petrine ministry* and, closely related to it, *episcopal collegiality*? These are realities which have their foundation and substance in Christ's own plan for the Church,²⁸ but which need to be examined constantly in order to ensure that they follow their genuinely evangelical inspiration.

Much has also been done since the Second Vatican Council for the reform of the Roman Curia, the organization of Synods and the functioning of Episcopal Conferences. But there is certainly much more to be done, in order to realize all the potential of these instruments of communion, which are especially appropriate today in view of the need to respond promptly and effectively to the issues which the Church must face in these rapidly changing times.

45. Communion must be cultivated and extended day by day and at every level in the structures of each Church's life. There, relations between Bishops, priests and deacons, between Pastors and the entire People of God, between clergy and Religious, between associations and ecclesial movements must all be clearly

²⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter III.

characterized by communion. To this end, the structures of participation envisaged by Canon Law, such as *the Council of Priests and the Pastoral Council*, must be ever more highly valued. These of course are not governed by the rules of parliamentary democracy, because they are consultative rather than deliberative;²⁹ yet this does not mean that they are less meaningful and relevant. The theology and spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between Pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them *a priori* in all that is essential, and on the other leading them to pondered agreement in matters open to discussion.

To this end, we need to make our own the ancient pastoral wisdom which, without prejudice to their authority, encouraged Pastors to listen more widely to the entire People of God. Significant is Saint Benedict's reminder to the Abbot of a monastery, inviting him to consult even the youngest members of the community: "By the Lord's inspiration, it is often a younger person who knows what is best".³⁰ And Saint Paulinus of Nola urges: "Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes".³¹

While the wisdom of the law, by providing precise rules for participation, attests to the hierarchical structure of the Church and averts any temptation to arbitrariness or unjustified claims, the spirituality of communion, by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul.

²⁹ Cf. Congregation for the clergy et al, Instruction on Certain Questions regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997): MS 89 (1997), 852-877, especially Article 5: "The Structures of Collaboration in the Particular Church".

³⁰ Regula, III, 3: "*Ideo autem omnes ad consilium vocari diximus, quia saepe iuniori Dominus revelat quod melius est*".

³¹ "*De omnium fidelium ore pendeamus, quia in omnem fidelem Spiritus Dei spirat*": Epistola 23, 36 to Sulpicius Severus: CSEL 29, 193.

The diversity of vocations

46. Such a vision of communion is closely linked to the Christian community's ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit. The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities. It is the reality of many members joined in a single body, the one Body of Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 12:12). Therefore the Church of the Third Millennium will need to encourage all the baptized and confirmed to be aware of their active responsibility in the Church's life. Together with the ordained ministry, other ministries, whether formally instituted or simply recognized, can flourish for the good of the whole community, sustaining it in all its many needs: from catechesis to liturgy, from the education of the young to the widest array of charitable works.

Certainly, a generous commitment is needed — above all through insistent prayer to the Lord of the harvest (cf. *Mt* 9:38) — in *promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life*. This is a question of great relevance for the life of the Church in every part of the world. In some traditionally Christian countries, the situation has become dramatic, due to changed social circumstances and a religious disinterest resulting from the consumer and secularist mentality. There is a pressing need to implement an extensive *plan of vocational promotion*, based on personal contact and involving parishes, schools and families in the effort to foster a more attentive reflection on life's essential values. These reach their fulfillment in the response which each person is invited to give to God's call, particularly when the call implies a total giving of self and of one's energies to the cause of the Kingdom.

It is in this perspective that we see the value of all other vocations, rooted as they are in the new life received in the Sacrament of Baptism. In a special way it will be necessary to discover ever more fully *the specific vocation of the laity*, called

"to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God";³² they "have their own role to play in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world ... by their work for the evangelization and the sanctification of people".³³

Along these same lines, another important aspect of communion is *the promotion of forms of association*, whether of the more traditional kind or the newer ecclesial movements, which continue to give the Church a vitality that is God's gift and a true "springtime of the Spirit". Obviously, associations and movements need to work in full harmony within both the universal Church and the particular Churches, and in obedience to the authoritative directives of the Pastors. But the Apostle's exacting and decisive warning applies to all: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything and hold fast what is good" (/ *Th* 5:19-21).

47. At a time in history like the present, special attention must also be given to *the pastoral care of the family*, particularly when this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis. In the Christian view of marriage, the relationship between a man and a woman — a mutual and total bond, unique and indissoluble — is part of God's original plan, obscured throughout history by our "hardness of heart", but which Christ came to restore to its pristine splendour, disclosing what had been God's will "from the beginning" (*Mt* 19:8). Raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, marriage expresses the "great mystery" of Christ's nuptial love for his Church (cf. *Eph* 5:32).

³² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

³³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2.

On this point the Church cannot yield to cultural pressures, no matter how widespread and even militant they may be. Instead, it is necessary to ensure that through an ever more complete Gospel formation Christian families show convincingly that it is possible to live marriage fully in keeping with God's plan and with the true good of the human person — of the spouses, and of the children who are more fragile. Families themselves must become increasingly conscious of the care due to children, and play an active role in the Church and in society in safeguarding their rights.

Ecumenical commitment

48. And what should we say of the urgent task of fostering communion in the delicate area of *ecumenism*? Unhappily, as we cross the threshold of the new millennium, we take with us the sad heritage of the past. The Jubilee has offered some truly moving and prophetic signs, but there is still a long way to go.

By fixing our gaze on Christ, the Great Jubilee has given us a more vivid sense of the Church as a mystery of unity. "I believe in the one Church": what we profess in the Creed has *its ultimate foundation in Christ, in whom the Church is undivided* (cf. *1 Cor* 1:11-13). As his Body, in the unity which is the gift of the Spirit, she is indivisible. The reality of division among the Church's children appears at the level of history, as the result of human weakness in the way we accept the gift which flows endlessly from Christ the Head to his Mystical Body. The prayer of Jesus in the Upper Room — "as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us" (*Jn* 17:21) — is both *revelation* and *invocation*. It reveals to us the unity of Christ with the Father as the wellspring of the Church's unity and as the gift which in him she will constantly receive until its mysterious fulfillment the end of time. This unity is concretely embodied in the Catholic Church, despite the human limitations of her members, and it is at work in varying degrees in all the elements of holiness

and truth to be found in the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities. As gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, these elements lead them continuously towards full unity.³⁴

Christ's prayer reminds us that this gift needs to be received and developed ever more profoundly. The invocation "*ut unum sint*" is, at one and the same time, a binding imperative, the strength that sustains us, and a salutary rebuke for our slowness and closed-heartedness. It is on Jesus's prayer and not on our own strength that we base the hope that even within history we shall be able to reach full and visible communion with all Christians.

In the perspective of our renewed post-Jubilee pilgrimage, I look with great hope to the *Eastern Churches*, and I pray for a full return to that exchange of gifts which enriched the Church of the first millennium. May the memory of the time when the Church breathed with "both lungs" spur Christians of East and West to walk together in unity of faith and with respect for legitimate diversity, accepting and sustaining each other as members of the one Body of Christ.

A similar commitment should lead to the fostering of ecumenical dialogue with our brothers and sisters belonging to the *Anglican Communion* and the *Ecclesial Communities born of the Reformation*. Theological discussion on essential points of faith and Christian morality, cooperation in works of charity, and above all the great ecumenism of holiness will not fail, with God's help, to bring results. In the meantime we confidently continue our pilgrimage, longing for the time when, together with each and every one of Christ's followers, we shall be able to join wholeheartedly in singing: "How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers live in unity!" (*Ps* 133:1).

³⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

Stake everything on charity

49. Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us *a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being*. This too is an aspect which must clearly mark the Christian life, the Church's whole activity and her pastoral planning. The century and the millennium now beginning will need to see, and hopefully with still greater clarity, to what length of dedication the Christian community can go in charity towards the poorest. If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (*Mt 25:35-37*). This Gospel text is not a simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ. By these words, no less than by the orthodoxy of her doctrine, the Church measures her fidelity as the Bride of Christ.

Certainly we need to remember that no one can be excluded from our love, since "through his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person".³⁵ Yet, as the unequivocal words of the Gospel remind us, there is a special presence of Christ in the poor, and this requires the Church to make a preferential option for them. This option is a testimony to the nature of God's love, to his providence and mercy; and in some way history is still filled with the seeds of the Kingdom of God which Jesus himself sowed during his earthly life whenever

³⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

he responded to those who came to him with their spiritual and material needs.

50. In our own time, there are so many needs which demand a compassionate response from Christians. Our world is entering the new millennium burdened by the contradictions of an economic, cultural and technological progress which offers immense possibilities to a fortunate few, while leaving millions of others not only on the margins of progress but in living conditions far below the minimum demanded by human dignity. How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads?

The scenario of poverty can extend indefinitely, if in addition to its traditional forms we think of its newer patterns. These latter often affect financially affluent sectors and groups which are nevertheless threatened by despair at the lack of meaning in their lives, by drug addiction, by fear of abandonment in old age or sickness, by marginalization or social discrimination. In this context Christians must learn to make their act of faith in Christ by discerning his voice in the cry for help that rises from this world of poverty. This means carrying on the tradition of charity which has expressed itself in so many different ways in the past two millennia, but which today calls for even greater resourcefulness. Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters.

We must therefore ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the Kingdom? Without this form of evangelization through charity and without the witness of Christian poverty the proclamation of the Gospel,

which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications. The charity of *works* ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of *words*.

Today's challenges

51. And how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an *ecological crisis* which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity? Or by the *problems of peace*, so often threatened by the spectre of catastrophic wars? Or by *contempt for the fundamental human rights* of so many people, especially children? Countless are the emergencies to which every Christian heart must be sensitive.

A special commitment is needed with regard to certain aspects of the Gospel's radical message which are often less well understood, even to the point of making the Church's presence unpopular, but which nevertheless must be a part of her mission of charity. I am speaking of the duty to be committed to *respect for the life of every human being*, from conception until natural death. Likewise, the service of humanity leads us to insist, in season and out of season, that those using *the latest advances of science*, especially in the field of biotechnology, must never disregard fundamental ethical requirements by invoking a questionable solidarity which eventually leads to discriminating between one life and another and ignoring the dignity which belongs to every human being.

For Christian witness to be effective, especially in these delicate and controversial areas, it is important that special efforts be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church's position, stressing that it is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person. In this way charity will

necessarily become service to culture, politics, the economy and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which depend the destiny of human beings and the future of civilization will be everywhere respected.

52. Clearly, all this must be done in a specifically Christian way: *the laity* especially must be present in these areas in fulfillment of their lay vocation, without ever yielding to the temptation to turn Christian communities into mere social agencies. In particular, the Church's relationship with civil society should respect the latter's autonomy and areas of competence, in accordance with the teachings of the *Church's social doctrine*.

Well known are the efforts made by the Church's teaching authority, especially in the twentieth century, to interpret social realities in the light of the Gospel and to offer in a timely and systematic way its contribution to the social question, which has now assumed a global dimension.

The ethical and social aspect of the question is an essential element of Christian witness: we must reject the temptation to offer a privatized and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the Incarnation and, in the last analysis, of Christianity's eschatological tension. While that tension makes us aware of the relative character of history, it in no way implies that we withdraw from "building" history. Here the teaching of the Second Vatican Council is more timely than ever: "The Christian message does not inhibit men and women from building up the world, or make them disinterested in the welfare of their fellow human beings: on the contrary it obliges them more fully to do these very things".³⁶

³⁶ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 34.

A practical sign

53. In order to give a sign of this commitment to charity and human promotion, rooted in the most basic demands of the Gospel, I have resolved that the Jubilee year, in addition to the great harvest of charity which it has already yielded — here I am thinking in particular of the help given to so many of our poorer brothers and sisters to enable them to take part in the Jubilee — should leave an endowment which would in some way be *the fruit and seal of the love sparked by the Jubilee*. Many pilgrims have made an offering and many leaders in the financial sector have joined in providing generous assistance which has helped to ensure a fitting celebration of the Jubilee. Once the expenses of this year have been covered, the money saved will be dedicated to charitable purposes. It is important that such a major religious event should be completely dissociated from any semblance of financial gain. Whatever money remains will be used to continue the experience so often repeated since the very beginning of the Church, when the Jerusalem community offered non-Christians the moving sight of a spontaneous exchange of gifts, even to the point of holding all things in common, for the sake of the poor (cf. *Acts* 2:44-45).

The endowment to be established will be but a small stream flowing into the great river of Christian charity that courses through history. A small but significant stream: because of the Jubilee the world has looked to Rome, the Church "which presides in charity"³⁷ and has brought its gifts to Peter. Now the charity displayed at the centre of Catholicism will in some way flow back to the world through this sign, which is meant to be an enduring legacy and remembrance of the communion experienced during the Jubilee.

³⁷ Cf. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, Preface, ed. Funk, I, 252.

Dialogue and mission

54. A new century, a new millennium are opening in the light of Christ. But not everyone can see this light. Ours is the wonderful and demanding task of becoming its "reflection". This is the *mysterium lunae*, which was so much a part of the contemplation of the Fathers of the Church, who employed this image to show the Church's dependence on Christ, the Sun whose light she reflects.³⁸ It was a way of expressing what Christ himself said when he called himself the "light of the world" (*Jn* 8:12) and asked his disciples to be "the light of the world" (*Mt* 5:14).

This is a daunting task if we consider our human weakness, which so often renders us opaque and full of shadows. But it is a task which we can accomplish if we turn to the light of Christ and open ourselves to the grace which makes us a new creation.

55. It is in this context also that we should consider the great challenge of *inter-religious dialogue* to which we shall still be committed in the new millennium, in fidelity to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.³⁹ In the years of preparation for the Great Jubilee the Church has sought to build, not least through a series of highly symbolic meetings, *a relationship of openness and dialogue with the followers of other religions*. This dialogue must continue. In the climate of increased cultural and religious pluralism which is expected to mark the society of the new millennium, it is obvious that this dialogue will be especially important in establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often

" Thus, for example, SAINT AUGUSTINE: "*Luna intellegitur Ecclesia, quod suum lumen non habeat, sed ab Unigenito Dei Filio, qui multis locis in Sanctis Scripturis allegorice sol appellatus est*": *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 10, 3: CCL 38, 42.

³⁹ Cf. Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*.

bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: *a name of peace and a summons to peace*.

56. Dialogue, however, cannot be based on religious indifference, and we Christians are in duty bound, while engaging in dialogue, to bear clear witness to the hope that is within us (cf. / *Pt* 3:15). We should not fear that it will be considered an offence to the identity of others what is rather *the joyful proclamation of a gift* meant for all, and to be offered to all with the greatest respect for the freedom of each one: the gift of the revelation of the God who is Love, the God who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (*Jn* 3:16). As the recent Declaration *Dominus Iesus* stressed, this cannot be the subject of a dialogue understood as negotiation, as if we considered it a matter of mere opinion: rather, it is a grace which fills us with joy, a message which we have a duty to proclaim.

The Church therefore cannot forgo her missionary activity among the peoples of the world. It is the primary task of the *missio ad gentes* to announce that it is in Christ, "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (*Jn* 14:6), that people find salvation. Interreligious dialogue "cannot simply replace proclamation, but remains oriented towards proclamation".⁴⁰ This missionary duty, moreover, does not prevent us from approaching dialogue *with an attitude of profound willingness to listen*. We know in fact that, in the presence of the mystery of grace, infinitely full of possibilities and implications for human life and history, the Church herself will never cease putting questions, trusting in the help of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth (cf. *Jn* 14:17), whose task it is to guide her "into all the truth" (*Jn* 16:13).

⁴⁰ Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Instruction on the Proclamation of the Gospel and Interreligious Dialogue *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations* (19 May 1991), 82: AAS 84 (1992), 444.

This is a fundamental principle not only for the endless theological investigation of Christian truth, but also for Christian dialogue with other philosophies, cultures and religions. In the common experience of humanity, for all its contradictions, the Spirit of God, who "blows where he wills" (*Jn* 3:8), not infrequently reveals signs of his presence which help Christ's followers to understand more deeply the message which they bear. Was it not with this humble and trust-filled openness that the Second Vatican Council sought to read "the signs of the times"?⁴¹ Even as she engages in an active and watchful discernment aimed at understanding the "genuine signs of the presence or the purpose of God",⁴² the Church acknowledges that she has not only given, but has also "received from the history and from the development of the human race".⁴³ This attitude of openness, combined with careful discernment, was adopted by the Council also in relation to other religions. It is our task to follow with great fidelity the Council's teaching and the path which it has traced.

In the light of the Council

57. What a treasure there is, dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council! For this reason I asked the Church, as a way of preparing for the Great Jubilee, *to examine herself on the reception given to the Council*.⁴⁴ Has this been done? The Congress held here in the Vatican was such a moment of reflection, and I hope that similar efforts have been made in various ways in all the particular Churches. With the passing of the years, *the Council documents have lost nothing*

⁴¹ Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁴ Cf. Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennia Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 36: AAS 87 (1995), 28.

of their value or brilliance. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church's Tradition. Now that the Jubilee has ended, I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as *the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century*: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.

CONCLUSION

DUC IN ALTUM!

58. Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work. Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Mt 28:19*). The missionary mandate accompanies us into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint" (*Rom 5:5*).

At the beginning of this new century, our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world. Many are the paths on which each one of us and each of our Churches must travel, but

there is no distance between those who are united in the same communion, the communion which is daily nourished at the table of the Eucharistic Bread and the Word of Life. Every Sunday, the Risen Christ asks us to meet him as it were once more in the Upper Room where, on the evening of "the first day of the week" (*Jn* 20:19) he appeared to his disciples in order to "breathe" on them his life-giving Spirit and launch them on the great adventure of proclaiming the Gospel.

On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom, a few months ago, in the presence of a great number of Bishops assembled in Rome from all parts of the world, I entrusted the Third Millennium. During this year I have often invoked her as the "Star of the New Evangelization". Now I point to Mary once again as the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps. Once more, echoing the words of Jesus himself and giving voice to the filial affection of the whole Church, I say to her: "Woman, behold your children"(cf. *Jn* 19:26).

59. Dear brothers and sisters! The symbol of the Holy Door now closes behind us, but only in order to leave more fully open the living door which is Christ. After the enthusiasm of the Jubilee, it is not to a dull everyday routine that we return. On the contrary, if ours has been a genuine pilgrimage, it will have as it were stretched our legs for the journey still ahead. We need to imitate the zeal of the Apostle Paul: "Straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (*Phil* 3:13-14). Together, we must all imitate the contemplation of Mary, who returned home to Nazareth from her pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, treasuring in her heart the mystery of her Son (cf. *Lk* 2:51).

The Risen Jesus accompanies us on our way and enables us to recognize him, as the disciples of Emmaus did, "in the breaking of the bread" (*Lk* 24:35). May he find us watchful, ready to

recognize his face and run to our brothers and sisters with the good news: "We have seen the Lord!" (*Jn* 20:25).

This will be the much desired fruit of the Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Jubilee which has vividly set before our eyes once more the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and the Redeemer of man.

As the Jubilee now comes to a close and points us to a future of hope, may the praise and thanksgiving of the whole Church rise to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

In pledge of this, I impart to all of you my heartfelt Blessing.

Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace

JOHN PAUL II

Dialogue Between Cultures For A Civilization Of Love And Peace

1. At the dawn of a new millennium, there is growing hope that relationships between people will be increasingly inspired by the ideal of a truly universal brotherhood. Unless this ideal is shared, there will be no way to ensure a stable peace. There are many signs which suggest that this conviction is becoming more deeply rooted in people's minds. The importance of fraternity is proclaimed in the great "charters" of human rights; it is embodied in great international institutions, particularly the United Nations; and it is called for, as never before, by the process of globalization which is leading to a progressive unification of the economy, culture and society. For their part, the followers of the different religions are ever more conscious of the fact that a relationship with the one God, the common Father of all, cannot fail to bring about a greater sense of human brotherhood and a more fraternal life together. In God's revelation in Christ, this principle finds a radical expression: "He who does not love does not know God; for God is love" (/ *Jn* 4:8).

2. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that thick clouds overshadow these bright hopes. Humanity is beginning this new chapter of its history with still open wounds. In many regions it is beset by bitter and bloody conflicts, and is struggling with increasing difficulty to maintain solidarity between people of different cultures and civilizations living together in the same territory. We all know how hard it is to settle differences between parties when ancient hatreds and serious problems which admit of no easy solution create an atmosphere of anger and exasperation. But no less dangerous for the future of peace would be the inability to confront intelligently the problems posed by a new social configuration resulting in many countries from accelerated migration and the unprecedented situation of people of different cultures and civilizations living side by side.

3. I therefore consider it urgent to invite believers in Christ, together with all men and women of good will, to *reflect on the theme of dialogue between cultures and traditions*. This dialogue is the obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world, a world able to look with serenity to its own future. This is a theme which is crucial to the pursuit of peace. I am pleased that the United Nations Organization has called attention to this urgent need by declaring 2001 the "International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations".

Naturally, I do not believe that there can be easy or readily applicable solutions to a problem like this. It is difficult enough to undertake an analysis of the situation, which is in constant flux and defies all preconceived models. There is also the difficulty of combining principles and values which, however reconcilable in the abstract, can prove on the practical level to be resistant to any easy synthesis. In addition, at a deeper level, there are always the demands which ethical commitment makes upon individuals, who are not free of self-interest and human limitations.

But for this very reason I see the usefulness of a shared reflection on these issues. With this intention I confine myself here to offering some guidelines, listening to what the Spirit of God is saying to the Churches (cf. *Rev* 2:7) and to all of humanity at this decisive hour of its history.

Mankind and its different cultures

4. Reflecting upon the human situation, one is always amazed at the complexity and diversity of human cultures. Each of them is distinct by virtue of its specific historical evolution and the resulting characteristics which make it a structurally unique, original and organic whole. *Culture is the form of man's self-expression in his journey through history*, on the level of both individuals and social groups. For man is driven incessantly by his intellect and will to "cultivate natural goods and values",¹ to incorporate in an ever higher and more systematic cultural synthesis his basic knowledge of all aspects of life, particularly those involving social and political life, security and economic development, and to foster those existential values and perspectives, especially in the religious sphere, which enable individual and community life to develop in a way that is authentically human.²

5. A culture is always marked by stable and enduring elements, as well as by changing and contingent features. At first glance, in examining a culture we are struck above all by those aspects which distinguish it from our own culture; these give each culture a face of its own, as an amalgam of quite distinctive elements. In most cases, a culture develops in a specific place, where geographical, historical and ethnic elements combine in an

¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 53.

² Cf. John Paul II, Address to the United Nations (15 October 1995).

original and unique way. The "uniqueness" of each culture is reflected more or less clearly in those individuals who are its bearers, in a constant process whereby individuals are influenced by their culture and then, according to their different abilities and genius, contribute to it something of their own. In any event, *a person necessarily lives within a specific culture*. People are marked by the culture whose very air they breathe through the family and the social groups around them, through education and the most varied influences of their environment, through the very relationship which they have with the place in which they live. There is no determinism here, but rather a constant dialectic between the strength of the individual's conditioning and the workings of human freedom.

Human development and being part of a culture

6. The need to accept one's own culture as a structuring element of one's personality, especially in the initial stages of life, is a fact of universal experience whose importance can hardly be overestimated. Without a firm rooting in a specific "soil", individuals risk being subjected at a still vulnerable age to an excess of conflicting stimuli which could impair their serene and balanced development. It is on the basis of this essential relationship with one's own "origins" — on the level of the family, but also of territory, society and culture — that people acquire *a sense of their nationality*, and culture tends to take on, to a greater or lesser degree in different places, a "national" configuration. The Son of God himself, by becoming man, acquired, along with a human family, a country. He remains for ever Jesus of Nazareth, the Nazarean (cf. *Mk* 10:47; *Lk* 18:37; *Jn* 1:45; 19:19). This is a natural process, in which sociological and psychological forces interact, with results that are normally positive and constructive. Love for one's country is thus *a value to be fostered*, without narrow-

mindfulness but with love for the whole human family³ and with an effort to avoid those pathological manifestations which occur when the sense of belonging turns into self-exaltation, the rejection of diversity, and forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia.

7. Consequently, while it is certainly important to be able to appreciate the values of one's own culture, there is also a need to recognize that every culture, as a typically human and historically conditioned reality, necessarily has its limitations. In order to prevent the sense of belonging to one particular culture from turning into isolation, an effective antidote is a serene and unprejudiced knowledge of other cultures. Moreover, when cultures are carefully and rigorously studied, they very often reveal beneath their outward variations *significant common elements*. This can also be seen in the historical sequence of cultures and civilizations. The Church, looking to Christ, who reveals man to himself,⁴ and drawing upon her experience of two thousand years of history, is convinced that "beneath all that changes, there is much that is unchanging".⁵ This continuity is based upon the essential and universal character of God's plan for humanity.

Cultural diversity should therefore be understood *within the broader horizon of the unity of the human race*. In a real way, this unity constitutes the primordial historical and ontological datum in the light of which the profound meaning of cultural diversity can be grasped. In fact, only an overall vision of both the elements of unity and the elements of diversity makes it possible to understand and interpret the full truth of every human culture.⁶

³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 75.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ John Paul II, Address to UNESCO (2 June 1980), No. 6.

Cultural differences and mutual respect

8. In the past, cultural differences have often been a source of misunderstanding between peoples and the cause of conflicts and wars. Even now, sad to say, in different parts of the world we are witnessing with growing alarm *the aggressive claims of some cultures against others*. In the long run, this situation can end in disastrous tensions and conflicts. At the very least it can make more difficult the situation of those ethnic and cultural minorities living in a majority cultural context which is different from their own and prone to hostile and racist ways of thinking and acting.

In light of this, people of good will need to examine the basic ethical orientations which mark a particular community's cultural experience. Cultures, like the people who give rise to them, are marked by the "mystery of evil" at work in human history (cf. / *Th* 2:7), and they too are in need of purification and salvation. The authenticity of each human culture, the soundness of its underlying ethos, and hence the validity of its moral bearings, can be measured to an extent by its commitment to *the human cause* and by *its capacity to promote human dignity* at every level and in every circumstance.

9. The radicalization of identity which makes cultures resistant to any beneficial influence from outside is worrying enough; but no less perilous is *the slavish conformity of cultures*, or at least of key aspects of them, to cultural models deriving from the Western world. Detached from their Christian origins, these models are often inspired by an approach to life marked by secularism and practical atheism and by patterns of radical individualism. This is a phenomenon of vast proportions, sustained by powerful media campaigns and designed to propagate lifestyles, social and economic programmes and, in the last analysis, a comprehensive world-view which erodes from within other esti-

mable cultures and civilizations. Western cultural models are enticing and alluring because of their remarkable scientific and technical cast, but regrettably there is growing evidence of their deepening human, spiritual and moral impoverishment. The culture which produces such models is marked by the fatal attempt to secure the good of humanity by eliminating God, the Supreme Good. Yet, as the Second Vatican Council warned, "without the Creator the creature comes to nothing!"⁷ A culture which no longer has a point of reference in God loses its soul and loses its way, becoming a culture of death. This was amply demonstrated by the tragic events of the twentieth century and is now apparent in the nihilism present in some prominent circles in the Western world.

Dialogue between cultures

10. Individuals come to maturity through receptive openness to others and through generous self-giving to them; so too do cultures. Created by people and at the service of people, they have to be perfected through dialogue and communion, on the basis of the original and fundamental unity of the human family as it came from the hands of God who "made from one stock every nation of mankind" (*Acts* 17:26).

In this perspective, *dialogue between cultures* — the theme of this World Day of Peace Message — *emerges as an intrinsic demand of human nature itself, as well as of culture*. It is dialogue which protects the distinctiveness of cultures as historical and creative expressions of the underlying unity of the human family, and which sustains understanding and communion between them. The notion of communion, which has its source in Christian revelation and finds its sublime prototype in the Triune God (cf. *Jn* 17:11, 21), never implies a dull uniformity or enforced

⁷ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 36.

homogenization or assimilation; rather it expresses the convergence of a multiform variety, and is therefore a sign of richness and a promise of growth.

Dialogue leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family's basic vocation to unity. As such, dialogue is a privileged means for building *the civilization of love and peace* that my revered predecessor Pope Paul VI indicated as the ideal to inspire cultural, social, political and economic life in our time. At the beginning of the Third Millennium, it is urgent that *the path of dialogue* be proposed once again to a world marked by excessive conflict and violence, a world at times discouraged and incapable of seeing signs of hope and peace.

Possibilities and risks of global communication

11. Dialogue between cultures is especially needed today because of *the impact of new communications technology* on the lives of individuals and peoples. Ours is an era of global communication, which is shaping society along the lines of new cultural models which more or less break with past models. At least in principle, accurate and up-to-date information is available to anyone in any part of the world.

The free flow of images and speech on a global scale is transforming not only political and economic relations between peoples, but even our understanding of the world. It opens up a range of hitherto unthinkable possibilities, but it also has certain negative and dangerous aspects. The fact that a few countries have a monopoly on these cultural "industries" and distribute their products to an ever growing public in every corner of the earth can be a powerful factor in undermining cultural distinctness. These products include and transmit implicit value-systems and can therefore lead to a kind of dispossession and loss of cultural identity in those who receive them.

The challenge of migration

12. A style and culture of dialogue are especially important when it comes to *the complex question of migration*, which is an important social phenomenon of our time. The movement of large numbers of people from one part of the planet to another is often a terrible odyssey for those involved, and it brings with it the intermingling of traditions and customs, with notable repercussions both on the countries from which people come and on those in which they settle. How migrants are welcomed by receiving countries and how well they become integrated in their new environment are also an indication of how much effective dialogue there is between the various cultures.

The question of cultural integration is much debated these days, and it is not easy to specify in detail how best to guarantee, in a balanced and equitable way, the rights and duties of those who welcome and those who are welcomed. Historically, migrations have occurred in all sorts of ways and with very different results. In the case of many civilizations, immigration has brought new growth and enrichment. In other cases, the local people and immigrants have remained culturally separate but have shown that they are able to live together, respecting each other and accepting or tolerating the diversity of customs. Regrettably, situations still exist in which the difficulties involved in the encounter of different cultures have never been resolved, and the consequent tensions have become the cause of periodic outbreaks of conflict.

13. In such a complex issue there are no "magic" formulas; but still we must identify some basic ethical principles to serve as points of reference. First of all, it is important to remember the principle that *immigrants must always be treated with the respect due to the dignity of every human person*. In the matter of controlling the influx of immigrants, the consideration which should rightly be given to the common good should not ignore

this principle. The challenge is to combine the welcome due to every human being, especially when in need, with a reckoning of what is necessary for both the local inhabitants and the new arrivals to live a dignified and peaceful life. The cultural practices which immigrants bring with them should be respected and accepted, as long as they do not contravene either the universal ethical values inherent in the natural law or fundamental human rights.

Respect for cultures and the "cultural profile" of different regions

14. It is a much more difficult thing to determine the extent to which immigrants are entitled to public legal recognition of the particular customs of their culture, which may not be readily compatible with the customs of the majority of citizens. The solution to this question, within a climate of genuine openness, *calls for a realistic evaluation of the common good* at any given time in history and in any given place and social context. Much depends upon whether people embrace a spirit of openness that, without yielding to indifferentism about values, can combine the concern for identity with the willingness to engage in dialogue.

On the other hand, as I noted above, one cannot underestimate the capacity of the characteristic culture of a region to produce a balanced growth, especially in the delicate early stages of life, in those who belong to that culture from birth. From this point of view, a reasonable way forward would be to ensure a certain "cultural equilibrium" in each region, by reference to the culture which has prevalently marked its development. This equilibrium, even while welcoming minorities and respecting their basic rights, would allow the continued existence and development of a particular "cultural profile", by which I mean that basic heritage of language, traditions and values which are inextricably part of a nation's history and its national identity.

15. Clearly, though, the need to ensure an equilibrium in a region's cultural profile cannot be met by legislative measures alone, since these would prove ineffectual unless they were grounded in the ethos of the population. They would also be inevitably destined to change should a culture lose its ability to inspire a people and a region, becoming no more than a legacy preserved in museums or in artistic and literary monuments.

In effect, as long as a culture is truly alive, it need have no fear of being displaced. And no law could keep it alive if it were already dead in people's hearts. In the dialogue between cultures, no side can be prevented from proposing to the other the values in which it believes, as long as this is done in way that is respectful of people's freedom and conscience. "Truth can be imposed only with the force of truth itself, which penetrates the mind both gently and powerfully".⁸

The recognition of snared values

16. Dialogue between cultures, a privileged means for building the civilization of love, is based upon the recognition that *there are values which are common to all cultures* because they are rooted in the nature of the person. These values express humanity's most authentic and distinctive features. Leaving aside ideological prejudices and selfish interests, it is necessary to foster people's awareness of these shared values, in order to nurture that intrinsically universal cultural "soil" which makes for fruitful and constructive dialogue. The different religions too can and ought to contribute decisively to this process. My many encounters with representatives of other religions — I recall especially the meeting in Assisi in 1986 and in Saint Peter's Square in 1999 — have made me more confident that mutual openness between the

⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1.

followers of the various religions can greatly serve the cause of peace and the common good of the human family.

The value of solidarity

17. Faced with growing inequalities in the world, *the prime value* which must be ever more widely inculcated is certainly that of *solidarity*. A society depends on the basic relations that people cultivate with one another in ever widening circles — from the family to other intermediary social groups, to civil society as a whole and to the national community. States in turn have no choice but to enter into relations with one another. The present reality of global interdependence makes it easier to appreciate the common destiny of the entire human family, and makes all thoughtful people increasingly appreciate the virtue of solidarity.

At the same time it is necessary to point out that this growing interdependence has brought to light many inequalities, such as the gap between rich and poor nations; the social imbalance within each nation between those living in opulence and those offended in their dignity since they lack even the necessities of life; the human and environmental degradation provoked and accelerated by the irresponsible use of natural resources. These social inequalities and imbalances have grown worse in certain places, and some of the poorest nations have reached a point of irreversible decline.

Consequently, *the promotion of justice* is at the heart of a true culture of solidarity. It is not just a question of giving one's surplus to those in need, but of "helping entire peoples presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production

and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies".⁹

The value of peace

18. The culture of solidarity is closely connected with *the value of peace*, the primary objective of every society and of national and international life. However, on the path to better understanding among peoples there remain many challenges which the world must face: these set before everyone choices which cannot be postponed. The alarming increase of arms, together with the halting progress of commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, runs the risk of feeding and expanding a culture of competition and conflict, a culture involving not only States but also non-institutional entities, such as paramilitary groups and terrorist organizations.

Even today the world is dealing with the consequences of wars past and present, as well as the tragic effects of anti-personnel mines and the use of frightful chemical and biological weapons. And what can be said about the permanent risk of conflicts between nations, of civil wars within some States and of widespread violence, before which international organizations and national governments appear almost impotent? Faced with such threats, everyone must feel the moral duty to take concrete and timely steps to promote the cause of peace and understanding among peoples.

The value of life

19. An authentic dialogue between cultures cannot fail to nourish, in addition to sentiments of mutual respect, a lively sense of *the value of life itself*. Human life cannot be seen as an object to do with as we please, but as the most sacred and inviolable

⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

earthly reality. There can be no peace when this most basic good is not protected. *It is not possible to invoke peace and despise life.* Our own times have seen shining examples of generosity and dedication in the service of life, but also the sad sight of hundreds of millions of men and women whom cruelty and indifference have consigned to a painful and harsh destiny. I am speaking of a tragic spiral of death which includes murder, suicide, abortion, euthanasia, as well as practices of mutilation, physical and psychological torture, forms of unjust coercion, arbitrary imprisonment, unnecessary recourse to the death penalty, deportations, slavery, prostitution, trafficking in women and children. To this list we must add irresponsible practices of genetic engineering, such as the cloning and use of human embryos for research, which are justified by an illegitimate appeal to freedom, to cultural progress, to the advancement of mankind. When the weakest and most vulnerable members of society are subjected to such atrocities, the very idea of the human family, built on the value of the person, on trust, respect and mutual support, is dangerously eroded. A civilization based on love and peace must oppose these experiments, which are unworthy of man.

The value of education

20. In order to build the civilization of love, dialogue between cultures must work to overcome all ethnocentric selfishness and make it possible to combine regard for one's own identity with understanding of others and respect for diversity. Fundamental in this respect is the *responsibility of education*. Education must make students aware of their own roots and provide points of reference which allow them to define their own personal place in the world. At the same time, it must be committed to teaching respect for other cultures. There is a need to look beyond one's immediate personal experience and accept differences, discovering the richness to be found in other people's history and in their values.

Knowledge of other cultures, acquired with an appropriate critical sense and within a solid ethical framework, leads to a deeper awareness of the values and limitations within one's own culture, and at the same time it reveals the existence of a patrimony that is common to the whole of humanity. Thanks precisely to this broadening of horizons, *education has a particular role to play in building a more united and peaceful world*. It can help to affirm that integral humanism, open to life's ethical and religious dimension, which appreciates the importance of understanding and showing esteem for other cultures and the spiritual values present in them.

Forgiveness and reconciliation

21. During the Great Jubilee, two thousand years after the birth of Jesus, the Church has had a powerful experience of the *challenging call to reconciliation*. This call is significant also in the context of the complex issue of dialogue between cultures. Dialogue in fact is often difficult because it is weighed down by the tragic heritage of war, conflict, violence and hatred, which lives on in people's memory. For the barriers caused by noncommunication to be bridged, the path to take is the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. Many people, in the name of a disillusioned realism, maintain that this is a Utopian and naive path. From the Christian point of view it is the only path which leads to the goal of peace.

The eyes of believers contemplate the image of the Crucified One. Shortly before dying, Jesus exclaims: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (*Lk 23:34*). The evil-doer crucified on his right, hearing these last words of the dying Redeemer, opens his heart to the grace of conversion, welcomes the Gospel of forgiveness and receives the promise of eternal happiness. The example of Christ makes us certain that the many impediments to communication and dialogue between people can indeed be torn down. Gazing upon the Crucified One we are filled with confidence

that forgiveness and reconciliation can become the normal practice of everyday life and of every culture, and thus a real opportunity for building humanity's peace and future.

Mindful of the significant Jubilee experience of the purification of memory, I wish to make a specific appeal to Christians to become witnesses to and missionaries of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this way, through their active invocation of the God of peace, they will hasten the fulfillment of Isaiah's splendid prophecy, which can be applied to all the peoples of the earth: "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage'" (*Is* 19:23-25).

An appeal to young people

22. I wish to conclude this Message of peace with a special appeal to you, *young people of the whole world*, who are humanity's future and living stones in the building of the civilization of love. I treasure in my heart the memory of the emotional and hope-filled meetings which we had during the recent World Youth Day in Rome. Your participation was joyous, sincere and reassuring. In your energy and vitality, and in your love of Christ, I was able to glimpse a more peaceful and human future for the world.

Feeling your closeness to me, I sensed a profound gratitude to the Lord who gave me the grace of contemplating — through the multicoloured mosaic of your different languages, cultures, customs and ways of thinking — *the miracle of the universality of the Church*, of her catholicity, of her unity. Through you I was

able to admire *the marvelous coming together of diversity in the unity* of the same faith, the same hope, the same love. Here was an eloquent expression of the wondrous reality of the Church, sign and instrument of Christ for the salvation of the world and for the unity of mankind.¹⁰ The Gospel calls you to rebuild the original unity of the human family, which has its source in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dear young people of every language and culture, *a high and exhilarating task* awaits you: that of becoming men and women capable of solidarity, peace and love of life, with respect for everyone. Become craftsmen of a new humanity, where brothers and sisters — members all of the same family — are able at last to live in peace.

¹⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

Philippine Episcopology— Addenda-Corrigenda, 2000

CHARLES BRANSOM, JR.

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

- N. 134 **Gregorio Espiga e Infante** - priest 27 July 1935.
- N. 135 **Patrick Cronin** - full name of consecrator: John Anthony Kyne.
- N. 136 **Epifanio Surban Belmonte** - born at *Calolbon*.
- N. 142 **Juan Nicolasora Nilmar** - priest 29 June 1942.
- N. 166 **Godofredo Pedernal Pisig** - died 25 November 2000.
- N. 173 **Francisco F. Claver** - born 20 *January* 1929; priest 78 June 1961.
- N. 177 **Salvador Lazo y Lazo** - died 11 April 2000 at New Manila, Quezon City.
- N. 178 **Nicolas N. Mondejar** - ordained priest 4 *April* 1953, not 24 March.

N. 221 **Angel L. Lagdameo** - Archbishop of Jaro 11 March 2000.

N. 237 **Vicente C. Manuel, S.V.D.** - resigned as Vicar Apostolic of San Jose in Mindoro 14 October 2000.

N. 247 **Ernesto Salgado y Antolin** - Bishop of Laoag 7 December 2000.

N. 250 **Camilo Gregorio y Diaz** - resigned 28 August 2000.

N. 255 **Sebastian Dalis y Acol** - resigned as Auxiliary of Baguio 11 July 2000.

N. 2892000, 20 March, at Gumaca, Cathedral of San Diego de Alcala.

Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese and Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Gaudencio B. Rosales, Archbishop of Lipa, and by Msgr. Emilio Z. Marquez, Bishop of Gumaca consecrated Msgr. **Jose Francisco Oliveros**, Bishop of Boac,

born at Quezon (Lucena) 11 September 1946; priest 28 November 1970; named 2 February 2000.

Statements on Liturgical Celebrations Outside Places of Worship

EPISCOPAL COMMISSION ON LITURGY

We, the delegates to the 15th National Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Liturgy, held at the University of Assumption in San Fernando, Pampanga, from September 5 to 8, in the jubilee year 2000, discussed the question regarding the liturgical celebrations outside designated places of worship. At the conclusion of our meeting we are pleased to issue the following statements in the hope that they will contribute to the authentic renewal of the liturgy in our country.

1. We affirm that a place is made holy primarily by the presence of Christ and the liturgical assembly that celebrates God's saving works. For this reason, places for liturgical celebrations outside churches, chapels, and oratories should be made to conform to the requirements laid down by the Church for liturgical celebrations.

2. As regards Sunday Masses in shopping malls, it is our conviction that they should:

- a. Serve primarily the spiritual needs of the community of employees working in the shopping mall;

- b. Be celebrated in appropriate space and with proper liturgical vessels and furnishings like the altar, lectern, vestments, and liturgical books;
- c. Lead the assembly to a lively awareness that they are members of their respective parish communities, where they should regularly gather for the Sunday Eucharist;
- d. Be regarded as a challenge to certain parishes to enhance their Sunday Masses in terms of hospitality, dignity, and active participation.

3. There are liturgical celebrations that are normally not held inside designated places of worship, such as anointing of the sick, liturgical blessings, and some rites connected with funerals. In these instances the following liturgical principles should be observed:

- a. The communal dimension of liturgical worship;
- b. The proclamation of the Word of God;
- c. The order and structure of the liturgical rite.

4. For any liturgical celebrations held outside places of worship recourse should be made to the competent ecclesiastical authority in order that the ecclesial nature of such celebrations is ensured.

Primer on Pornography

ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA

1. What is pornography?

Mirriam-Webster Dictionary:

- *the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement*
- *any material (as books or a photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement*

"Erotic" (adj.): *dealing with sexual love*

Greek "pomographos": a "writing about prostitutes" ("porn-e"=prostitute, "graphein"=to write).

2. What is the Church's stand on pornography?

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2354:

- *Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties.*
- *// offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other.*
- *It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others.*

- *It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world.*
- *It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.*

3. What does the Bible say about pornography?

Although the Bible does not contain the word "pornography" itself, there are verses that point towards the immorality of pornography.

- Such verses refer to committing adultery in one's heart. That is, even though one does not physically commit adultery with another person, one already commits adultery with that person in one's heart if one looks at that other person with lust.
- This is precisely what takes place in pornography: it presents a person as an object of lust.

Some Biblical texts:

Matthew 5:27-28 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

Mathew 15:19 *"For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander".*

Mark 7:21-23 *"For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*

2 Peter 2:14 *"They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!"*

- Related are passages that mention, "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife", such as Exodus 20:17, Deuteronomy 5:21 and Romans 13:9.

4. What other Church documents tackle pornography?

Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media*, May 7, 1989. Purpose is "to describe the more serious effects of pornography and violence on individuals and society, to indicate some of the principal causes of the problem as it exists today and to point to some remedial steps which need to be taken by professional communicators, by parents, by educators, by youth, by the general public, by public authorities and by churches, religious bodies and groups in the private sector".

Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, November 1, 1983.

Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, February 22, 1997.

Pontifical Council for the Family, *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, December 8, 1995; and, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, May 13, 1996.

Pope Paul VI: *On Human Life (Humanae Vitae)*, July 25, 1968; and, *On Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*, December 8, 1975.

Pope John Paul II: *Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)*, November 22, 1981; *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Centesimus Annus)*, May 1, 1991; Letter to Families, February 2, 1994; and, *The Church in Africa (Ecclesia in Africa)*, September 14, 1995.

5. Why do people patronize pornographic materials? Is it more prevalent in certain sectors (depending on sex, social status, etc.)?

Among the factors leading people to promote and patronize pornography are the following:

- The pleasure it brings to the user.
- Influence of the mass media, including advertisements that

frequently offer a representation of permissiveness in sexual activity that reaches the point of being openly pornographic and morally offensive.

- The great profit gained by producers and vendors of pornographic materials.
- Weakened family ties and interpersonal relationships, leading the person to indulge in a sensually pleasurable narcissistic experience; though devoid of real meaning.
- Corruption of moral standards — those who accept abortion, licentious sex, disrespecting others, etc., would also accept pornography.
- Related issues: drugs (resulting to decreased self-mastery and increased libido), prostitution and pedophilia; these are at times (note: but not always) brought about by poverty and injustices in society.

The incidence of pornography depends a lot on the attitudes of the individuals as well as on the availability of materials.

- Those who have experienced true love, respect, a wholesome family life, and good interpersonal relationships would probably be less prone to it.
- Many are introduced to the different forms of pornography at the adolescent stage, and there seems to be an impression that it is more common among males than among females.
- Although a certain amount of money is necessary to patronize pornography, even the poor could oftentimes afford certain forms (many of which can be availed of for free).

6. Pornography is an entirely personal affair. Why should it be considered wrong?

Pornography IS NOT a purely personal affair. Other people are always affected and hurt.

Pornography degrades the dignity of persons, both those who are depicted in lewd materials and those who patronize them

- Those portrayed as sexual objects are degraded into the level of things, of mere commodities that provide pleasure. Would you want members of your family to be portrayed in these obscene materials? Probably not. Now, why would you want others to be portrayed?
- Likewise, those who use pornographic materials actually try to escape reality through sexual fantasies. Instead of facing reality and entering into true interpersonal relationships, they enclose themselves in a make-believe relationship with a person turned into an object of pleasure.

Pornography contributes to a general lowering of the morality of society.

- People habituated to pornography would more easily look for other sources of sexual pleasure, such as premarital and extramarital sex or prostitution (and with them, run the risk of contracting AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases).

Since pornography is a way of achieving self-centered gratification, it could also easily lead the person to be more selfish, and to be less considerate of others.

- A person who cannot control his or her sexual impulses is actually less free, if by freedom we mean the capacity to exercise dominion over oneself (more precisely, to do good).
- As in any other form of addiction, one's freedom is actually lost through addiction to sex. (An addict seems to be "free" to take drugs, but he or she is not free *not* to take drugs.)

Family life is threatened by pornography

- *"// undermines the sexual discipline, especially on the part of men (the vast majority of sex offenders), that is required for strong family life.*

- *It fosters an addiction to loveless, depersonalized sex that makes it difficult for men to become and remain the strong, self-controlled fathers that can be adequate role models for their children, and makes them undependable husbands inclined to treat their wives not as persons but as sex-objects"* (Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., *Pornography and the American Family*, in *Ethics and Medics*, Sept. 1992, p. 3).
- Being the basic unit of society, when the family is weakened, society itself is also weakened.

Pornography contributes to the commission of sex crimes.

- True, not all who patronize pornography end up being sex offenders (in the same way that not all alcohol consumers end up being alcoholics or drunken drivers), but is it unrealistic to assume that many sex offenders have used pornography to stimulate their fantasies, which later on moved them to carry out their crimes?
- As to the role of sexual fantasies in sex crimes: *"psychological steps by which a sex offender usually commits a crime[:]* First there is an emotional state of loneliness and depression that leads to free sexual fantasizing, then to distorted rationalizing thoughts, then to planning the crime, and finally acting out. Sexual fantasy is crucial in this process and leads to compulsive behaviour" (*New York Times*, "Science Times" section, April 14, 1992).

Thus it is clear that pornography is not a purely personal affair.

7. How do you advise people addicted to pornography?

Discover the true meaning of the virtue of holy purity, which inclines us to keep our body and soul free from all forms of uncleanness and lust.

- It is not a pessimistic virtue, by which we are "forbidden" from doing pleasurable acts.

- Rather, it is our response to love, that leads us to respect ourselves and others, always seeing in all persons the image of God himself.
- It allows a person to be more mature, and to have more dominion over himself or herself — just like any other virtue (i.e., good habit); such as prudence, justice, charity, etc.

Use the means available to us ever since

- Being a habit, purity can be acquired through a repetition of acts coupled with a firm determination to overcome the bad habit: by constantly trying to avoid the occasions that would lead one to pornography in all its forms (magazines, movies, internet, imagination), by frequently reminding oneself that one has already made the resolution to avoid them.
- Offering prayers and little sacrifices would help one overcome selfishness and therefore the other vices, including lustfulness.
- The need for "savage" sincerity in confession (and spiritual direction): not only when it comes to sins, but also to circumstances that may lead us to temptation; above all, our struggle to live holy purity

8. How do you advise parents with adolescent children who may be interested in exploring pornography?

The parents' task today is not easy, given the dissemination of pornography through the mass media, instigated by the desire for profit and the breaking down of adolescent sensitivity.

- Thus, the Pontifical Council, *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, December 8, 1995: *"this must call for two forms of concerned action on the part of parents: preventive and critical education with regard to their children, and courageous denunciation to the appropriate authorities.*
- *Parents, as individuals or in associations, have the right and duty to promote the good of their children and demand from the authorities laws that prevent and eliminate the exploitation of the sensitivity of children and adolescents."*

It is not enough to tell them that pornography is wrong, and therefore they should not indulge in it.

- Parents should try to create an atmosphere of responsible love in their families. The love that the husband and wife show each other, and the example they give in living the virtue of purity and in respecting others, is the first school of virtues for their children.
- With this foundation, they can then explain to their children what love really is, and how sexuality is actually an expression of love (and should therefore not be perverted).

"Education for chastity is inseparable from efforts to cultivate all the other virtues and, in a particular way, Christian love, characterized by respect, altruism and service, which after all is called charity".

- In practical terms, the document continues, *"it is not sufficient, therefore, to provide information about sex together with objective moral principles"*.
- It is also necessary that the children's knowledge of their biological development and impulses be accompanied by a growing love of God and a greater awareness of the dignity of each human person and his or her body.
- Important virtues that create an atmosphere conducive to purity are: discipline of the senses and the mind, watchfulness and prudence in avoiding occasions of sin, having wholesome pursuits, temperance, respect for self and for others, openness to one's neighbor, to live in an orderly way, to make personal sacrifices, and decency and modesty in speech, action and dress (all these without stifling feelings and tendencies, but channeling them into a virtuous life).

Parents cannot simply say, "be chaste!", or, "pornography is wrong!".

- They would be more effective by presenting chastity as one among the many virtues that the child or the adolescent (and even the adult) needs.

- They would instead say: "try to be generous, be sincere, study hard, be a master of yourself, be chaste, be modest, ...".
- These are not added burdens, but means to help the person in his or her process of maturity.

The role of God's grace cannot be overlooked.

- Prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Reconciliation, and spiritual guidance or direction, are valuable aids in progressively enlightening the stages of growth and as moral support.
- Well-chosen and recommended books on spirituality offer a wider and deeper formation and provide examples and testimonies of virtue.

9. Does sex education in schools help minimize the incidence of pornography?

NO. In fact, sex education in schools pulls towards the same direction as pornography: *the destruction of moral values*. Furthermore, sex education in schools are designed to downplay parental authority: "parents are old-fashioned, they don't know anything about sex; don't listen too much to them about sex (or even about other matters)".

Children have a latency stage when it comes to information on sex.

- Until around the age of puberty, they do notice some differences between being a boy and being a girl, but do not really care much.
- Sex education among young boys and girls arouses in them a curiosity that was not there before, and would introduce them to a knowledge that first, they do not really need at their stage, and second, they are not yet able to make use of properly.
- Experience shows that sex education leads them to promiscuity later on, eager to try out the knowledge they have, especially if they have been taught the basics of sex (anatomy, physiology,

psychology, etc.) *but not its proper use* (i.e., only within marriage, the need for virtues and self-dominion, generosity and respect for others, the true meaning of the virtue of purity, etc.)

10. What is the Church's stand on sex education?

Sex education should primarily be done on an individual basis, within the intimacy of the family.

I.e., mothers should be ready to answer their daughters' questions, and fathers, their sons'. Parents may have to be taught to do this, and may need help from others who enjoy their confidence.

Parishes, schools and civil authorities should support the educational undertaking of the family by presenting human love in the proper way, and by safeguarding the people against injustices and moral disorders (abuse of minors, sexual violence, degrading dress, permissiveness, pornography, and the improper use of demographic information).

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2001

EPISCOPAL COMMISSION FOR ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS

"See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children — and so, in fact we are."
(1 John 3:1)

January 18-25 is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Prayer is the soul of the Ecumenical movement. We Christians have become more aware of the imperative of our faith "to be one", to seek for visible unity under the lead of the Holy Spirit.

*The Prayer of Unity of 2001 centers on John 14:1-6. The theme is: **"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"** (John 14:6). The Romanian group that prepared the celebration theme this year offers this text as key to the Christians in their country as they live through a period of great cultural, political and economic change in which they seek how to witness to the Gospel together. We in the Philippines may find ourselves in a similar context.*

By this theme, we focus upon the way by which we Christians travel together towards the goal of our ecumenical pilgrimage, the full visible unity of all Christians. We pilgrims are not alone on this path; Christ who is the Way, is our companion and guide

on it. We walk in Christ and with Christ on the way toward unity and only through him will we find unity.

Here are the suggested biblical readings that we may use during these eight days. Jesus calls us Christians into renewed faith in God and in himself (Days 1-3). Jesus continues by revealing the grandeur of God whose unique "house" affords dwelling places for all who believe (Day 4). Jesus completes his revelation by assuring us that he will return to bring us home to himself (Day 5). We know from Jesus' example (Day 6) in his farewell meal that we are to live a life in loving service to one another and the world. On our journey together towards unity, we as human beings sometimes lose sight of the Goal and become uncertain of the way (Day 7). Jesus responds by reminding us that he is the way and it is through traveling together with him that we will reach the goal (Day 8).

DAY 1: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." (John 14:1)

Isaiah 43:1-7,18-19: I will make a way in the wilderness.

Psalms 43:1-5: Why are you cast down, O my soul. Hope in God.

Acts 18:8-11: I am with you for there are many in this city who are my people.

Matthew 8:23-27: Why are you afraid, you of little faith.

DAY 2: "Believe in God." (John 14:1b)

Exodus 3:6-10: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Psalms 103: He made known His ways to Moses.

Romans 11:33-36: His judgments are unsearchable and His ways inscrutable.

John 17:5-6: I came from You (Father).

DAY 3: "Believe also in Me" (John 14:1b)

2 Corinthians 6:16-18: If only your children, walk in My law.

Psalms 114: When Israel went out from Egypt.

Romans 10: 4-13: Christ is the end of Law.

Luke 10:21-24: No one knows who the Father is except the Son.

DAY 4: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places." (John 14:2)

Isaiah 60:4-7: They will gather together.

Psalms 84: How lovely is your dwelling place.

Hebrews 13:7-14: Remember your leaders and imitate their faith.

John 10:11-16: There will be one flock, one shepherd.

DAY 5: "I will come again and take you to myself." (John 14:3)

Joel 2:28-32: I will pour out my spirit.

Psalms 98: He will judge the world.

Ephesians 2:17-22: Through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

John 14:25-31: The Holy Spirit will teach you everything.

DAY 6: "You know the way to the place where I am going." (John 14:4)

Exodus 13:20-22: The Lord went in front of them.

Psalms 25:1-11: Make me know your ways, **O Lord.**

1 Corinthians 10:1-13: God will not let you be tested beyond your strength.

Mark 8:34-38: If any wants to be my follower, let them take up their cross.

DAY 7: "How can we know *the* way?" (John 14:5)

2 Kings 2:9-12: Let me inherit a share of your Spirit.

Psalms 130: I wait for the Lord.

John 16:4-15: He will guide you into all the truth.

DAY 8: "I *am* the way, *the* truth, and *the* life." (John 14:6)

Genesis 33:1-1-2: I will go alongside you.

Psalms 133: How very good when kindred live together in unity.

Hebrews 10:19-25: Let us hold fast without wavering.

John 17:20-23: So that the world may believe.

During these intensely ecumenical days of the year, let us all pray for Christian unity and let us pray with other Christians in our area for this unity willed by Jesus Christ. Let us plan with other Christians how we shall carry out together this prayer activity.

But ecumenism is an encompassing element of our faith. Our search for Christian unity is not limited to one week every year. Let us find opportunities throughout the whole year to express communion with other Christians and pray together for that full visible unity the ecumenical movement strives after in Christ.

For a New Quality of Consecrated Life: Indispensable Points of Reference

FABIO CIARDI, OMI

How will religious life be in the new millennium? If they had asked this to the monks of the first millennium they would certainly not have foreseen the epochal novelty carried out by the mendicant orders, that they would have left solitary places to go and live in cities, they would have renounced stability for wandering, to the large structures for agile fraternities.... The monks of the first millennium could not foresee the new forms of religious life which would arise in the second millennium, the Holy Spirit yes! Also for the next millennium, let us let the Holy Spirit design the new religious life: it can do it better than us, with much more creativity.

What we can do is ask ourselves how we are called today to live the irremissible values of religious life, in ways to be able to face the challenges of the future and offer prophetic proposals. Wisdom is needed, for a similar operation, in order to be able to read the signs of the times. In fact, there is no lack of historical, anthropological, theological, sociological and psychological studies which investigate the phenomenon of religious life. There is, rather, a lack of wise reading on it and the courage of prophesy.

I will gather the irremissible reference points for consecrated life in five chapters: the supremacy of God in evangelical life, charisma and prophecy, communion, closeness and solidarity with people, dialogue on all fields.

THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN EVANGELICAL LIFE

This first element could seem to be taken for granted. It is not at all. Becoming bourgeois, the need for a social status, the search for efficiency of the institute and personal autonomy have strongly mined the supremacy of God within religious life. Without this supremacy religious life makes no sense. The essence of consecration is in the relationship with God. in the recognition of Him as Only and All, in welcoming his love, giving oneself completely to Him who is totally loved, as the Council (see *Lumen Gentium*, 44) recalls, up to the point of being able to say that religious men and women live only for God', "they only devote themselves to God" (*Perfectae caritatis*, 5, 7).

1.1 The foundation: The supremacy of God fundamental factor of religious life

The search of God — *quaerer Deum* — has been the yearning which, at the beginning of the first millennium, saw the birth of monasticism. "My God and my everything" is the prayer re-echoed in a thousand wars over the centuries, to indicate the foundation and the heart of the whole existence of the consecrated people.

The passion for the search for God and the dynamic tension towards Him has been provoked in the hearts of our first fathers and in our first mothers by the Word of God. The Word, disclosed by the Spirit and welcomed and lived completely, has provoked the unstoppable motion of the close sequence of Christ, with the desire to be able to become perfect like the Father. "The Word of God is the starting point of the Monk — wrote John Paul II looking at the expressions of ancient monasticism — a Word which

calls, which invites, which personally questions, (...) which changes life. Every day the monk eats the bread of the Word. Without this it is as though he is dead and does not have anything else to communicate to the brothers, because the Word is Christ, to which the monk is called to comply with" (*Oriente lumen*, No. 10).

The second millennium, rich in a large variety of forms of religious life, began with the identical yearning for evangelical life: *vir evangelicus* is said Dominic and "new evangelist" Francis.

At the doors of the third millennium, in harmony with the previous bi-millennium tradition, don Luigi Orione continues to repeat: "Our first Rule and life must be to observe, with great humbleness and very sweet and overwhelming love for God, the Holy Gospel"¹. The little sister Magdeleine echoes him "We must build a new thing. A new thing which is ancient, which is the authentic Christianity of the first disciples of Jesus. It is necessary that we take the Gospel word by word again"².

Will the beginning of the third millennium be marked by a similar wish of sequence? Will it possess the same longing for the search of God? Or rather will work, organization, analysis, worries suffocate the seed of the Word? Or will they lead to other paths? Or will they distract from the Only one necessary? If the roots of the tree are cut, it withers and dies. Arising from the Gospel, religious life is either fed by the Gospel or goes relentlessly towards extinction.

The centuries and the millennia go by, the words of Christ remain eternally and in time maintain the freshness and the

¹ *Lettere di Don Orione*, (Letters of Don Orione) Ed. Piccola Opera, Rome 1968, II, p. 278.

² Piccola Sorella Magdeleine, (Small Sister Magdeleine), *I padrone dell'Impossibile* (The master of the impossible) Pieme, Casale Monferrato 1994.

explosive force of a proposal as always. These will bring religious life to its initial and fundamental intuition of "*sequela Christi*." It was a word of Christ — "Go, sell ... and then come, follow me" — which made Anthony go into the desert and made the following of Christ a progressive penetration in the mystery of God. It will still be the Word of God to give Christological value to religious life and to place God again in the center of his project. Entering the third millennium we would only like to take with us the book of the Gospel. We would like it to be — or should be so again — the only source of inspiration for the whole of our life.

The imperative for the third millennium is: let us go back to being evangelical. Christian people, people of God. The Word, the "*sequela Christi*," God: we are in the heart of the project of consecrated life; its own being, irremissible.

I believe that in the heart of every religious man and woman the will must arise and constantly arise again to be totally of God, without compromise and without reserve, so as to be able to say existentially, with the whole of one's being: "I have no other God than you" ; "My God, my all"; "You, Lord, are my only good". It is a choice which one never makes once for ever. One must start again always, never giving up, not even in front of one's failures... At a time in which religious life is searching for its identity I am sure that paying attention to the choice of God, to the welcoming of the Word and the following of Christ we come to the center itself of our particular vocation. Re-centered in God and in evangelical life we will know how to re-design the map of our itinerary of ecclesiastical presence and apostolic dynamism.

12 Today: The need for a "new spirituality" attentive to today's sensitiveness and to the new paths of the Spirit.

I said "let us return to being". But perhaps it is not the right verb. I should say" "let us lean out towards". It is to return to

evangelical roots, without necessarily following the interpretative forms which have been transmitted to us. Faith is not repetitiveness or restoration. When one talks of the theological dimension of religious life one's thoughts immediately go to the concrete forms in which the sequence of Christ and the search for God has been expressed. Certain tested forms of asceticism, prayers, behavior, styles of life come to mind.

Today's sensitivity, the new cultural parameters and a new anthropology have, however, put into crisis many aspects of the traditional spiritual path.

Today one invokes a "new asceticism" which takes into account the positive vision of the realities created and of the corporeity, of a major respect of the person, of qualified fraternal relationships, of services to the poor... One also asks for a "new mysticism", which is able to find God in the creation, in the brothers and sisters, in the paths of history. Rather than go backwards, courage to go forwards is necessary, creativity is necessary, in the attention to the breath of the Spirit, always creative.

What itineraries open today in front of us for a new choice of God?

I believe that we must welcome new paradigms able to inform every side of spiritual life: the paradigm of sharing of the "weakness of God", of the integrity of what is lived, of communion.

The sharing of the "weakness of God". The choice of God, nowadays more than ever, goes through the recognition of his mercy and his gratuitousness of love, which in Jesus reaches our fragility. The fall of the big strong ideologies, insecurity and the precariousness which characterizes our society, the so-called "fragility" of the new generations, make the words of Paul more

than ever actual: "When I am weak it is then that I am strong". Our weakness and our wounds, in which we can experiment the abandoning of God, are no longer an obstacle, but the concrete way to let us be reached by his love. This course will make us able to understand those who feel the distance or the absence of God and to help them to welcome his presence right there.

The integrity of what is lived. The life in the Spirit must inform every concrete aspect of religious life, from work to rest, from prayer to health, from the apostolate to the care of the person, from study to the harmony of the home. The aim of spiritual life sometimes seems to be limited to prayer and apostolate. Other aspects are neglected. And thus slovenliness, stress, nervous breakdowns... Religious life should testify that grace invests the person completely and together transforms the structures, and thus let transpire the beauty, harmony, simplicity, the full realization of man and woman.

Communion. We are in front of a paradigm which merits particular attention, because it is able to inform every ambit of spiritual life.

The theological comprehension which the Church matured of itself as the Body of Christ, people of God, communion, *Ecclesia de Trinitate*, demands to open the way to new spiritual community itineraries. The indications regarding this, offered by Karl Rahner not long before his death are well known concerning the spirituality of the Church of the future: "Fraternal communion in the Spirit as a distinctive and essential element of the spirituality of tomorrow". The novelty of spirituality, he also wrote, will be "fraternal communion in which it is possible to have the same fundamental experience of the Spirit"³. Also Amedeo Cencini,

³ Elementi di spiritualità nella chiesa del futuro, (Elements of spirituality in the Church of the Future) in Problemi e prospettive di spiritualità (Problems and perspectives of spirituality) by T. Goffi and B. Secondin, Brescia 1983, pages 440-441.

coherent with today's ecclesiastical sensitiveness, leans towards the elaboration of new paradigms of holiness: "it is nice — he writes — to meet a saint, but it is even nicer and more uplifting to meet a community" of saints, or brothers/sisters who, living together, try to become saints together, proposing thus, to everybody a common and imitable form of holiness, much more visible and efficient, eloquent and coherent, because in this form the contents of the announcement, that is evangelical love, identifies itself with the style of life of who announces"⁴.

Mysticism itself postulates a re-reading starting from the community experience. "We are too used to mystic solipsism — writes Bruno Secondin — too much slaves of the forms of spiritual growth as big lonely ascensions, vertiginous adventures for few privileged people. Behind this there is an ecclesiology which is not very sensitive to the community dimension of Christian existence. (...) it is necessary to elaborate better a community interpretation of contemplative experience"⁵.

The classical elements of spirituality demand to be re-thought starting from a more ecclesial and community prospective of Christian life: sharing of the spiritual path and the fruits of the lived Word, fraternal correction, regular revision of the community path... The idea of a whole community of saints, because the Saint lives in the middle of this, will open new models of saintliness for us.

Above all it is the young religious men and women, with their sensitivity and needs, who push in this direction. The

⁴ "... come rugiada dell, Ermon ..." (... like dew of the Ermon...). *La vita fraterna comunione di santi e peccatori*, (Fraternal Life communion of saints and sinners) Paoline, Milan 1998, pages 35-36.

⁵ *Mistici nostri contemporanei*, (Our contemporary Mystics) in AA. VV., *Vita cristiana ed esperienza mistica*, (Christian life and mystic experience) Editions of Teresianum, Rome 1982, page 407.

comprehension of the only and infinite love of God — they have affirmed many times — the knowledge of being called to the following of Christ, the strong wish for evangelical rootedness, the need for prayer ask to be lived in the spiritual life of choices and personal convictions, but at the same time must become a path followed together⁶.

Spiritual life, which has always characterized religious life, will find, in communion and unity, new paths on which it is worthwhile venturing.

1.3 The mission: Answer the spiritual expectations

The spiritual dimension of religious life — expressed in the welcoming of the Word, in the sequence of Christ and in the choice of God — not only says one of its irremissible elements, it also says one of its missions.

God, object of the experience, must be said and given to everybody. The religious men and women must also be able to repeat with the community of John: "What was there from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have contemplated and what our hands have touched (...) we also announce to you, so that you may share a common life with us. Our communion is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1-4).

It is now common-place to repeat that we are in the presence of a new demand for the sacred, often degenerated in a vague theism. The thirst for spirituality today is very lively, even if it risks stagnating in the search for affluence. Behind mysticisms,

* References to the young, here and subsequently, are from F. Ciardi — T. Merletti, *Volare si pud. Reportage dal mondo delle giovani e dei giovani religiosi* (One can fly. Report from the world of the young and the young religious). Messaggero, Padua 1998.

magic rites, escapes to esotericism, lies an authentic need for auto-transcendancy.

Humanity is waiting for a further jump of quality in its evolution. After the homo faber and the homo sapiens, will the third millennium, in order to take up again an intuition of Jean Guilton, finally see the birth of the homo mysticus?

The mission of religious life will perhaps just be this: become the prophetic forefront of new humanity with mystic connotations. Religious men and women are called to make God their breath, to contemplate him in the story of the men and the women who are their contemporaries, to adore him in the secret of the heart and in the masses, to serve him in his creatures, to sing to him with the harmonies of their living, to testify him up to martyrdom. Consecrated life can show the truth of evangelical beatitudes and thus of the truth of the whole Gospel. It can say joy, beauty, fruitfulness can say to be completely of God.

In front of a vague need of the sacred, to us the task to give a concrete face, a name to that indicated as the Absolute, the supreme Entity, the Totally Other: it is the God of Jesus Christ, a personal God, which is Love.

"The Christianity of the future — according to another famous axiom of Rahner — will either be mystic or it will not be". Is it not our task to open humanity to the mystic dimension? Live the dimension of the Mystery to introduce humanity to it: it is an exacting and enthusiastic mission.

CHARISMA AND PROPHECY

A second irremissible point for the future of religious life is that of its charismatic and prophetic dimension.

2.1 The foundation: The concreteness of Consecrated Life: charismatic and prophetic dimension

Religious life during the history of the Church has been concretely made visible in multiple charismata. Generic religious life does not exist, almost an abstract entity, just as charisma which is not individualized or personalized does not exist. Concrete experiences exist, provoked by the Spirit, lived by men and women who have the face of Anthony, Basil, Augustin, Benedict, Francis, Domenic, Ignatius, Angela Merici, Theresa of Avila, Luisa de Marillac, Giovanni Bosco, Luigi Guanella, Mother Theresa of Calcutta.... People which the Spirit guided along new paths for the always new discovery of evangelical richness, towards forms of presence and service adherent to the needs of the Church and humanity. People who have trusted God and have brought into the Church a load of genuine novelties and particular active enterprise. The one Gospel shines with different colors. The one following is interpreted with multiple methods.

Religious life cannot give up this charismatic richness, it would mean giving up its evangelical component and its ecclesial destiny. If it is not charismatic it simply is not.

In as much as religious life is charismatic it is also prophetic, if by prophecy one means reading the present with the eyes of God, in order to discover his design, to make it known and to find the way for its actuation.

Our founders have been made authentic prophets when they received charisma from the Spirit. Thanks to this they have been informed of "a more profound intelligence of spiritual things" (*Dei Verbum* 8): the Gospel has become life, action, a particular style of life, work. The word of God has proved to be alive and efficient, able of making an impression in the lives of people and populations. The religious families to which the founders give life have proved to be a realization of the Gospel and thus a specific answer, adherent and effective to certain urgencies. They have been a new, realized presence of Christ, the only one who can fully answer human yearnings.

For this prophetic dimension of theirs, charismata appear as interventions of the Spirit with the purpose of guiding history. At every moment of crisis, difficulty, transformations the Spirit repropose, with its own creativity, the fertile vitality of the Gospel. Christ continues, in an always new form, to be the light which illuminates even person who comes into the world.

2.2 Today: Give back meaning to the charismatic and prophetic reality

This charismatic past is alive in the conscience of the religious orders. Each one of us, when we tell the beginnings of our own charismatic story, underlines the novelty and the prophecy. We say with conviction that our founders have dared that which at their time was unthinkable: they were bold, innovative, creative: they anticipated their times: they opened new ways of evangelization.

The tale of this glorious past history, rather than being a complacency, should evoke burning questions: are we capable of as many novelties? Do we know how to risk, giving up formulas once valid but now obsolete? Do we have the courage to take on new paths, to leave grounds used for too long to till virgin soils?

The words of John Paul II many years ago to the religious of Latin America, are provocative and burn like scorching embers on our skin: "In the same way in which they did so at their time, your Founders would also give, in our days, for the service of Christ, their best apostolic energies, their profound ecclesial sense, the creativity of their pastoral initiatives, their love for the poor from which so man ecclesial works have sprung. The same generosity and abnegation which pushed the Founders must also move you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charismata which, with the same force of the Spirit which provoked them, continue to enrich themselves and adapt themselves, without losing

this genuine character, to place themselves at the service of the Church and to fully bring the establishment of his Kingdom".

The Church strongly invites us to be ourselves, in truth, without flattening ourselves on generalities. *Mutuae relationes* continues to show all its actuality when, following the indications of *Perfectae caritatis* 2b, it asserts that "each Institute has been born for the Church and must enrich it with its own characteristics following a particular spirit and specific mission" (no. 14). Better still in the work of cultural evolution and ecclesiastical renovation it is necessary that the identity of each institute is conserved with such security, that the danger of a insufficiently defined situation can be avoided, for which the religious, without the due consideration of the particular style of action of their own nature, be inserted in the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way" (no. 11).

Despite a lot of talk about charisma, the institution seems to oppress it and engulf it. The stress and strains, the heaviness of the structures, the flattening on what has already been experimented and the, keeping of the status quo, risk hibernating the explosive strength of charisma, making it innocuous, inefficient. There is the danger that the fire of the Spirit is watered by the repetitive banality of daily routine. From an external glance it seems that the charismatic enamel of the origins has been lost. The ever more considerable number of studies and publications on charisma has not yet brought the expected fruits.

How to find again and express charisma in a new and creative way? I believe that one must move in a double direction.

First of all have the courage to seriously confront oneself with the project of the founder, living the "word of life" which the Spirit deposited in his heart. The quality demands re-qualification, or rather to be just like the Holy Spirit wanted us when he gave

us life and carry out the specific mission which he entrusted to us. One cannot expect a new quality of religious life if everybody continues to do everything.

Secondly, there is a need for a new type of communion between the religious families; still more, amongst all the charismatic forms present in the Church: only from unity can distinction proceed, only in communion does one acquire identity.

We can also let ourselves be questioned on this by the young religious. Perhaps in them charismatic ideal is not yet weighed down by experience, by compromise. They do not hide the need for more freedom and creativity. They run the risk of being inserted "in the works as though in a cogwheel, of becoming institutionalized too quickly". They wish for "means of keeping ideals alive and creativity alive, which are the specific patrimony that the young can bring" ... They say that "it would be nice, if our superiors (some already do) listened more to the young when one must make important decisions, let oneself be infected by their idealism...". They are aware of having something to bring. "Let us be creative", they have repeated in all ways during the congress *Vidimus Dominum*, "give us space, let us express ourselves".

2.3 The mission: Bring to light the co-essentiality of the charismatic dimension of the Church, with respect to the hierarchic one

Re-asserting its own charismatic and prophetic dimension religious life also finds a specific ecclesiastical life. I do not only refer to the typical mission which arises from each charisma. I think, above all, of the presence of religious life in as much as it charismatic life. If religious life presents itself as a charismatic reality this brings to light the co-essentiality of the charismatic dimension of the Church, with respect to the hierarchic one.

In the ecclesiastical conscience the reality of charismata is not yet fully acknowledged. The reality of the hierarchy remains strong and omnipresent, one only has to look at the concrete structure and ecclesiastical organization. It is not acknowledged either in theological reflection. A glance at the ecclesiology handbooks would immediately show that the space of few pages are dedicated to charisma. Consequently the Church is perceived by society almost exclusively in its hierarchic dimension, not for anything the word "layman" is set against "Catholic".

Show the charismatic factor of religious life and the many varieties of its forms in which the exuberance of the Spirit of love and unity expresses itself, means helping the whole Church to become more conscious of its nature. In an ecclesiology of communion one must reserve better consideration to the historical charismata of the saints, to their persons, to their work, to their mission and spirituality and thus to the religious families arisen from them as authentic charisma of the Holy Spirit.

Hierarchic gifts and charismatic gifts are bestowed by the same Spirit and reveal themselves as instruments so that the Church can carry out its mission of universal sacrament of salvation. Consequently, if one cannot consider office and charisma as two adequately distinct realities, equally one cannot think of the Church without the most abundant charismatic gifts expressed above all by consecrated life, as an integrative element of the work of the Spirit in the Church. From here the strong affirmation of John Paul II that, not only there is no contrast and opposition between institutional dimension and charismatic dimension, but that "both of them are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because they contribute together to make present the mystery of Christ and his salvation work in the world" (27th May 1998). This word "co-essential" was censored by the Osservatore Romano, which opted for an "almost co-essential",

but already previously, in 1987 it was used by the Pope in a similar "context: "Charismatic gifts and hierarchic gifts are distinct, but also reciprocally complementary (...)... In the Church, both the institutional aspect and the charismatic one, both the hierarchy and the associations and movements of believers, are co-essential and contribute to life, to renewal, to sanctification, even if in a different way and such that there is a mutual exchange, communion"⁷.

In fidelity to its own charismata the religious institutes will be able to help the Church to become conscious of its charismatic nature and thus to develop the "Marian profile" described by von Balthasar and taken up again by John Paul II, with the consequences which this means, such as the attention to laity, to women in particular and the primacy of love.

3. COMMUNION

As the third irremissible element I indicate communion, because this informs all the ambits of religious life.

3.1 The foundation: The centrality of communion in the project of religious life

The centrality of the community and of fraternal life in communion is testified from the beginnings of religious life. In its own way it is also present in the most extreme forms of solitude. In the path of evangelical actuation consecrated life has ever more brought to light the value of reciprocal love as the apex of the teaching of Christ towards those called to his following. Not by chance the founders have often left to their sons and daughters, as a testament, the same testament of Jesus: "If you read the life of the Holy Founders — writes don Luigi Orione —, you will

⁷ In / *movimenti della Chiesa*. (The movement of the Church) *Acts of the II international discussion*, Milan 1987, pages. 24-25.

usually find their spiritual children around the founders who die. In those last moments what do you hear, which are the most burning accents of those men of God, what are the last expressions of their desire? "Love each other, sympathize with each other, be a single heart and an only soul...".

One can say that each component of the project of religious life is informed by communion. And this is not only valid for the monastic communities, but also for the modern institutes dedicated to mission one works of charity, to teaching, to different ministries.

Communion characterizes the first ambit of consecrated life, the search for God and his primate. The God who calls and to whom religious men and women dedicate themselves is the God of Jesus Christ, a Love, Relationship, Trinity, who involves in the dynamic itself of love and unity. How to belong to a God of communion if one does not take part in communion and one does not express it concretely in a life of unity?

The same following of Jesus, fruit of a personal calling, cannot be realized alone. Each vocation, at its birth, is convocation. Jesus calls to form his community, his family, the new people of God, and it is to the group as such that he entrusts the missionary mandate.

It goes by itself that communion informs the community. This is even a theological reality in as much as place of the presence of the Resurrected Lord. Taking up again the council teaching and the subsequent teachings. John Paul II confirms that, even in the large variety of historical realization of the communities of consecrated people and in the multiplicity of the finalities for which they arose, one cannot forget that "fraternal communion before being an instrument for a specific mission, is theological space in which one can experience the mystic presence of the resurrected Lord" (*Vita consecrata*, 41). There one can experiment it and from there one can give it to the world.

One understands the boldness of the document *Dimensione contemplativa della vita religiosa* (contemplative dimension of religious life), when it affirms that "the religious community is in itself a theological reality, object of contemplation (...) a place where the experience of God must be able to particularly reach its fullness and communicate it to the others".

Communion also informs charisma. The charisma of an institution is, in fact, characterized for the community dimension: it is a collective charisma, which involves many people in a same project of life.

Communion, lastly, informs the mission. One goes to the people guided by Christ present in his community, to be able to share experimented trinitarian communion and be introduced into it, so that God is everything for everybody. The clear affirmation of the *Christifideles laici* — then taken up again in the *Redemptoris missio* — according to which "communion is missionary and the mission is for communion" (no. 32) is the apex of a path of reflection and life which has characterized the Church in the last few years.

Starting from this evangelical horizon, one can also gather the final destination of each charisma the edification of the body of Christ (see *Lumen gentium* 45). All the religious families possess a common orientation towards this end. Who announces the Gospel does so, so that unity is realized. Who lives in contemplation and prayer, who cares for the sick, who teaches, does so, so that unity is realized. ... Everything has one convergence, an only aim: the edification of the body of Christ, the re-capitulation of everything in Christ, the realization of Jesus' prayer to the Father: "... may they all be one" (John 17.21). Each charisma, whether it has a contemplative or apostolic direction, in as much as it arises from the Gospel, lives to realize the vocation to which all the Church

is called: to be a sign and a sacrament of the unity of men and women with God and among themselves. In order that the Church may carry out its mission the specific contribution linked to every evangelical word, to each religious family is necessary.

3.2 Today: The courage of communion and the humbleness to learn from new experiences of communion

This reality of communion, present throughout the space of the history of religious life, is perceived in a new way now that unity is revealed today as one of the signs of the times.

Religious men and women, traditionally considered "experts of communion", are questioned in a completely particular way by this new sign of the times. They are the first to have to answer the breath of the Spirit which questions the Churches.

Yes, we are asked to have the courage of a new Christian life: the courage of communion. People prepared to actuate the new commandment of exchangeable love, or rather to love "like" Christ has loved are needed, with the same measure of his love. In his mystery of abandonment on the cross and of death, he reveals the rootedness of love, a love without measure, made of respect of the others, of welcoming, of sharing, of a complete gift of himself, even up to giving his life. There he expropriates himself of everything, in a mystery which is a togetherness of annihilation and donation. If Jesus loved up to death "we in turn are bound to give our lives to one another" (1 John 4 9-10).

To build up a community which is an authentic place of the experience of God, a site of irradiation, a starting point of service and mission, exacts on behalf of he who takes part in it, a love which has the characteristics of the Christian agape: the capability of service, the opening towards everybody with no exclusions or preference, the courage to always love, with the most pure gratuitousness and with disinterest...

One ever more also asks for a new quality of human relationships, often threatened by barriers raised by the aseptic computer communications, by the ambits of work and ever more individual interests, by the cells of religious transformed in suites with a bar and TV. Attention to other things, listening, interest, sharing, opening of the heart, sincere friendship, are basic attitudes for a love capable of communion and unity. New opportunities of growing in mutual love within a community, are also offered nowadays by international and intercultural characteristics.

Moreover, nowadays it is no longer enough to work for a more real communion within one's own community and one's own Institute. Communion is called to spread itself with mutuality of love with bishops and priests, laymen, women, the young, new basic communities, movements, with the trinitarian dynamic of the *perichoresis*, with mutual giving and welcoming, service and communion.

The apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* has proposed an ecclesiology of communion "characterized by both the presence of differences and the complementarity of the vocations and life conditions, of ministries, the charismata and responsibilities" (no. 20). This goes back to a luminous page of the Constitution on the Church: "In virtue of this Catholicity, the single parties bring their own gifts to the other parties and to all the Church, so that the whole and the single parties grow with the help of all, that they are all in communion with each other and with their efforts orient themselves towards total unit" (*Lumen gentium* 13).

"What Christianity teaches in the field of relationships between single people — love, know each other, become one with the others, up to the point of being able to communicate the eventual gifts which God has given us — must be transferred to the social side, yes to know, esteem and love the other Movements and Works of the Church and evoke or enlarge among everyone

the reciprocal communion of spiritual goods"⁸. Thus Chiara Lubich, who has made communion amongst the charismata one of the main objectives of her Movement.

This new opening exacts a deep humbleness, or rather the recognition that a religious family does not have everything at home, as is usually repeated. It is the sects which have everything at home. We are "Catholic", constructively open to communion and sharing. One can also learn from others, with reciprocal giving and receiving. If, for example, in other times, as history records, the religious have, above all, been those to create, spiritually feed and direct aggregate forms of laymen, nowadays it can happen that it is the ecclesiastical movements, with their strong charismatic force and their adherence to the needs of the current Church, to involve the religious orders, as *Christifideles laici* affirms: "The same faithful laymen can and must help the priests and the religious orders in their spiritual and pastoral path"⁹. Communion and reciprocity in the Church are never one way. One cannot live religious life in terms of autarchy.

A particular consequence of this ecclesiastical communion is the fraternal spiritual relationship and the mutual collaboration between the different religious institutes. *Vita consecrata* recalls to this regard the spiritual friendship which has often linked founders and proposes it as an exemplary model of the relationships which nowadays the members of their religious families are called to establish with each other. The same document also alludes to a theological motivation of such a relationship of communion: the members of different institutes, it affirms, united with each other "must visibly show, like shoots of the only Vine, the fullness of the Gospel of Love" (no. 52). It is subject to the idea that each

* C. Lubich, *Spirituals del Movimento*, oc, (*Spirituality of the Movement*) page 201.

¹¹ see 61: theme taken **up** again **by** *Vita consecrata*, see **no.** 54.

institute is part of the Gospel and that only together can one offer the fullness of the Gospel.

The new generations of religious men and women are particularly sensitive to these relationships of communion. Because — they asked themselves at the seminar *Vidimus Dominium* — why not communicate reciprocal richness to each other? Why not stay constantly open to all the Church, to all the charismata, also to those which arise today, including those of the ecclesiastical movements? Not with the loss of one's own identity, naturally, but purposely to reinforce it. How to have, in fact, one's own identity if not in the communion with the other vocations and the other charismata?

I believe that in this open and sincere confrontation, especially with the freshness of the new charismata which the Holy Spirit gives to the Church today, the traditional religious life will also flourish anew.

3.3 The mission: *Put oneself at the service of the inter-ecclesiastical communion and the unity of the human family*

Prepared to "learn", religious life cannot fail its task to "teach". This is a further aspect of the mission of religious life, linked to its dimension of communion. "Experts in communion religious men and women are called to help all the other members of the Church and society to live communion. The Church — wrote John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* — entrusts the communities of consecrated life with the particular task of increasing the spirituality of communion, first of all internally and then in the same ecclesiastical community and outside its borders constantly opening and re-opening the dialogue of charity, above all where the world of today is lacerated by ethnic hate and by homicidal madness" (no. 51). It is an explicit mandate which, if taken seriously, may revolutionize religious life, because it obliges it to be itself and to pull out all its potential.

The first ambit of testimony of religious life is the ecclesiastical one. One appeals to the capability of consecrated persons to express "an exemplary fraternity which is to be a stimulation to the other ecclesiastical components" (no. 52). In fact, "consecrated life, for the fact itself of cultivating the value of fraternal life, proposes itself as a privileged experience of dialogue" (no. 74). There is no danger of intimism, of the building of a safe and welcoming atmosphere in which to take refuge. One is, rather, challenged to experiment the exacting dynamic of communion to be able to become authentic specialists of the dialogue of love between the different vocations of the local Church: between bishop and clergy, between clergy and laity, between the multiple parish and diocesan components... Religious life is called to take on the burden of the building of ecclesiastical communion, transmitting the laws of unity experimented before within the fraternity.

The life of communion of consecrated people is also called to become exemplary for the same human involvement, in a divided and unjust world. The horizons of the mission to build unity are spread over the whole of humanity. The religious community in this yard seems — *Vita consecrata* also says — "testimony of the divine project to make of all humanity, within the civility of love, the large family of the children of God" (no. 35): up to the point of indicating to all people "the beauty of fraternal communion" (no. 41).

"Doesn't this world of ours — we read at the end of the document — perhaps have the need of joyful testimonies and prophets of the beneficial power of the love of God? Does it not also have the need for men and women who, with their life and their actions, know how to sow seeds of peace and fraternity?" (no. 108). Having experimented in one's own heart the dynamism of communion permits testifying and encouraging authentic com-

munion. Finally, consecrated life appears as a prophecy in act in the whole of society.

CLOSENESS AND SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE

A fourth irremissible element of religious life may be individuated in its "popular" nature. This point may seem less evident than the previous ones. It would be clearer if I said that one of the irremissible components of religious life is the choice of the poor, but formulated in this way, this principle seems limited to me, even if it is true. I intend, rather, to bring to light the fact that religious life is strongly rooted amongst the people of God, is particularly close to laity, alive for people.

4. 1 The foundation: *Religious life is rooted amongst the people, close to the simple people*

This dimension is, above all, rooted at the birth itself of religious life. At the origins monasticism appears as a phenomenon of Christian lay life, if with this word one intends a distinction with respect to the hierarchy: it did not intend to place itself as a new state of life with respect to that of the laity. Its initiators and theorizers were convinced to be authentic laity, or better, authentic Christians and nothing else. They did not want any other rule than the Gospel, the common rule to all Christians. They lived as celibates — "without celibacy one does not have monasticism" recites a monastic saying — without this element being considered discriminating with respect to the laity, it was a particular gift of the spirit, as was that of marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7). If marriage does not go outside laity, the same can be said of virginity.

This "lay" nature of religious life would seem to be disproved by the phenomenon of the clericalization of monasticism and the following canonical experiences, followed by the phenomenon of regular clergymen and thus of the clerical congregations. However, also in these cases, religious life has not moved away from the

laity, from the people of God, because, rather, than the presbyterial ministry in itself, it usually has meant underlining its own "means" of living this ministry, placing the presbytery within and at the service of a wider charismatic project, placing itself thus on the charismatic side of the Church more than on the hierarchic one. People, looking at the members of the religious institutes, perceive less their being priests and more their being religious, expressed in common life; in poverty, in the simplicity of life, in the space dedicated to prayer, in itinerant preaching, in the welcoming and in mercy reserved in the sacrament of confession, in the help to the poor, to the sick, to the needy... The simple people, instinctively, feel a difference between the diocesan clergy and the religious even when these are priests.

Religious life, apart from its "lay" nature (more correctly we would say "charismatic") shows its "popular" dimension thanks to the nearness to the people, with the simple people. Its history is an eloquent testimony. On the laity's side a profound nearness and familiarity has always been perceived with the nuns dedicated to the children in kindergartens, at catechism, at the liturgical service, to the cure of the sick in hospital.... The laity have learnt to pray from the monks by going to their place of prayer, have seen the religious, priests and brothers, play with the children in the oratories, teach in the schools, work in the parishes, dedicate themselves to the evangelization in the most various ways and to the most different ministries of charity. There is a large sense of esteem and sincere admiration for the missionaries who depart from our diocesan Churches for territories where the Church is not yet present or is still young.

A further aspect of this nearness to people is expressed by the constant worry of sharing with the people their own experience of life and mission and to involve it in the same path. It is only necessary to remember the Third Orders, the Brotherhoods, the most varied associations arisen around the religious families.

4.2 Today: *Look "outside", in an exodus which opens us wide to the concrete needs of the people*

This the past. And today? The passion for the people must continue to animate us, even if new appeals come from this front. I think in particular of the impulses of theological anthropology, of ecclesiology, of missiology.

Our fathers and our mothers were animated by the desire for the salvation of souls, understood the value of a soul redeemed by the blood of Christ. "Cross the seas, save a soul and then die" was a word able to motivate the ideal of a life. Today, although aware of the value of the soul, we are called to turn to the whole person, in his interest, and thus to put into action a global project of meeting and relationship.

Our fathers and our mothers understood the value of the single person ("The Chinese are a billion — a missionary in Hong Kong told me — : we "will conquer" them by loving them one by one!"). We continue to care for single people but, at the same time, we have the aim of the salvation of a population, we want to build communities where every single person can find his surroundings of life and growth.

Our fathers and our mothers went to people — the sinners, the schismatics, the pagans —, as to people without salvation. We know that, although needy of salvation, the people who we will meet are loved by God. He is already at work in them. They preserve the seeds of the Word and at their contact we can also enrich ourselves.

Finally we are invited to rediscover the profound value of our charismata. Each charisma is given for the life of the world. Contemplation like evangelization, the service to the poor such as teaching have humanity as a last reference. That same humanity for which the Son of God came and gave his life. Charisma is

understood in the measure in which one actualizes it. The careful and generous exercise of the inherent dimension of diaconate and mission will permit discovering the charisma in all its elements and potentials. One is, giving oneself and, giving oneself, one understands who one is. Identity and mission also seem to be strictly linked on a hermeneutic level.

We are called to meet the men and women of today on the level of the sharing of life more than present ourselves to them as teachers. Like Theresa of the Child Jesus we must also sit down at the table of the sinners. We will then know how to find again a comprehensible language, able to say the mystery of God in a penetrating and convincing way; a language which arises from listening to the Word of God and to people.

It is the path taken by the Son of God, who has shared everything of us, the joys and the sorrows. He has known how to make our anxieties, doubts, despair, sins, his own, up until dying outside the encampment. For this we have a supreme Priest able to understand us and to save us.

To find itself again religious life must rekindle contact with people and, therefore, the generosity of giving, service. Religious life will have a tomorrow if it is love. More than look at ourselves, to the problems of our communities, we are called to look around us, in an exodus which widens out on humanity, able to translate itself in concrete choices of the poor.

4.3 The mission: *Communion with the lay in the new forms of association and participation to charisma*

Sharing life with people is still not enough, it could be paternalism. It is necessary to involve oneself in the same path of life. This is today a new aspect of the mission of religious life towards the people. I refer to the need to create authentic Christian communities and, in particular, to the specific theme of aggregations to the institute.

I mentioned before that every religious family, throughout the centuries, has seen the birth around it of different movements of laity who have felt themselves called to share the charisma. Today the need is greater and is expressed in a new way. Not only do we witness the reflowering of the ancient Third Orders, but also to the rising of new forms of aggregation. Other laymen want to live with us, participate in our projects, in our initiatives, share the ideal of our founder, which they feel as theirs. They feel attracted by that way of following Jesus, by the evangelic words which relive thanks to that charisma.

It is a new chapter in the experience of consecrated life in these years. The superiors general already, when preparing the Synod on consecrated life, asked themselves about the elements of greatest novelty which were arising in the experience of their institutes. They talked about the relationships with lay people as an authentic sign of the times. Amongst all these ecclesiastic components the laity seemed to be those with which communion had most developed.

Religious men and women are called to repeat with Jesus "The words which you gave me I have given to them". The founders have known how to transmit the "word" of the Gospel, expressed in their particular charisma, received from the Holy Spirit. In our turn, we are called to transmit the gift received, with the knowledge that every charisma is for the Church, for all the Church. One's own "word" is to be given to everybody.

Thus the laity, from object, pass to subject of the mission and together with them we could work for the advent of the Kingdom.

DIALOGUE ON ALL FIELDS

A fifth irremissible point of religious life is its opening to dialogues: ecumenical, inter-religious, inter-cultural.

5.1 The foundation: *The conscience of the vocation to unity*

This aspect is also strongly rooted in the history of religious life.

The conscience of the vocation to build unity is attested by the initiator himself of primitive monasticism, Saint Anthony the Great, when he writes that the Father "through his omnipotent Word, has gathered us from every part, from one extremity to the other of the earth. He has resurrected our heart from the earth to teach us that we are members, one of each other", "The monk — Evagrio also writes — is he who, separated from everything, is united to everybody".

Giovanni Cassiano strongly brings to light the vocation to its own unity of monastic life when, during a period of tension amongst the Patriarchates, he recalls Jesus' prayer to the Father: "The love which you have given me be in them and them in us"; "That everybody be one"; "Like you, Father, you are in me and I am in you, let them also be one in us". He then comments: "This prayer will be fully realized in us when the perfect love with which God loves us will pass firstly to the movement itself of our heart. Then the prayer of the Lord will be fulfilled, this is, in fact, not vain".

In the VI century, in full Nestorian crisis, Barsanufio, famous prisoner in Ghaza, summarized his own ecumenical practice in brief teachings: do not enter into discussion on dogmas, but say "this goes beyond what I can understand" and pray God for our sins: do not argue and do not try to convince, but rather suggest: "Talk in your heart to God who knows the secrets and who can do more than we can ask for".

The history of monastic and religious life is rich in attempts and fruitful experiences of dialogue. How can we not think of the enormous work done by Saint Augustin for the unity of the Church

in front of the Donatist schism, or the work of Saint Dominic in front of the Catharist heresy?

Then when new religions appear on the horizon, such as the Muslim one, the figure of Saint Francis arises who proposes a completely different way of relating than that taken with the Crusades. The words with which the sultan dismisses the humble friar who had come to him without the power of arms, are the most beautiful fruit of an authentic ecumenical meeting: "Pray for me, because God may deem to show me what law and faith is most appreciated by him".

Looking down through history we find the constant commitment of ancient orders and more recent foundations to enter into dialogue with the great Asian religions. The Franciscan Odorico from Pordenone, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci and in this century Merton, Le Sax, Griffiths, are only some of the most well known names of a vast movement which has characterized the path of religious life. For years now the Inter-monastic Association experiments with fruitful exchanges between Christian monks and monks of other religions, beginning with the Buddhist ones.

The modern ecumenical movement also counts amongst its most enthusiastic protagonists and worshippers monks and religious men and women. It is only necessary to recall the "invisible monastery" of Paul Couturier, the spiritual affair of Sister Gabriella della Trappa, like the rising up of monastic and religious life forms in the Anglican Church and in the evangelical ones.

The same recent phenomenon of atheism has not left religious life indifferent. Paul VI, for example, entrusted the Jesuits with the task of studying the phenomena and to have dialogue with those who no longer have a religious culture.

Finally, history teaches us that dialogue on all fields is part of the tradition itself of religious life and more still of its mission

of sign and service of communion. "Consecrated life, for the fact itself of cultivating the value of fraternal life, proposes itself as a privileged experience of dialogue" (*Vita consecrata*, 74).

Today: *The commitment for ecumenical, inter-religious, inter-cultural dialogue*

I fundamentally believe that religious life, for its survival itself, must proceed with decision in this direction of service qualified to communion and to the edification of unity on every level, following the way opened by Paul VI to the whole Church.

The historical reminiscence of what religious life has done in the field of dialogues (even if it not yet called this) becomes an exacting appeal for today, as *Vita Consecrata* has also confirmed, which titled its last chapter "Committed to dialogue with everyone", an almost logical conclusion of all the discussion on religious life.

The document recalls, first of all, how the Synod brought to light the strong tie between consecrated life with the *cause of ecumenism*, to the point which "no institute of consecrated life must feel itself dispensed from working for this cause" (no. 101).

Talking then about the forms of ecumenical dialogue pointed out as particularly adapt to the members of the religious communities is the sharing of the *lectio divina* as an instrument to search for the truth: the participation of the common prayer, in which the Lord guarantees his presence (see *Matthew* 18. 20); friendship and charity which makes it feel how good it is that the brothers live together (see *Psalms* 133 (132); the hospitality given to the brothers and sisters of different Christian confessions; the reciprocal knowledge and the exchange of gifts; the cooperation in initiatives in common for service and testimony. Not less important is the knowledge of the history, the doctrine, the liturgy, charity and apostolic activities of other Christians (see no. 101).

With regard to *inter-religious* dialogue, from the moment that it is part of the evangelist mission of the Church, Institutes of consecrated life Institutes cannot relieve themselves from commitment in this field as well, each one according to one's own charisma. It is recalled that the first form of evangelization is "the same testimony of a poor life, humble and chaste, permeated with fraternal love for everybody". The Pope also recognizes that "freedom of spirit", one of the characteristics of consecrated life, largely favors the dialogue of life.

Also for *inter-religious dialogue*, *Vita consecrata* suggests some particular instruments such as mutual knowledge, reciprocal respect and charity, cordial friendship and reciprocal sincerity, with the monastic environments of other religions. Another particular aim for cooperation with people of different religious tradition is made up by the common concern for human life, which goes from compassion for physical and spiritual suffering, commitment to justice, peace and safeguarding of the creation, to search and promotion of the dignity of woman (see no. 102).

Finally *the dialogue with those who do not profess particular religious beliefs*. Consecrated people, by the nature itself of their choice, place themselves as privileged interlocutors of that search for God which has always agitated the heart of man and brings him to multiple forms of ascetism and spirituality. The, personal and community ascetism, which purifies and transfigures one's whole existence, testifies, against the temptation of egocentricity and sensuality, the characters of the authentic search of God. "For this — the document concludes — consecrated people have the duty to generously offer welcome and spiritual accompanying to those, who moved by thirst for God and wishing to live the needs of faith, turn to them" (no. 103).

CONCLUSION

To measure oneself with these new sensitivities and new openings to which all of the Church of today is called, becomes an imperative for every religious man and woman; the penalty: suffocation and decline. Before secularization, religious life explicated its mission of sign through certain values such as poverty, chastity, cassocks, a style of penitent life. Today that these "numbers" have less importance and recall more the "ecclesiastical system" than the "kingdom", the new "number" will be made up by dialogue, opening, welcoming with love, by communion. These dimensions will be a sign which is easier to read and more comprehensible, or rather the sign for excellence: "By this they will recognize that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other...".

In the measure in which consecrated life will know how to be faithful to its most profound vocation, charity, it will know how to concretely open itself to enter in communion with all the ecclesiastical components, with other confessions, other religions, with all the men and women of good will. It will certainly develop a new interior strength. In giving and putting itself at the service of unity, consecrated life could recover its own identity and freshness and grow towards the new horizons towards which the Spirit leads all the Church.

Spiritual Direction in Asian Context

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

/1. Call for Intense Spiritual Formation:

Meetings attended by the Rectors and Spiritual Directors held in Asia transpired in the late eighties and the early years of the nineties. The need for intense spiritual seminary formation was prominently articulated. This was accompanied by suggestions as to the intensification of programs for spiritual directors. The programs should include among others, teachings and sharings on the life of kenosis and penance, conversion to inter-religious spirituality and the skill to produce formation program for seminarians that is integral or wholistic.¹

In general, the choice of right people for the task of formation is crucial. Formators must be mature, virtuous and competent. This must be made true in all the seminaries in Asia.

¹ Pathway... to Priestly Sanctity ed. by V. Cajilig, OP, Manila: FABC-OESC, 1989 p. 9: We recommend that the following aspects be integrated into the spiritual formation program for spiritual directors, as well as for formation in the seminaries: a. Inculturation within the context of each local Church; b. adaptation of spiritual formation to the Asian condition of poverty and suffering leading to a life of biblical kenosis; c. convergence of inter-religious spiritualities leading to inter-faith dialogue; d. the positive use of media for formation purposes; e. The integration of all components of formation toward interiorization and not merely external compliance.

2. *Hunger for God:*

An intense hunger for God can possibly be the best description of the reality in Asia. In fact, the hunger for bread can be translated too, to hunger for God. Thus, the people responsible for spiritual direction can not discount this hunger.

The feeling of hunger must be satisfied. It is thus imperative that priests should learn how to satisfy this hunger through concrete actions that flow from prayer and discernment. The seminarians who would become priests later, should be trained in such a way that in due time they will facilitate the people in discerning the loving response of God to the dehumanized. Seminarians, whose consciences have been trained and formed psychologically, socially and spiritually in an integrative way, become more evangelically effective and visible. Thus, they contribute towards making the Kingdom of God more real and integrated to the people they will be serving.²

The above would require training of personnel who would help the seminarians in their formation and discernment. Hence, there is a claim for more intense training for all spiritual directors. Cogently, too, there is need for a sufficient number of spiritual guides in every seminary.

3. *The Spiritual Director's Task of Accompaniment:*

Spirituality in Asia is seen by formators as a form of journey and accompaniment. The spiritual journey follows a certain pathway that leads to interiority where the spiritual director acts as guide, companion and co-discerner.

There are different schools of spirituality in the Church. While there are different schools of spirituality, most schools if not all,

² *Hunger for God... Hunger for Bread* ed. by V. Cajilig, OP, Manila: OESC FABC, 1988, 112-115.

exalt the role of a model. However, the model of all models is Christ with whom the *formandi* is con-figured. The directors must not fail to share this with his directee and exhort him to become more open and generous to respond. The director assists the directee in determining the pattern(s) of the movements of the Holy Spirit in one's life. His main goal is to allow the directee to eventually arrive at the stature of Christ.

The spiritual guide helps also the seminarians see the variables and the non-variables in the spiritual journey. Among the variables may be the charisms of the founders of schools of spirituality. And of the non-variables, one should count on the "Word", the imperative of spiritual formation and therefore, of paramount importance. The person of Jesus is the object of the efforts exerted in spiritual life that one wants to emulate. The directee is to configure his actions to those of Jesus, the healer, the teacher, the servant and the sanctifier. In fact, spiritual direction has to go on even after the directee's sacerdotal ordination as is *Pastores Dabo Vobis* number 81: "Spiritual Direction too contributes in no small way to the ongoing formation of the priests. It is a well-tried means and has lost none of its value, it ensures spiritual formation. It fosters and maintains faithfulness and generosity in the carrying out of the priestly duties."

4. *The How of Spiritual Direction:*

Spiritual direction as understood in general by John Wright is "an interpersonal situation in which one person assists another to develop and come to greater maturity in the life of the spirit, that is, the life of faith, hope and love."³ The "how" according to T. Green in giving the guidance must be rooted in the adult to adult relationship and sharing.⁴

³ Cfr. T. Green SJ in the "How of Spiritual Direction," in *Pathway... into Priestly Sanctity*, p. 132.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 134.

Noting its great importance in the life of the Church in Asia, the Asian Synod reaffirms the need for **formation programmes** to train priests and religious who are men and women of God devoted to prayer and living deep spiritual lives and who are able to guide and accompany others on their road to God. Christians in Asia need to have zealous pastors and spiritual guides and not simply efficient administrators. The personal example of formator has a crucial role to play in the formation process.⁵

5. *Celibacy in Spiritual Direction:*

Formation in Celibacy — which is taken as a special gift of God — is to be properly attended to. Celibacy is a way of loving God with an undivided heart. Celibacy is also a way of loving others especially the poor and the unloved. Strategies to deal with 41 's problems related to sexuality with the help of experts should be reckoned even in the early years of formation.

The journey of the seminarians who are to identify their sexual orientation with the help of the spiritual direction is considered as part of the process of interiorization and integration. For one's sexuality and one's direction and orientation in his personal life is one special area to be scrutinized before one commits himself to priestly life. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* number 50 articulates, "The seminarians should have a sufficient degree of psychological and sexual maturity as well as an assiduous and authentic life of prayer, and he should put himself under the direction of spiritual father. The spiritual director should help seminarian so that he himself reaches a mature and free decision, which is built on esteem for priestly friendship and self discipline, as **well** as on the acceptance of solitude and on physically and psychologically sound personal state."⁶

⁵ Message of Synod for Asia, 1998.

⁶ See also: *Priestly Spirituality*, ed. by F-J Eilers, SVD, Mail: Logos Publications, Inc., 1999, p. 147.

6. *Formation in Mission*

Orientation for mission is the over-all motivation in spiritual direction. The task of mission is from Christ himself. The mission of the candidates trained for priesthood is to sanctify and to eventually save souls. Spiritual direction is a tool for salvation. Missionary life is apostolic life. Work in life of mission is definitely not activities devoid of spiritual roots. Work is said to be apostolic if and when it is freely, actively and creatively done as resonance of God's love for all.

In the book **Hundredfold Harvest**...Enjoyed, conviction for missionary formation is cogently stated, "...the missionary formation of the future priests in Asia, with its emphasis on evangelization and dialogue, assumes vital importance particularly because of the vast majority of the people of the continent is yet to experience the redemptive love manifested in Jesus Christ..." This conviction leads to practical recommendation on how the seminarians be directed in the missionary aspect of priestly training.⁷

The 1998 Asian Synod resounds the call for a deep **missionary** spirituality, rooted in Christ, with special emphasis on compassion and harmony, detachment and self-emptying, solidarity with the poor and the suffering and respect for the integrity of

⁷ Recommendations: 1) That missionary spirit permeates the whole formation of seminarians, and that it be present in all subjects taught; 2) that formators be examples of this spirit and of teamwork; 3) that this spirit and apostolic zeal be fostered by inviting to the seminary active missionaries who can serve as role models and share their experience, thus inspiring the seminarians; 4) the missionary intentions and concerns have their place in our liturgical celebration, 5) That practical training be given to seminarians to foster in them a missionary attitude. This should be done during semester sessions and also through experiences... (Hundredfold Harvest... Enjoyed from the Conference on Formation of Priests in Circumstances of the Present Day Asia: Second Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asia, published by OESC-FABC, Manila, 1995, p. 29).

creation. The witness of **monastic and contemplative communities** is particularly called for to reveal the authentic countenance of Jesus; likewise, the life and work of consecrated men and women.⁸

7. Silence and Kenosis:

In the task of giving spiritual guidance, the director exhorts the directee to ask from the Spirit the gift of silence. Quiet disposition, inside and out, is a requirement for contemplation. "Silence is the seat of wisdom". It is through silence of the body, mind and spirit that one achieves unity with his being and his Originator. There can never be any contemplation without silence. As a minister of Jesus in Asia, the clergy must keep pace if not ahead of other leaders of other religions who use silence as a vehicle of communion with the Divine or the Sacred. In fact, the seminarians can be guided to learn such art from other religions aside from what they learn from Christian mysticism. Through the clergy's contemplative yet proactive life, the laity too, may be inspired.

Poverty is a lot for many Asian peoples. It is a known fact that alleviation from this dehumanizing form of poverty is their fundamental need. However, poverty can be salvific, if and when it is an evangelical one. That is, one decides to live simply as a vocation; that moved by God's immense love, one partakes with Jesus' choice of complete dependence on the Father. Sacerdotal formation is precisely being molded according to Christ's simplicity, poverty and total surrender to God. This kenotic experience of individuals culminates in suffering with Christ crucified and being enjoined with the Risen Lord. Thus, the spirituality of the cross is a path towards the spirituality of the resurrection. This is the Christian way.

⁸ Synodus Episcoporum-Coetus Specialis Pro Asia, Nuntius Ecivitate Vaticana, 1998, p. 8.

Silence, contemplation and kenosis are never achieved for their own sake. They are all vehicles, tools, and conditions for creative actions to bring total human development of the believer himself and the community. Silence leads one to attain a sense of wholeness, contemplation situates him to a communion with God and kenosis brings forth in one the loving person, the authentic image of God in man. In silence, one gain strength; in contemplation, one attains vision; and in kenosis, one bargains for fortitude.

APPENDIX I

SHORT PROGRAM FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

DATE	TIME	THEME	SKILL
DAY1	9:00 A.M.	"STAY WITH US" - The Emmaus Ex	Sharing the Word of God
DAY 2	3:00 P.M.	Accompaniment	Journal
	9:00 A.M.	Knowing the Directee	Questions/ Answers
	3:00 P.M.	Handling Human Realities	Dialogue
DAY 3	9:00 A.M.	Depression in Seminary	Way of Grieving
	3:00 P.M.	Jesus Forsakeness	Tri-media
DAY 4	9:00 A.M.	Celibacy	A case study
	3:00 P.M.	Ascertaining Growth	Leveling (Needs/states)
DAY 5	9:00 A.M.	Questions Commonly asked by priests/seminarians	Projecting answers
	3:00 P.M.	Maturing in Christ	Survey of Schools of Spirituality

APPENDIX II

TOPICS FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

A. CORE TOPICS

1. Perseverance in Vocation
2. Spirituality
3. Prayer Life
4. Relationship (Opposite and Same Sex)
5. Self-Discipline and Responsibility
6. Positive Outlook (Meaning) of Life

B. PARTICULAR YEARS

FIRST YEAR

Details:

1. Family History
2. Authority
3. Self-Discipline
4. Responsibility
5. Emotional Dryness
6. Positive Thinking
7. Affirmation
8. Fraternal Concern, Openness, Friendliness
9. Humility, Simplicity and Generosity

SECOND YEAR

Details:

1. Sacramental Life
2. Meaning of Life
3. Mediation
4. Priority Values

5. Detachment (money)
6. Temptation about sex
7. Affirmation
8. Relationship with Formators, Family, Friends

THIRD YEAR

Details:

1. Skills in Handling Difficulties
2. Chastity
3. Self-Discipline
4. Emptiness
5. Human Development (Psycho-Sexual Journey)
6. Relationship in Community
7. Consistency/Firmness in Handling Resolutions

FOURTH YEAR

Details:

1. Process of Discernment
2. Happiness
3. Apostolate
4. Celibacy
5. Obedience to Superiors
6. Poverty
7. Making Options in Life (Accdg. To One's Values)

B. TOPICS FOR THEOLOGIANS

A. CORE TOPICS

1. Spirituality
2. Vocation
3. Christ as Model of Models
4. Prayer in our Time
5. Community Life

6. Receptivity to God's Word
7. Intellectual Life, Study and Formation
8. Sacrament of Reconciliation

B. PARTICULAR YEARS

FIRST YEAR

Details:

1. Accompaniment and Spiritual Direction
2. Friendship
3. Human Sexuality and Celibacy
4. Healing of Memories
5. Meditation: Inter-Religious Dimension
6. Holy Eucharist

SECOND YEAR

Details:

1. Occasion of Sins
2. Perseverance: Sins against Charity Seminary Life
3. Formation of good habits and eradication of bad habits
4. Vatican II on Priestly Life
5. Scandals/Misbehavior
6. Discipline in Seminary Life

THIRD YEAR

Details:

1. Maturity and Learning from Mistakes
2. Review Church's Document on Priestly Formation
3. Difficulties and Dangers in Priestly Life
4. Obedience
5. Theological Virtues
6. Meaning of Suffering

FOURTH YEAR

Details:

1. Freedom and Responsibility
2. Practical Lessons from the Fathers of Church
3. Healing of Memories
4. Inculturation: Toward Filipino Spirituality
5. Sins of Past and the Future
6. Faithfulness in Little Things

Drawing All to the Bread of Life, Asia and the Eucharist

DIOSDADO TALAMAYAN D.D.

Several thousand miles — and a variety of cultures — separate the Churches of Asia from the See of Peter, but we take great comfort from its interest in our endeavors to "draw all to the Bread of Life". I am honored to have been asked by His Eminence, the Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome, to share with this Assembly our experiences at preparing for the Eucharistic Congress, both remotely and immediately. I am honored to do so likewise in behalf of my brothers in the episcopate in the local churches of Asia.

Situationer

A Socio-Political and Economic Picture

Emerging from long periods of colonization, most of the countries of Asia have experimented in varying ways with democracy, many times drawing from Western models. While some **democracies have endured and even thrived, while others have been replaced**, by constitutional means, at times, and at other times

* Archbishop of Tuguegarao, Chairman of Permanent Committee on International Eucharistic Congress, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

extra-constitutionally, by military regimes, dictatorships and other authoritarian regimes. Corruption is endemic in many societies of Asia, up to the highest levels of officialdom and it can hardly be denied that there is a direct relation between corruption and the abject poverty of most Asian countries. Regimes of patronage are common. While talent and native ability are by no means wanting, opportunities are severely limited. Several Asian economists are floundering even as some struggle to recuperate from the recent paralyzing currency crisis. International funding agencies are both bane and boon, for while their loans and financing packages offer short-term relief, they do impose conditions on debtor-nations that in many ways compromise national sovereignty and distort national aspirations and goals. For most nations of Asia, debt-relief is an urgent need. Membership in the World Trade Organisation and the consequent globalization not only of trade but even of the exercise of professions has spelled even more trouble for many Asian countries. It has resulted in the displacement and redundancy of several local industries and income-generating ventures.

The Religious Situation

Asia has traditionally been the home to many of the world's great religions. In different forms these religions continue to survive. In countries where Christianity, particularly the Catholic Church, has taken root, we see bountiful harvests of the Spirit, if not in the number of converts, then certainly in the fervor and ardor of the members of the Church. There can be no more fitting proof of this fact than the recent beatification of several Asians on March 5, 2000 at St. Peter's Square, including Blessed Pedro Calungsod of the Philippines.

The analysis of the *7th FABC Plenary Assembly* is a fecund source of useful insights:

First: There has been a regular meeting of Churches in Asia and these have engendered pastoral creativity as well as inspiring Christian fellowship.

Second: The Asian Church has been blessed with several examples of Christian heroism and holiness, as evidenced by the numbers of Asians already raised to the dignity of the altar, and by those recently beatified.

Third: The rich cultures of Asia and long-entrenched traditions make the work of Inculturation and adaptation imperative. While there has been notable headway in some areas, particularly in the liturgy, much remains to be done. These needs were discussed at the *Pan-Asian Consultation on Inculturation and Liturgy* at Bangalore, India, in April, 1995.

Fourth: Because of the economic and political profile of Asia, many of the Asian Churches have explicated the Church's "option for the poor" and have been directly involved in the struggle for justice, and for respect and recognition of human rights and fundamental liberties.

Fifth: Regrettably the rise of fundamentalism — what the FABC has called "extremism" — has been a cause of concern to the Churches of Asia. While the thirst for the Spirit and the hunger for the Word of God can be discerned in the numerous fundamentalist groups and assemblies that have emerged, this phenomenon has also brought division in its wake. ("A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service", *Final Statement of the 7th FABC Plenary Assembly, Samphran, Thailand, January 3-13, 2000*, pp. 1-3).

Liturgical Endeavors

In Korea, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea launched the "One Heart, One Body movement. It aims at the translation of the Eucharistic Mystery into daily life. Put otherwise, that the

Mystery of the Eucharist is lived, is at the heart of the movement. Besides, Perpetual Eucharistic adoration has been one way of prayerfully celebrating the Jubilee. (*Letter of Fr. John Kim Jong-Su, Secretary-General, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, February 26, 2000*).

The Japanese Catholic Bishops' Conference reports that different dioceses in Japan have Eucharistic Assemblies and Eucharistic processions. The promotion of the Eucharist is primarily a concern of each individual diocese and so is the task of fostering vocations to the priestly and religious life. (*Letter of Bishop Peter Takeo Okada, Secretary-General of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, February 14, 2000*).

The Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference, for its part, issued a pastoral letter exhorting the faithful to love the Eucharist, and giving them information on the forthcoming Eucharistic Congresses, both international and national. The bishops also agreed to promote the frequent reception of Holy Communion, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Holy Hour and Benediction. Before the national Eucharistic Congress, which has been set for June 25, 2000, there will be parochial, vicarial, and diocesan Eucharistic Congresses. (*Letter of Fr. John Baptist Wu, Secretary-General of the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference, February 10, 2000*).

The Philippines, for its part, prepared for the Jubilee Year in each diocese and also nationally by Congresses on the Son in 1997, the Holy Spirit in 1998 and the Father in 1999. Simultaneously, Eucharistic Congresses all over the Philippines will end the Jubilee Year on January 7, 2001. This national event will be preceded by vicarial and parochial Eucharistic Congresses starting March. To prepare for this, the Permanent Committee on Eucharistic Congresses of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines which I chair is conducting Jubilee Eucharistic Moni-

tors Training Seminar-Workshops in seven regional centers all over the country. Priests, religious, lay leaders and diocesan leaders, and the youth will be involved in these training programs. The bishops of the Philippines want to reach all and to involve all.

Manifestations of a desire for Eucharistic-Centeredness

In Asia, we thank God that we do not have only hints of an esteem for the Eucharist, but clear expressions of a longing for its transforming effect in society and in the lives of all who believe.

The Church in Malaysia reports that not only is participation at Sunday Eucharist encouraging. Because the Eucharist is a Celebration and the wellspring of Eucharist living, the local church has also made an option for the poor and has itself on the organization and promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities. (Fr. Anthony Thomas, The Liturgical "Scene in Malaysia", *FABC OESC Pan-Asian Consultation on Inculturation and Liturgy*, April 9-11, 1995, pp. 67-69).

The People of Indonesia are sensitive to symbolic expressions celebrations. Liturgists have their hands full with the concerns of liturgical participation and experiments. The Eucharist has been the focus of liturgical education and activity. (Fr. Niko Hayon, *"Liturgy in Indonesia"*, pp. 70-72).

Fr. Ivau Jeydsudera, writing for the Church of Sri Lanka, puts it succinctly when he reports: "There is a glimpse of hope since people take much interest in studying the Bible more than ever before. The sharing of the Word of God in small groups and its richer experience will lead the faithful to a great extent, to participate more actively in the Eucharist, the Celebration of the Mass and also in other liturgical celebrations." (*"Liturgical Scene in Asian Countries: Sri Lanka"*, pp. 73-75).

The picture of the Church in Bengal is rosy. Aside from proactive inculturation movement in the Church, there is enthusiastic participation of the laity. In fact, it is observed that the "Eucharist has become more meaningful in local languages. It is seen that acolytes, readers, choir-leaders, gift-bearers and other ministers take part in the liturgy." (Fr. Francis Gomes Sina, *"The Beginnings of the Church in Bengal"*, pp. 76-79).

Bishop Anthony Lobo informs us that the Eucharistic liturgy has reached a level of maturity in Pakistan that has produced hymns, a Missal and a Lectionary in the various languages in use in Pakistan. (*"Inculturation of the Liturgy in Pakistan"* pp. 81-83).

In behalf of India, Fr. Jacog Theckanath enunciates a beautiful vision of the transforming effect of the Eucharist: "Our liturgy should produce not more adorers but witnesses; it should not proclaim a disincarnate Christ, but the Christ incarnate in the cultural flesh of India." In fact, as early as 1970, the late-esteemed and venerable Valerian Cardinal Gracias already observed that India was blessed with remarkable developments in the liturgical life of its people. (*"Liturgical Inculturation in India: A Review"*, pp. 84-97).

In the Philippines, esteem for the Eucharist has manifested itself in the more popular and traditional forms of Eucharistic devotion (including the popularity of "Perpetual Adoration Chapels"). There has been constant interest and attention given the enhancement of the Eucharistic Liturgy, including its inculturation. Notable among these attempts has been the initiatives taken by the world-renowned Filipino Benedictine Liturgist, Fr. Anscar Chupungco, OSB. But more importantly, lay persons and clergy alike, in seminars, congresses and assemblies have expressed the determination to work for the transformation of society, drawing strength from and aiming at an emulation of the Eucharist.

Conclusion

The peoples of Asia rejoice in the great gift that the Eucharist is. In their struggle for dignity and the vindication of their rights, they draw strength and inspiration from it. In their aspiration for a just society, they take their bearings from it. They are inspired by the knowledge that divergent through cultures may be, as their brothers and sisters stand around the same Table, sharing the same Bread and partaking of the same Cup. Though true to their own proud ethnic cultural heritage, they stay, for unity of one Family gathered around the Table of the Lord.

Professionalism in Pastoral Work*

RAMON AGUILOS, MSEM, STD

Introduction

An attempt to discuss and then relate two constructs — *professionalism* on the one hand and *pastoral work* on the other — can be an interesting enterprise. These two ideas have been "strange bedfellows," and have not been good "working partners" (or, to use a contemporary word, *soulmates*), at least in the general experience among priests. For decades, probably since Vatican II, there have had been a plethora of theological discussions, pastoral reflections and theoretical and practical affirmations on the ministry of priests. There is an abundance of documents that deal on the priesthood and priests' mission to continue Christ's work as prophet, priest and king¹; that through the sacrament of ordination they "are signed with a special character[,...]...are configured to Christ, ...[and act] in the person of Christ."² Literature is profuse

•Paper delivered on October 25, 2000 during the Annual Seminar for the former scholars of the *Stadium Theologiae Foundation*, at the Hacienda Rosalia, Manapla, Negros Occidental.

¹ *Optatam Totius*, 14.

² *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.

about priests-and-bishop relationship, on the role of the laity, on priestly holiness, on celibacy, and many more. While these are very essential in understanding the nature of the priesthood and the life of priests, there is a gnawing concern that there is one thing that has been left unnoticed, — *professionalism* among priests in their ministry.

Reasons for "No Talk" on Professionalism

Offhand, there are reasons that we can cite why a discussion on "professionalism" remains almost nil. First, there is a common opinion and impression — and rightly so — that priesthood is more than just a profession. At the time we were seminarians (i.e., the *seventies*) the Church was reeling from the after-effects of Vatican II, and as many can vouch, there was a worldwide phenomenon of exodus from the priesthood. What was quite disturbing was that many of these men leaving the presbytery were eminently successful in their spheres — a Provincial, an ex-president of a university, a popular dean of the graduate school. These men stood out above their peers. They were given responsible posts proportionate to their talents.³ Their work was undoubtedly that of a professional. Why these men to whom many looked up for their learning and wisdom defected and preferred the secular life outside the priesthood was a major piece for discussion. It is true that Vatican II's clarion call for *aggiornamento* necessitated the updating of Church structures and making them conform to modern social and psychological trends of the age and its culture. True enough, many priests, in their efforts to be in tune with the world attained success in their priesthood as they engaged in the world of work as "hyphenated priests". As successful persons an aura of prestige surrounded them. Sadly, a lot of these priests became dissatisfied with their work and took the radical course

³ Cf. Raymund A. Tartre, SSS, *The Priesthood is a Call*, (New York: The Sentinel Press, 1972), pp. 11-12.

of leaving the priesthood. Naturally, this provoked a longer and harder look on the nature of priestly ministry. Why did they quit? Did they ever know the whole concept of the priesthood as understood and taught by the Church? Didn't they understand that the priesthood is a call, and not a mere profession as a professional chooses a career as a lawyer, or a physician or an engineer? For all these questionings, there came a bottomline acceptance to the idea that priesthood is *not* a profession. "It is a ministry"; "it is a call to service," or something to that effect.

Secondly, our current literature never associates priesthood with profession. I run through the words, "profession," and "professionals," in many a Church document and I find that they are only consigned to the lay faithful and their career paths and choices. In an even more exclusive manner, professionals are set apart from other individuals and their line of work like farmers, fishermen, factory workers, laborers and politicians.⁴ Here in the Philippines, the term *professional* is given a legal stamp, since it is applied to all those who practice a specific occupation according to the norms imposed by the Professional Regulations Commission, the government's professional registration authority. We, priests, do not pass a professional board examination in order to "legalize" our practice. We are "ordained" to the priesthood, although we can say that in the seminary we went through a series of examinations and evaluations to determine our "fitness" and "competence". Wittingly or unwittingly, we have relegated professional work and lifestyle as more of a property of the laity in their engagement with the complex world of education, politics, society, economics, culture, science, art, international life, mass media and other fields that need a real show of "professional qualities." As a result, the priesthood is left as having its own

⁴ Cfr. *Acts of the Second Plenary Council*, nn. 434-437.

distinctive identity, and priestly ministry its distinctive quality, but definitely, not in the realm of "professionalism."

Then, even among professional groups, there is a discussion on the perils of professionalism. An article addressed to lawyers voices this concern, and raises some issues suggesting that some of the values and practices of professionalism that have conveniently been thought to be desirable are not necessarily good.⁵ Even the association of the professionals, with the "new class," — those engaged in managerial and technical careers,⁶ as well as with intellectuals and white-collar workers further corroborates the doubts as to the appropriateness of making priesthood a "profession".

But I suggest that we do not enter into that sphere of discussion. We have long accepted the traditionally-held ideas on the priesthood and priestly ministry vis-a-vis the nature and role of the laity. A semantic discussion on the ministry as differentiated from professionalism might sound a little preposterous. It could lead us into more interesting terms like "laicization of the clergy," and the "clericalization of the laity" and other similar notions. The truth of the matter is that, contemporary times find the status of the priest continuously evolving, and its social importance either strongly felt or strongly challenged. True, our basic functions have not changed — the offering of Mass, hearing confessions, preaching. But in the light of present-day challenges, pastoral ministry

⁵ Cfr. Alvin Esau, "Perils of Professionalism," Ms, Talk given at the University of Victoria Law School, February 25, 1991, in <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/law/Courses/esau/lppr/peril.htm>. The perils this author mentions are: perils of *hierarchy*, peril of *autonomy*, the peril of monopoly, the peril of *duality* and the peril of *idolatry*.

⁶ The "New Class" is hypothesized professional/managerial/technical class dominant in post-industrial societies. Further, the correctness of calling the New Class a "class" compared to the pseudo-professionalized underclass of clerical workers or otherwise "proletarianized" and "deprofessionalized" white-collar workers is in debate.

demands the carrying out of other duties and functions which in themselves require what laymen rightfully call, "professionalism."

Presbyterorum Ordinis asserts that there are "pastoral and human circumstances of the priesthood."⁷ It, then, behooves upon us, priests, to render our service to the faithful, Church and to God with utmost zeal and dedication in the same way that laymen are to their respective careers and occupation. In this vast field that priests labor on, we get into real contact with people who are experts in their respective areas of competence. As pastors we engage in a more "professional" interaction with a number of them who exercise full-time and/or part-time basis for the service of the Church. These are the catechists, the personnel in the Church offices, Church hospitals and Catholic schools. In pastoral planning and organization, priests do tap the services of educators, lawyers, civil servants and other professionals in the various strata of their parish community. These people do not only offer their expertise and competence in the service of the Church. They, too, mirror to us priests what professionalism is, and how it can best help in the person, lifestyle, and work of the priesthood and pastoral ministry.

The Term, "Professional" ⁸

The word, *professional*, has its origin in the Latin *professio*. The corresponding verbs, *profiteor* and *confiteor*, carry the same meaning: to proclaim out loud, or to confess publicly a particular creed. Such act implies a witnessing to a particular creed, even to the point of death. The first martyrs were called *confessors*, since they professed the Christian creed, and they witnessed to

⁷ Cfr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Preface.

⁸ Rolando de la Rosa, OP, "Educating the Catholic Woman for the Professions in the Service of the Family, Church and Society," in *The Woman of Faith Today: Shaping the Nation's Future*, (Manila: CBCP Office on Women, 1999) pp. 180-182.

it amidst persecution. Truly, during the early Christian era, to be a professional Christian was a dangerous thing.

In the Middle Ages, the term *professio* continued to have the religious meaning of public confession of faith or religious consecration. This religious meaning of the word has been devalued in the modern times, and has nearly disappeared during the last decades as a result of the broadening of its usage. The only places where the word profession retains its strictly religious meaning are in the religious convent (temporary or perpetual vows), and in the Church, when the faithful recite the Creed.

Talcott Parsons distinguishes *occupation* from *profession*. According to him, for something to be called a profession, certain conditions are required, and the basic one is "orientation towards collectivity." This he means that a professional is expected to act for altruistic motivations and not for selfish gain. People who carry out an occupation are motivated by specific interest, generally an economic one, and this is accepted by society. But professionals are expected to act in an altruistic way by not converting their occupation into a means for self-aggrandizement. Their social role is so important that it cannot be paid for with money, which is the reason why they do not receive formal payment for their work but symbolic remuneration in terms of honor called *honorarium* or *professional fee*. Their relationship with those whom they serve goes beyond the contractual or commercial.

Also, a professional is one who performs his task according to ethical standards required by his profession. Professionals have their own "magna carta" that serves as a blue print to guide them in their chosen profession. A professional is expected to uphold the highest possible standards by manifesting genuine enthusiasm for a particular calling. High standards are set, and any form of transgression to these standards is a breach of professionalism.

In brief, this is what we can cull as major elements in professionalism: a witnessing—even to the point of death—of a particular creed, belief or tenet; an orientation towards collectivity and altruism; performance of tasks and duties according to high ethical standards. In the "priestly sphere" I say that professionalism simply means a witnessing in our practical and pastoral duties to the ideals of the priesthood, even if that means giving up our lives. It means a movement from self-seeking motives to motives that are community-oriented, church-oriented. It also means a performance of duties with a great demand on moral and spiritual values, and values proper to the priestly office.

Some Hard Facts and Accepted "Givens"

While we seem to extol the laity for their commitment and dedication to their profession, we cannot ignore the fact that they, too, are beset with problems related to professionalism. We often hear of the complaint from the Commission on Civil Service, as well as in private firms of the lack of professionalism among employees.⁹ It is not uncommon to hear of gambling, drunkenness and other immoral practices. We also detect the unharmonious and unpleasant personal and professional relations employees have with other professionals and government officials. The late reporting for work is another, and is a major cause for the slow performance level in result-oriented offices and companies.

Even the preparation for professional accreditation still leaves much room to be desired. In passing the board exams for teachers and certified public accountants, as well as the bar for lawyers, the picture is quite dismal. Except for medicine and other health-related professions, the passing rate is alarmingly low in many schools. And because of the economic situation in our country, even those who graduate and pass the board examinations still have

" *Ibid.*, p. 182

to contend with stiff competition for employment. And since many graduates find themselves left without jobs, they end up either as domestic helpers or in occupations hardly commensurate to the level of education they have achieved.¹⁰ In the academe, we have many young people who start off well in the teaching profession, but they leave, lured by the prospects of greener pastures outside the walls of the academe. Then there is the brain-drain syndrome, where many professionals whose expertise might have been used here leave the country to earn dollars abroad."

Priests are not exempt from many instances of unprofessionalism. We see a lot of our brothers whose priestly life and service are unfortunately way out of the "professional mould": sloppy appearance, late in meeting appointments, irregular in making reports to the Chancery, disorderly sacristies, parish offices lacking the atmosphere and ambience of real work, absenteeism in religion and theology classes, etc. We also receive feelers (short of saying, "complaints") from among our lay faithful about parishes where pastoral approaches are still of the KBL type — *kasal, binyag, libing*, — where priests are indifferent towards planning and organization, slow on tapping human resources among parishioners, and unmindful of the idea that the lay faithful are collaborators in the work of evangelization.

On the other hand, we have to realize and accept the "givens" amongst priests and their experience in pastoral ministry:

Priests serve in the parishes as pastors and associate pastors. In many instances they serve as teachers, chaplains at hospitals or prisons, as well as in administrative positions. Where opportunity arises, they serve in mission parishes outside their own dioceses.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

" Emerita S. Quito, "Problems of the Profession," in *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, (Manila: De La Salle University, 1983), p. 51.

Now we see that the variety of work that a priest does is an opportunity for hard work, for showing competence and efficiency in administration, and for meeting, working and interacting with the faithful in the parish, many of whom are career people and professionals themselves. It is in these circumstances that it is expedient for priests to "professionalize" their ministry, at least to some great extent.

The Three "Munera" of Teaching, Sanctifying and Serving

This paper does not intend to develop a theology on professionalism in the pastoral ministry, nor does it attempt to engage in a theoretical discussion on the subject. As this topic borders on the practical, I wish to use the normal paradigm of the three functions of the priests and offer some suggestions on how professionalism in the ministry may be realized.¹² These are not exhaustive suggestions and proposals. You can use your own imaginations and come up with your own.

Teachers of the Word

As *teachers of the Word*, we, priests, must appreciate the real effect of the ministry of the Word on the life of our communities, and be anxious to use this essential instrument of evangelization with the best possible professionalism. We can professionalize the teaching ministry in various ways. We have, for example, to undergo permanent formation courses, like the review of theology and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, the Doctors and the Saints. We, too, need to make positive efforts at knowing the great masters of Christian spirituality. Indeed, initiatives need to

¹² The discussion is an annotation to the recent document published by the Congregation for the Clergy. See Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest of the Third Christian Millennium: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community* (19 March 1999) in Paulines Publishing House (1999) 67 pp.

be taken in permanent formation. Priests are to be encouraged to update themselves academically and pastorally. *Nemo dot quod non habet*, we are used to hearing this dictum, and it is still true to this day.

We can develop good libraries of our own. The presence of mini-libraries in our personal study rooms, in our parish rectories, and the kind of books stacked therein are reflective of our own doctrinal and professional outlook. We can even access libraries available on the internet. There is an electronic library set up by the Congregation for the Clergy (www.clerus.org), and therein we can use the catechesis and teaching of the Holy Father and the various documents published by the Holy See.

Ministers of the Sacraments

We are *ministers of the sacraments*, all right, but there is more to celebrating mass and administering sacraments and sacramentals. In the parish, we can involve our parishioners in discussions and practical means on how sacramental care can be renewed and how it can be placed at the service of new evangelization, and encourage them to help in their proper implementation.

With a true pastoral spirit, let us give special care and attention to the proper maintenance of the Church. We are to respect the canonical (cf. Canons 284, 669; Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priests) and liturgical norms by vesting properly and reverently for divine worship and by wearing all of the prescribed vestments (cf. Canon 929).

Leaders of the Community

We are *pastors of the flock*, and we are to understand and exercise our proper and correct function as spiritual leaders of the communities entrusted to our care.

We, too, are administrators. We are administrators of personnel, parish development programs, the budget, building and renovation projects. We are directors of Catholic schools. We are writers and speakers, designers and builders, and directors of the life of a parish.

But we cannot do all these jobs alone. Our "servanthood-leadership" qualities can be seen in the way we relate with our lay faithful and to what extent we entrust parish-related programs and projects to their charge. They make up 99.2 percent of the parish. When a parish is alive it is because of them. As servant-leaders we need to tap their human resources. We put them at the head of many committees. We support them as they engage in parish projects. Those in the parish can vouch that as pastor and leader of the flock, a priest does not have to lead the parade all the time; there are times when he needs to be in the midst of the crowd.¹³

Secular Expressions of Professionalism Applicable to the Ministry

Let us now look into the standards of secular professions and find out possible ways in which these standards are applicable to the priestly ministry.

As teachers should feel the nobility of their teaching profession, the doctors the dignity of their medical career, the priest should likewise feel the loftiness of the priesthood: its nature, its mission. He should manifest enthusiasm for and "pride" of his calling.

As teachers and doctors are to uphold the highest possible standards of their profession, a priest should make the best preparation for this calling. He should strive to broaden his cultural,

¹³ This idea I got from an autobiography of a priest. See John F. Davis, *This Priest is Thankful*, (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1979), p. 93.

social, priestly, prophetic and pastoral outlook and deepen his professional interest. He is to work out means for further and continued cultural and professional growth through a realistic program of on-going formation. He has the duty to keep abreast of developments in the sacred sciences, in the human arts, and to use their knowledge to improve their priestly and pastoral competence.¹⁴

As professional men and women are encouraged to have membership in local, provincial and national professional organizations, priests may participate actively and unselfishly in some professional groups in their locality, in a way that these do not hamper their ministry.¹⁵

Professionals are advised to avoid promotion characterized by rivalry and divisive competition, which weaken the cause of their profession. In the case of priests, it runs counter to the culture of the ministry to jostle and fight for promotion or to lobby for the premier positions in the diocese. Using pressure to secure the best parishes in the diocese should be the last thing a priest must do. And even if qualification is the sole determining factor in appointments, oftentimes this is not strictly followed. And where there are cases when this happens, all a priest can do is to submit in humility to the authority. Professionalism in the ministry is also a commitment to obedience and deference to one's superior.

Part of professionalism is the prudent and careful exercise of one's tongue, as one relates with brother priests and with other people. During our sermons and homilies we warn people against

¹⁴ The 7th Plenary Assembly of the Federation Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) held in Thailand early this year dealt on the formation of the clergy. See Vicente Cajilig, OP, "On-Going Formation of the Clergy," in *Boletín Eclesiástico* 76 (July-August 2000) 420-422. This is Father Cajilig's editorial to the July-August issue of the said journal.

¹⁵ Cfr. CIC n. 278.

the major "Filipino" pre-occupation called, gossip (*tsismis*),*⁶ and the harmful effects it causes on individuals and on the community. It becomes all the more incumbent on us to safeguard the good name of brother priests and of the lay faithful. Further, it is a case of bad taste to be too concerned of our own reputation at the expense of others. A priest who is indiscreet of his language, is fond of sowing intrigues against his own bishop and among fellow priests, and publicly reveals their hidden faults reflects a low social, cultural and moral upbringing, not to mention the damage his action causes on the priesthood itself.¹⁷ Politicians, soldiers, physicians and lawyers are, under certain conditions, obliged to keep information relative to their profession under seal of secrecy. Priests are not exempt from this professional responsibility. Not to mention the secret of sacrament of confession, which is sacred and cannot be violated at any pretext, professional secrecy among the clergy also includes respect for the private and individual lives of brother priests, and the careful manner of communicating information to someone. "No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it."¹⁸

Needless to say, priests are to participate in pastoral planning of the diocese, vicariates and parishes. They are to be well-informed on current leadership trends and models and to afford parishioners a degree of participation in these plans and in their implementation.

Working conditions are definitely a factor for effectiveness and efficiency in work — this is true to all professions. That is why priests are to aim for necessary "working conditions": adequate building structure and equipment; sufficient library

¹⁶ Cfr. *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, 1219.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* nn. 1240

¹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2489 and 2491.

(private and common), adequate pastoral aids, reasonable priest-parishioner ratio, allotted time for enjoyment and leisure, etc.

We can run rivers of suggestions for an increased sense of professionalism in our pastoral work, but we need to stop here.

Conclusion

As we have seen, this paper does not build a theory on professionalism in pastoral ministry. It only goes into the "brass tacks" of pastoral work and gives it the "professional flavor" due it. It proposes nothing new. It merely affirms what have long been "professed" as the ideals of the priesthood and shows how we can put them into practice.

In the Philippine setting, the reference of the priest as a "servant-leader" proposed by the Second Plenary Council is an echoing of what "professionalism" is vis-a-vis pastoral work:

"The priest is a servant and leader when he reaches out to all classes of people in the community with great kindness after the manner of our Lord. He *inspires, leads, and coordinates* the members of the community so that they will become what they are supposed to be as Christians"¹⁹ (italics supplied).

The duty of *inspiring, leading and coordinating* are, we might say, "professional tasks" of the servant-leader, probably akin to the productive and management tools used by managers and professionals — *planning, organizing, directing and controlling* — to see their work become real and operational. Professionals who are successful in their fields are those who habitually follow the science and art relative to their profession. A priest also needs to get back into the basics of priestly work, and constantly practice it. As a result of a habitual action, there is unity in his being,

¹⁹ *Acts of the Second Plenary Council*, n. 529

and his identity as *another Christ* is found in all the circumstances of his life. It was St. John Chrysostom who said, "The outward bearing of the priest, his walk, his words, and his acts, will have a beneficial effect on those who hear or see him. Everything in the modest ecclesiastic will help the people conceive a high and worthy idea of God and of his religion."

We end paraphrasing what the recent circular letter of the Congregation of the Clergy has offered as a concretely edifying priestly scenario. Yes, there is no better experience for the faithful in the parish each time they see, observe, feel and listen that the Word of God is soundly and enthusiastically preached, when the liturgy is solemnly and respectfully celebrated, or when they are comfortably and warmly received in the parish office. Further, there is no better inspiration each time they see their priest eat and rest, even as they are edified by his temperance and sobriety. There is no greater rejoicing than when they visit him and they observe his simplicity and priestly poverty. There is no better comfort whenever they talk with him and discuss common interests with him and there he exudes spiritual strength and priestly nobility.²⁰ There is no better place than the pastor's rectory — the priest's home and workplace at the same time — which is a haven, a watering hole in the midst of a vast desert. It is the center of the community of faithful with the pastor providing the salt and the light. If that is not professionalism, how, then, to call it?

Simply put, "professionalism in the pastoral ministry" is to find the grace of the priesthood "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 in the hospitals, on the public transport and in the media."²¹ Every circumstance

²⁰ Cfr. "Conclusions" in *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*, as cited.

²¹ *Ibid*, quoting John Paul II, "Catechesis at the General Audience" 7 July 1993, n. 7.

is an occasion for the priest to witness to the ideals of the priesthood, even if that means giving up his life. Each priestly role is a summons from self-seeking motives to motives that are for the good of the Church (*Sentire cum ecclesia*). His whole priestly life is a calling that demands the highest moral and spiritual values, values proper to the priestly office, the values of Christ — *Cor Sacerdotis, Cor Christi*. The heart of the priest is the heart of Christ.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases and Inquiries

ARTEMIO BALUMA, HP, JCD

LEGAL AGE TO MARRY

I am a parish priest in a Mindanao parish. The parents of both a single young man and a single young woman, both below eighteen (18) years old came to my office to set the date of the wedding of their children. I was informed they just came from our municipal registrar's office, but the officer refused to allow the young pair to apply for a marriage license for lack of age. The parents of the boy remembered, though, that when they themselves applied for it, the father was seventeen (17) and the mother, fifteen (15). So, they came to the parish office. I checked on my Canon law book and I found in Canon 1083 that a girl and a boy who respectively completed their fourteenth and sixteenth years of age are eligible to marry and that the Episcopal Conference may establish a higher age. I know the age to marry is also eighteen (18) years completed. So I told the parties to just wait to turn eighteen (18). What better advice shall I give to parties in similar situations? What are the legal implications in the case?

From the facts presented, our consultant may be in a confounding situation on why the civil registrar refused the applicants for marriage license.

In our Philippine Civil Code of 1949, the minimum age for marrying was fourteen (14) for a girl and sixteen (16) for a boy (Article 54). However, with the enactment of the Family Code which took effect on August 8, 1988, the age was raised to eighteen (18) on both parties. It is a sound provision as Article 5 of the Family Code reads: *Any male or female of the age of eighteen (18) years, or upwards not under any of the impediments mentioned in Articles 37 and 38, may contract marriage.*

The reason for this raising of the age is to enable the contractants to better mature not only biologically but also mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually. A girl of fourteen (14) and a boy of sixteen (16) may be both physically mature but definitely they have not reached the other levels of maturity proportionate to their age. That is why if they are above eighteen (18) and below twenty-one (21) years old they need parental consent to marry.

The consultant is correct in citing Canon 1083. Here in the Philippines, the Catholic Bishops' Conference raised the qualifying age to marry at eighteen (18). However, since universal Canon law pegs the legal capacity of parties to marry at fourteen (14) and sixteen (16) years old, the local Ordinary may dispense with the age requisite, but not lower than fourteen (14) and sixteen (16) for a girl and a boy, respectively (Canon 1083).

Nonetheless, for lack of legal capacity of age, they may apply for dispensation (Canon 85) from the impediment of age from the local Ordinary (Canon 1078, section 1). Still, there is the civil law problem. The parties cannot apply for marriage license due to lack of required age. What to do in this situation?

First, should the bishop grant the dispensation, then, the parties do not apply at the civil registrar's office for the issuance of marriage license. The marriage will be purely canonical. It will

have a canonical sacramental effect, not civil effects. The marriage will be celebrated in secret (Canon 1130). There will be no announcements or banns but the necessary inquiries will be conducted in secret (Canon 1131, no. 1). The secret is to be observed by the local Ordinary, the assisting clerics, the parties and the witnesses (Canon 1131, no. 2). Finally, the celebration will not be in a public form, hence, it is to be attended mainly by the contractants, the solemnizing cleric and two witnesses. Needless to say, public wedding reception that will alert the neighborhood has to be avoided.

While this secret marriage is granted in Church law in this situation where there is prohibition in Philippine Civil law, "it must be pointed out that the spirit of canonical legislation tends towards avoiding to infringe on civil law. Consequently, the secret celebration of marriage is rarely authorized in these cases, unless it is required for important reasons related to the *salus animarum*", (Caparros et al. Code of Canon Law, 1993, pp. 715-716).

As a practical consideration, then, it is admonished that local Ordinaries be not too generous in the granting of such dispensation for its being in conflict with civil law. For them to do so may result in these things: the marriage is civilly invalid, the spouses are not legally bound, the children are civilly illegitimate. Moreover, the celebrant priest could be stripped of his authority to solemnize marriage under OCRG Administrative Order No. 1, 17 October 1988, Section 14, no. 6, for willfully violating the provisions of existing marriage laws. Finally, same celebrant could be criminally prosecuted for performing illegal marriage ceremony under Article 352 of the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines.

Instead, the Local Ordinaries as pastors "are to see to it that they dissuade young people from entering marriage before the age customarily accepted in the region", (Canon 1072).

Homilies for July-August 2001*

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

July 1, 2001

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: 1 Kgs 19:16, 19-21/Gal 5:1, 13-18/ Lk 9:51-62)

Listen to this statement, "Freedom is what we have — Christ has set us free! Stand, then, as free people, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again." Brothers, you may think the statement came straight from our national heroes in Kawit, Cavite or at Balintawak or Pugad Lawin a century ago. Actually, it was St. Paul who, so to speak, acclaimed this "declaration of independence" in his letter to the Galatians (our 2nd reading).

Freedom is an emotion-laden word. If trumpeted to the four winds, it can mobilize a battalion of oppressed people, and no matter how poorly equipped, turn them into an avalanche of irresistible force against regimes of colonizers and tyrants.

Freedom is a rallying point, a clarion call for people straining under the yoke of servitude and exploitation. It transforms slaves into freedmen, the faint-hearted into heroes, the run-of-the-mill into pathfinders and trailblazers.

* The Homilies come from the book of Rev. Msgr. Mario Balthasar, OP entitled *Treasures: Old and New* (Homilies for everyday, 3 vols.)

The opposite of freedom is slavery. The antipodes of freedmen are slaves. Surprisingly, some people prefer to remain as slaves. After given a chance to taste and experience freedom, they slide back to their old prisons. Why? There are several answers to that. One, freedom means taking personal, responsible, decisions. Some people shun responsibility because it entails hardwork and sacrifice. Two, man prefers the line of least resistance, the status quo, especially if it carries along privilege, comfort, relaxation. Why bother with change? Just follow the beaten path, they reason out.

Remember the ancient people of Israel? Moses led them out of slavery in Egypt into freedom-land. But when they began to experience discomforts and privations on their journey, the majority opted for returning to Egypt. They said they could enjoy again, even as slaves, the onions, garlic and meat they were accustomed to.

Christ has given us freedom, declared Paul. Freedom from sin and death; freedom from bad old habits; freedom from greed and idolatry; freedom from fear and anxiety, freedom from unnecessary conventions and conformism; freedom from constraints to do what is right and good. If there is any man who promised total freedom, it is Jesus Christ. Freedom is an essential attribute of God. Jesus has given us freedom: to be free like him.

Governments and institutions usually issue commemorative coins to mark important milestones in their history, such as declaration of independence, foundation day and the like. Let us see the other side of the coin marking Paul's declaration of independence of all Christians. "My brothers, you were called to be free, but do not let this freedom become an excuse for letting your physical desires control you. Instead, let love make you serve one another... But if you act like wild animals, hurting and harming each other, then watch out, or you will completely destroy one another."

As usually the case with other good things we inherit, like wealth, health, influence, skills, so with freedom, we abuse it. We let it become an excuse for allowing our physical desires to control us. If we wish to submit to the control of any thing, it should be love's control, says Paul, the love which makes us serve one another. So here we meet a Paulinian paradox: service in freedom, or freedom at service, or better free servant. It seems paradoxical but it is true. We are free, but we must serve.

The other two readings contain the same paradox. God chose a successor to Elijah, until then the prophet-leader of Israel. How? By installing Elisha as servant tentatively to Elijah until the latter is recalled to heaven. On the other hand, Jesus who did not feel shame to say he came down from heaven to serve and not be served, wants his followers to be resolute in following him and to distinguish themselves by the badge of service through love.

In democracies, new governments are installed on the national, provincial and municipal levels. This is the result of the exercise in freedom of the nations' electorate. It is the fervent prayer and expectation of all, that based • on the lessons of this Sunday's 3 readings, the chosen leaders of nations will distinguish their administration with the mark of service through love, with love, and in love.

July 8, 2001

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Is 66:10-14/Gal 6:14-18/Lk 10:1-12)

Peace is the pre-requisite to prosperity. That is an axiom all governments should accept and strive to realize. Where peace exists, prosperity follows. Where it does not exist but only strife and warfare, you can expect misery to abound. There is a close connection between peace and prosperity. In today's 3 bible readings, peace and prosperity are not only very closely connected but are identical.

Of course, the three readings take us to a higher level. God's peace is more elevated and more intimate to man. That is why Jesus once said, "I give you my peace not as the world gives." God's peace is beyond the ability of the world to give. Although the axiom above for all governments, that peace is pre-requisite to prosperity, is valid, yet it may not be true in all instances as happens with all axioms related to human affairs. Some areas in the country are peaceful but they are not necessarily prosperous, and you may be the richest man in the country, but you don't enjoy peace of mind because of worries about losing your wealth or your life.

God's peace is such that one can enjoy it even in the midst of poverty. Poverty is not a hindrance to receiving or experiencing God's peace. If the poor are blessed, as the gospels claim, it is because they can experience God's peace. Having God's peace, God's prosperity will not be far from coming although this again is of a different kind from the world's prosperity, just as God's peace is of a different kind from the world's peace. In the 1st reading (Isaiah 66), God predicts a period of prosperity for his people because he had made peace with them at last.

In the 2nd reading (Galatians 6), we hear Paul boasting about something. Usually, men boast about their prosperity and achievements; but Paul, who enjoys God's peace, boasts about sharing Christ's sufferings and humiliations. He feels prosperous for being poor and persecuted on account of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the 3rd reading (Luke 10) says that those, who have received God's peace can in turn impart it to others, along with God's prosperity. Oblivious of their own comfort and financial security, their concentration is to spread God's peace, impart divine healing and announce the nearness of God's kingdom to the hearts of men.

It is clear that the peace and prosperity our 3 readings are talking about are of a spiritual nature. They are not meant however, to under-rate or minimize the importance of prosperity and peace of the more tangible kind. Efforts by governments and private organizations towards poverty-elimination, creation of jobs, increase of individual and family incomes, food security, provision of decent shelter, universal access to health services, affordable education must continue and intensify.

Such efforts should merit our approval and collaboration. It goes without saying that programs and projects geared to generating prosperity for the poorer members of our society, who constitute the greater percentage of the population, will have greater chance of success when all the rich and poor alike, possess the peace and prosperity that comes from God which he alone can give. This peace is gained, not through programs, policies and projects, but through prayer and conversion.

Without God's peace in one's heart, the world's peace and prosperity are illusions, are temporary and unstable. Just look at the economic situation in Asia, which was reputed a couple of years ago to be the fastest growing economy in the world, Asia, the home of economic tigers. That reputation is shattered; somehow God's peace did not gain entrance into men's hearts. The words of Jesus in today's gospel are significant. He instructs his disciples that on entering any house, they must first say, "Peace to this house. If there is a peaceable man there, your peace will rest on him, if not, it will come back to you." So with God's peace in men's hearts, the prosperity they create will be more enduring and far-reaching since they'll find it easy to share and to care.

July 15, 2001

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Dt 30:10-14/Col 1:15-20/Lk 10:25-37)

There are a few joys in life that offer so much satisfaction and at a low cost or none at all. For example, planning what to do during the day and dreaming for tomorrow. It is this planning and dreaming what drives us, I believe, to go on with the business of life, even in the face of difficulties.

When one ceases to plan and dream, then life, difficult as it is already, becomes doubly difficult, hard and unpleasant. It is the children, the youth that are the happier portion of humanity because it is they that are full of plans and dreams for the future. The adults and the aged are less happy in comparison, but it need not be that way. If they go on planning and dreaming, they can be as happy, if not, happier, as their youthful counterparts.

So, let us encourage one another to make small or big plans, to dream small or big dreams in order to make this world a better place to live in, to add color, hope and happiness in this life, without forgetting, however, there is a better world than this, a better life than the present, for which we must seriously plan and dream also. Whoever you are, whatever your station in life, whichever responsibility you hold — plan and dream so that you can taste and experience the innocent joys hidden in life, feel the joy of living, appreciate the gift of life, and add to the general-welfare of others.

Moses himself, according to the 1st reading, offers a plan and a dream for his own people so that they can find happiness in life. He answers them that they can do this, gain happiness, at no financial cost or unreasonable sacrifice on their part. They do not have to reach for it up in the sky to bring it down to them;

they do not have to go across the ocean to haul it back with them. For the Word of God, which they should obey and follow, is right near to them, in their very mouth and heart. All it takes, is for them to search deeply in their hearts and shout it out, broadcast and firmly, so to speak for them and for others to hear.

In the third reading, someone asks Jesus how may one gain eternal life. And his answer was to search one's heart and he'll find the way to it. Because it is in one's heart that one summons forth the love for God and for one's neighbor, the love that carries you to eternal life. So again, you do not have to go up the sky or travel oceans to find the gold that will buy you eternal life. That gold is hidden in your heart and all it takes is to bring it out.

Even the second reading speaks of Christ as the plan and the dream, so to speak, by which and through which God created everything in heaven and on earth. Likewise, goes on the second reading, Christ was the plan and the dream through whom God decided to bring the whole universe, the whole of mankind back to himself. If God, so to speak had dreams and plans by which he created and recreated all things and all human beings for their happiness; if Moses had also plans and dreams for his fellow-countrymen; who will object that we also need to plan and to dream, each in our several ways, so that there will be general happiness for all?

To end on a practical note, we pose this question. How can we make this community, this one gathered now for Mass, a happy community, full of plans and dreams? You do not have to climb the sky or cross the oceans. You have the answer, the Word, hidden in your hearts, waiting to be brought out and put into practice. If you fully obey the Lord and carefully follow his commandments, listen to what he will do for your reward. As it is written in Scriptures, "The Lord will open the heavens, the store-house of

his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hand. The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity — in the fruit of your womb, in the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground." (Deuteronomy 28) All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God, says the same Scripture passage.

July 22, 2001

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Gn 18:1-10/Col 1:24-28/Lk 10:38-42)

It is said that Filipinos are a hospitable people, and that hospitality is a distinctive mark of our nation. Are you in agreement with this? Of course, many things have happened in the past three or more decades, with old values tumbling down and now values arising and taking hold, allowing for some changes in its practice, in the emphases given, in the different socio-economic environments, in the fact itself that the name hospitality has been taking different meanings, it is safe to say that Filipinos are a hospitable people.

What is important, however, is that if we still believe hospitality as a value to be cherished and protected, we must purify it of elements that diminish its beauty and attractiveness. For example, the distortions, the excesses, the boastfulness that usually accompany our manifestations of hospitality. Apparently, we are more hospitable to outsiders than to close members of the family; in practicing it we incur expenses beyond our ability to pay; we try to impress our visitors just so we could boast of it to others.

But why are we talking about hospitality in this homily portion of the mass? Are there no more important topics to talk about? Precisely, the 3 bible readings of this day discuss this topic, and you will find out that hospitality determined the beautiful

outcome and orientation in life of the biblical persons who practiced it and are mentioned in today's readings.

Moreover, there is this advantage that the bible defines for us the true hospitality that merits eternal reward and is free of the baggage of distortions, excesses and pridefulness I mentioned above. The biblical hospitality that we all should practice is that which looks not only at the needs of the fellow we intend to help, but also at the hidden Lord who identifies himself with that fellow and bids us come to his help.

Actually there are two persons here at whom the practice of hospitality is directed: one that is seen, felt, served and cared for; and the other that is unseen, intuited, worshipped and admired, enjoyed of rather than cared for. The distinction between the two objects of hospitality is sometimes neat and clear, but at other times unclear and more subtle.

In the cases narrated by the first and third readings, the distinction is quite transparent. Abraham received and served three strangers, but he recognized intuitively God hidden in them. Martha and her sister hosted Jesus in their home, each one practicing on Jesus her distinctive kind of hospitality: Martha by attending to his physical needs while Mary by sitting down in worshipful attention. Which of the two sisters gave Jesus a better treatment? The remark of Jesus did not imply that Martha got a lower mark than Mary, but that both had a right to treat Jesus in the manner they saw more fitting and in accordance with their own temperament. In any case, Abraham serving God hidden in the 3 strangers, Mary and Martha serving God who became man, all three received their several rewards for practicing hospitality.

The second reading speaks of a more subtle form of distinction, so subtle that it could remain a mystery, unrecognized and unperceived by many, if it isn't explained and revealed to them. That is what Paul did exactly. He says it was his duty and privilege

to reveal the mystery that Christ is hidden in all of us, so much so that the hospitality we refuse to anyone in need is considered refused to Christ himself. And let us not forget that Christ had promised that even a glass of water offered to anyone in his name would not lose its reward in heaven.

What a disproportion between the service and the reward: for a mere glass of cool water a reward of eternal happiness. But why should we be amazed at this? If we, Filipinos are overgenerous in welcoming our visitors, God is infinitely more overgenerous in rewarding a service done for his sake.

July 29, 2001

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Gn 18:20-32/Col 2:12-14/Lk 11:1-13)

"Lord, teach us to pray," said a disciple to Jesus. Here is one request that should be on the lips of all of us. I wonder if we ever asked Jesus to teach us to pray. If never, then it could be either we think we already know, which is presumptuous to say; or that we feel we do not need to pray, which is horrible to think to say the least. Fortunately, in today's gospel here is one disciple who shows us the lead in asking Jesus to teach us to pray.

It has been said that prayer is as natural to a Christian as breathing is to a man. One does not need to be taught how to breathe. He better just do it or he is a dead man! Some people, though have never learned how to breathe deeply. Because it is healthy and strengthening. Prayer is natural to a Christian, in the sense that if he does not pray he is as good as a spiritually dead Christian. And the more deeply he prays, the better because he becomes a more convinced and stronger Christian. I believe what the disciple was requesting is for Jesus to teach him how to pray

deeply, because he saw how his master prayed with deep concentration and prolonged time. Having been raised in the pious Jewish tradition, that disciple certainly must know the basic prayers of his religion. But he wants to pray like Jesus prayed.

In accommodating his disciple's request, Jesus teaches not only the need to pray but also how to pray, what to pray, when to pray or how often. If we take into account all these aspects, then our prayer becomes more natural, more deep and pervasive to our spiritual being. Hence, more uplifting and strengthening.

So, how do we pray? We pray by addressing God. This sounds commonplace if not pedantic. To who else should prayer be directed? Nevertheless, when God is out of our mind, as happens at times, our prayer is not a prayer no matter how many thousands of words we use. If one cannot formulate his own prayer, the Our Father is the best prayer one can say, provided he does not say it mechanically. We have come across some Catholics who do not know the Our Father in whatever language. Singing the Our Father with feeling and reflection is a good way of praying the Our Father, like we do at Mass.

What to pray? Firstly, for God's honor. It not only predisposes God to feel benevolent towards us, it also precludes any inclination towards excessive self-interest. Then, we pray for what is basic and necessary, such as acceptance into his kingdom, deliverance from evil, forgiveness for oneself in view of having pardoned others, and the daily bread.

How often should we pray? Once a week? Like our attendance at Sunday Mass? And suppose they do not attend Mass? They would never be praying at all! Jesus teaches us to pray our daily bread, meaning we should pray everyday. Otherwise we do not form the habit of praying seriously. Oh yes, Jesus also teaches us to pray with perseverance, even to the point of appearing stubborn with God till we get what we are praying for.

He will not tell us this, unless he was sure that the Father is pleased with that kind of prayer.

The first and second readings, in their turn, show us the wonderful effects of having prayed well. Abraham tried to bargain with God to spare two entire cities for the sake of a few holy persons. If Abraham had bargained to the hilt, like a good Filipino housewife, and had continued bargaining with God, not for 50, 40, 30, 20, 10 souls but for just one good person, his nephew Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah would have existed to this day! For there is no limit to God's mercy. For the same reason, the world, as bad as it is, continues to turn around the sun because I think some few good souls are bargaining with God for its sake.

Finally, Paul, in his letter to the Colossians (second reading) shows how the prayer of Jesus Christ, while he hung on the cross ("Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.") won a complete condonation of all mankind's debts due to sin. This is why in the Our Father, we ask daily for the pardon of our common sins, and we get it. Christ instituted a special sacrament for the pardon of graver sins, as a proof of his super abundant mercy in assuring us that we will not lack of effective ways to obtain divine forgiveness.

Brothers and sisters, the three readings have taught you how to pray. So, do it, and do it well.

August 5, 2001

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Qoh 1:2, 2:21-23/Col 3:1-5, 9-11/Lk 12:13-21)

Today, we have a teaching from the 3 bible readings that for some, may prove a bitter medicine to swallow and therefore easily shoved aside and finally rejected. For others, the teaching will look impractical, irrelevant or at best an impossible dream. I say

this after taking into account the present mood and temperament of peoples everywhere.

What is this pill, and why is it bitter to the taste? The greatest social problem of our times, and we may all agree on this, is poverty that has scandalously divided peoples into hostile groups of the "haves" and the "have nots," into rich/very rich and poor/very poor, into those of easy and comfortable living and those of inhuman and degrading existence.

We also all agree, it seems, that the solution would be the eradication of poverty so that we will see a homogenous grouping where all are the "haves," all are rich, all are leading easy, comfortable lives conformable to human dignity. Our new government has set among its first priorities eradication of poverty. Will it succeed this time for once? Well luck favors it better than previous administrations that also aimed at the same goal?

Universally speaking, peoples want to become rich in the conviction that it is the only way to escape poverty. But wanting to become rich may get out of hand and easily lead to avarice. Greed, which victimizes traditionally those who are already rich, can also take hold of the poor. This may seem paradoxical but it is true. There are greedy poor as there are greedy rich; just as there are rich who are poor in spirit and there are poor who are rich in spirit. But avarice is more about the disposition of the heart than about the quantity or quality of material possessions. The heart that is held captive by greed, irrespective of whether one is poor or rich, becomes a bottomless pit, whose hunger cannot be satisfied and will not stop to consider the morality of the means for indulging its avarice.

The teaching from our three bible readings is the right medicine to take in order to solve radically the social problem of poverty, and its twin sister, avarice. For the avarice of some, causes the poverty of many; while poverty itself is not an insurance

against avarice. Qoheleth, the author of the book from where our 1st reading is taken, may have stated his point quite extremely. But we cannot contradict his astute observation. You really do not have to read his entire book, to convince yourself that Qoheleth rings true when he says that all our strivings to amass wealth, money, possessions are ultimately useless, empty and vain.

Yes, one may have employed all his wisdom, knowledge, skill, time and energy to become rich and amass wealth. But in the end he will have to leave all this behind. The third reading taken from the gospel of Luke shows the folly and madness one falls into when all his strivings are about how to pile up riches for oneself but is not rich in God's sight. In the second reading, Paul shows us where our true riches lie, viz, with Christ and in Christ, who is in heaven.

To conclude, one is reminded of a prayer in the book of Proverbs which says, "I ask you, God, to let me have two things before I die: (one) keep me from lying, and (two) let me be neither rich nor poor. So, give me only as much food as I need. If I have more, I might say I do not need you, God. But if I am poor, I might steal and bring disgrace on you, my God." (30:7-9). Let us make this prayer from the book of Proverbs our own prayer and also our ideal in life.

August 12, 2001

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Wis 18:6-9/Heb 11:1-2, 18-19/Lk 12:32-48)

When Jesus referred to his disciples, as "little flock" he must have in mind both their exiguous number and humble origins. When members of a group are few in number and lowly in status, they are bound to be a timid group and are given little importance by the high and mighty of society. I do not know if I can refer

to you as "little flock." Surely, you are bigger in number than Jesus' audience and many of you are important and influential persons in society.

But I would like to think that Jesus named his early disciples "little flock" also because of their ready and open disposition, like children who do not go around feeling self-important and self-sufficient. So, despite your big number and your being "somebodies" in society, you can also be called "little flock" if you possess the childlike disposition just mentioned.

To such "little flocks" of yesteryears and of today, the following assurance and promise are given, "Do not be afraid. For your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom" (v. 32 of our 3rd reading). But the question arises immediately in our minds, "Would the promise of a Kingdom suffice to banish fear from the hearts of our Lord's "little flock?" That depends on how you understand the Kingdom and how you are disposed concerning it. In the letter to the Hebrews (Ch. 18 of our 2nd reading), the writer praises Abraham, Sarah and other ancestors for taking God at his word and for hoping the full realization of his promises at some distant future beyond this visible world. Meanwhile, they went about their earthly duties, without fear in the hearts, as regards their hostile enemies and the precariousness of their meager possessions.

But more, even. According to the book of Wisdom, (Ch. 18, first reading), God's promise of a Kingdom drove fear out of the hearts of a whole nation aside from the chosen individuals mentioned by the letter to the Hebrews. This nation was ancient Israel, which sprung precisely from faith-filled Abraham, and was recipient of signal favors from God.

Among these favors were their liberation from Egypt's captivity, their inheritance of a new land, their governance by their

own kings, their guidance by prophets, priests and wise men. But this same nation, through their checkered history of 15 or more centuries, came to the realization that God's promise of a true Kingdom was not of this earth nor for this earth. The author of the book of Wisdom, where our 1st reading is taken, praises this ancient people of God for continuing their spiritual journey in faith towards that promised Kingdom, then better understood by them.

Therefore, the Kingdom that God promises, the Kingdom that puts to rest the hearts of men from every fear and anxiety, is of the nature of things we can hope for only in faith, of things that we cannot see, as the letter to Hebrews says. In brief, one attains to the Kingdom promised by God when one shares in God's proper life. Since this participation in God's life can already begin here on earth by living in union with God, then fear and anxiety can also be banished from us while we are still on earth.

This consideration elicits from the Christians a two-fold responsibility, whether as individuals or as the New People of God/ the New Israel, for in either way, all are called to receive God's Kingdom. One, to put to rest the hearts of their fellow-beings from their fear and anxiety by doing the best they can, so that the less fortunate ones are assured of the essential goods in this earth. After all, this is what the loving God did for his ancient people, giving them an earthly kingdom as a pledge and a representation of a better future and lasting one.

Two, the more affluent Christians must realize that the goods they presently possess have only a limited capacity of assuring fulfillment and security. It is only God's Kingdom, i.e. life in union with him, a share in his proper life that can fully satisfy their hearts and banish the fear and anxiety that continue to hound them, even while they enjoy their earthly possessions. As today's gospel says, "Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any

moth destroys. For wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be."

August 19, 2001

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Jer 38:4-6 8-10/Heb 12:1-4/Lk 12:49-53)

The readings of today's mass are like our Philippine weather at this time of the year. Within the period of one day, an overcast sky looms over our heads, then breaks into a torrent of rains. Hours afterwards, a bright and sunny heaven clears the area for our activities. The gloom and bloom of our Philippine weather mirrors, in turn, the succession of sad and cheerful feeling we also experience in our souls also within the period of one day.

This is the reason why the bible is so attractive a book to read and listen to. It seems so close to our personal experiences, so much in harmony with the rhythm of our lives comprising its chiaroscuro, its ups and downs, its successes and failures.

We have, for example, this 1st reading (Chapter 38) from the book of Jeremiah. It narrates an anxious episode in the life of this great prophet. For his devotion to duty, for championing the cause of truth, and for announcing fearlessly God's message, his life was placed in extreme danger by those who opposed his sane advices.

Jeremiah is said to be a profound psychologist. He discloses to God the depths of his feelings and inner struggle with a bluntness that can surprise. He does this, not so much to seek God's help so to apprise his Lord of the consequences his loyalty to God had led him. Hence, it is also said that Jeremiah was the proto-type of Jesus in that the obedience of both to their mission and to God's will was the occasion and reason of their sufferings.

In the third reading (Luke, Chapter 12) Jesus, like Jeremiah, discloses his soul, the depths of his feelings as he was about to enter Jerusalem to accomplish the mission his Father entrusted to him. "I have come to set fire on earth," he says. A fire that would purify men of their unwanted accretions, meaning their sins. He feels some kind of impatience to get that mission finally done. It is a duty he has to consummate, though it will be for him like a baptism that will drown him in sorrow. He sadly foresees that his very eagerness to carry out his Father's will shall result in a division among men in every age: those who will side with him and those who will oppose him.

In face of the crucified and resurrected savior, men cannot remain neutral; either one is for Jesus or against Jesus. This division will invade even society's most revered sanctuary, i.e. the family, where you logically expect unity and closeness. Fathers will fight against their sons, mothers against their daughters, parents against their in-laws and vice-versa.

But the sky is not always that gloomy. Bright and sunny periods also paint the horizon. Philippine weather is not that ugly as to offer no relief or moments of cheer. So we have the 2nd reading (Hebrews Ch. 12) to remind us we are surrounded with a cloud of witnesses, beginning with Jeremiah through Jesus throughout stout-hearted men and women in our midst, attesting that God does not abandon those who are determined to run the race that lies ahead.

Jesu» did not give up because of the cross; he took it up all the way to the end because of the joy that was waiting for him. Similarly, we who have decided to be on the side of Jesus must remain loyal to him, whatever the consequences our choice may lead us to.

Jeremiah and Jesus held on to their God-given duty to the end. Inspired by their example and of countless others, that cloud

of brave witnesses we must also hold on to our God-given responsibilities because of the joy that is waiting for us. This is the message of the bible readings in today's mass.

August 26, 2001

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Is 66:18-21/Heb 12:5-7, 11-13/Lk 13:22-30)

You may have heard people remark that Ayala Alabang or Forbes Park is like a paradise and that some squatter areas in Metro Manila look like hell. There is nothing wrong with such remark except that you and I never saw paradise or hell to be able to make comparisons.

However, Catholic teaching states that in paradise there is only pure joy and in hell, there is only pure pain. But if we allow certain truth to the above people's remark, we do not mean that Alabang and Forbes Park are exempt from pain and sorrow or those squatter areas in Metro Manila never experience moments of joy and happiness. The remark only means that the former is not paradise, but only like a paradise and the latter is not hell but only like hell.

For samples and experiences of joy and happiness and conversely those of sorrow and pain are not a monopoly of one or the other social classes of rich and poor. Consequently, however, much one tries or even succeeds to belong to the favored social class of the rich, one should never think that disappointments, worries, sorrows, disasters can never intrude in their lives.

In fact, these are the universal heritage of all mankind. As St. Augustine writes in one of his sermons, "From the time of Adam to the time of his descendants today (including our today), man's lot has been labor and sweat, thorns and thistles." The three bible readings of this Sunday Mass support the impression

that disappointments, hardships, pain and sorrows are integral parts of the stuff of life here on earth.

Call them "punishments" if you wish. You would be using a biblical term and concept, as you will see. The bible readings teach us not only how to handle our setbacks and misfortunes by turning them into our advantage but also how to ensure for ourselves the true and permanent joys.

In the first reading (Isaiah 66), God explains to his people that while their captivity in Babylon was a "punishment" for their sins, at the same time, however, it was an opportunity for them to proclaim and reveal him to their captors by means of their repentance and changed lives. Thus, in the final analysis, the "punishment" endured by God's people becomes in fact, the rehabilitation and salvation of the world and their own selves.

The second reading (Hebrews 12) is a lesson in pedagogy or child discipline. In effect, the author of the letter lays down the criterion by which a person can be said a real child of his father. This is when the father "punishes" his misbehaving child to bring him up properly. The author could therefore conclude that if God does not "punish" us by allowing suffering to come our way, it shows we are bastards and not his real sons and daughters. So he says, "Endure hardships as disciplines; God is treating you as sons." He quotes a corroborating passage from another Scripture (book of Proverbs), "The Lord disciplines those he loves; and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

Finally, the third reading (Luke 13) gives a very practical lesson on how to remain joyful despite all hardships and how to possess joy forever. Like the man in the gospel story, we may have been anxious over the number of people who are going to be saved.

Jesus tells us not to bother ourselves with such questions but to attempt instead, to enter the open door that leads to salvation before it is slammed closed at our face. Entering it, accordingly, is already difficult in itself. Why increase your bother by asking hypothetical questions like whether few or many are going to be saved? For Jesus, the important thing is to attempt to enter the door. This is what should give us joy because everyone can do this: to attempt, to try, and God will do the rest.