

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2001

John Paul II

**28TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF
THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY**

Holy Name Society

**AN EXPERIENCE OF DIALOGUE AMONG
THE RELIGIONS IN INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF THE
NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE**

Chiara Lubich

**RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION OF THE LAITY
IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

Javier Gonzalez, OP

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Eye as Camera
Memory as Film
Heart as Processor
VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

One late afternoon a teacher is strolling around the university campus, trying to relax, with a student. The young man says to the teacher that he is coming from a photography class. However, he has one difficulty: the young fellow has no camera. How is it possible for him to attend a photography class? The problem is big for how would the young man record the so many happenings in the country? Should he be sent to Basilan, how would he record the Abu Sayyaf urgency? Should he be assigned in the Congress, how would he record the faces of ambitious senators who want to be the leader in the senate? How would he record the victims of flood in typhoon stricken provinces? To record events in photography is part and path to history.

It seems that in our modern times we are not anymore capable of putting into record should one has no more highly technical gadgets to record events as they unfold in time.

But it was a truly reflective afternoon that leads one's spirit to rediscover the truth that has always been here. Ever since the dawn of time, the human eye has always served as the camera that perceives all angles of a given scene: the color, the depth, the height and the distance. In short, the human eye is capable of appreciating every given angle of a picture. The memory of man is usually an ever effective recorder of seen images, perceived sounds and attaining emotions in any given human event and experience. The heart is an ever-sensitive processor that enjoys happiness, abhors pain, rejects uncertainty and welcomes hope and love.

Woman and man, believer or not, rich or poor, provincial or city dwellers should not be stunted by the wrong notion that to be able to live well today he should necessarily acquire all gadgets of modern time. As the church continues to accompany the citizens of this country, which are as well citizens of the kingdom of God, each should always remind them that the nature's gifts are efficient and can be relied upon. Our formators and animators in schools, parishes, families and all other sectors should all remember the wonderful functions of the eye as efficient camera to read events; of the memory to record in one's inner self social and human experiences; of the heart to process the meaning of odd and joyful happenings in one's faith and life.

World Mission Sunday 2001

JOHN PAUL II

Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo (Ps 89[88],2) [I will sing the mercies of the Lord forever].

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. With intimate joy we celebrated the Great Jubilee of salvation, a time of grace for the whole Church. Divine mercy, experienced by each of the faithful, prompts us to "put into the deep", remembering with gratitude the past, living with passion the present and looking forward with confidence to the future, convinced that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever" (Heb 13,8) (cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 1). This tending towards the future, illuminated by hope, must be the basis of all Church activity in the new millennium. This is the message that I wish to address to every Catholic on the occasion of Mission Sunday, which will be celebrated on 21 October.

2. It is time, indeed, to look forward, keeping our eyes set on the face of Jesus (cf. Heb. 12,2). The Spirit calls us to "direct our thoughts to the future which lies before us" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 3), to witness and to proclaim Christ, giving thanks

"for the 'marvels' the Lord has worked for us: '*Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*' (Ps 89,2)" *ibid.*, n. 2). On the occasion of Mission Sunday last year, I reminded you that missionary commitment is born of ardent contemplation of Jesus. A Christian who has contemplated Jesus Christ cannot fail to be captivated by his radiance (cf. *Vita consecrata*, n. 14) and to commit himself to bearing witness to his faith in Christ, the only Saviour of mankind.

Contemplation of the face of the Lord leads the disciples to contemplate the faces of the men and women of today: the Lord identifies himself in fact with "the least of my brothers" (cf. Mt 25,40.45). Contemplation of Jesus "the first and greatest evangelizer" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 7) transforms us into evangelizers. It makes us aware of his desire to give eternal life to those entrusted to him by the Father (cf. Jn 17,2). God wants "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tm 2,4) and Jesus knew that the Father's will for him was that he should announce the Kingdom of God to other towns: "for I was sent for this purpose" (Lk 4,43).

The fruit of contemplating the "least of his brothers" is the discovery that every person, although in a way which is mysterious for us, is in search of God, by whom he or she is created and loved. His first disciples discovered this: "[Lord], everyone is searching for you" (Mk 1,37). And the "Greeks", on behalf of future generations, exclaim: "We wish to see Jesus" (Jn 12,21). Yes, Christ is the true light that illuminates every person who comes into this world (cf. Jn 1,9): mankind searches for him, "feeling after him" (Acts 17,27), drawn by an inner attraction the origin of which they themselves do not know. It is hidden in the heart of God, where there beats a desire for universal salvation. Of this, God makes us witnesses and heralds. For this purpose he fills us, like in a new Pentecost, with the fire of his Spirit, with his love and with

his presence: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28, 20).

3. Another fruit of the Great Jubilee is the attitude that the Lord asks of every Christian, to look ahead with faith and with hope. The Lord does us the honour of placing his confidence in us and calling us to the ministry, showing us his mercy (cf. I Tm 1,12.13). This call is not reserved for a few, it is for everyone, each in his own state of life. In the Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* I wrote in this regard: "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*.... 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' (I Cor 9,22)" (n. 40).

The call to mission acquires a singular urgency, particularly if we look at that part of humanity which still does not know Christ or recognize him. Yes, brothers and sisters, mission *ad gentes* is today more than ever valid, I hold impressed on my heart the face of humanity that I have been able to contemplate during my pilgrimages: this is the face of Christ reflected in that of the poor and the suffering; the face of Christ mirrored in those who live like "sheep without a shepherd" (Mk 6,34). Every man and woman has the right to be taught "many things" (*ibid.*).

Faced with the evidence of human fragility and insufficiency, the human temptation, for the apostle too, is to send people away. Instead, it is at this very moment that, contemplating the face of the Beloved, each of us must listen again to the words of Jesus: "There is no need for them to disperse.

Give them something to eat yourselves" (cf. Mt 14,16; Mk 6,37). In this way we will experience at the same time both human weakness and the Lord's grace. Aware of the inevitable fragility which marks us profoundly, we feel the need to render thanks to God for what he has done in us and for all that, in his grace, he will still do.

4. How can we fail to recall, in these circumstances, all the missionaries, priests, religious and laity who have made mission *ad gentes* and *ad vitam* their reason for living? With their very life they proclaim "without end the graces of the Lord" (Ps 89). Not rarely this "without end" has come to the point of bloodshed: how numerous were the "witnesses to the faith" in the last century! It is also thanks to their generous giving of self that the Kingdom of God was able to grow. To them goes our grateful remembrance, accompanied by our prayer. Their example gives stimulus and support to all the faithful who can take courage seeing themselves "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12,1) who with their deeds and words made and continue to make the Gospel resound on every continent.

Yes, brothers and sisters, we cannot remain silent about what we have seen and heard (cf. Acts 4,20). We have seen the work of the Spirit and the glory of God show themselves in weakness (cf. II Cor 12; I Cor 1). Still today numerous men and women with their dedication and their sacrifice are for us eloquent manifestations of God's love. From them we receive the faith and we, in turn, are urged on to be announcers and witnesses of the Mystery.

5. Mission is "*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).... 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" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 56). This is an invitation to all, it is an urgent call that deserves an immediate and generous answer. We must set out! We must set out without delay, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus; like the shepherds, stirred by the first announcement of the Angel; like Mary Magdalene at the sight of the Risen Lord. "At the beginning of this new century, our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world.... 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" (*ibid.*, n. 58).

6. Dear brothers and sisters! Mission demands prayer and concrete commitment. Many are the needs for a capillary diffusion of the Gospel.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the institution of Mission Sunday by Pope Pius XI, who accepted a request by the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith to "establish "a day of prayer and propaganda for the missions' to be celebrated on the same day in every diocese, parish and institute of the Catholic world ... and to encourage offerings for the missions" (Sacred Congregation of Rites: *Institution of Mission Sunday*, 14 April 1926. AAS 19 (1927), p. 23 ff.). Since then Mission Sunday has been a special occasion to remind the whole People of God of the permanent validity of the missionary mandate, since "missionary activity is

a matter for all Christians, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations" (Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 2). It is at the same time an opportune circumstance to reaffirm that "the missions ask not only for a contribution but for a sharing in the work of preaching and charity towards the poor. All that we have received from God life itself as well as material goods does not belong to us" (*ibid.*, n. 81). This Day is important in the life of the Church "because it teaches how to give: as an offering made to God *in* the Eucharistic celebration and *for* all the missions of the world" (*ibid.*). May this anniversary be then an opportune occasion to reflect on the need for greater, common effort to promote the missionary spirit and collect the necessary material aid which missionaries need.

7. In the homily for the closing of the Great Jubilee, on 6 January 2001, I said: "We need to set out anew from Christ with the zeal of Pentecost, with renewed enthusiasm. To set out from him above all in a daily commitment to holiness, with an attitude of prayer and listening to his word. To set out from him in order to testify to his Love" (n. 8).

Therefore:

Set out anew from Christ, you who have found mercy.
Set out anew from Christ, you who have forgiven and been forgiven.

Set out anew from Christ, you who have known pain and suffering.
Set out anew from Christ, you who are tempted by tepidity: the year of grace is endless.

Set out anew from Christ, Church of the new millennium.

Sing as you go! (cf. *Closing rite of the Mass of the Epiphany of the Lord 2001*).

May Mary, Mother of the Church, Star of Evangelization, accompany us on our journey, as she remained with the disciplines on

the day of Pentecost. To her we turn with confidence. Through her intercession may the Lord grant us the gift of perseverance in our missionary duty, which is a matter for the entire Church community.

With these sentiments I bless you.

Instruction on the Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories

CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

1. The universal mission of priests "*to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8) has been enthusiastically renewed by the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of the Church¹. In the Decree on Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, the Conciliar Fathers exhorted priests to be "*profoundly aware of the fact that their very life is consecrated to the service of the missions*"¹.

It is above all a missionary spirit that gives life to this priestly service in the various situations of the world today and, in particular, among those people and in those socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and His Gospel are still unknown³.

¹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Priesthood *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 10: AAS 58 (1966) 1007; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, nos. 67-68: AAS 83 (1991) 315-326.

² SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, no. 39: AAS 58 (1966) 986-987.

³ Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 33: AAS 83 (1991) 278-279.

Thus, the prophetic insight of Pius XII's Encyclical *Fidei Donum* that the Conciliar Fathers wanted to foster and to make known was authoritatively underlined by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* which "*encouraged Bishops to offer some of their priests for temporary service in the Churches of Africa, and gave his approval to projects already existing for that purpose*"⁴.

2. As a consequence, this particular form of missionary cooperation between the Churches, that is, of *fidei donum* priests, which has been in place since the middle of last century, remains valid even today. It is particularly so in the case of the established Churches whose focus is on those specific Churches not only in Africa but also in other continents - such as Asia, Latin America and Oceania - where evangelisation was needed and is still required today with new enthusiasm and zeal due to the low living standards and limited personnel.

The exchange of diocesan clergy between the Churches of the mission territories, whether it is in the same country whose regions and zones are less evangelized, or in other countries of the same continent in need of apostolic personnel, or even to other continents of missionary territories, has been made possible by this missionary gift. In view of the diminished number of life-time missionaries that are now available from the already established Churches, this exchange ought to be fostered and promoted⁵.

3. This exchange among the Churches, the fruit of universal communion, must preserve a strong missionary thrust to counteract

⁴ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 68; cf. CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY, Directive *Postquam apostoli*, 23 July 1980, nos. 23-31: AAS 72 (1980) 360-363; JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, 15 March 1992, no. 18: AAS 84 (1992) 684-686.

⁵ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELISATION OF PEOPLES, Instruction *Cooperatio missionalis*, 1 October 1998, nos. 16-17.

the prevalent trend of a certain number of diocesan priests who, incardinated in their particular Churches in mission territories, want to leave their own country and reside in Europe or North America, often with the intention of further studies or for other reasons that are not actually missionary.

Often their motives are based on the higher living conditions which these countries offer and the need for young priests in some of the established Churches. These priests are then convinced by such reasoning not to return to their own country, sometimes with the tacit permission of their own Bishop, or at other times in opposition to his request that they return home. A certain permanency is then given to such irregular situations by virtue of the vast distances and poor communication.

4. With this *Instruction*, therefore, the Missionary Dicastery wishes to provide norms to govern the sojourn of diocesan priests from mission territories who are living abroad. Such reasoning is warranted so that the young missionary Churches which are already short of personnel, and in particular of priests, are not deprived of ample apostolic strength that is absolutely indispensable for their Christian life and the ongoing development of evangelisation among those people who for the most part are not yet baptized⁶.

5. First of all, this *Instruction* **is intended for diocesan Bishops** or their equivalent in law⁷ whose ecclesiastical circumscriptions are dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. Thus, they must adhere to the enclosed norms, applying them immediately so as to resolve any irregular situations.

This *Instruction* is also being sent, in agreement with the Congregation for Bishops, to the Episcopal Conferences of Western Europe, North America and Australia, to inform them of the

⁶ Cf. *Instruction Cooperatio missionalis*, no. 20.

⁷ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 381 §2.

existence of this phenomenon and to ensure that adequate provisions are made so that a proper exchange based on a true missionary spirit may be re-established between the Churches. Furthermore, this *Instruction* also pertains to other countries, not cited above, where this same problem occurs.

6. The formation of seminarians in mission territories. The seminary's educational programme must ensure that seminarians are well trained in a true and proper manner concerning the nature and duties of a pastor, adapting themselves to the pastoral needs of their own particular Church where they will be incardinated from the moment of their diaconate ordination. It is also necessary that they are taught to broaden the horizons of their mind and heart to the specifically missionary and universal dimension of the life of the Church⁸.

In the mission territories one needs to be particularly attentive during the seminarian's formation not to allow an attitude that clamours for the supposed right to pursue further studies after ordination nor that the bishop has the obligation to send him abroad.

Moreover, it is important to promote the **ongoing formation of priests** involving the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions, be it at a diocesan, provincial or national level⁹.

7. Reasons for staying abroad. One of the principal reasons why diocesan priests from missionary territories are sent abroad by their Ordinary is to further their studies in a field that is unavailable in their own region, with the aim of providing a specific ecclesial service upon their return.

The intellectual formation of priests, whether it is in the theological disciplines or in other fields, should always be clearly useful for

⁸ *Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 58: AAS 84 (1992) 759-761.

⁹ *Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 72: AAS 84 (1992) 783-787.

the particular Church. Such was the opinion of the Second Vatican Council in the Decree *Optatam totius*: "*It is the bishop's responsibility to send young men of suitable character, virtue and ability to special institutes, faculties or universities, so that the various needs of the apostolate may be met by priests trained to a higher scientific standard in the sacred sciences and in other appropriate subjects*"TM.

So every Bishop, together with his collaborators, should make a careful selection from among his priests of those who are truly gifted and capable of further studies. This decision should be based on the needs of the Diocese, such as teaching roles at the major and minor seminaries, the permanent formation of clergy, curial officials and particular departments of the diocesan chancery, or even at a provincial or national level - in which case it would be in agreement with the Episcopal Conference.

One is strongly advised not to send abroad for further studies those priests who have personal problems, in the vain hope that they may find a remedy - instead they should be helped in more appropriate and specific ways.

The Bishop who receives priests of mission territories into his own Diocese for academic reasons must take care of their spiritual formation, a practice that has already borne much fruit in many countries. It would be advantageous if the Episcopal Conference set down certain norms concerning the stay of such priests who are overseas for academic reasons".

¹⁰ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the training of priests *Optatam totius*, no. 18: AAS 58 (1966) 725.

" In this regard one can note the directives issued by the Italian, German and U.S.A. Episcopal Conferences.

8. Pastoral assistance to emigrants of one's own country is another reason why a diocesan priest may be sent abroad for a certain period.

The phenomenon of human mobility is finding new expressions and truly warrants our pastoral attention. Where it is necessary, Bishops of missionary countries may choose to send priests to precise locations abroad. Skilled priests filled with a true missionary spirit are to follow and gather those men and women of their own country who have emigrated overseas to assist them spiritually and preserve some link with their country of origin, since these emigrants and refugees now reside in countries which are largely non-Christian. Obviously this must come about with the explicit agreement of the Bishops and then later with the Episcopal Conferences where the emigrants reside¹².

9. One final reason, that one may encounter in exceptional cases, concerns those situations where **priests are forced to leave their own country** for reasons of persecution, war or other serious motives. Even if such situations cannot be foreseen, as often happens, it is still necessary to clarify the situation and the concerns of each case while bearing in mind the legal requirements of individual nations that accept refugees.

¹² SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on Bishops *Christus Dominus*, no. 18: AAS 58 (1966) 682; PAUL VI, Motu proprio *Pastoralis migratorum cura*, 15 August 1969: AAS 61 (1969) 601-603; COMMISSION FOR THE PASTORAL ASSISTANCE OF MIGRANTS AND TOURISM, Letter *Nella sua sollecitudine*, 26 May 1978: AAS 70 (1978) 357-378; C.I.C., can. 568; CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR PASTORAL ASSISTANCE OF MIGRANTS AND TOURISTS, Letter on *Human Mobility and the formation of future priests*, 25 January 1986.

NORMS

First of all, as a general rule, what is sanctioned by C.I.C., can. 283 §1 is reiterated: *"Clerics, even if they do not have a residential office, are not to be absent from their Diocese for a considerable time, to be determined by particular law, without at least the presumed permission of their Ordinary"*.

The Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples requires that all Bishops and diocesan Priests strictly observe the above canon, in addition to those situations indicated in article 3 of this *Instruction*.

A. Norms for the sending abroad of ordained priests for further studies

art. 1 - The diocesan Bishop of Mission Countries, after having ascertained the actual diocesan needs and sought the counsel of his collaborators, should choose the most able priest, after having asked his consent, to pursue further studies. He is to designate the field of study in which the priest must specialize, the Faculty in which he must enrol and the date of his definitive return.

art. 2 - Agreement is then sought in writing with the diocesan Bishop and with the proposed Institute where he has decided to send the priest, including the question of his financial support.

art. 3 - Some arrangement is then made with this Bishop concerning the pastoral work which shall be undertaken by the priest only, however, for the duration of his course and in such a fashion that it is not too burdensome so as to prevent him from completing his studies in the allotted time span, nor that he be required to assume an office or position as laid down by law¹³

"As, for example, the position of parish priest, according to C.I.C., can. 522.

art. 4 - The diocesan Bishop who receives a priest student from mission territories into his own Diocese should make sure that a precise agreement has been reached, as specified above, with the Bishop who is sending the priest for further studies.

art. 5 - The Bishop who is accepting priest students into his Diocese is obliged to provide spiritual assistance for them by inserting them into the diocesan pastoral plan, ensuring that they participate in the life of the Presbyterate and accompanying them with fatherly care.

art. 6 - In the eventuality of grave problems, this same Ordinary, after having discussed them with the Bishop of the said priest, must take adequate measures that may even result in the termination of permission to remain in that Diocese.¹⁴

art. 7 - Any priest who, after having been warned as prescribed by law,¹⁵ obstinately refuses, to abide by his Bishop's decision and return to his Diocese, will be punished with an appropriate penalty as decreed by law¹⁶. Before proceeding, however, the Ordinary ought to inform the overseas Bishop of his intention.

B. Norms for staying abroad to provide pastoral assistance to migrants.

art. 8 - Apart from the norms already noted, either of universal or particular law, and before appointing a priest of a mission territory as a chaplain to migrants, the two Bishops involved should come to some understanding, confirmed in a written agreement, concerning the type and duration of pastoral work required. Such

¹⁴ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 271 § 3.

¹⁵ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 1347 §1.

¹⁶ Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 273 and can. 1371 § 2.

a priest should be introduced into the pastoral activities of the Diocese and participate in the life of the Presbyterate.

art. 9 - In the event of numerous emigrant groups, some agreement can also be made with the respective Episcopal Conferences.

C. Norms for refugee priests who have fled from their country for grave reasons.

art. 10 - Any Bishop who welcomes a refugee priest from a mission territory into his Diocese, that is, someone who has had to leave his home for grave reasons, must consult with the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples prior to giving him a pastoral office.

The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, during the course of the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal on the 24 April 2001, approved the present Instruction and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Office of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, 25 April 2001, Feast of Saint Mark, the Evangelist.

Jozef Cardinal Tomko

Charles Schleck, C.S.C.,
Archbishop tit. of Africa,
Adjunct Secretary

28th National Convention of the Holy Name Society

HOLY NAME SOCIETY

Before the National Convention made the following introduction on PCP II and NPCCR:

In 1579, February 6, the Diocese of MANILA was created, a Suffragan of the Archdiocese of MEXICO. It covered the whole PHILIPPINES. The first Bishop was DOMINGO SALAZAR, O.P. The Missionaries were the AUGUSTINIANS, FRANCISCANS, JESUITS and DOMINICANS, all Spaniards.

In 1595, August 14, MANILA became an ARCHDIOCESE. On that same date three DIOCESES were created, namely: NUEVA SEGOVIA (Northern Luzon), CACERES (Bicolandia) and CEBU (Visayas and Mindanao).

In 1896, FILIPINOS revolted against SPAIN under the leadership of GEN. EMILIO AGUINALDO. He declared the INDEPENDENCE of the PHILIPPINES from SPAIN on June 12, 1898. On December 10, 1898, at the TREATY OF PARIS, SPAIN ceded the Philippines to the UNITED STATES for 20 MILLION DOLLARS. On January 4, 1899, President MCKINLEY and GENERAL OTIS declared American sovereignty over the Philip-

pires. The last Spanish Archbishop of MANILA was BERNARDINO NOZALEDA, O.P. All the Spanish Missionaries left their parishes.

The PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENT CHURCH under FR. GREGORIO AGLIPAY was born during the revolution. Many Filipino priests joined him. The new church is now also called AGLIPAYAN CHURCH.

In 1900, the HOLY SEE sent the first APOSTOLIC DELEGATE EXTRAORDINARY to the Philippines in the person of ARCHBISHOP PLACIDEL. CHAPELLE to reorganize the CATHOLIC CHURCH in the Philippines.

In 1904, January 16, the first AMERICAN ARCHBISHOP took possession of MANILA ARCHDIOCESE, namely JEREMIAH JACOB HARTY.

The Philippine National Census and Statistics Office in 1903 registered a total population of 7,635,426, 84% of which were Catholics. The ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA had then a catholic population of 1,368,795 with 143 Diocesan Priests and 102 from various Religious Orders.

In 1916, December 14, MOST REV. MICHAEL O'DOHERTY became the Archbishop of MANILA, a post he held for 33 years. He was the one who acquired the present Residence of MANILA ARCHBISHOP in MANDALUYONG CITY.

In 1949 MOST REV. GABRIEL REYES became the 28th Archbishop of MANILA and the FIRST FILIPINO to occupy that SEE. He died in 1952.

In 1953, February 18, MOST REV. RUFINO J. SANTOS became the Archbishop of Manila. POPE JOHN XXIII made him the FIRST FILIPINO CARDINAL. He governed the Archdiocese for 20 years. He died in 1973.

IT WAS IN 1953, January 7 to 25, WHEN THE FIRST PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES (PCP -I) WAS CELEBRATED. It was presided by a PAPAL LEGATE, NORMAN CARDINAL GILROY of SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA. The APOSTOLIC NUNCIO THEN WAS ARCHBISHOP AEGIDIO VAGNOZZI.

In 1974, January 21, JARO ARCHBISHOP JAIME L SIN WAS APPOINTED 30th ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PA UL VI WHO ALSO MADE HIM A CARDINAL ON MAY 24, 1976. HIS 25th anniversary as CARDINAL is on MAY 24, 2001.

IT WAS IN 1991, January 20 to February 17, WHEN THE SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES (PCP-II) WAS CELEBRATED WITH MANILA ARCHDIOCESE AS THE HOST ARCHBISHOP LEONARDO Z. LEGAZPI, O.P, WAS THEN PRESIDENT OF THE CBCP. HE WAS ALSO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF PCP-II. MOST REV. OSCAR V. CRUZ, NOW ARCHBISHOP OF LINGAYEN DAGUPAN, WAS THE PCP-II SECRETARY GENERAL.

The ACTS AND DECREES of PCP-II were then submitted to the CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS at the VATICAN CITY After a year, on April 25, 1992, CARDINAL BERNARDIN GANTIN, Prefect of the Congregation, gave the APPROVAL in behalf of POPE JOHN PAUL II. Finally, on July 22, 1992, the DECREES of PCP-II were promulgated and published. And so we have that precious book entitled: ACTS AND DECREES of the SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES.

TEN YEARS LATER, from January 22 to 27, 2001, the 369-strong NATIONAL PASTORAL CONSULTATION ON CHURCH RENEWAL (NPCCR) met to reflect on and evaluate the progress of the PHILIPPINE CATHOLIC CHURCH with the PCP-II and NATIONAL PASTORAL PLAN as GUIDELINES.

AND NOW WE HAVE THIS MESSAGE OF THE NPCCR. IT WAS PUBLISHED IN THE MONITOR, official publication of CBCP, and in BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS (March-April 2001).

At random, I asked 25 Parish Priests and 25 Lay Leaders what they thought of the NPCCR MESSAGE. NOT ONE HAD READ IT And so, as my humble share I thought of reproducing the TEXT (only 8 pages) for WIDER DISTRIBUTION among CHURCH LEADERS, both LAY AND CLERGY-RELIGIOUS. I DO THIS WITH THE HOPE THAT THESE CHURCH LEADERS WILL, IN TURN, REPRODUCE IT AND SHARE IT WITH THEIR OWN COMMUNITY GROUPS.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE OF THE NPCCR MESSAGE TO "APPROPRIATE", "REFLECT", "DIALOGUE", "DISCERN", "PLAN", AND "ACT" ON THE NINE (9) PASTORAL PRIORITIES, I ALSO MADE MY OWN PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS. HOPEFULLY, MY REFLECTIONS AND COMMENTARIES WILL PROVOKE YOU TO AFFIRM OR REFUTE MY VIEWS AND PRESENT YOUR MUCH BETTER IDEAS AND COMMENTARIES.

IT IS NOW TIME TO SEE, JUDGE AND ACT!!!!

NINE (9) PASTORAL PRIORITIES OF THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY*

On January 22-27, 2001, the NATIONAL PASTORAL CONSULTATION ON CHURCH RENEWAL (NPCCR) was HELD

* Ratified and adopted by the Holy Name Society at its 28th National Convention of June 1-3, 2001, at the Betania Retreat House, Tagaytay City.

IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA. IT WAS AN APPRAISAL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES TEN (10) YEARS AFTER THE CELEBRATION OF PCP-II. IN THE MESSAGE OF THE NPCCR NINE (9) PASTORAL PRIORITIES WERE RECOMMENDED.

FOLLOWING THESE NINE PRIORITIES, WE NOW MAKE THE APPLICATION TO THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY IN THE PHILIPPINES.

I - INTEGRAL FAITH FORMATION

We affirm that at the heart of pastoral renewal is the formation of Integral Faith. By this we mean that it is not enough to know the teachings of the Church. It is necessary that we live in accordance with such teachings. It means that we are Christians not only on Sundays and inside the Church, but also on the other days and in all our dealings with our fellowmen. It means that we know, love and serve God and live virtuous lives. It means that we know what we ought to know (The Creed); we do what we ought to do (The Commandments); and we use the Means of Grace (The Sacraments and Prayer). It means, in short, that we are Christians in THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED.

We shall, therefore, intensify our study of our Faith making use of the HOLY BIBLE, CATECHISM FOR FILIPINO CATHOLICS and Cardinal Gibbon's FAITH OF OUR FATHERS. We shall have STUDY SESSIONS under the guidance of our Parish Priests and Spiritual Directors. And we shall receive frequently the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation. And we shall organize communal practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

2 - EMPOWERMENT OF THE LAITY

It is already admirable how the Filipino Laity is empowered in the Civil Society. We have many Lay Lawyers, Doctors, Educators, etc. And the lay people have reached the highest levels of such professions. The whole civil government of the country is in the hands of the laity.

It seems that it is in the Church that we need empowerment. It is true that there are many Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors and Catechists. But there are few of the laity who can adequately explain and defend the teachings and practices of our Church. We are not familiar with the Social Teachings of the Church.

In this area we will be empowered if we take up formal studies in Theology, Canon Law, Social Teachings of the Church etc. Should we not be encouraged by our Bishops and Priests to enroll in such courses?

3 - THE POOR IN THE CHURCH

Recent events have awakened us to the fact that the materially poor are not getting much attention in the Church. They are marginalized. They are not being evangelized.

Let us join and cooperate with our Priests and Bishops in evangelizing them. And we shall give the proper wages to those working for us. We shall work on their behalf that the government assure them of their rights.

We shall join our Church leaders in evangelizing the rich and powerful because they are the ones who can give jobs to the materially poor and give them their just wages and benefits.

We shall help the materially poor to raise their standard of living for "poverty in the sense of destitution is not God's will for anyone", and that to remain in a condition of poverty, disease, unhealthy housing is contrary to the dignity of human beings. (PCP-II no. 122)

4 - THE FAMILY, CENTER OF EVANGELIZATION

We shall commit ourselves to a more intensive evangelization of the family. Where the Bishop has allowed the wives of Holy Name Men to join the Holy Name Society they shall be inducted after proper preparation. Both parents will then evangelize the family not only by giving religious instruction to their children and household help but also by giving them good example in going to Church and receiving the Sacraments.

The family of the Holy Namers shall prepare the children and household help for their First Communion. As is the custom in Catholic families, the Sacred Heart of Jesus shall be enthroned in the home.

The Holy Name Family shall reach out to the neighbors by sharing with them the beautiful practices of our Church such as family prayers on special occasions. They shall lead in the propagation of the Family Rosary in their neighborhood.

In times of sickness of family members, the Holy name Family shall invite a Priest for the anointing of the sick and invite the neighbors to witness the reception of this Holy Sacrament.

5 - STRENGTHENING THE PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITIES OF THE PARISH

The Parish is the Community of Communities. The Holy Name Society is one of the recognized religious communities of the Parish. The Holy Name Society is one of the mandated organizations in the Parish and Diocese.

We shall make the Holy Name Society a strong parish association. We shall lighten the burden of our Parish Priest. We shall coordinate and cooperate with the other parish associations through the Parish Council.

6 - RENEWAL OF THE CLERGY

The Holy Name Society shall cooperate with the various sectors of the Church in empowering the clergy. This can be done in various ways, namely:

- a) by encouraging our Sons to study in the Seminary. The Catholic Family is the first Seminary of the Local Church.
- b) by organizing a Diocesan Union Foundation for financial assistance to the Seminary.
- c) by making known our desire to have priests who are the **BEST TEACHERS** and **PREACHERS** and **BEST PRESIDERS** in our Liturgical celebrations.
- d) Since PCP-II requires that "the Good News be preached in the language of the people (No. 160) we must encourage and help the priests to master the dialects of our parish-ioners who do not understand English and Tagalog.

- e) The Holy Name Society shall be a friend and protector of the Priest by making his life and work more humane and bearable specially in difficult parishes.

Let us pray and work for an EMPOWERED CLERGY in the same way that we pray for and work for an EMPOWERED LAITY. There are Lay people who are most outstanding in their line of expertise in civil society. Let our priests be most outstanding also in the sciences proper to them.

7 - EVANGELIZING THE YOUTH

The youth are the most numerous in our population. Let us organize them in the JUNIOR HOLY NAME SOCIETY and train them early in the Lay Apostolate. Let us organize their DIOCESAN UNIONS and even their NATIONAL ASSOCIATION. Their early exposure to the CHURCH IN THE WORLD will make them OUTSTANDING SERVANTS OF CHRIST in the Civil Society.

8 - INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

One of the most serious scandals encountered by non-Christian religions in ASIA is the multitude of SECTS all claiming to be the true church of Jesus Christ. In the Philippines the most active are the Iglesia ni Cristo, the various Born Again Groups and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

We seek guidance from our spiritual leaders in the Church — our Bishops and Priests — on how to "ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE OF LIFE, FAITH, PRAYER AND COMMON ACTION WITH THEM." There is much talk about dialogue with

ISLAM. Not much is heard about dialogue with non-Catholic Christian religions.

The materially poor Catholics seem to have been accused of certain desecrations. They were even asked to apologize. Some are of the opinion that such desecrations might have been perpetrated by certain non-Catholic Christians who hate the Catholic Church so much.

9 - MISSION "AD GENTES"

Mission "ad gentes" means the sending of Catholic Missionaries to non-Catholic countries in Asia such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Shri Langka etc. It is true that Pope John Paul II is challenging the Philippine Church to be the "MISSIONARIES FOR ALL OF ASIA." Of course, we must respond to that challenge.

But we must not forget the "NEAR EAST MISSIONS", namely, THE FILIPINO CHINESE IN OUR OWN COUNTRY. (PCP-II no. 109) Less than 20% of them in the Philippines are receiving effective evangelization. Yet they are the EMPLOYERS of thousands of native Filipino Catholics.

Above all, we must not forget to NOURISH THE FAITH OF THOSE FILIPINOS WHO ARE ALREADY BELIEVERS. (*Evan. Nuntiandi*, No. 54). Among these are the most materially poor in our midst in Metro-Manila. They came from the provinces in search of a better life. And where do they live now? Under the bridges. In push carts. In slum areas. Let us bring them the "treasures" of the Catholic Faith and the "DIGNIFIED LIFE OF CHILDREN OF GOD."

There are many places in the Philippines where evangelizers are much needed. Because they are not reached by the evangelizers

of the Catholic Church they are joining anti-Catholic sects who are brave enough to go to them. Unless we do something now, we might wake up one day to find out that they are all gone!

EVANGELIZATION IN THE 3RD MILLENNIUM

Two millennia of Christianity have passed by. We are now at the start of the 3rd Millennium which is characterized by a sophisticated INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. The world has become a VILLAGE. We can go to places so easily. And we can know through CNN what is happening in other places of the world.

Through this INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY all Asia knows that the Philippines, the "only Catholic country" in this part of the world is what it is so corrupt and so miserably poor! We can send thousands of missionaries to Malaysia, Indonesia etc. And they will be laughing at our missionaries!

But if in the Philippines we have a Catholic Population that is truly CHRISTIAN and EDIFYING, THAT WILL BE KNOWN IN ALL OF ASIA THROUGH MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. And the non-Christian Asians will be saying: "Look, how they love one another! Look, how are their social relationship! Look, how clean and neat and prosperous they are! Why are they like that?" And they will know that it is because we are CATHOLICS! AND THEY WILL INQUIRE FURTHER. AND THEY WILL FIND JESUS CHRIST!

There is something more powerful than the individual witnessing by our few missionaries in Asia. It is the MEGA COMMUNITY WITNESSING BY THE WHOLE CATHOLIC POPULATION OF THE PHILIPPINES.

So let us start with MODEL CATHOLIC PARISHES. How many do we have now? Let us start with MODEL CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESES AND DIOCESES How many do we have now? LET US PRODUCE A MODEL CATHOLIC NATION. AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT THROUGH CNN. AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL BE CURIOUS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.

OTHERWISE, WE CAN FISH THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE THIRD MILLENNIUM AND WE WILL CATCH NOTHING!

Capiz Diocese: 50 Years of Love and Service

DEXTER IRISARI

Capiz is now 50 years old as a Diocese. The Church — the whole community of faith — has all the reasons to rejoice as Capiz marks its golden jubilee as a Diocese on May 28, 2001.

Capiz today speaks of the exemplary leadership and efficacy of its bishops and the perseverance and generosity of its people, both the clergy and the laity.

Capiz was created a Diocese on January 27, 1951. It was canonically erected as a Diocese on May 28, 1951 in accordance with the Apostolic Letter, "Supremi Apostolatus," of Pope Pius XII.

The Diocese took its name from its diocesan seat, the town of Capiz, which was then the capital of the Province of Capiz. Later, however, the capital was transformed to a charter city, Roxas City, named after its illustrious son Manuel A. Roxas, the last president of the Commonwealth and the first president of the Philippine Republic.

The titular and patroness of the Diocese of Capiz is the Immaculate Conception, patroness of Roxas City. The city's parish church was elevated to the rank of a Cathedral of the Bishop of Capiz.

BISHOPS OF CAPIZ

The Most Rev. Manuel Yap, D.D., took over the administration of the Diocese of Capiz in 1951 to 1952 as its first bishop. He was then transferred to the See of Bacolod left vacant with the death of the Most Rev. Casimiro Lladoc, D.D., its first bishop.

Though Bishop Yap's administration was short-lived, barely 10 months, he had left an indelible imprint on the infant Diocese of Capiz. To his credit goes the organization of the diocesan curia which, until now, preserves its organizational make-up. It was also during his term that the Colegio de la Purisima Concepcion, founded by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Vicente M. Gonzales, D.P., was donated to the Diocese and thus, became the diocesan school.

Monsignor Frondosa

With the transfer of Bishop Yap to the See of Bacolod, Msgr. Antonio F. Frondosa, then vicar general of the Archdiocese of Jaro and parish priest of its Cathedral, became the second Bishop of the Diocese of Capiz.

A true-blue Capicefio, Bishop Frondosa of Dumalag, Capiz worked his way patiently and conscientiously with the generosity of the people of Capiz for the programs of the Diocese.

It was through the initiative of Monsignor Frondosa that the Diocese of Capiz was able to put up St. Pius X Seminary, considered to be among the first seminaries run by the local clergy.

In compliance with Pope Paul VI's Pontifical Bull "Ninium Patens," Capiz was elevated to the rank of an Archdiocese on January 17, 1976 with the Dioceses of Romblon and Kalibo as its suffragans.

Because of his massive and impressive projects, Monsignor Frondosa earned the sobriquet "the builder."

The Bishop's Residence, St. Pius X Seminary, the Cursillo House, the Home for the Aged, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish Church and Shrine, even the growth of Colegio de la Purisima Concepcion, the archdiocesan school of Capiz, and a host of others are mute testimonies of Archbishop Frondosa's efficacy as a builder.

Through the years, he had "built" a number of priestly and religious vocations. He "built" four bishops — Bishop Raul Martinez of Antique, Bishop Dinualdo Gutierrez of Marbel, Cotabato, Bishop Vicente Navarra of Kabankalan, Negros Occ, Bishop Warlito Cajandig of Calapan, Mindoro Oriental — and a cardinal, Jaime Cardinal Sin.

Monsignor Frondosa had inspired even the most ordinary of professionals and the most lowly of the faithful to soar to greater heights.

He had served as chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Vocations and the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace.

Archbishop Frondosa, after ably serving the Diocese of Capiz, was laid to rest at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral on Sept. 27, 1993.

His flock remember him as a versatile leader — a builder, a communicator, a man of action, a man of the masses, an institution and, above all, a man of God who humbly walked in Christ's way.

Monsignor Onie

Archbishop Onesimo Cadiz Gordoncillo, "Monsignor Onie" to the clergy and to the laity, came to Capiz on June 18, 1986 to become the second archbishop in the history of the Archdiocese. Since then, though he is from Negros Oriental, he has become an integral part of the people of Capiz; Capicenos, too, have become an integral part of him.

Monsignor Onie, a product of the Sacred Heart Seminary in Bacolod City and the Central Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas, was ordained priest in Dumaguete City on March 18, 1961. He had served as professor (1961-1964) and later rector (1966-1969) of St. Joseph Seminary in Dumaguete City, parochial vicar (1961-1964) and later parish priest (1972) of the Dumaguete Cathedral Parish. He pursued further studies in guidance and counseling at Mankato State University, Minnesota, USA (1961-1965).

Monsignor Onie also served as parish priest of Dauin, Negros Oriental (1969-1970); was appointed papal chamberlain (1971); served as chancellor of the Diocese of Dumaguete; was appointed titular bishop of Ginugo and auxiliary bishop of Dumaguete and then Bishop of Tagbilaran, Bohol.

With an impressive record of achievements through the years, Monsignor Onie serves as "a father and brother to his priests, an amiable, and loving shepherd and pastor to his people."

The positions he holds in his service as bishop include the vice presidency in the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and the chairmanship in the Episcopal Commission on Liturgy of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. He was also vice president for the Visayas of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.

Described as a "very fine ordinary, understanding, kind, supportive and sensitive to the needs of the people," Monsignor Onie lives up to the role of a true servant-leader.

Monsignor Onie's leadership has given rise to two outstanding projects — the building of Ecclesial Basic Communities in Capiz and the building of the college seminary, Sancta Maria Mater et Regina Seminarium in Cagay, Roxas City.

The college seminary was opened to philosophy students when it started its operations in 1999. By June of 2001, the seminary will open its gates to theology students.

THE CLERGY OF CAPIZ

The Archdiocese of Capiz enjoys the distinct honor of being the only Archdiocese in the country run by secular priests, all Filipinos. In a span of 50 years, a number of its priests have distinguished themselves in varied fields of endeavor. From its ranks came four bishops and a cardinal.

At present, Capiz has 85 priests, 6 of whom have already retired. Those in active service serve the four vicariates of the Diocese composed of 25 parishes and 5 chaplaincies; the schools and the two seminaries

The Archdiocese, because of its missionary zeal, has also answered the requests of other Dioceses for priest-assistance. Even St. Patrick's Cathedral of New York City is a recipient of the Archdiocese's priest-assistance service abroad.

Capiz is one of the few dioceses in the country whose priests are young. Fifty per cent of the clergy in active service had been ordained during Monsignor Onie's term as archbishop of Capiz.

THE LAITY

The growth of a Diocese depends, to a large extent, on the active participation of the laity.

Majority of the Capicenos are Catholics and, through the years, they have labored harmoniously with their bishops and their priests in the Lord's vineyard "to bear fruit that will last." Religious organizations and movements, which have gradually become parish-based, flourish in the Diocese. Such organizations include the Legion of Mary, Ladies of Charity, Catholic Women's League, the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Apostleship of Prayer, Children of Mary, Knights of Columbus, Crusaders of the Holy Face...

Movements like the Christian Family Movement, Couples for Christ, Charismatic Movement, Cursillo de Cristiandad, Sa-Maria, Divine Mercy, BIL & BTL of the Youth Ministry continuously increase in number.

These organizations and movements help pursue the diocesan thrust on the formation of Christian communities.

The laity, through their donations and support, have helped build or rebuild parish churches, convents and barrio chapels. With their parish priests, they helped build perpetual adoration chapels. As of now, eight parishes have already put up their own perpetual adoration chapels.

The only Catholic hospital in the Diocese of Capiz, St. Anthony College Hospital now owned and managed by the Daughters of Charity, was founded by a layman, Mr. Pio Bernas, upon the inspiration of **the Bishop of Capiz**.

The growing number of Catholic institutions in the Diocese; the various infrastructures put up to implement Diocesan programs,

notably the two seminaries, St. Pius X Seminary for high school and pre-college seminarians and the College Seminary, Sancta Maria Mater et Regina Seminarium; people empowerment through ecclesial basic communities, the increase in priestly and religious vocations — these and many more are tangible proofs of the generosity and support of the laity.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Diocese of Capiz provides sound Catholic education to its people through the archdiocesan college, Colegio de la Purisima Concepcion, which was founded in 1948, its branch schools Saint Catherine Academy in the Parish of Mambusao and Our Lady of Snows Institute in the Parish of Dumarao; Saint Joseph School of President Roxas, Sta. Monica Parochial School of Panay Parish which is run by the Missionary Institute of Saint Therese, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Learning Center, Mary the Queen's School of Mount Carmel Parish, Our Lady of Grace Academy run by the Rosarian Dominican Sisters, Saint Martin Academy of Dumalag and Our Lady of Fatima Academy in Dao, both run by the Dominican Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary.

Saint Joseph Cotelingo Orphanage in Lonoy is run by the Rosarian Dominican Sisters.

Other schools giving Catholic education in the Diocese are Saint Mary's Academy of Capiz run by the Religious of the Virgin Mary, Saint Anthony College run by the Daughters of Charity and La Salle-Roxas.

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

Religious congregations in the Diocese are the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM), the Daughters of Charity, the Order of the Carmelite Nuns, the Missionary Catechism of Saint Therese (MCST) conducting catechesis in the Parish of Mambusao, the Missionary Institute of St. Therese in Sta. Monica Parish, the Servants of the Poor, and the Augustinian Recollect Sisters running the Kindergarten of Colegio de la Purisima Concepcion.

Two formation houses are found in the Diocese. The Servants of the Poor and the Rosarian Dominican Sisters have their formation houses in Lawaan and Loctugan, Roxas City respectively.

SPECIAL MINISTRIES

The Diocese has put up the Capiz Catechetical Institute at Baybay, Roxas City for the formation of catechists, the Ministry for the Deaf and Mute *Bqhay Dalayunan* which caters to the deaf and mute of the Diocese, the Social Action Center, the Care and Share Center of the Ministry of Family Life Apostolate and many others.

To preserve religious artifacts, two parishes of the Diocese, Sta. Monica Parish in Panay and St. Martin of Tours Parish in Dumalag, have maintained their own museums.

YEARS OF LOVE AND SERVICE

The Golden Jubilee of the Diocese of Capiz brings to the fore the generosity and cooperative spirit of the people of Capiz, their

deep respect and reverence for the clergy, the harmonious relationship between the Church and the State, the sterling leadership and "dreams come true" of the bishops assigned in the Diocese, and the bond of love and service in the Lord's vineyard between the clergy and the laity through the years.

"So Capiz has existed as a Diocese for 50 years. These have been years of love and service. And the years that lie ahead will be years of continued laboring in the Lord's vineyard, of going and bearing fruit... fruit that will last," Archbishop Onesimo Gordoncillo said.

An Experience of Dialogue among the Religions in India in the Light of the *Novo Millennio Ineunte*

CHIARA LUBICH

It was something unexpected, it was truly a great joy for me to read the Pope's new apostolic letter *"Novo Millennio Ineunte"*, published right during the first few days of my first trip to India. What paramount importance it gives to love and to the spirituality of communion! In the very moment I was approaching the mysterious world of Hinduism, what consonance and assurance emerged from those pages encouraging dialogue among the religions!

"This dialogue must continue," writes the Pope. "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 specter of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace."

¹ Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 55.

This is what I myself have noticed with great joy, in reading the news that arrives from India, which keep me informed of the latest developments in the dialogue that began in January this year when I visited that mysterious and fascinating land.

A profound change of mentality is gradually beginning to spread. A world closed by fears and suspicion, which had erected high religious barriers on both sides, is beginning to open up. Prof. Kala Acharya, one of the Hindu promoters of the University campus meeting of the Bharatiya Sanskriti Peethan of Mumbai (Bombay) to which I had been invited, observed: *"We have grown up closed in among our own walls admiring our own garden, without knowing that on the other side of these high walls there are very beautiful gardens to contemplate. It's time to tear down the walls and to discover the garden of the other."*

Between Christians and Hindus there is a growing network of relationships characterized by a spirit of brotherhood.

A number of initiatives and programs are underway. *"We must go ahead."* This is the urgency sensed by Mrs. Minoti Aram, president of the Shanti Ashram, who was the first person to invite me to India. In March, she and her daughter Vinu called the person in charge of the young people and the secretary of her Gandhian institution to her village. A proposal was made to begin a dialogue on four levels: with a group of intellectuals towards the middle of June; in a large-scale meeting with young people at the beginning of August; with the group of women who work for Ashram in favor of the poorest children of the villages in October; and with personalities of various religions in the city of Coimbatore, capital of Tamil Nadu, in the south of India, at the beginning of December. The purpose of these meetings would be to present the collaboration between the Focolare Movement and the Shanti Ashram as an example of dialogue.

An international seminar for interreligious dialogue between Hinduism and Christianity at the Somaiya College of Mumbai, last February, offered the opportunity to establish new relationships and to strengthen the ones begun in January. In March, Dr. Kala Acharya and other professors visited a center of the Focolare Movement in Mumbai. Once again, their sensitivity to the interior life and the consonance with our lifestyle was evident.

More trips are being taken from the north to the south of India to meet with young people, adults, and families who adhere to the Movement, so as to form them in interreligious dialogue in the spirit of Vatican II, with the clarifications introduced by the *Dominus Iesus*, in the face of present-day problems and in the light of the charism which animates the spirituality of unity.

Some bishops are asking the members of our Movement in India to collaborate in the commissions for interreligious dialogue in various dioceses.

Witness and dialogue open to listening

In his apostolic letter the Pope invites us *"to bear clear witness to the hope that is within us"* (cf. 1 Pt 3:15), and at the same time *to approach dialogue with the other religions with an attitude of profound willingness to listen*" precisely because we find ourselves *"in the presence of the mystery of grace, infinitely full of possibilities and implications for human life and history"* (NMI 56).

These words of the Pope surprised me. In fact, as soon as I reached India, the first thing I wanted to do was to learn more about this millenary culture by remaining in silence, by listening, as far as possible. The more we entered into contact with this mysterious world the more it revealed itself to us as a world not easy for westerners to decipher; a world which presents a picture of unity in all the richness of its diversity.

We felt that a jewel box full of spiritual treasures lies before us, of attraction towards mysticism encompassing the whole of human nature — a mysticism which is certainly not extraneous to the work of Grace. This treasure chest can be opened only by those who approach it with respect, with love and above all with the conviction that God has much to tell us through this ancient culture. In our difficult and tormented contemporary world, this culture has an essential and vital word to offer which highlights the primacy of interior life.

This made me wonder: what would be the effect of India's encounter with the charism of unity? From the very first days, I intuited that by bringing to full maturity the seeds of the Word present in this culture, Jesus could reveal himself from the very core of the Indian reality.

The words that Igino Giordani had written in 1960 at the conclusion of his trip to India resounded in my ears like a challenge: *"If in Asia, and above all, in India, religions come into contact with each other constantly, drawing parallels and comparisons, there will emerge in time what it has most to give: that which raises mankind up with divinizing energy."*²

How can we give everything in our power here in India? Through love, a love which must be directed towards individuals but also to the entire nation. Mary held and holds in her heart a special love for each one and for all peoples, a love which is mercy, a love which sees in all nothing but their virtues and good works, a love which is "nothingness of self, which is completely open to the other, in order to "enter" the other.

We experienced once again that this love leads to reciprocity. We discovered elements that we have in common and that we can live together.

I. Giordani, *Strode a Dio in India*, Citta Nuova 2 (1960) p. 14.

During those days I was struck by a phrase of a philosopher, a non-believer, who defines love as *"the capacity to discover similarities in the dissimilar"* (Adorno).³ I wondered: Could our dialogue, then, be one of the most beautiful expressions of love?

The joyful announcement of the revelation of God as Love and the seeds of the Word present in Hinduism

Certainly, this religion is mysterious. But over and above the many gods, we discovered that there is also a very strong sense of the "One", of the Absolute. And above all the rules: tolerance, love!

We discovered something wonderful: the seeds of the Word that the Council speaks of are so very evident in this religion! We experienced that if we highlight them, they grow, they mature and the Hindus themselves fall "in love" with them again and give lesser value to other aspects of their religion: they go directly to the essence which is love.

In speaking with religious leaders, with the Hindu members of Gandhian institutes and cultural organizations about the great discovery we made of God as Love right in the midst of the hate and violence of the Second World War, it came spontaneously to quote expressions from their scriptures and wise men. "We underline that God is love," I said to them, "but do you not say: *'God loved us first because he is the one who gave us love and he makes it grow when we search for him.'*"⁴ And do you not say: *'The Lord is love by nature, he resides in love, his supreme reality?'*"⁵ Are you not also familiar with that phrase of Tagore:

³ Cit. da W. Miihs, *L'amore vi dam le all*, Ed. Citta Nuova, 1997, p.108.

⁴ Tayumanavar, in A. Lehmann, *Die Hymnen des Tavumanavar*. Giitersloh 1933, pp.37,155,204.

⁵ Tirumular, Tirumantiram, nn. 226, 257, 402.

*'Ever since I encountered my Lord, our game of love has never ended'?*⁶

Similarly, when I spoke of the light that had illuminated the words of the Gospel and had showed us that loving God is not a question of sentiments, but of doing his will, I added: «Do you not also say: *'Doing the will of the Lord is a greater act than singing his praises'*?⁷»

And when I told them about discovering love of neighbor, the heart of the Gospel, which requires that we love the others as we love ourselves, I gave them the example of something Gandhi said: «*You and I are but one thing. I cannot harm you without hurting myself*»?⁸ Then when I mentioned love for enemies — so genuinely evangelical — I quoted this other saying: «*While the axe chops the sandalwood, it in turn offers its virtue by scenting the axe with its fragrance*.»⁹ In other words, a vengeance of love.

These are all seeds of the Word, something alive and true! The Hindus were deeply impressed by these phrases.

Really — as the Pope wrote — this *"joyful announcement of the revelation of God as Love is a gift for everyone"* (see NMI 56).

At the end of the meetings in Coimbatore and at the Bharatiya Sanskriti Peetham, the cultural center of the University of Vidyavihar in Mumbai, the Hindus themselves expressed the same need for love and unity. *"This message responds to the needs of our times. We are passing through a great worldwide crisis. Only peace and*

⁶R. Tagore, Poems of Kabir. Macmillan and Co., 1954, 1954, pp. 48-49, n. XLI.

⁷ From the teachings of Candrasekhara Bharati, quoted by R.K. Aufar in Dialogues with the Guru. Bombay, pp. 147-151.

⁸ Cit. da W. Miihs, *Parole del cuore*, Milano 1996, p. 82.

⁹ *Dalla hindi del Ramacaritamanasa*, Uttara-kanda, 36,4.

love can save us, nothing else," said a university professor. And he added that I had "summed up the thought of this country elaborated during the course of many centuries." "Even though we already underline these values in our religion," affirmed a literary man of Mumbai, Partap H. Butani, of the Bombay Natural History Society, "there is a difference here: it's not just a matter of words; we must live them." And a poet, Kalyangi Sarla Curmil (Jainist). "If we have understood something this afternoon, it is to be the fragrance of this flower of love."

The mysterious ways of salvific grace

Certainly, the ways through which the salvific grace of God comes to individuals following other religious traditions is unknown to us (see *Ad Gentes* 7). *"Theologians — as the Dominus Iesus affirms — are seeking to understand this question more fully. Their work is to be encouraged, since it is certainly useful for understanding better God's salvific plan and the ways in which it is accomplished."*¹⁰ Also the "dialogue of life" can cast new light and open new pathways towards understanding God's plans.

I was really convinced that if the Hindus love, and in as much as they love, the Holy Spirit acts in them too. I was struck by the experience of a Hindu doctor who has been living the spirituality of unity for some time: *"We speak of reincarnation; we believe it is necessary in order to purify ourselves. But I learned that each time I love, I die to myself in order to 'live the other person' and when I love, I experience joy. So it's a continual death and rebirth."* It's the Spirit of Truth who will lead to the fullness of truth.

Our experience of dialogue highlights what the Pope said precisely in India. *"Through dialogue we allow God to be present*

¹⁰ Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus* 21.

in our midst; for as we open ourselves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God. And the fruit is union among ourselves and with God."¹

From Hindus the proposal to continue the dialogue

The proposal to continue the dialogue came from our Hindu friends. Dr. Vinu Aram, director of the Shanti Ashram Gandhian organization, proposed: *"We must continue to explore our spiritual foundations; then we will be able to start out on shared activities and projects."* Another Hindu personality underlined that there is not only the need for nations to collaborate in the fields of industrial development or education, but *"also in the field of peace and spirituality."* *"You sowed a seed,"* she said, *"now we must water it and help it to grow."*

Even during the ceremony in Coimbatore, in which they gave me the "Defender of Peace" Award, another Gandhian organization, the Sarvodaya Movement, requested that we begin dialogue with Hinduism as we had begun some time ago with Buddhism. Not only, but the award citation recognized that the seeds of peace and love sowed among the nations were the fruit of the teachings of Jesus Christ and they showed to what extent *"the message of Jesus Christ stays relevant, fresh and healing in solving contemporary issues"*. They asked for our contribution in order to affirm spiritual values also in India, at a time in which this country must face *"new challenges, social problems accompanied by tensions and divisions; it must deal with an economic and technological development often marked by a materialistic mentality and void of moral values."*

¹ John Paul II, *Discorso a Madras*. 5 febbraio 1986, in // *dialogo interreligioso nel Magistero Pontificio*, Libreria Vaticana 1994, p. 385.

A new understanding of the Christian message

Truly *"In the common experience of humanity, despite all its contradictions the Spirit of God, who 'blows where he wills' (Jn 3:8), not infrequently reveals signs of his presence"* (NMI 56).

And it is precisely *"in having been witnesses of this mysterious action of God, that," as the Pope writes, "we come to a deeper understanding of the Christian message"* (see NMI 56).

I had a new confirmation that dialogue with the other religions opens the Catholic Church more and more to that other self which is outside of herself! St. Thomas affirmed that the Church should not be considered in proportion to the number of Catholics, but, since Jesus Christ died for all people, it should be considered in proportion to the number of all those for whom he died, that is, for all humanity.¹² Therefore, in a certain way the Church is also "outside of herself. Through dialogue she opens to "herself outside of herself.

Moreover, in India I rediscovered the Mass, the extraordinary, most consoling possibility of offering a gift that is in proportion to the royal majesty of the Father: his immolated Son.

A new way towards dialogue

My heart is filled with immense gratitude to God.

Cardinal Tomko, Prefect of the Congregation for Evangelization, in a letter addressed to the Focolare Movement's Center for Interreligious Dialogue, writes: *"Well aware of the complex reality of India, especially in the ambit of interreligious dialogue, we join with you in giving thanks to the Lord for this way which the Holy Spirit wished to open to the Church"*. An unprecedented but effective way which avoids compromise and syncretism, as

¹² See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* HI, p.8a.3c.

many Indian bishops affirmed when I presented our experience of dialogue during the Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conference held in Calcutta.

Mary and interreligious dialogue

I wondered how all this had come about.

I was surprised by the words of Professor Kala Acharya: From our first meeting, she pointed out that God had been using three women for dialogue during those days (herself, Mrs. Minoti Aram, president of the Shanti Ashram, and myself), adding: *"Because a woman is a mother (and therefore knows what love is) like Mary. I think that She is at work. In the same way that a thread links a garland of flowers together, Mary is linking all these flowers"*.

Upon arriving in India, the 1st of January, the feast of the Mother of God, I asked our heavenly Father during Mass to fashion each one of us, members of the Work of Mary, into her image.

Perhaps the answer lies here: through the charism that has been given to us, gratuitous gift of the Spirit for our times, by following the journey of the spirituality of communion so clearly highlighted by the Pope (see NMI 43), we participate in a certain way in the maternity of Mary. Jesus becomes present in our midst, as he promised (Mt 18:20) when we love one another to the point of achieving unity. And he is light, joy, love"!

And Jesus is light for every person on this earth.

Yes, we could say that he is "related" to all in some way because he gave his blood for all people.

Once the trip had ended, in view of the developments on the horizon, I became evermore convinced that the Spirit is blowing strongly in our times, inspiring the Holy Father with prophetic words and gestures which urge the Church to "put out into the

deep" towards new horizons, and causing the irruption of new charisms towards the fulfillment of God's designs. Could it be that the new countenance of the Church of the third millennium is emerging: the Church, communion between the Petrine-institutional dimension and the Marian-charismatic dimension, so alive in the heart of the Pope?

Rights and Participation of the Laity in the Life of the Church

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

The laity has become in recent times a fashionable topic to talk about, a topic that interests both clergy and laity alike. Such interest started some forty years ago, coinciding with the celebration of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65); it grew up with the promulgation of the current Code of Canon Law (1983) and has ever since gradually increased until nowadays. Not in vain our times have been described in ecclesiastical circles as "the hour of the laity."

The cause of such interest was triggered by the new image of the Church that the Vatican Council offered us. A new or, more accurately, a restored image of a Church composed not only of clergy but also of lay faithful, forming all together the People of God. Something so obvious but also so easily forgotten. In fact, for centuries, the laity had been considered as a sort of second-class citizens in the Church, paternally admitted into her, with specific obligations but hardly any right in her governance. This key factor, together with many others, had lead in modern times to a situation that could not be maintained any longer. The need for *aggiornamento* was prophetically perceived by Pope John

XXIII, who, to carry it out, convoked the celebration of the Second Vatican Council.

The Council's last document

Theoretically, the Council ended in 1965. In practical terms, however, the Council ended in 1983 with the promulgation of what rightly has been called its last document, namely, the Code of Canon Law. The chronological interval of almost 20 years that separated both events was due to two main factors: one, to the obvious need of time to study the Council's documents and see how the whole new look on the Church could be best expressed and presented into legal terms; second, to the amount of consultation which took place with the Church at large, which assumed proportions that were never even thought of before.¹

The result was the Code that we have now. A Code quite different from the previous one, not just because of its material length (1752 canons against 2,414 of the former), but, most importantly, because of its different principle of division: the threefold mission of the Church (teaching, sanctifying and governing) and the altogether new vision of the Church, inherited from the Second Vatican Council, that it carries.

The incorporation of the Council's ecclesiology did not happen by chance, but was the result of a long range orchestrated plan. In fact, the revised Code was originally thought as "a great effort

¹ The preparation of the first drafts of the new Code, over a period of nearly ten years, was carried out by the Pontifical Commission in consultation with some two hundred experts drawn from thirty-one countries. As those drafts became ready, they were circulated for comment through a wide variety of interests in the Church. Taking into account that the amendments for every scheme numbered between 10,000 to 20,000 and that opportunity for a widespread consultation at almost every level was given, one can understand why this process of revision took another seven years (1973-1980) to complete. The work of codification, which was brought to completion in an outstandingly collegial spirit, required indeed an enormous organizational and scientific effort.

to translate the conciliar ecclesiological teaching into canonical norms."² A task that from the very beginning seemed little less than impossible if not absolutely such. However, as John Paul II wrote on the occasion of the Code's promulgation, "if it is impossible perfectly to transpose the image of the Church described by conciliar doctrine into canonical language, nevertheless the Code must always be related to that image as to its primary pattern whose outlines, given its nature, the Code must express as far as is possible."³

Saying this is one way to indicate that "canon law" is something wider than the Code in which it is synthesized. Indeed, canon law overflows the covers of a book, based as it is on the entire juridical and legislative heritage of revelation and tradition. And so, as we focus here on the present status of the laity in the law of the Church, we are obviously taken the current Code of Canon Law as our primary reference source, but not exclusively. We will have to take into account also some recent official normative on the matter, as well as the ever-fresh new horizons offered by the Second Vatican Council. Would it be possible, for instance, to understand the canonical status of the laity in the Church without taking into account the overriding doctrinal principle on which canon law is founded, namely, that the Church is a *communio*? Certainly not, for from such principle important juridical consequences flow, as we will see in the following pages, organized around two main points: 1) The fundamental rights and

² John Paul II, Apost. Const. *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* (25th January 1983).

³ *Ibidem*. In other words, "it would be unfair to expect the Code to express the richness of doctrinal content found in the conciliar and postconciliar text, but it is fair to expect the legislation to remain faithful to the principles outlined in the authoritative doctrinal texts of Vatican II." (F. G. Morrissey, *The Laity in the New Code of Canon Law*, in AA.VV., *Readings, Cases, Materials in Canon Law*, p. 323).

⁴ Cf. *LG*, 13.

obligations of the laity; 2) The way in which the laity participate in the threefold mission of the Church (Lay Ministries).

But before entering into them, let us give an answer to a simple, basic question on the conceptual identity of the laity.

Who are the laity?

This question reminds me of the typical scholastic *definitio terminorum*. Superfluous as it may seem at first sight, clarification purposes, however, deem it very often necessary. In fact, the meaning of the term "laity" receives different peculiar connotations in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and in the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

a) *In the documents of the Vatican Council* we read that all those who have been baptized in Christ form part of the Church, the new people of God⁵; that by such incorporation into Christ and into his Church, they share in the threefold mission (functions) of Christ: priestly, prophetic, and kingly⁶; and that a particular mission flows from this, namely, to bear witness to Christ everywhere on earth, which is nothing else than to give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.⁷

One distinction is very soon introduced: it happens that among all the members of the Church, some are *fully* incorporated into her, while others are not. In the Council's own words, "those are fully incorporated into the new people of God who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who, by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical

⁵ Cf. *LG* 14-15.

⁶ Cf. *LG*, 31.

⁷ Cf. *LG*, 10.

government and communion, are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops."⁸

Another distinction is also established by the Council, this time due to the members' different states, condition of life and vocation: some members are constituted clergy, others are religious and finally others, the vast majority, laity. Although all are equally called to sanctity⁹ and to the apostolate,¹⁰ yet "not everyone in the Church marches along the same path."" The laity, in particular, with their specific secular¹² character, "are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth."¹³

In short, by "laity" the Council understands all Christ's faithful fully incorporated into His Church, except those in holy orders and those in a religious state sanctioned by the Church, who "carry out their own part of the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world."¹⁴ The emphasis is placed on their secular condition and corresponding mission, for the laity are called to work for the sanctification of the world from within.

b) *In the Code of Canon Law* we read similar affirmations, for some canons, especially from the second book of the Code, have been literally taken from the Const. *Lumen Gentium*. Thus,

⁸ *LG*, 14.

⁹ Cf. *LG*, 39.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 33.

¹² Cf. *LG*, 31b; 36b. See a recent study with abundant bibliography on the secular character proper and peculiar of the laity: R. Pangilinan, *La secularization especifica de los laicos y la secularidad de la Iglesia en su conjunto*. Instituto Martin de Azpilcueta. Cuadernos Doctorales. *Excerpta e disseertationibus in iure canonico*, n. 16, Navarra, 1999, pp. 367-429.

¹³ **LG, 33.**

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

canon 204 repeats that "Christ's faithful are those who, since they are incorporated into Christ by baptism, are constituted as the people of God. For this reason they participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world."¹⁵ Parallely, another canon speaks of the faithful who are in full communion with the Catholic Church, namely, "those baptized... who are joined with Christ in his visible body, through the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance."¹⁶ Finally, all these faithful in full communion with the Catholic Church are divided into two categories: the clergy and the laity. "By divine institution, among Christ's faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics; the others are called lay people."¹⁷

Thus when we speak on the laity in the context of canon law, we refer to those members of the People of God who, through baptism, have been incorporated into Christ and his Church and who carry out their mission not through the exercise of sacred orders but in virtue of the common priesthood of the faithful.

I. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE LAITY

Practical concern for the rights and duties of all the members of the Church is one of the most remarkable features of the current

¹⁵ This canon is based on *LG*, 31.

¹⁶ Canon 205. Catechumens are given special place in ecclesial communion in virtue of their desire to be united to the people of God (cf. c.206).

¹⁷ Canon 207. No mention is made of the members of consecrated life on this regard. It is interesting to note that the Code for the Oriental Churches describes the laity as those faithful who, sharing in secular life, participate in the Church's salvational mission when they exercise their proper role in carrying out their functions, have not received sacred orders, and *are not members of the monastic or religious state*.

Code of Canon law. Such concern appeared already as a goal in the first of the ten principles ratified by the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 1967, at the very outset of the Code revision. It was stated there that, as a consequence of its juridical character... "the Code must specify and preserve the rights and duties of each person towards others and towards the ecclesial society as they pertain to divine worship and the salvation of souls."¹⁸

The result was the inclusion in the Code of Canon Law of a list of fundamental rights and obligations shared by the members of the Church. A sort of bill of rights regrouped in three different sections; one, containing the obligations and rights "of *all* Christ's faithful" (can. 208-223); another, those specifically pertaining to "the *lay* members of the Christ's faithful" (can. 224-231); and a third group containing those regarding clerics (can. 273-289). Such novelty was most welcome for it appeared to keep the Church's legal system attuned with the times and seemed to resonate well with the sensitivities of the 21st century people.

Easy as it may look to us today, the original project of introducing such lists, however, was difficult and not exempted from some controversy. Why? Because of three main reasons: First, because this was something completely new in the Church's legislation; second, because such a listing of common rights and obligations presupposed the fundamental equality of all the members of the Church, something in theory accepted but not always correctly understood in the past;¹⁹ and third, because many were unsure on how these rights could eventually be claimed and

¹⁸ *Communicationes* 2 (1969), 79.

¹⁹ In the past, rights were very often understood as *concessions* from the authority (and therefore "privileges" granted only to certain persons), rather than something to which one was justly entitled to for being based either on human nature, baptism or Church's positive law.

protected, specially at local levels. This last reason still persists today and we have to humbly admit that "present mechanisms in many instances are simply unable to cope with this new and fascinating dimension of Church law."²⁰

Obligations and rights in the Church go together. Rights give rise to obligations and *vice versa*. This explains the mixed listing of both of them in the Code. Following such list, we enumerate hereinafter the obligations and rights of the laity, which necessary comprise also those shared by all the members of the People of God.²¹ To the latter ("all Christ's faithful") belong the first twenty rights and obligations, concerning communion in the Church [1-6], personal sanctification [7-9], Christian education [10-11], apostolate [12-13], relations pastors-lay faithful [14-17], association [18], and two other special rights [19-20]. The rest, twelve in total, are specific of the laity, concerning their mission and apostolate [21-23], Christian doctrine [24-26], matrimonial and family life [27], and ecclesiastical offices and functions [28-32]. They are the following:

1) *Fundamental Equality*. By virtue of baptism there exists true equality among all Christians. Equality in dignity and action in order to contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ.²²

²⁰ F. G. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

²¹ "Lay members of Christ's faithful have the duties and rights enumerated in the canons of this title, in addition to those duties and rights which are common to all Christ's faithful and those stated in other canons" (can. 224).

²² Cf. can. 208, based in *LG*, 32.

2) *Communion with the Church.* "Christ's faithful are bound to preserve their communion with the Church at all times, even in their external actions."²³

3) *Obligations towards the Church.* All Christ's faithful are to carry out with great diligence their responsibilities towards both the universal Church and the particular Church to which by law they belong.²⁴

4) *Regard for common good and rights of others.* All Christians, "both individually and in associations, must take account of the common good of the Church, as well as the rights of others and their own duties to others."²⁵

5) *Provision for the material needs of the Church.* "Christ's faithful have the obligation to provide for the needs of the Church, so that the Church has available to it those things which are necessary for divine worship, for works of the apostolate and of charity and for the worthy support of its ministers."²⁶

6) *Social justice and charity.* Everyone has the obligation to promote social justice and to help the poor from their own resources.²⁷

7) *Holiness of Life.* "All Christ's faithful, each according to his or her own condition, must make a wholehearted effort to lead a holy life, and to promote the growth of the Church and its

²³ Can. 209 §1. The essential unity among the People of God is constituted by one faith, one worship and one regime: "Those baptized are in full communion with the catholic Church here on earth who are joined with Christ in his visible body, through the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance." (can. 205)

²⁴ Cf. can. 209 §2.

²⁵ Can. 223 §1.

²⁶ Can. 222 §1.

²⁷ "They are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the Lord's precept, to help the poor from their own resources" (Can. 222 §2).

continual sanctification." ²⁸ The Second Vatican II Council emphasized the universal vocation to holiness.²⁹

8) *Divine worship and own spirituality.* "Christ's faithful have the right to worship God according to the provisions of their own rite approved by the lawful Pastors of the Church; they also have the right to follow their own form of spiritual life, provided it is in accord with Church teaching."³⁰

9) *Free choice of state in life.* "All Christ's faithful have the right to immunity from any kind of coercion in choosing a state in life."³¹

10) *Christian Education.* All Christians "have the right to a christian education, which genuinely teaches them to strive for the maturity of the human person and at the same time to know and live the mystery of salvation."³²

11) *Freedom to research and of expression.* "Those who are engaged in fields of sacred study have a just freedom to research matters in which they are expert and to express themselves prudently concerning them, with due submission to the magisterium of the Church."³³

12) *Spreading the Gospel.* It is the mission of every disciple of the Lord (obligation and right) "to strive so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places."³⁴

²⁸ Can. 210.

²⁹ Cf. *LG*, 40-41.

³⁰ Can. 214.

³¹ Can. 219.

³² Can. 217.

³³ Can. 218.

³⁴ Can. 211.

13) *Apostolic Action*. Christians have the right "to promote and support apostolic action, by their own initiative, undertaken according to their state and condition."³⁵

14) *Christian Obedience*. "Christ's faithful are bound to show christian obedience to what the sacred Pastors, who represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith and prescribe as rulers of the Church."³⁶ No blind obedience to "what the Pastors declare as teachers of the faith and prescribe as rulers of the Church," is enforced by the Code, but it simply requires an attitude of Christian obedience towards them, as they are Christ's representatives.

15) *Freedom to express own needs*. Christians "are at liberty to make known their needs, especially their spiritual needs, and their wishes to the Pastors of the Church."³⁷

16) *Personal Views*. It is everybody's duty "to manifest, at least at times, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, their views to the sacred Pastors [and to others] on matters which concern the good of the Church."³⁸ The canon adds that this right must be exercised with due respect for the integrity of faith and morals, having also into account both the common good and the dignity of individuals.

17) *Spiritual Assistance*. Because of their baptism, Christians have the right to be assisted by their Pastors from the spiritual riches of the Church, especially by the word of God and the sacraments.³⁹

³⁵ Can. 216. The canon adds a prohibition about the indiscriminate use of the title "catholic."

³⁶ Can. 212 §1.

³⁷ Can. 212 §2.

³⁸ Can. 212 §3.

³⁹ Can. 213.

18) *Association and Meetings*. "Christ's faithful may freely establish and direct associations which serve charitable or pious purpose of which foster the christian vocation in the world, and they may hold meetings to pursue these purposes by common effort."⁴⁰

19) *Good Reputation and Privacy*. "No one may unlawfully harm the good reputation which a person enjoys, or violate the right of every person to protect his or her privacy."⁴¹

20) *Vindication of Rights and Proper Judgment*. "Christ's faithful may lawfully vindicate and defend the rights they enjoy in the Church, before the competent ecclesiastical forum in accordance with the law." "If any members of the Christ's faithful are summoned to trial by the competent authority, they have the right to be judged according to the provision of the law, to be applied with equity." They have also the right that "no canonical penalties be inflicted upon them except in accordance with the law."⁴²

21) *Proclamation of salvation message*. Deputed to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation, lay people, like all Christian faithful, have the right "to strive so that the divine message of salvation maybe known and accepted by all people throughout the world."⁴³

22) *Sanctification of the temporal order*. The sanctification of the temporal order is the specific mission of the lay faithful and the one which is most characteristic of them. "By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will."⁴⁴ This is their peculiar way to give witness to Christ.

⁴⁰Can. 215.

⁴¹ Can. 220.

⁴² Can. 221.

⁴³ Can. 225 §1.

⁴⁴ LG, 31. Cf. Can. 225 §2.

23) *Freedom in secular affairs.* The lay members of Christ's faithful are entitled to "that freedom in secular affairs which is common to all citizens."⁴⁵ In using this freedom they are also to safeguard the freedom of others; hence, in questions of opinion, they are not to propose their own view as the teaching of the Church.

24) *Personal Formation.* "Lay people have the duty and the right to acquire the knowledge of christian teaching which is appropriate to each one's capacity and condition, so that they may be able to live according to this teaching, to proclaim it and if necessary defend it, and may be capable of playing their part in the exercise of the apostolate."⁴⁶

25) *Higher studies.* "[Lay people] have the right to acquire that fuller knowledge of the sacred sciences which is taught in ecclesiastical universities or faculties or in institutes of religious sciences, attending lectures there and acquiring academic degrees."⁴⁷

26) *Teaching the sacred sciences.* Likewise, assuming the requisite suitability, "they are capable of receiving from the lawful ecclesiastical authority a mandate to teach the sacred sciences."⁴⁸

27) *Matrimonial vocation and children education.* "Those who are married are bound... to strive for the building up of the people of God through their marriage and family."⁴⁹ "Parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate their children... in accordance with the teaching of the Church."⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Can. 227.

⁴⁶ Can. 229 §1; cf. *Apostolicam Auctoritatem*, 29.

⁴⁷ Can. 229 §2.

⁴⁸ Can. 229 §3. Teaching theology and other sacred sciences does not therefore require the sacred orders, but only a special mandate to do it in an ecclesial manner, as prescribed in can. 812. Cf. *Communicationes* 2 [1970] 95.

⁴⁹ Can. 226 §1.

⁵⁰ Can. 226 §2.

28) *Experts or advisors in councils.* "Lay people who are found to be suitable are capable of being admitted by the sacred Pastors to those ecclesiastical offices and functions which, in accordance with the provisions of law, they can discharge."⁵¹ Furthermore, "those who are outstanding in the requisite knowledge, prudence and integrity, are capable of being experts or advisors, even in councils in accordance with the law, in order to provide assistance to the Pastors of the Church."⁵²

29) *Stable ministry of lector and of acolyte.* "Lay men whose age and talents meet the requirements prescribed by decree of the Bishops' Conference, can be given the stable ministry of lector and of acolyte, through the prescribed liturgical rite."⁵³ This canon,

⁵¹ Can. 228 §1.

⁵² Can. 228 §2. It is difficult to see in the expression "are capable of used by this canon in its two paragraphs a real and proper right of the laity, inasmuch as the admission to particular offices requires a prescribed suitability in the subject and is subject to the decision of the competent authority. Cf. G. Feliciani, "I uiritti e I doveri dei fedeli in genere e dei laici in specie," in // *nuovo codice di diritto canonico. Aspetti fondamentali della codificazione postconciliare*, Bologna, 1983, 62-63. For some bibliography on this regard see A. Gauthier, OP, *Norme canoniche generali sui fedeli, laici e chierici* (Commentario del Codice di diritto canonico, cann. 204-329). (Rome: Pontificia Università San Tommaso, 1994), p.35.

⁵³ Can. 230. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) set in 1984 the following requirements for admission of lay men to the ministries of lector and acolyte, whose exercise of office is subject to renewal every year: 1) They must be exemplary Catholics; 2) They must be at least twenty-one years old; 3) They must be adequately literate; and 4) They must have finished the seminar established for their proper training and formation (Cf. CB, Prot. n. 35/84. F. Testera, OP, *Canon Law Digest for the Philippine Catholic Church. A Text and Commentary*. (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 3rd ed., 1985), p. 14. This canon 230 echoes *Ministeria Quaedam*, 12 when it says that this conferral "does not carry with it the right to sustenance or salary from the Church." They are entitled, however, "to a worthy remuneration befitting their condition, whereby, ...they can becomingly provide for their own needs and the needs of their families" (Can. 231 §2).

which uses the term "ministry" referred to the laity,⁵⁴ contains also a distinction between laymen and laywomen, for these two stable ministries are given exclusively to lay men.⁵⁵

30) *Temporary assignments in liturgical actions.* "Lay people can receive a temporary assignment to the role of lector in liturgical actions. Likewise, all lay people can exercise the roles of commentator, cantor or other such, in accordance with the law."⁵⁶

31) *Supplying certain ministerial functions.* "Where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available, lay people, even though they are not lectors or acolytes, can supply certain of their functions, that is, exercise the ministry of the word, preside over liturgical prayers, confer baptism and distribute Holy Communion, in accordance with the provisions of the law."⁵⁷

32) *Service of the Church not strictly ministerial.* "Lay people who are pledged to the special service of the Church, whether permanently or for a time, have a duty to acquire the appropriate formation which their role demands..." "They have the right to

⁵⁴ Traditionally the term "minister" has been reserved only for ordained ministers. The documents of the Vatican council made a certain use of the word "ministry" speaking of the laity, but the Code itself is much more reserved on this point. It uses the term "ministry" referred to laity only in relation to liturgy (worship), the ministry of the word and in a substituting function or of extraordinary character (can. 230, 759). When it refers to a function peculiar of the laity, the Code does not use the term "ministerium." Cf. A. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵⁵ The Code has eliminated, where possible, discrimination in the law between laymen and laywomen. With the exception of this canon regarding the lay ministries of lector and acolyte (probably because of the close connection with orders: they were before "minor orders"), all distinctions based on sex in regard to the status and functions of the laity have been removed. Thus the general laws on choice of domicile, place of marriage, choosing a rite for the children, access to Church courts, and so forth have been revised to recognize equality for all lay people. The law maintains a distinction between the sexes in regard to the minimum age for marriage (can. 1083), taking into account the natural functions of each partner.

⁵⁶ Can. 230 §2.

⁵⁷ Can. 230 §3.

a worthy remuneration... Likewise, they have the right to have their insurance, social security and medical benefits duly safeguarded."⁵⁸

These fundamental rights and obligations, whose implementation calls for harmonious action, good will, and understanding on the part of all concerned, have four significant notes, namely, they are universal, perpetual (lost only in death), cannot be renounced voluntarily and are anterior to any other right.

II. PARTICIPATION OF THE LAITY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The rights and obligations which arise from the condition of being a member of the faithful are juridical requirements of the baptismal character and, therefore, of divine law. The fundamental rights and obligations of the laity form the basic nucleus of their juridical status.

All those who have been baptized are called without distinction to the fullness of sanctity, which is the same for all; they are likewise called to the common apostolate.⁵⁹ However, while sanctity and the apostolate are equal for all regarding their substance and their ends, there is great diversity in the methods and forms of attaining them, namely, the states and conditions of life as well as particular or specific vocations.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Can. 231 §2.

⁵⁹ Cf. *LG*, 32 and 41.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*. This means that the varied and manifold forms of spirituality, conditions of life, and types of apostolate are a response to the will of Christ for the foundation of the Church. By the will of Christ there is a hierarchy in the Church endowed with power and the mission received is to teach doctrine, maintain the deposit of faith, administer the sacraments, specially to renew the sacrifice of the Cross through the celebration of the Eucharist, and to govern the life of the Church. The participation of the faithful in the triple mission of Christ (namely, priestly, prophetic, and kingly) is not hierarchical. Cf. J. Hervada, "Introduction to Book II, Part I- Christ's Faithful," in E. Caparros, M. Theriault, J. Thorn (ed.), *Code of Canon Law Annotated*, (Montreal: Wilson & Lafleur Limine, 1993), 185-186.

The Second Vatican Council spoke of the various ways in which the faithful could share in Christ's prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions. It affirmed that by the will of Christ there is a hierarchy in the Church endowed with power and peculiar functions in carrying out the mission entrusted to the Church. Likewise, the laity, being part of the whole people of God, participate in the same triple mission of Christ. This three-fold mission entrusted to the Church — to teach, to sanctify, and to govern—, was precisely adopted by the 1983 Code of Canon Law as its principle, of division, henceforth providing for us a framework to study the status of the laity in the new law.

A. The Teaching Mission

Every member of the Church, by virtue of the sacrament of confirmation, is bound by the obligation to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith.⁶¹

The Code describes the different responsibilities that the episcopal college, individual bishops, priests, religious and laity have for the ministry of the Word.⁶² Referring specifically to the laity, it states that they "are witnesses to the good news of the Gospel, by their words and by the example of their christian life. They can also be called upon to *cooperate* with Bishops and priests in the exercise of the ministry of the word."⁶³

The exercise of such witnessing and cooperation has specific responsibilities in each of the five principal ways through which the ministry of the Word is rendered, namely, preaching, catechetical

⁶¹ Through the sacrament of confirmation, the faithful are "enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith" (Canon 879).

⁶² Cf. canons 756-780.

⁶³ Canon 759.

instruction, missionary work, works of education at all levels, and through the use of social communication.

1) *Preaching of the Word*. Canon 766 states that "the laity may be allowed to preach in a Church or oratory if in certain circumstances it is necessary, or in particular cases it would be advantageous." No limitation is set as to age or sex; thus lay men and women, the young and the old, may now engage in the ministry of the word provided they are truly trained or skilled and properly deputized for this type of ministry. Some limitations, however, are otherwise provided by law as well as by the local authorities, specifically by the respective Bishops' Conferences. *By law*, the homily at regular Masses, as part of the liturgy itself, is reserved to priests and deacons.⁶⁴ *By the local authorities*, in the particular set up of the Philippines, the local Bishops' Conference has authorized the diocesan bishops to deputize duly qualified lay persons to preach outside the Mass, in accordance with the following norms: (a) Whenever there is a need because of scarcity or physical inability of sacred ministers, in cases such as those in large parishes, in remote barrios and islets, and in other places where there is difficulty in the means of transportation and during inclement weather⁶⁵; (b) They must be Catholics of good moral

⁶⁴ "The most important form of preaching is the homily, which is part of the liturgy, and is reserved to a priest or deacon" (Can. 767). The Church has made it clear in strong terms that the homily is a special case and must be preached by an ordained minister (cf. cc. 762-765). The main reason of this exception is the close relationship between preaching and the Eucharist, to the point that "the Eucharist appears as the source and the summit of all preaching of the gospel" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5). This explains why the ministers of the Eucharist, in principle, have the right or the faculty to preach.

⁶⁵ These instances listed here are some of the "certain circumstances" or the "particular cases" mentioned in canon 766 when the lay preaching may become necessary or useful. They may very well include the Liturgy of the Word with or without Communion at daily services as well as Sunday services in the absence of a priest or deacon (can. 517 §2); or by one acting as an official witness at marriage (can. 1112) and funerals presided over by a duly authorized lay person. It may be likewise useful in particular cases, such as retreats, missions and other made by special request (cf. F. Testera, *op. cit.*, 82).

character; (c) They must be well prepared through formation in Christian doctrine and in Sacred Scriptures; (d) They must be distinguished by their loyalty to the hierarchy and fidelity to the magisterium of the Church; and (e) They are deputized for one year, renewable.⁶⁶

2) *Catechetical instruction*. If every Christian, by virtue of baptism and confirmation, is called to transmit the Gospel, it means that in a certain sense everyone in the Church is a catechist. Now, the term "catechist" ordinarily refers to the numerous lay teachers of catechesis in parishes and schools. Catechesis, so understood, is "an eminent form of lay apostolate" and the Church has high words of praise and appreciation for them because they exercise a task of vital importance for the life of the Church.⁶⁷

The importance of this apostolate comes mainly from its aim, which is to put up those being instructed "not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ."⁶⁸ Catechesis is an "education in the faith" ministry, primarily oriented to teach the revealed truths (leading to the profession of faith), to relate the message with liturgy (leading to the celebration of the Christian mystery), to witness what is proclaimed (leading to an authentic life in Christ), and to promote a life of prayer in the listeners.

The Code of Canon Law enjoins parish priests to avail themselves of... "the assistance of lay members of Christ's faithful"

⁶⁶ Cf. CB, Prot. N. 35/84, in F. Testera, *op. cit.*, 82-83.

⁴⁷ "I am anxious to give thanks in the Church's name to all of you, lay teachers of catechesis in the parishes and schools, the men and the still more numerous women throughout the world, who are devoting yourselves to the religious education of many generations. Your work is often lowly and hidden but it is carried out with ardent and generous zeal, and it is *an eminent form of the lay apostolate*, a form that is particularly important where for various reasons children and young people do not receive suitable religious training in the home." (John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 66). Emphasis mine.

⁶⁸ *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: ECCCE Publications, 1997), 129.

to ensure the catechetical formation of their parishioners. It also encourages them "to promote and to foster the role of parents in the family catechesis."⁶⁹

Catechists have been for centuries carrying their mission motivated almost exclusively by personal dedication. Today, however, the Church has envisioned organized bodies of professional [diocesan and parochial] catechists, granting them not only financial assistance, but also official recognition for their ministry. This is reflected in some programs being already implemented in many dioceses, where a "missio canonica" (mandate) or a written appointment is given to them.⁷⁰ Such written document attests also to the seriousness of the commitment and to the support of the Church that sends them. In fact, catechists, to be properly called "ministers," need to act "in the name of the Church," something that cannot happen unless they are *sent* or commissioned by the Church herself.

Obviously, catechists need formation. Canon 785 states that catechists are to be given a suitable formation before being commissioned to teach on behalf of the Church. Previously, canon 780 had said that "local Ordinaries are to ensure that catechists are duly trained to carry out their office properly." Reacting to this vital need, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991)

⁶⁹ Can. 776.

⁷⁰ In those dioceses where such program is already being implemented, those accepted as catechists are given the so-called *Missio Canonica* or mandate by their Ordinary. As currently practiced in Manila, the core of the written document issued to each catechist reads as follows: "After you have signified in word and deed your intent to commit yourself to the fundamental ecclesial task of evangelization and catechesis, we hereby confer on you the Apostolic Mission to be a Catechist. We are confident that you will communicate the Christian Faith in doctrine, worship and life according to the directives of the Magisterium of the Church, and that to the best of your knowledge and ability, you will lead those entrusted to you to the maturity of Christian life."

urged the creation of centers for the "calling, training and formation of professional and volunteer catechists for children and youth in public and non-sectarian schools..."⁷¹

3. *Missionary activity.* The missionary activity of the Church is the responsibility of all her members.⁷² Canon 784 explicitly states that laypersons may be chosen as missionaries, particularly for the role of catechists,⁷³ whose function is to present the Gospel teaching and engage in liturgical worship and in works of charity.

It has become a modern phenomenon to see throngs of lay people committed to missionary activities and works of apostolate. At times professionals (doctors, teachers...) who volunteer to go to mission lands offering the services of their witnessing and expertise. Other times young people who generously offer themselves for a period of time to help in parishes and schools, etc. These services, fully appreciated and encouraged by the Church, bear also an excellent witness to Christ and in many instances they are a practical way to spread the good news of the Gospel. Again, lay missionaries in order to become properly "ministers" need to be "sent" by the competent ecclesiastical authority.⁷⁴

4. *Catholic education.* Catholic education is one of the primary duties of committed lay Christians, and in particular of parents,

⁷¹ PCP-II, *Decrees*, art. 55 #1. "For all catechists ongoing formation programs are a necessity, in order to increase their fervor, purify their motives, and improve their knowledge and teaching skills. To facilitate all the foregoing, there is need in each diocese for a diocesan catechetical center with a full-time coordinator" (*ib.*, 648).

⁷² Cf. can. 781.

⁷³ Canon 785.

⁷⁴ Cf. can. 784. In the Ritual there is an "Order for the Blessing of those who exercise pastoral service." It is a blessing that may be given by a priest/deacon or superiors in religious congregations. The order may be celebrated during the mass or during a celebration of the word of God. Normally, a little cross is imposed on each one after the public commitment. In the prayer/blessing the community asks God "to strengthen and bless our brothers and sisters as they begin their new pastoral service."

whose responsibility it is to educate their children in the doctrine of the Church.⁷⁵ Parents, however, may avail themselves of religious assistance that is usually available in schools.

Among the means of advancing education, schools are of great importance⁷⁶; thus "parents must have a real freedom in their choice of schools"⁷⁷ since they "are to send their children to those schools which will provide for their catholic education."⁷⁸ Diocesan bishops (indeed local Ordinaries) are reminded of their duty to regulate and watch over the education in the Catholic religion provided *in any school*: "In his own diocese, the local Ordinary has the right to appoint or to approve teachers of religion and, if religious or moral consideration require it, the right to remove them or to demand that they be removed."⁷⁹

But education in the faith has to be extended also to institutes of higher studies, especially Catholic universities, whose responsibility is to initiate the laity into the study of theology⁸⁰ so that, in turn, they may also teach it. Two conditions, though, are required for lay people to teach theological subjects, namely, 'requisite suitability' and a mandate to teach: "Lay people... are capable of receiving from the lawful ecclesiastical authority a mandate to teach the sacred sciences."⁸¹ Likewise, canon 812 states that "those who teach theological subjects in any institute of higher studies must have a mandate from the competent authority." The Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* spoke of 'canonical mission' or *venia legendi* to teach theological or academic subjects that dealt

⁷⁵ Canons 793-799.

⁷⁶ Can. 796.

⁷⁷ Can. 797.

⁷⁸ Can. 798.

⁷⁹ Can. 805.

⁸⁰ Cf. can. 811.

⁸¹ Can. 229 §3.

with matters of faith and morals. Furthermore, it required that those professors made the profession of faith.⁸² However in view of certain difficulties, the present law requires a *mandate* rather than a *mission*?* to be given by the competent ecclesiastical authority. Who is that "competent authority"? Originally, the Apostolic See, the episcopal conference within its territory, and in the normal course of events, the diocesan bishop in his own diocese. By delegation, the Major Religious Superior of clerical institutes which own and operate Catholic learning institutions.

5. *Means of Social Communication.* The Code exhorts all the faithful, especially those who in any way take part in the management or use of the media, to be diligent in assisting pastoral action, "so that the Church can more effectively exercise its office through these means."⁸⁴ On its part, given the importance of electronic media today, the Philippine Bishops' Conference has decreed that "a ministry for Evangelization and Catechesis through Electronic media shall be created at national and diocesan levels."

From this overview it can be seen that lay people are expected to share in the Church's mission of teaching the Word. No sector of this ministry is excluded from them although the norms on preaching must be carefully observed.

B. The Sanctifying Mission

The sanctifying mission of the Church is carried out "in a special way in the sacred liturgy, which is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ."⁸⁵ This explains why it is exercised

⁸² *Sapientia Christiana*, art. 27, s.l.

⁸³ Cf. *Communicationes* 15 [1983], 105. This mandate or commission is required because those who teach these subjects do so, not on their own authority, but in the name of the Church (*SP*, 27). Hence this mandate is something more than mere permission to teach (although it seems to be less weighty than 'canonical mission').

⁸⁴ Can. 822 §3.

⁸⁵ Can. 834 §1.

principally by bishops, priests, and deacons. However, "the other members of Christ's faithful have their own part in this sanctifying office, *each in his or her own way* actively sharing in liturgical celebration, particularly in the Eucharist."⁸⁶

Referring to this particular mission of the Church, the Code distinguishes two big areas of Church's life, namely, the celebration of the sacraments or sacramental law (can. 840-1165), and the acts of divine worship other than the celebration of the sacraments (can. 1166-1253). What is the role of the laity in each of these two areas?

a) *In the field of sacramental law*, the Code provides that lay people may be ministers of baptism,⁸⁷ may distribute the Eucharist even as Viaticum,⁸⁸ are the ministers of matrimony, and may be delegated to receive matrimonial consent.⁸⁹

The role of the laity is more evident when it comes to the preparation for reception of the sacraments, especially of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Preparation for baptism begins even before the birth of the child⁹⁰; the actual preparation may be carried out by qualified members of the laity.⁹¹ The faithful, especially the parents, are to see to preparation for confirmation.⁹²

⁸⁶ Can. 835. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁷ "If the ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or some other person deputed to this office by the local Ordinary, may lawfully confer baptism; indeed, in a case of necessity, any person who has the requisite intention may do so" (Can. 861).

⁸⁸ Cf. Can. 910, 911.

⁸⁹ "Where there are no priests and deacons, the diocesan Bishop can delegate lay persons to assist at marriages, if the Episcopal Conference has given its prior approval and the permission of the Holy See has been obtained" (Can. 1112 §1).

* "Parents are obliged to see that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks. As soon as possible after the birth, indeed *even before it*, they are to approach the parish priest to ask for the sacrament for their child and to be themselves duly prepared for it" (Can. 867 §1).

⁹¹ Cf. Can. 851.

⁹² Cf. Can. 890.

The same applies for reception of the Eucharist.⁹³ The law makes little reference to special preparation for the reception of penance and anointing of the sick, taking for granted the desire of the Church that "the faithful take part (in the sacraments) fully aware of what they are doing, *actively engaged in the rite* and enriched by it."⁹⁴ However, the Code enters into detail when speaking of the way in which the ecclesial community is to assist in preparing young couples for marriage. We can see, therefore, that it is primarily in regard to the sacraments of initiation and of matrimony that lay people are called on to exercise their priestly mission of sanctification. What is new in the law is the emphasis placed on preparation for the celebration of these sacraments.⁹⁵

All other norms on the sacraments, except those explicitly concerning clerical ministers, are addressed to the laity. The law retains the prescription that only males may have access to orders⁹⁶ and states that through the reception of orders a person leaves the state of the laity.⁹⁷

⁹³ Can. 914: "It is primarily the duty of parents and of those who take their place, as it is the duty of the parish priest, to ensure that children who have reached the use of reason are properly prepared..."

⁹⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n.11. The active participation of the faithful in the rites takes different forms in each particular sacrament. The rite of Penance, for instance, speaks of "the role of the community" in its celebration and the manner for the penitent to celebrate it: "The faithful Christian, as he experiences and proclaims the mercy of God in his life, celebrates with the priest the liturgy by which the Church continually renews itself (*Rite of Penance*, Introduction, n. 10 d). Regarding the anointing of the sick, the Code says that "Pastors of souls and those who are close to the sick are to ensure that the sick are helped by this sacrament in good time" (Can. 1001).

⁹⁵ F. G. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁹⁶ "Only a baptized man can validly receive sacred ordination" (Can. 1024).

⁹⁷ "By divine institution, among Christ's faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics; the others are called lay people" (Can. 207).

b) In the area of the Church's life *concerning acts of divine worship other than the celebration of the sacraments*, the newly restored "non-ordained" ministries take on special significance. By describing them as "newly restored" ministries, we are indicating that they are not in fact novel experiments, but rather, as Pope Paul VI wrote, "a restoration of the old practice."⁹⁸ Certainly, the awakening and restoration of functions of the laity within the Church are recent phenomena, the answer to an urgent call issued by the Second Vatican II.

The law foresees in canon 230 the institution of three different types of lay ministries: (1) ministries *conferred on a stable basis*: lector and acolyte; (2) ministries where *the assignment is temporary*: commentator, cantor, etc.; and (3) ministries exercised *on a supply basis* where ministers are not available: ministry of the word, prayer leadership, conferral of baptism and distribution of communion. Let us say something about each one of them.

(1) *The stable ministries of lector and acolyte*: "Lay men," canon 230 § 1 states, "whose age and talents meet the requirements prescribed by decree of the Episcopal Conference, can be given the stable ministry of lector and of acolyte, through the prescribed liturgical rite."

We should notice, in the first place, that these stable ministries of lector and acolyte are so far reserved to men. This is in fact one of the few canons which make a distinction between men and women. Being based on the M. P. *Ministeria Quaedam*, we may well presume that the main reason for such distinction is the one advanced in said document, namely, to keep "with the venerable tradition of the Church."⁹⁹ We know that traditionally these two

⁹⁸ Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam* (1972). "For certain liturgical and charitable functions were entrusted to the faithful *from earliest times*, whose conferring was frequently accompanied by a special rite, in which God's blessing was invoked, and which established the person designated in a special rank or class for the performance of some ecclesiastical ministry" (*lb.*).

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, n. 7.

ministries of lectorate and acolytate were "minor orders" and therefore exclusive of men. In recent times, however, there have been requests formulated by experts asking for the revision of this norm, since *de facto* these same ministries are being performed already by women (readings, distribution of communion, etc.)- As we had occasion to write in another place,¹⁰⁰ such a reservation was necessary when those "minor orders" were seen exclusively as steps towards priestly ordination. Now, however, that the two are restored as lay ministries, any exclusive reservation to men does not seem to make much sense anymore. It is then my opinion that the borderline of lay (men and women) ministries should be clearly drawn in the reception of orders (diaconate, priesthood and episcopacy), and that the exercise of liturgical ministries, *with the exception of those requiring ordination*, should be open to lay people both men and women.¹⁰¹

Secondly, that these stable ministries are not confined solely to liturgical celebrations: for instance, it is part of the ministry of the lector to proclaim the word of God, to provide catechetical instruction and to prepare the faithful for the reception of the sacraments.¹⁰² In turn, the acolyte, as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, can be called on to distribute holy communion, to

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J. Gonzalez, *Lay Ministries*. (Manila: Life Today Publications, 2000) 3rd ed., p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Some past and even existing hesitations on this matter are very understandable for the degree of openness, especially at the level of implementation, will vary greatly from times and places, since it involves many religious-socio-cultural factors. Furthermore, certain "intermediate steps" may have probably been necessary, before the law takes in some instances a more innovative stand. Cf. G. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, p. 329. This author is already thinking of the third Code some years hence, and considers prudent in the meantime "to wait and see how some of the new institutions develop before enshrining them in the Church's formal legislation" (*ib.*).

¹⁰² Cf. *Ministeria Quaedam*, n. 5.

expose the Blessed Sacrament,¹⁰³ or even be instructed to have a special care for the sick.¹⁰⁴

Thirdly, that these ministries are conferred by the Ordinary, i.e., the Bishop and, in clerical religious institutes and clerical societies of apostolic life, of pontifical right, the competent major Superior.¹⁰⁵

Finally, that, apart from a firm will to render faithful service to God and the Church, those on whom these ministries are conferred must meet the requirements of age and talents prescribed by decree of the Episcopal Conferences. In the particular case of the Philippines, the local Conference set, in 1984, some specific requirements in the candidates, namely, to be exemplary Catholics, at least twenty-one years old, and being adequately instructed as certified by having finished the seminar established for their proper training and formation.¹⁰⁶

(2) *Ministries with temporary assignment: commentator, cantor, etc.* "Lay people can receive a temporary assignment to the role of lector in liturgical actions. Likewise, all lay people can exercise the roles of commentator, cantor or other such, in accordance with the law."¹⁰⁷ While the stable ministry of lector, for instance, is conferred in a liturgical rite, the temporary assignment of some person to exercise the role of lector is much less formal. Both men and women may be so assigned. The person concerned may be asked to carry out specific functions on particular occasions, e.g., to read at Masses on a Sunday. The other roles mentioned in this paragraph [commentator, cantor or "other such"]:

"» Cf. Can. 910 §2, 943.

¹⁰⁴ *Ministeria Quaedam*, n.6.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. CB, Prot. n. 35/84, in F. Testera, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ Can. 230 §2.

altar servers, collectors, ushers...]¹⁰⁸ are also conferred and exercised in this informal manner.

(3) *Ministries exercised on a supply basis where ordained ministers are not available.* "Where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available, lay people, even though they are not lectors or acolytes, can supply certain of their functions, that is, exercise the ministry of the word, preside over liturgical prayers, confer baptism and distribute Holy Communion, in accordance with the provisions of the law."¹⁰⁹

The list of functions mentioned in the canon is not exhaustive¹¹⁰; the Code foresees other cases where lay people may act as extraordinary ministers."¹ These extraordinary ministries mentioned here can be exercised by lay people, either men or women. Two prerequisites are mentioned: the need of the Church, and the non-availability of ministers. In such circumstances, lay people can be authorized to supply some of the functions of the absent or impeded ministers. "The canon [230] does not allow the lay people in question to act solely on their own initiative: since the responsibility for the pastoral welfare of his people falls on the Bishop, it is he who must decide whether the circumstances warrant such extraordinary ministries."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ See J. Gonzalez, *Lay Ministries*, 10-36.

¹⁰⁹ Can. 230 §3.

^{1,0} For instance, the Code does not say anything of the person who is to preside at funeral services. The rite of burial (no. 19), however, provides that under certain conditions laypersons may be authorized to carry out such rites on behalf of the Church.

¹¹¹ Cf. Can. 517 §2, 1112. The Code is silent about other ministries, partly because the matter is implicitly referred to liturgical law (Cf. Can. 2), and partly also because, given the time and circumstances, it probably opted for the more prudent attitude of "wait and see" how some of the new institutions develop before enshrining them in the Church's formal legislation.

¹¹² The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, *The Canon Law. Letter & Spirit*. (London, 1995), pp. 131-132.

Commenting on these ministries exercised *on a supply basis* where ordained ministers are not available, we notice that an examination of the canons curiously reveals that many of the functions assigned to the laity in the Code are done so in instances where clerics are not available. Evidently, although some canonists may think that "there is little possibility that canon 230 will be changed,"¹¹³ this is not the Church's last word on the matter. Could have we expected from the 1983 Code a "more advanced" stand on the issue of non-ordained ministers and ministries? Perhaps. We could make ours the opinion that "in spite of the evident progress to date, it is quite clear that many of the various sanctifying functions of the Church are still thought of in terms of the clergy."¹¹⁴

However, on this particular sanctifying mission of the Church, which involves the exercise of the common priesthood of the faithful, on one hand, and the ministerial priesthood of the clergy, on the other, utmost care has to be taken to keep in line with right terminology and, much more important, with theological accuracy.

A recent *Instruction* issued jointly by six Sacred Congregations, on November 13, 1997,^{U5} purposely provided "authoritative response to the many pressing requests which have come to our Dicasteries from Bishops, Priests and Laity seeking clarification in the light of specific cases of new forms of "pastoral activity" of the non-ordained on both parochial and diocesan levels."¹¹⁶

The document first encourages the active *participation* of all the faithful in the mission of the Church, in line with the call of

¹¹³ T. Richstatter, OFM, *Instituted Lay Ministry: The History and Future of Canon 230*, in Canon Law Society of America, *Proceedings of the Forty-ninth Annual Convention* (Nashville, Tennessee, October 12-15, 1987), p.72.

¹¹⁴ F. G. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, p.329.

¹¹⁵ *Instruction Ecclesia de Mysterio, On Certain Questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests.* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997).

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem, Premiss.*

the 1987 and of 1994 Synods of Bishops, by making its own the exhortation to Pastors "to acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, indeed for a good many of them, in the Sacrament of Matrimony."¹¹⁷ Then, it makes clear that in the more restrict area of the sacred ministry of the clergy (which office requires reception of the sacrament of Orders) the non-ordained are called to *assist* and *collaborate*, pointing out that "in situations of emergency and chronic necessity in certain communities, some of the faithful, despite lacking the character of the sacrament of Order, have acted appropriately and within their proper limits, in dealing with these realities."¹¹⁸ One of the important issues here is the terminological shift between "participation" and "collaboration" concerning the lay and priestly ministries,¹¹⁹ due to "the essential difference between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood." Such difference exists not in the priesthood of Christ (which remains forever one and indivisible) nor in the sanctity to which all of the faithful are called, but "at the mode of participation in the priesthood of Christ."¹²⁰

C. The Governing Mission

The Church's mission of governing has traditionally been reserved to the clerics, mainly because it involves the so-called power of "jurisdiction," power traditionally believed to be insepa-

¹¹⁷ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988, n.23: AAS 81 (1989), p. 429).

¹¹⁸ Instruction *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, premiss.

¹¹⁹ In effect, participation ("to take part in") in the ministerial tasks could not strictly speaking take place without the subject ontologically taking part -for the matter- in the ministerial priesthood itself. This could only happen with priestly ordination. From this we see the aptness of the term collaboration ("to work with") when applied to the non-ordained faithful's cooperation with the ministerial work of priests." (J. B. Achacoso, "Limits to Lay Ministries. A Reflection on *Ecclesia de Mysterio*," in *Philippine Canonical Forum* I [1999], p. 76).

¹²⁰ Instruction *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, Theological Principles, n. 1.

table from the *sacra potestas* and, therefore, exclusive of those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders. This explains why for centuries the laity has hardly had any participation in it.

In our times, this relationship between the *sacra potestas* and the *munus regendi* has plunged into canon law some ecclesiological problems that are still object of doctrinal debate. A debate that focuses alternatively on the very foundation of power in the Church and on its exercise and organization,¹²¹ and that is enlivened by the Second Vatican Council's numerous texts quoted by the Code, whose theological expressions cannot always be translated at once into canonical terms.

Without entering now into the debate, I will simply "situate" it in the right perspective for the purpose of our study. It is commonly understood that the *sacra potestas* refers to the power that Christ transmitted to the Apostles and to their successors in order that in His name they taught, sanctified and governed the Church. The *sacra potestas*, therefore, apart from expressing juridical power, includes also "the capacity received from the sacrament of Orders to produce in Christ's name the supernatural effects attached to the administration of the sacraments and to the preaching of the divine word."¹²² Logically, while the *sacra potestas* includes the three-fold *munus* of teaching, sanctifying and governing entrusted by Christ to the apostles, the governing function constitutes one aspect of the *sacra potestas*, namely, the one concerning the governance of the Church as a society.¹²³

¹²¹ A. Viana, *Organization del gobierno en la Iglesia segun el derecho canonico latino*. (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1997), p. 39.

¹²² Ibidem, 40.

¹²³ Cf. W. Onclin, *De potestate regiminis in Ecclesia*, in P. Laisching-F. Pototschnig- R.. Potz (eds.), *"Ex aequo et bono"*. Willibald M. Plochl zum 70. Geburtstag." (Innsbruck, 1977, p. 224.

The next question, basic for us here, is concerning the subjects of such governing power in the Church. Going straight to the point: *Do the laity have the capacity to share in the power of governance in the Church?* The answer to this question requires having first determined the relationship between priesthood (common and ministerial) and power in the Church.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law did not solve this problem. One could have reasonably expected the Code to have done it, but the Code wisely avoided facing the issue directly, thus leaving options open to further research on the matter. The canonical norm states: *"Those who are in sacred orders are, in accordance with the provisions of law, capable of the power of governance, which belongs to the Church by divine institution. This power is also called the power of jurisdiction."*¹²⁴* From this text some readers hurry up to conclude the contrary by exclusion: "Therefore," they affirm, "those who are *not* in sacred orders are *incapable* of the power of governance." But actually the canon does not say that lay people are incapable of the power of governance; it only contains the general declaration that "those in sacred orders are capable of having power of governance in the Church."¹²⁵ True,

¹²⁴ Can. 129 §1.

¹²⁵ Certainly, canon 129 does not say that the lay people are incapable of power of governance, with the effects as expressed in c. 10, but that they "may cooperate" in the exercise of this power. A serious objection to this, however, comes from canon 274 § 1, which states that "only clerics can obtain offices the exercise of which requires the power of order or the power of ecclesiastical governance." From here many conclude that the Code excludes the laity from the power of governance. However, an attentive reading of c. 274, §1 shows that the reference to the power of order is a tautology, for it is already included in the cleric, and that the reference to the power of governance is contradicted by the Code itself when it admits lay persons to governance offices (can. 228), as it is certainly the judge in ecclesiastical tribunals (can. 1421)... The problem is rooted in a theological question relating to various was intensely debated by the Revision Commission (cf. *Communicationes* 14 [1982] 146-149 at can. 126). The matter is more doctrinal than legal, and still open to further theological research. (Cf. *The Canon Law. Letter & Spirit*. (London: 1995), Commentary to c. 274, p. 156).

the Code adds a second paragraph that somehow declares the legislator's mind: "Lay members of Christ's faithful can *cooperate* in the exercise of this same power in accordance with the law."¹²⁶ For a better reading of the legislator's mind one needs to go back in time to the period of preparation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

In the process of revision of the Code, the Pontifical Commission studied the question of the participation of non-ordained persons in the office of government. In the drafts of the Code, in 1974, the door seemed very open in this regard. Even at its final stages, the Commission seemed to agree that the laity, too, should be able to share in the mission of governing, taking into account the particular nature of the Church.¹²⁷ This position was clearly reflected in the 1980 draft of the Code, whose proposed canon 126 used for the laity the expression "earn partem habere possunt quam singulis pro causis auctoritas Ecclesiae suprema ipsis concedit," although a remark was advanced: "quatenus eodem ordine sacro non ininitur"¹²⁸ This latter sentence was suppressed in the 1982 draft, which kept the text intact, although adding a curious "however" to the statement on the participation of the laity.¹²⁹ The promulgated text was simplified with the expression "cooperate... in accordance with the law."

¹²⁶ Can. 129 §2. The word "cooperate" (*cooperari*) is not a technically refined canonical term; it is a new and somewhat ambiguous word for a legal text. Obviously, the §2 does not refer to a mere material or bureaucratic cooperation, for this would be of no interest to the legislator, and even less so in this canon that wishes to determine which persons have the right to exercise power of governance and when they can exercise it.

¹²⁷ Cf. F. G. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, 331.

¹²⁸ The proposed canon 126 of the 1980 draft had only one paragraph and read as follows: "Potestatis regiminis, quae quidem ex divina institutione est in Ecclesia et etiam potestas iurisdictionis vocatur, ad normam praescriptorum iuris, habiles sunt, qui ordine sacro sunt insigniti; in exercitio eiusdem potestatis, quatenus eodem ordine sacro non ininitur, christifideles laici earn partem habere possunt quam singulis pro causis auctoritas Ecclesiae suprema ipsis concedit."

¹²⁹ Cf. J.Ma. Pinero, *La ley de la Iglesia*, Vol. I (Madrid: Sociedad de Educación Atenas, 1993), 261-262.

Understandably, then, interpretations to this canon 129 vary, depending on the different doctrinal background taken as departure point. The basic tendencies or opinions that appeared on this regard were [and are still today] the following:¹³⁰

a) Some believe that the power of governance *requires always the sacred order*. Those who defend this opinion claim that Orders and Offices have been always united; the distinction between power of order and power of jurisdiction did not destroy such need, but it simply distinguishes their exercise. They add that the Second Vatican Council always united sacred power with order, being strange to the Council the participation of the laity, admitted *suo modo* in services of direction or governance. The concession of a lay person to be a judge in the ecclesiastical tribunals¹³¹ is not in accordance with the Council. The holders of this stand see a contradiction in the statement that "they do not have and yet can cooperate in it"; if someone is incapable for something, there is no sense to grant him it. They conclude by saying that a power of governance that is not rooted in the sacred power is a contradiction in itself.¹³²

b) Others think that *only the Pope can grant the power of governance to a lay person*. They are not satisfied with the distinction between clergy-laity: "If [the laity] are incapable, how can they exercise it?," they wonder. True, in the Code there are cases of executive power of governance in a lay person, as for instance the case of the diocesan administrator.¹³³ The holders of this opinion propose that it should be said: "the power of

¹³⁰ Cf. J. Ma. Pifiero, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-263.

¹³¹ Cf. *Causas Matrimoniales*, V §1. Can. 1421: "The Episcopal Conference can permit that lay persons also be appointed judges."

¹³² Cf. *Communicationes* 14 [1982] 146-148, ad c.126, n° 4.

¹³³ See can. 494.

governance is exercised by the lay faithful by concession, in each case, of the supreme authority of the Church."¹³⁴

c) There are others who believe that the power of governance *can be granted by the diocesan bishop to the laity*. This stand is contrary to the previous opinions. Accordingly, not only the Pope, but also any diocesan bishop can grant the power of governance to a lay person. The reason given is not purely theological, but also practical: in order to avoid too much centralization.¹³⁵

What is my personal opinion and understanding of canon 129? With due respect for other opinions and subject always to a better judgement, it seems to me that the Code does not exclude the laity from the power of governance. Canon 129 expresses a principle of ecclesiastical law, namely, that the power of governance by itself requires the sacred Orders but that it can also be delegated by the supreme legislator to the laity. This way of talking recognizes two channels of transmission of public functions in the Church: first, the sacrament of Orders; second, the canonical mission.¹³⁶ The existence of this double channel of transmission brings forth several questions, especially those related to their proper articulation and relation in the specific ministries of sacred order,¹³⁷ but allows us

¹³⁴ *Communicationes* 14 [1982] 146, ad c.126, n° 1.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Ibidem* 14 [1982] 149, ad c. 126, n°4. In dealing with this matter, there were some simple warnings about being careful regarding the statement, since in it men and women are included (Cf. *Communicationes* 14 [1982] 149, ad c. 126, n° 8).

¹³⁶ See A. Viana, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29. Unlike the canonical mission, the sacrament of Orders confers the capacity to act in *persona Christi Capitis* (ministerial priesthood), a prerogative exclusive of ordained ministers.

¹³⁷ Some of these questions become very intricate due to the fact that some theological, juridical and even historical elements are implicated in them. In ancient times, for instance, the sacrament of Order and the canonical mission were fused in a single act, in such a way that a cleric was ordained for a specific office that was conferred on him by the imposition of hands; later, as it is today, there was separation between the sacramental moment and the specific act of provision of an office. See A. Viana, *op. cit.*, p. 29; J. Hervada, *Elementos de Derecho Constitucional Canonico*. (Pamplona, 1987), pp. 199-220.

to understand the canon's term "cooperate" as "having the capacity." Later on, the peculiar nature of each office and the faculties assigned to it in canon law¹³⁸ will determine whether an office may be entrusted to sacred ministers only [and among these, to what type of minister according to the degree of orders received] or whether the office may also be entrusted to a lay person.

Be it what it may, I do not think the present text of the Code is the final word on this fundamental doctrine. After all, the matter is still one of doctrinal discussion, and accordingly not one to be determined in a Code of law. Most canonists admit that canon 129 is somewhat unclear. Some even think it may have been left "deliberately ambiguous" in order to allow the Church itself to gradually live its way into an appropriate understanding of its meaning;¹³⁹ and others hold that the meaning of its second paragraph "must be deduced from and therefore circumscribed by other statements in the Code as well as prior understanding of the law."¹⁴⁰ Perhaps then it may be accurately said that "the present texts restrict themselves to reflecting what would appear to be the current state of theology and practice in this matter."¹⁴¹

Leaving this excursus aside, let us reassume the original point on the lay participation in the Church's function of governing. Since "the power of governance is divided into legislative, executive and judicial power,"¹⁴² we will briefly examine each of these three areas separately.

¹³⁸ Cf. can. 145 §2.

¹³⁹ Cf. P. Lombardfa, *Lecciones de Derecho Canonico* (Madrid: 1984), p. 102.

¹⁴⁰ R. Smith, *Lay Persons in the Diocesan Curia: Legal Structures and Practical Issues*. Canon Law Society of America, Proceedings of the Forty-ninth Annual Convention (Nashville, Tennessee, October 12-15, 1987), p. 72.

¹⁴¹ *The Canon Law. Letter & Spirit, op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁴² Can. 135 §1.

1) *Legislative*. Although the *legislative power* as such is reserved to the supreme authority in the Church,¹⁴³ the laity, however, by virtue of their baptism, can cooperate in their own way in the exercise of this power. Thus, like any other member of the ecclesial community, they cooperate in the legislative function of the legitimate customs, approved by the legislator.¹⁴⁴

They also cooperate in the exercise of this function at the regional or local level, for instance, by taking part in the diocesan synod, the formal diocesan legislative organ. In fact, among the members of the synod are laypersons, chosen by the pastoral council "in the manner and the number to be determined by the diocesan bishop."¹⁴⁵ The bishop may in addition invite other laypersons to participate in the diocesan synod.¹⁴⁶ The synod members —clerical and lay— do not have a deliberative vote, but only a consultative one, being the diocesan bishop *the sole legislator* in the synod.¹⁴⁷ In spite of this limitation, the official presence of lay persons is a significant step forward. The previous Code did not provide for lay delegates to the synod.

Similarly, members of the laity may also be invited to participate in particular councils, also with consultative voice.¹⁴⁸ Again, this presence was not provided for in the 1917 Code.

2) *Judicial*. The position of laypersons on the Church's tribunals has been considerably enhanced with the new legislation.

¹⁴³ "Legislative power is to be exercised in the manner prescribed by law; that which in the Church a legislator lower than the supreme authority has, cannot be delegated, unless the law explicitly provides otherwise. A lower legislator cannot validly make a law which is contrary to that of a higher legislator" (Can. 135 §2).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Can. 23.

¹⁴⁵ Canon 463 §1, 5°.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Canon 463 §2. Even members of other Churches may be invited as observers (Cf. Canon 463 §3).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Canon 466.

¹⁴⁸ Can. 443 §3.

Offices that were previously reserved to clerics are now open to all the faithful, both men and women.¹⁴⁹ Actually, only the office of judicial vicar and his assistant are reserved to clerics.¹⁵⁰

Thus, in addition to advocates, who previously could be laypersons, the functions of notary,¹⁵¹ defender of the bond,¹⁵² promoter of justice,¹⁵³ auditor,¹⁵⁴ assessor¹⁵⁵ and judge¹⁵⁶ are now available to the laity. The presence of laypersons in these areas may exert a very innovative influence on the lives of many of the faithful. Obviously, competency is a must: referring in particular to judges, the Code states that they "are to be of good repute, and possess a doctorate, or at least a licentiate, in canon law."¹⁵⁷

The possibility of having the laity as judges in ecclesiastical tribunals is a major change from the previous Code. The present norm, first introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1971,¹⁵⁸ establishes that "the Bishops' Conference can permit that lay persons also be appointed judges"; adding that "where necessity suggests, one of these can be chosen in forming a college of judges."¹⁵⁹

¹⁴⁹ The old Code barred lay persons from sitting in ecclesiastical tribunals as judges (cf. c. 1574). This was based on the commonly accepted assumption that only those in holy orders were capable of the power of governance or jurisdiction. Today, lay persons may be admitted to cooperate or share in the exercise of the power of jurisdiction (cf. c. 129 §2) and can therefore, be involved in functions heretofore reserved to clerics, e.g. as judges in a collegiate tribunal (cf. can. 1421 §2).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Can. 1420 §4.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Can. 1437.

¹⁵² Cf. Can. 1435.

¹⁵³ Cf. Can. 1435.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Can. 1428.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Can. 1424.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Can. 1421.

¹⁵⁷ Can. 1421 §3.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Causas Matrimoniales* n.V §1. See *Communicationes* 10 (1978) 231 at can. 20 §1; 16 (1984) 54-55 at can. 1373 § 2.

¹⁵⁹ Can. 1421 §2.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has allowed diocesan bishops (and those who are ranked equal to them in law) to recommend lay persons to be appointed judges in the ecclesiastical tribunals, on condition there is a shortage of qualified clerics for the job, that the candidates are "Catholics of unimpaired reputation" and technically prepared having a doctorate or at least a licentiate in canon law. The licentiate requirement may be waived in special instances but only in favor of persons experts in civil law and with at least a three year experience in ecclesiastical courts.¹⁶⁰

3) *Executive*. At the executive or administrative level lay people, by virtue always of their baptism, are also called on to exercise their common priesthood and to cooperate in their own way in the exercise of this power. This role will be carried out primarily at the diocesan and parochial levels.

At the diocesan level, the presence of the laity may be felt in several councils, boards and commissions, such as:

(a) *The diocesan pastoral council*. This is an optional body, whose duty is to study and weigh those matters which concern the pastoral works in the diocese, and to propose practical conclusions concerning them."¹⁶¹ Lay members are to be assigned also to it, so that the council "truly reflects the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese."¹⁶² The law requires that they be "outstanding in firm faith, high moral standards and prudence."¹⁶³ The bishop is free to establish such a council, in so far as pastoral circumstances suggest.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. CB, Prot. n. 35/84 in F. Testera, *op. tit.*, pp. 168-169. The Conference's norm end with a restriction, namely, that "lay persons cannot sit as judges in cases against clerics, or in cases concerning the declaration or imposition of interdict or excommunication" (*ib.*, p. 69).

¹⁶¹ Can. 511.

¹⁶² Can. 512 §2.

¹⁶³ Can. 513 §3.

(b) *The Committee for economic matters.* Each diocese is to establish a committee for economic matters, comprising at least three members who are experts in financial and legal matters, and of outstanding integrity.¹⁶⁴ All such members, appointed by the Bishop for terms of five years, may be lay persons. This committee, whose establishment is a requirement of the law, not an option, must be consulted before any taxes for the needs of the diocese are levied,¹⁶⁵ before acts of administration of major importance are carried out,¹⁶⁶ when determining what acts go beyond the limits and manner of ordinary administration,¹⁶⁷ for the investment of funds,¹⁶⁸ and even when a bishop has to reduce certain obligations arising from a will.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, the council must give its consent for certain acts of alienation.¹⁷⁰ Along with these and other prescribed general functions, the council can also play an important advisory role in temporal matters.

(c) *The Diocesan treasurer.* The function of diocesan treasurer needs not be a cleric, as long as whoever is appointed is an expert in financial matters and of truly outstanding integrity¹⁷¹ and fulfills the general criteria for ecclesial office.¹⁷² The financial administrator, appointed for fixed terms of five years, may indeed be clerical or lay, male or female. As an administrator, the task is not so much to make policy decisions as to carry out the policies already established, to make payments in accordance with the budget policy, and administer the funds on a day-to-day basis. It

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Can. 492

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Can. 1263.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Can. 1277.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Can. 1281.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Can. 1305.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Can. 1310. The bishop is no longer considered the sole administrator of the diocesan temporal goods.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Can. 1292.

¹⁷¹ Can. 494.

¹⁷² See Can. 149 §1.

is the administrator's responsibility to ensure that proper accounts are kept and laid before the committee at the end of the financial year. The administrator's basic responsibility is to manage the diocesan funds in accordance with canon law.¹⁷³

(d) *The chancellor.* The office of the chancellor is a very important one, as indicated by the fact that it is mandatory, and by the provision that he/she may, if necessary, be given an assistant.¹⁷⁴ The chancellor may, but need not, be a cleric: in principle a lay man or woman may be, and nowadays not infrequently is appointed. It is important, however, to distinguish the office of chancellor as described in the Code from that found in some dioceses, where the chancellor's role is closer to that of a vicar general or an episcopal vicar than to other offices.¹⁷⁵ Only a priest may be vicar general or episcopal vicar."¹⁷⁶

At the parochial level, the presence of the laity may likewise be felt in similar councils, boards and commissions, such as:

(1) *Parochial pastoral councils.* "If the diocesan bishop considers it opportune, a pastoral council is to be established in each parish. In this council...Christ's faithful, together with those who by virtue of their office are engaged in pastoral care in the parish, give their help in fostering pastoral action."¹⁷⁷ The Code does not enter into details regarding the composition and prerogatives of the council except to say that the members assist the pastor in promoting the pastoral activities of the parish and in providing assistance.

(2) *Parochial finance committee.* In each parish there is to be a finance committee to help the parish priest in the adminis-

¹⁷³ Cf. Can. 1275ff. See *The Canon Law. Letter & Spirit, op. cit.*, p. 722-723.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Can. 482.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. F. G. Morrissey, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

TM Cf. Can. 478.

¹⁷⁷ Can. 536.

tration of the goods of the parish.¹⁷⁸ Such a committee provides the parish priest with valuable insight and advice, so that he may act more effectively in the interests of the parish. This is another example of the call to the laity for a greater participation (responsibility) in the mission of the Church. This mission is expected to be carried out by the laity in the exercise of their apostolate in the temporal as well as the spiritual order. And it is particularly in the areas of finance and management that laymen can make their most significant contribution to the Church, for it is in this field that lay people are often better trained than priests.¹⁷⁹ Although lay persons are to be members, the law recalls that "in all juridical matters, the parish priest acts in the person of the parish, in accordance with the law."¹⁸⁰

(3) *Parish minister/team.* In exceptional circumstances, due mainly to scarcity of priests, the pastoral care of a parish could be entrusted to one or several persons who are not priests - whether clerics, religious, or lay person. "If because of a shortage of priests, the diocesan bishop has judged that a deacon, or some other person who is not a priest, or a community of persons, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish..."¹⁸¹

(4) *Other functions.* In addition to those mentioned, there are other ministries and functions the laity may exercise in connection with the life and mission of the Church. For instance, heads of

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Can. 537; PCP-II, a. 120.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. F. Testera, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁸⁰ Can. 532.

¹⁸¹ Can. 517 §2. The possibility of such participation arises from the basic fact of the sacrament of baptism. Those who are not priests cannot be entrusted with the full care of souls, but they may be given various liturgical and pastoral responsibilities within the parish. The Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest is an occasion when those entrusted with their pastoral care may exercise their ministry. Cf. B.A. Cusack - T.G. Sullivan, *Pastoral Care in Parishes Without a Pastor. Applications of Canon 517 §2.* (Washington D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1995).

apostolic movements and of charitable institutions; apostles in politics and media; promoters of Catholic schools, etc., to say nothing of other innumerable "hidden" ministries, not precisely administrative in nature, exemplified in those engaged in contemplative prayer or "prayer apostolate" and in the countless anonymous "martyrs" whose lives are a perfect witnessing to the spirit of the beatitudes.

Such a variety leads us also to a better understanding of the splendid nature of the Christian laity: "The chosen race, the King's priests, the holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pe 2:9), with the specific mission of transforming the world from within, that is, of "consecrating" the earthly realities... deputed to such a mission by baptism and confirmation!

Some Conclusions

The Church, understood by canon law in terms of communion, is succinctly described in the Code as "the People of God." All her members, by their incorporation into Christ through baptism, are entitled to take an active role in the mission of the Church: "For this reason they *participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ*. They are called, *each according to his or her particular condition*, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world." All Christians, then, share not only the dignity of Christ but also his mission. But it is done "in their own way" and "according to their particular condition."

In the Church, there are sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics, and there are lay people. Drawn from both groups are those who are consecrated to God in their own special way, who are popularly known as "religious." Each group enjoys a peculiar, unique state recognized by the Church.

In these pages we have zeroed in our attention on the present status of the laity in the Church from the canonical point of view. Two aspects of the nature and life of the laity have been the object of our attention: their rights and obligations, and their participation in the threefold mission of the Church. As a way of conclusion, I add a few remarks that may have the resemblance of some practical guidelines for future action.

1) *Respect for the rights of the laity.* The rights of the faithful in general and of the laity in particular are to be respected. A careful study of the canons of the present Code reveals that much more attention has been given to the laity and to their rights and corresponding obligations in the Church than was the case with the previous Code. The canonical provisions regarding the Sacraments, for instance, involve the right of the faithful to receive them in accordance with their nature and purpose of sanctification, willed by Christ. A strict observance of such provisions is urged at all levels. Canon law calls for a prudent recognition of the rights of all the members of the people of God. This should not be envisaged as a threat to clerical independence or as a surrender of prerogatives, but rather as a special grace given to the Church at this time.

2) *Active lay participation.* The laity are to be encouraged not only to assume leadership in the family life ministry, but also to actively participate in the life of the Church, through associations and ministries proper to them at both diocesan and parochial levels. Although final decision-making still in most cases remains a prerogative of clerics, many of such decisions are to be made in consultation with the laity. The Code repeatedly tells pastors to get the valuable assistance of lay persons, reminding them furthermore that in varying ways lay people share in the Church's threefold mission of teaching, sanctifying, and governing. Any attempt to identify the Church with the hierarchy, or even with the clergy as a whole, would be contrary to the very teaching of the Church and to its legislation. This presents a new challenge for all.

3) *Common priesthood and ministerial priesthood.* To attain a harmonic development of the Church's life, as organic communion, the acceptance of the different nature of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood is necessary, respecting consequently the diversity of functions defined also in the Code, of the sacred ministers (in law called clerics) and the laity, avoiding both the "clergyization" of the laity and the "laityzation" of the clergy.

4) *Ecclesiastical Tribunal Personnel.* Bishops, clergy and laity alike should realize the importance of the matrimonial tribunal ministry in their respective dioceses. Consequently, they should support their establishment and operation. The preparation of adequate personnel, priests and laypersons, for the purpose has to be a priority, since ecclesiastical tribunals, in order to operate properly in the administration of justice, need to count on personnel specifically trained and apt. Only thus judicial activity, "integrated with a truly pastoral attitude and placed at the service of the truth," could be seen as a ministry in the light of the Gospel and of the Church Magisterium.

5) *Studies in canon law by the laity.* Local Ordinaries and clergy are left today with no other alternative but to encourage and facilitate some selected members of the laity (lay religious as well) to enroll in formal canon law courses, in order to acquire the proper academic degrees: doctorate or at least licenciante in canon law. This is not charity, but justice, for the laity are to certain extent entitled to this higher formation as well as to be equipped with the required qualifications, in line with the CBCP's recommendation for lay persons to be appointed judges in the ecclesiastical tribunals. At the bottom of it, however, people need help to understand that canon law is part of the Church's patrimony; that canonical norms, by avoiding arbitrariness, take on the work of justice in the protection of rights as well as in the determination of duties; and, finally, that canon law is a valuable means for every person to live in the Church his or her vocation to salvation...

A great challenge indeed represents for us what we are seeing with our own eyes: the emergence in the Church of a mature, well-prepared, responsible lay people, committed and directly involved in carrying out the mission entrusted by the Lord to his followers.

Mission: Telling God's Story

JAMES KROEGER, MM*

"This signal event is our first step as a local Church into the Third Millennium." With these words, Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD, inaugurated a pivotal event in the life of the Philippine Church - the first National Mission Congress. The congress was projected to be, in Bishop Manuel's words, "a fitting culminating activity to end three years of intense preparation for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000."

The bishop, who is Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Missions, continued, "'Rejoice in the Lord, I say it again, rejoice' Saint Paul exhorted the Philippians. Let joy and rejoicing in the Lord be the pervading atmosphere and integrating mood of the congress." His words proved prophetic. "Cebu 2000," as the congress was popularly called, became a celebration of the

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Philippine Church, her faith, and her vocation-to-mission. The five-day congress (September 27-October 1, 2000), nearly two years in preparation, with its 2,300 delegates, proved to be a truly unique event for Asia's largest local Church in the Jubilee Year 2000.

This piece approaches the mission congress through a particular optic; it explores several key mission themes that emerged during the congress. These themes help unfold the reality and agenda of mission in the contemporary context of the Philippines and Asia.

Narrative Missiology. Story-telling in faith was the integrating methodology of the mission congress. This approach, employed by speakers, workshop coordinators, homilists and participants, emerges from the conviction that mission, at heart, means "Telling God's Story," God's love story, a love made personal and incarnate, the Jesus story; it is a story of great compassion and mercy, a salvation story.

Papal Legate, John Baptist Cardinal Wu of Hong Kong, noted that story-telling is a very biblical approach for conveying the message of divine truth and love. He recalled the fact that Jesus, the very source of mission, was a story-teller, constantly using parables to convey the exigencies of the kingdom. Jesus often answered both theoretical and practical questions (Who is my neighbor?) with stories like *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:30-37).

Cardinal Wu recalled that "missionaries have always told the story of their experience in preaching the Gospel. At the Council of Jerusalem, Peter told the story of his encounter with Cornelius. On his visits to Jerusalem, Paul recounted the story of the way in which the Gentiles received the faith. Francis Xavier wanted to run through the Universities of Europe, telling the story of his encounter with Asia and its millions of peoples waiting to receive the liberating truth of Christ."

Contemporary missionaries continue telling the story of Jesus in diverse contexts and challenging situations. Congress participants heard Bob McCahill, MM, narrate inspiring stories of encounter and service with Muslims in Bangladesh. Pio Estepa, SVD, recalled his mission experiences in Zaire, Latin America, and Oceania. Philippine mission narratives were recounted by Ruben Gomez, OMI, Louis Hechanova, CSsR, and former president Corazon C. Aquino. And, there were many more stories told and waiting to be told.

The "narrative missiology" served the congress and its participants well. It genuinely communicated, it inspired, it brought laughter, it engendered joyful enthusiasm, it strengthened faith, it elicited commitment. Story served as the vehicle to present and explain the many diverse dimensions of integral mission. Throughout the entire congress God's love story and the speakers' mission narratives became interwoven with the participants' own personal story of faith, love, and committed service. Everything served to create a new narrative — the "Cebu Story."

Jubilee Theme of Incarnation. The mission congress, a pivotal event in the Jubilee celebrations of the Philippine Church, explored the meaning of mission from within the Jubilee Year context, its grace and demands. What picture of mission emerges when it is viewed through the optic of the Incarnation of the Word of God?

Incarnational mission affirms, as Luis "Chito" Tagle explained, "God's total engagement in the lives and histories of human beings. The incarnation reveals a God who is not distant from humanity, but one who is near and in solidarity with humanity...." In the incarnate Word, as *Ecclesia in Asia* (11) notes, "Divine compassion has never been so immediately accessible." Seeing God as close to humans enables humans to be close to one another. Mission centers on enabling sharing, personal closeness,

and community to happen — among Christians as well as among people of all living faiths.

In Jesus, missionary of the Father, one finds a unique "style" of presence among us, a kenotic incarnation. In Jesus' self-emptying, both God and humanity are revealed. Christians are called to be symbols of the self-effacing God they believe in. A kenotic God is seen in kenotic humans. *Kenosis* reveals the true face of God as well as the true face of humanity.

Contemporary mission, therefore, becomes servanthood. The missionary adopts, incarnates the "servant mind" of Jesus; this becomes, as Daniel Huang portrayed, the heart of missionary spirituality. It involves "self-forgetfulness, self-emptying, self-gift, dying — to comfort, to security, to privilege — for the sake of life.... [it means] ultimately to live a life of life-giving dying." The Jubilee Year of the Incarnation renews Christian mission by enabling the rediscovery of the face of Jesus — God's incarnate, kenotic Son.

Celebration of Faith. The mission congress — even in its inception — was envisioned to be an expression of faith. In the Philippine Bishops' pastoral letter on mission (July 5, 2000) they noted: "It is clear that the challenge of proclaiming Christ in Asia is a summons addressed *first of all* to us [Filipinos], to share the gift of faith that we ourselves received."

"Cebu 2000" included many manifestations of faith: daily prayers and Eucharistic liturgies, the prayer-vigil and faith-testimonies organized by the youth of Cebu, the pilgrimages to Cebu's churches, holy doors, and religious sites. Many participants testified that the congress was an "explosion" of the faith in their minds and hearts. One parish delegate from Manila said: "I had not expected to be so moved and my faith so greatly renewed. The congress was a gift to me...."

For most delegates, the highpoint of the Congress was the joyful mission-sending ceremony integrated into the closing Eucharist; Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, presided over this most meaningful ritual. Each missionary received their mission cross: "Receive this sign of Christ's love and of our faith. Preach Christ crucified, who is the power and wisdom of God." The homilist gave a succinct challenge to all: "Filipinos everywhere! Learn your Faith, Live your Faith, Share your faith."

Vocation-to-Mission. The Cebu congress as well as the Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Mission emphasize the unique role of the Philippine Church for mission in Asia. A renewed mission response by Catholic Filipinos at this time in history is viewed as a *kairos*, a true hour of grace; there is a new insistence and urgency to fulfill the Lord's mission mandate and to "tell the world of His love."

All the popes, at least from Pius XI to the present, have spoken of this Philippine vocation-to-mission. During his 1981 Philippine visit Pope John Paul II declared: "I wish to tell you of my special desire: that the Filipinos will become the foremost missionaries of the Church in Asia." In 1995 in Manila during the World Youth Day, the Holy Father renewed the invitation for Catholics to proclaim Christ, his Gospel, and his love to Asia.

Mission statistics add urgency to the desired response of Filipino Catholics, since they represent well over 50% of all Asian Catholics. Asia, the vast continent of 60% of humanity, contains 85% of the world's non-Christians. The Lord asks: "Whom shall I send?" Frequently during the congress the delegates prayed together: "He we are, Lord Jesus, send us in your Name."

The congress final statement affirms that this "vocation-to-mission" will be realized both within the Philippines and also *ad*

gentes, to the peoples of the great continent of Asia and beyond. This vocational commitment was concretized — with profound impact — in the "mission-sending ritual" at the conclusion of the congress: women and men missionaries were commissioned and sent forth; the assembled delegates applauded, sprinkled flowers, sang with gusto, and prayed for the departing missionaries: "Lord, look kindly on your servants we send forth as messengers of salvation and peace.... Guide their steps.... Make their words the echo of Christ's voice.... Fill the hearts of your missionaries with the Holy Spirit."

Integral Evangelization. Mission today is understood — and implemented — in a comprehensive, holistic, integral manner; this means, to quote Pope Paul VI, that evangelization will bring "the Good News into all strata of humanity" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 18). The congress aimed at presenting all the different components of integral evangelization: (a) Witness of Christian Life; (b) Service of Humanity; (c) Interreligious Dialogue and Inculturation; (d) Explicit Gospel Proclamation; and, (e) Prayer, Contemplation, Liturgy and Sacraments.

Major presentations on each of these essential topics were given by *de facto* missionaries from at home and abroad. They narrated their mission stories and experiences — how they proclaim the Jesus story in a variety of life situations, among peoples of different faiths and cultures. These narratives were enhanced by deep faith insights, emerging from an integration of the missionary's own experience and reflection. Twenty specialized workshops held on the afternoons of the congress enabled further delegate participation and exploration of diverse themes — all directed to an "integral" understanding of contemporary mission.

Communion of Saints. A unique element of the "Cebu Story" would be missing if one did not appreciate the role and presence of the whole missionary Church — including the saints in glory.

Significant congress events were held at the Santo Nino Pilgrim Center, adjacent to the famous Basilica de Santo Nino; all delegates revered the Santo Nino image as they entered the assembly hall.

Filipino's love for Mother Mary manifested itself readily during the congress. As the *pueblo amante de Maria*, the local Church appreciates Mary's role as the "Morning Star of Evangelization," active in the history of the Philippines. Cardinal Sin noted in his Eucharistic homily that "Our [Filipinos] special gift in mission will be our love of Our blessed Lady." He prayed: "Teach us, each according to his or her own calling, to say *Yes* to your Son, in the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Francis Xavier and Therese of Lisieux, the co-patrons of mission, were present to the congress in a unique way. First-class relics of these missionary saints were secured especially for the congress; they were prominently displayed in a reliquary, along with medallions of Lorenzo Ruiz and Pedro Calungsod. By felicitous planning the final day of the congress was Sunday, October 1, Saint Therese's feastday. Cardinal Wu spoke movingly of the contemplative dimension of mission in his homily at the closing Eucharist; he challenged all delegates to "think globally, act locally, and live contemplatively."

Saint Lorenzo Ruiz's feastday fortuitously fell on the second day of the congress (September 28). His faith-witness in Japan was recalled: "I am a Christian and I will remain so until the hour of my death.... I would rather die a thousand deaths than renounce my faith." Ruiz's life and martyrdom challenged congress delegates: "To die for the faith is a gift to some, to live the faith is a call to all."

The presence of Blessed Pedro Calungsod, noble son of the Church of Cebu, permeated the congress. His March 5, 2000 beatification, the first of the Jubilee Year, remained fresh in the

people's minds. Everyone rejoiced and recalled how "Beato Pedro," the virtual unknown, seemed to dash from behind and arrive at the frontline for his beatification. Cardinal Vidal asked congress delegates to regard Calungsod as "our model and example of a true missionary."

Joyful Evangelizers. Without doubt, the mission congress unfolded in an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Bishop Manuel, overall congress chairman, noted how "the happy, festive atmosphere of the congress was contagious." Catechists, laity, priests, nuns, and bishops enjoyed their travel to Cebu (many for the first time); everyone met old friends and even relatives; authentic Filipino hospitality was abundant; the first evening was given over to a dramatic presentation on the life of Pedro Calungsod, and the last evening was highlighted by a "barrio fiesta" at the residence of Cardinal Vidal — complete with song, dance, lechon, and a variety program.

Pope Paul VI always emphasized the need for "joyful evangelizers" to effectively spread the Good News. "Cebu 2000" captured and expressed the "joy of mission"; an infectious celebratory atmosphere was pervasive. For several foreign visitors — especially those from Rome — the joyful, yet prayerful, enthusiasm was unique among mission congresses. Indeed, happy, joy-filled missionaries are gifts from God!

The "Cebu Story." The written word fails to adequately capture and convey all the diversity and richness that comprised the first-ever Philippine National Mission Congress. "Cebu 2000," blessed with the Lord's abundant grace, enriched with the intercession of Mary, Queen of Missions and Mother of Asian Peoples, was a gift — a truly generous gift — to the Church in the Philippines.

Congress delegates, representing every ecclesiastical circumscription in the Philippines, religious women and men, laity and lay movements, especially the youth, departed from Cebu — with joyful hearts. For them, the "hour of mission" had sounded; it rang out loud and clear — a *kairos*, a most opportune moment to renew missionary commitment by word, by worship, by witness, by work! -The moment of departure became a personal "going forth" in deed and in truth."

"Cebu 2000" stands at the beginning of a new millennium, a new age in mission, a time of renewed commitment to Pope John Paul II's dream: "that Filipinos will become the foremost missionaries of the Church in Asia"!

Sharing from a Jubilarian*

NILO PEIG, JCD

I have often been asked how it feels to be 25 years old as a priest. It may be easier to describe how I do not feel.

After 25 years, I do not feel tired of the priesthood. Not too much, if ever. People may have gotten tired of me. That is the price for longevity. And there are times, increasingly becoming frequent these past years, when my temper is shorter and my patience, thinner and my workload, lesser and my output, smaller. But I console myself that these are the necessary consequences of the process of ageing. My biological clock is inexorably ticking. The spirit continues to be willing, but the flesh is getting weaker.

After 25 years, I do not feel frustrated with the priesthood. Not very, if ever. I continue to find pleasure in my life, fulfillment in my work, satisfaction in my relationships. I believe that through these 25 years, I have generally enjoyed the confidence of my bishops, the companionship of my confreres, the cooperation of my staff and the respect of the people. Of course, these may all be wistful thinking on my part. Feelings are not always mutual. But as the song says: "I can dream, can I?"

* A homily delivered by the author on the 25th anniversary of his priesthood, March 25, 2001.

After 25 years, I do not feel burnt-out in the priesthood. Not yet, if ever. There are occasions when I feel exhausted and drained. But I continue to find purpose for my ministry. I continue to feel needed and useful. And I continue to see a role for myself, no matter how small, in the work of the Church and in the service of God.

There is a story about the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was trying to discern her vocation. She asked her spiritual director what to do. And her spiritual director gave her only one advice: Let joy be your compass. Where you find happiness directing you, there you go. Of course, Mother Teresa, saint as she is, managed to find happiness wherever she was. I am neither Mother Teresa nor a saint. But I also try to find whatever consolation there is in whatever I am assigned to do, whether I am constructing a commercial building without experience or gaining experience in negotiating with accident victims. I continue to find joy in my priesthood. And I thank God for making it so.

And that would describe precisely how I feel after 25 years as a priest. Just one adjective: grateful.

Grateful to our family, especially my mother, whose prayers and support sustained me all these years in the priesthood. Grateful to the bishops I have served and the priests and religious who have served with me. Grateful to the people whom I had the privilege to work for and to work with throughout these 25 years.

But above all, grateful to God: first, for calling me to the priesthood; second, for choosing me to be a priest and most important, for tolerating me as a priest, all these 25 years. St. Paul, in that passage I have selected from his First Letter to the Corinthians (1:26-31), says it all: "Look and see whom God has called. He has chosen what the world considers foolish, what the world considers weak, common and unimportant people so that no mortal may boast before God."

I have sometimes wondered: if I were God, would I have called and chosen me? For all my self-esteem, which is considerable, I wouldn't bet on it. This paradoxically is both the ground for my humility and the summit of my pride: knowing what I was, knowing what I am, knowing from all eternity what I would become, still God said: Come.

That is why on my 25th year, I have the same problem as the Prophet Micah (6:6-8) in the First Reading. How will I thank the Lord? What shall I bring when I bow before him in thanksgiving? Everything has been grace, unmerited favor, undeserved privilege. Regrettably, my responses have often been wanting, resulting in God's love being many times unrequited, his favors oftentimes unreturned.

In the end, all I can offer to God now is what I have offered Him 25 years ago: myself, nothing more, nothing less but also nothing else; a little more cynical, as the Bishop can attest; a little more sarcastic, as my confreres experience, a little more impatient, as my staff realize, but no less enthusiastic, as God in heaven knows. In the lyrics of an old song: "Today, I may not have a thing at all, except for just a dream or two. But I've got lots of plans for tomorrow and all my tomorrows belong to you."

Of course, I also realize that God has not been totally shortchanged by me. I have done my best, as canon 1025, par. 2 says, to be beneficial to the ministry of the Church, be it in handling parishes or in administering offices, whether I am caring for persons or taking care of papers. Still at the end of the day, all I can say is what the Gospel (Lk. 17:7-10) reminds us of: "When you have done all that you have been told to do, you must say: We are no more than servants; we have only done our duty."

25 years ago, like all the priests here present, I took what the American poet Robert Frost described as the road less traveled.

By God's mercy and your prayers, I am still traveling that road: sometimes running; other times, stumbling. Even the runner stumbles. It has been a journey of many surprises with its share of personal accidents, wandering and getting lost. But by God's grace and your help, I have not gone off that road, not yet, and if I can help it, never will. After all, it has made all the difference in my life.

So after a quarter of a century as a priest, what now? I do not know what the future holds. But I know who holds my future. And I am sure I am in good hands. I pray that God will be as caring for you as He has been for me these past 25 years. As we used to sing with gusto when we were young theologians at UST, may God continue to keep us in beauty and truth and virtues' impassioned embrace, ever his valiant legions, imbued with unending grace. Thank you.

Cases & Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

SECRET CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

I am a widower, 71 years old. I am keeping an intimate relationship with a widow who is a N.N. pensioner. We would have wanted to get married but if we do so, her pension will cease and she is supporting two daughters.

I have heard about the so-called "Marriage in Conscience" which gives the sacred effects on the contracting couple. I am interested to have this kind of marriage so that both of us can receive the sacraments and in order to avoid scandal since I am a religious leader in our parish.

Please let me know if we can have such marriage in conscience and what are the conditions. In due time, when the daughters are gainfully employed, we intend to legalize our marriage.

From time to time we hear of "secret marriages" being celebrated in the (Catholic) Church. Actually, there is not such a thing as "secret marriage" since every marriage is a "public" affair. What can be secret in some particular instances is its celebration.

In fact, it is well known that the Catholic Church, in her legislation on marriage, contemplates the possibility of having a *secret celebration* of marriage. We read in canon 1130 that "*for a grave and urgent reason, the local Ordinary may permit that a marriage be celebrated in secret.*"

What are those "grave and urgent" reasons that may justify such a celebration?

Before giving our opinion on the present case, let us review the provisions of the Church on this matter.

1. What does justify a Secret Celebration of Marriage?

As a rule, marriages of Catholics are to be contracted in the church, in the presence of the parish priest (or of a priest or deacon delegated) and of two witnesses, before the congregation of faithful, i.e., publicly. However, as we have just said, "*for a grave and urgent reason, the local Ordinary may permit that a marriage be celebrated in secret.*" (can. 1130)

Several things can be said regarding the mentioned provision, namely:

1) In the first place a marriage "celebrated in secret" is not a "clandestine" marriage. Unlike the clandestine marriage (of which no proof exists in the external forum), the secret marriage is celebrated according to the canonical form, although in secret, that is, without the usual publicity. These marriages are very exceptional; therefore, require not only permission from the local Ordinary, but also *a grave and urgent reason*.

2) The secret celebration of a marriage is allowed, *not by the parish priest* but only by the local Ordinary of the place where the marriage will be celebrated.

The parish priest who endorses the case to the local Ordinary for approval, should bear in mind the norm issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for all marriages, that "no parish priest will solemnize a marriage of persons who do not belong to his parish by reason of domicile, quasi-domicile or residence of at least one month, without the written permission of the local Ordinary or of the parish priest, as provided in can. 1115." The reason is obvious. If such norm is to be observed when the celebration of marriage is public, with a greater reason it should be observed in the case of a marriage celebrated in secret. How could a parish priest endorse for approval by the local Ordinary a secret celebration of marriage, when he does not even know the contracting parties? The parish priest will have to give complete information to the local Ordinary about the "grave and urgent reasons" that may justify the secret celebration of marriage.

3) The *grave and urgent reasons* which may justify the secret celebration of marriage are among others the following according to experts in the matter:

- a) The dispensation of an occult impediment;
- b) The existence of concubinage of persons publicly regarded as husband and wife: the public celebration of their marriage would cause scandal to the faithful;
- c) The loss of employment or social and civil privileges enjoyed by a widow or widower with children, if the celebration of marriage is made public and known by the employer or agency granting the privileges;
- d) The disparate social condition of the contracting parties;
- e) The unreasonable opposition of the parents;
- f) The prohibition of marriage imposed by civil law, if the

prohibition is contrary to natural or ecclesiastical law. "With regards to reasons deriving from restrictions of civil law, the spirit of the canonical legislation is to avoid any fraud against civil law; hence permission is seldom given in these cases, and then only for serious reasons related to *salus animarum*." (W. Paguio, *Marriage*, Manila, 1992, p. 468). Parish priests are aware of the provision of canon 1071: "Except in a case of necessity, no one is to assist without the permission of the local Ordinary at: [...] 2° a marriage which cannot be recognized by the civil law or celebrated in accordance with it";

g) Marriages in countries where the Church is persecuted and religious marriages are forbidden, and provided that the non-celebration of the marriage could result in danger of incontinence, or grave moral or economic damages.

2. Secret pre-nuptial Investigations

The law of the Church elaborates: "*Permission to celebrate a marriage in secret involves: 1° that the investigations to be made before the marriage are carried out in secret;...*" (c. 1131)

The fact that permission has been given for a marriage to be celebrated in secret in no way absolves the priest or deacon involved from conducting the required investigations intended to establish the freedom of the parties to marry. Canon 1066 states categorically: "Before a marriage takes place, it must be established that nothing stands in the way of its valid and lawful celebration."

The certitude that no hindrance will impede the marriage validity and lawfulness must be supported by positive and morally valid arguments, not by mere conjectures or negative arguments. Mere probability is not enough. The Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments maintains the earnest request it issued to local Ordinaries on this matter: "Let the local Ordinaries remind the parish

priests that it is not lawful to assist at a marriage, not even with the intention of preventing the couple from living in shameful concubinage or from causing scandal for getting married civilly, unless they have a legitimate proof on the freedom of the contracting parties, keeping what is prescribed by law" (*Instr.* July 4, 1921: AAS XIII, 1921, p. 348).

The pre-nuptial investigation is to be conducted in all cases, even if the contracting parties are good parishioners and well known by the parish priest. Such pre-nuptial investigation is the prescribed legal way for the one who is to assist at a marriage to be convinced personally that the parties are in fact free to marry: "One who assists at a marriage acts unlawfully unless he has satisfied himself of the parties' freedom to marry in accordance with the law." (c. 1114).

Great prudence and ability have to be shown in all cases in conducting the pre-nuptial investigation by the parish priest. This is particularly true when, like in our case, the investigations are carried out in secret, after having obtained permission to celebrate u. marriage in secret. It is then when the parish priest needs great acumen, perspicacity and mental alertness to detect whether the parties give him the real situation in which they live or exaggerate the same in order to win his sympathy and go ahead with the secret celebration of their marriage. Hence, the parish priest should conduct the investigation of the contracting parties "cautiously and separately and with regard to their circumstances." Obviously, the couple should be told from the beginning that everything regarding the investigation is to be kept absolutely secret.

3. Secrecy about the Celebration

The secret celebration of marriage brings with it the absolute abstention from any kind of announcement of the marriage, before

and after its celebration. To do otherwise would be a contradiction. Hence, no publication of banns takes place in the church, orally or in writing; no announcement in the press; no invitation to relatives or close friends to a social celebration after the wedding... Marriages celebrated in secret are not to be entered in the ordinary parish register of marriages, but in a special register for such marriages, which is to be kept in the secret archive of the diocesan curia: "*A marriage celebrated in secret is to be recorded only in a special register which is to be kept in the secret archive of the curia*" (c. 1133).

Great care is to be taken by those bound to keep the secrecy in order to preserve it. Who are they? According to the law, the secret binds the following persons: the local Ordinary, whoever assists at the marriage, the witnesses and the spouses" (cf c. 1131, 2°).

The obligation of secrecy ceases for the local Ordinary "if from its observance a threat arises of grave scandal or of grave harm to the sanctity of marriage. This fact is to be made known to the parties before the celebration of the marriage" (c. 1132).

The spouses themselves are bound to keep the secrecy. Actually, such secrecy is meant most of the times for their own protection. If however both of them should freely decide together to make known the fact of their marriage, all the others are released from the obligation.

4. The Celebration of Marriage

The secret marriage is to be celebrated following the canonical form prescribed in canon 1108, that is, "...in the presence of the local Ordinary or parish priest or of the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who, in the presence of two witnesses, assists." Hence, five persons only are present during the celebration: the

local Ordinary or person authorized to assist, two witnesses and the two contracting parties.

The liturgical performance is the one established in the ritual for marriage celebration.

With regards to the two witnesses it is the local Ordinary who has the right to choose the persons who according to his own judgment are able to understand the responsibility to faithfully keep the secrecy required by this kind of marriage. Needless to say that he may delegate the parish priest the faculty to choose and appoint the two witnesses among the most practical parishioners.

5. Our opinion on the present case

My personal opinion on the present "Marriage in Conscience" case presented by our reader is the following:

Assuming the veracity of all the alleged circumstances and the honest-to-goodness intention of legalizing their marriage in due time, I think that this is one of the instances where the secret celebration of marriage would be morally justified and where the secret celebration of marriage would be a proper thing to do. In spite of some legal restrictions, the spirit of the canonical legislation of avoiding fraud against civil law seems to be safeguarded and besides there is a serious reason related to the *salus animarum*, which, by the way, the Church has always considered as her supreme law. Obviously, due discretion would have to be observed in the procedure, particularly by the local Ordinary, who will be the one to grant permission and who will have the last word on the matter.

Homilies for November-December 2001

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

November 1, 2001

AH Saints

(Readings: Apoc 7:2-4, 9-14/1 Jn 3:1-3/Mt 5:1-12)

The celebration of today's feast of All Saints and the three readings of today's Mass invites us to reflect on, to taste the joys of, and to accept the responsibilities of our church membership. God has willed this church from all eternity, Jesus Christ founded it in time, and the Holy Spirit guides it throughout the ages.

That you are now Christians, that you are members of the community God has gathered to himself to share in his life and glory, is something you can turn over and over again in your mind. And you will discover, to your amazement and happiness, its manifold riches and implications.

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

You should welcome all occasions, helps and possibilities that could increase your understanding and appreciation of being a Christian, i.e. of being a church member. The celebration today of the feast of All Saints is one such occasion.

By the word "celebration" we usually mean the Holy Mass that takes place, in which the Word of God is proclaimed and explained, and the body and blood of Jesus is offered and partaken, and God's presence to the gathered Christians is experienced. In passing, I'd like to say that those Catholics who seldom or never go to Mass, or keep away from Holy Communion, are missing quite a lot of things, to say the least.

But let us say something about today's three bible readings. All three speak about throngs of people, crowds of humans, assemblage of disciples, gatherings of persons, concourse of households. Surely, you must know something about crowd psychology, bandwagon mentality, group dynamics and the like. You must know how sheer numbers can generate explosions of enthusiasm, cheer, optimism and strength. Those Catholics who keep to themselves alone and never bother to join their brethren in public worship and religious gatherings like the sacrifice of the Mass, do not experience the feelings just mentioned.

Going back to the three bible readings, what seems to stand out clearly from the above-mentioned throngs, crowds, assemblage of peoples gathered in God's presence, is their unity and spontaneousness in expressing praise and admiration of their Creator and Savior. Coming from diverse origins, background and status, they form one community adoring their Lord forever.

It can be asked whether the assemblage of peoples the first reading so eloquently describes refer only to the saints in heaven. Is today's Feast of All Saints dedicated exclusively to the honor of those Christians who finally made it to heaven? What do experts

say about this? According to them, the 144,000 persons that were marked with the seal of God represent symbolically the Christians on earth who still have to struggle and need the protection of God.

In addition to this, the common-sense theology of our Filipino Catholics has joined the Commemoration of the departed souls to this Feast of All Saints. Hence, actually the *Todos los Santos* celebration involves not only the Christians already in heaven, but also the Christians on earth and the Christians in purgatory. The celebration is a public worship of God participated indeed by countless throngs, crowds, gatherings, assemblies, and concourse of angels and humans.

If the Christians on earth are also involved in this great celebration of Feast of All Saints, what kind of involvement, we may ask, is expected of them? The third reading (Gospel of Matthew) enumerates eight possible occupations or situations of Christians which, although difficult and painful in themselves will gain for their practitioners great reward from God.

Hence, these eight situations or occupations got their names in Christian theology or catechism as the eight beatitudes or blessedness. It will be good for us to find out if we are in one or other of these situations, or in none of them. That will tell us whether we will receive or not an eternal reward from our heavenly Father.

Finally, the second reading (Letter of John) tells us that we Christians on earth have been marked with the seal of God through the sacrament of baptism. We are therefore his very own dear children. Yet, for the time being, we don't appear as such. But later, this will be clear, when Christ will appear again because then, we will see him just as he is.

All Souls

November 2

(Readings: Jn 14:1-6/Wis 3:1-9 [or 3:1-6,9]/Rom 6:3-9 [or 6:3-4,8-9])

Today's celebration of All Souls Day affords us the occasion to think about our dead fellow creatures, especially our dead brethren in the faith, who lie buried in cemeteries, memorial parks, under lahar cover or mud flows, or drowned in rivers and seas, or lost in vastness of mountains and hills.

We also remember the victims of natural and man-made calamities, of unforeseen and preventable accidents, of honest mistakes and inexcusable blunder. We remember also the innocent or unwilling victims of abortion, foul play, murder and mayhem.

In remembering those who have departed peacefully or otherwise from this life, we are forced to reflect on death itself, a universal law that accepts no exemption, a grim master that has prevailed upon the dead and will prevail upon the living.

The topic of death is unpleasant for some people. This is understandable inasmuch as it goes against our natural instincts and basic inclinations. But it is a topic we cannot avoid talking or thinking about. Certainly not on a day like this, or yesterday when we went visiting cemeteries and memorial parks.

Speaking about cemeteries, the few that I saw here and abroad, I was stunned by what I saw in one cemetery here in Metro Manila. I discovered that the living and the dead were sharing a common ground for shelter. It is said that many Filipinos are afraid of ghosts. But these cemetery dwellers appeared relaxed staying with the dead.

The fact that some of our living brethren are forced to seek roof and shelter among the dead is a stinging indictment against a society that permits such things to happen.

On the other hand, this living together by both the dead and those unfortunate families emerges as a symbol of enduring solidarity, such as it should be, among members made up of the same human stuff.

It is those living derelicts of society, who must seek survival in cemeteries, that are teaching us, to our embarrassment, eloquent lessons of humaneness and solidarity with the dead.

For, not infrequently, it is from the poor, the outcasts, the lowly, the scum of society, we can get words of wisdom, principles of human solidarity, examples of genuine acts of compassion. They are the ones who can stare at death in the face, who believe that dying is a part of living. In fact, it opens the door to a better life — the life that Jesus talks about in today's Gospel.

Though it has been said that dying is a part of living, yet, we tend to accept such statement. It goes so much against our basic instinct to go on and live forever. No wonder that even Martha, in today's gospel shows resistance that death could claim her beloved brother Lazarus. "Lord," she says, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died." She was suggesting that death cannot have the last word on Lazarus, and for that matter, on the rest of mankind.

In this Jesus agrees completely with Martha. For he states solemnly, "I am the resurrection and the life: whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life."

But there is more to this affirmation of Jesus Christ. For he continues to say, enigmatically it seems, "Whoever is alive and believes in me will never die." This part seems to fly against the facts. For everybody dies, whether he/she believes in Jesus or not. What does Jesus mean in saying this? Can we add, mentally at least, the adverb "permanently" so as to mean "will never die permanently"?

That would not be necessary if we take into account what is said in the first reading (Book of Wisdom). Namely, "the souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in view of the foolish, to be dead. But they are in peace."

So the just, the believers in God, really never die. For them, because they are firmly and securely in the hands of God, the living God, to whom a thousand years is but a day or a night, death is only a restful sleep, a temporary slumber. And when they awake, they rise up fresher, full of life, love and happiness forever.

November 2, 2001

All Souls

Alternative homily

(Readings: Jn 14:1-6; Wis 3:1-9 (or 3:1-6.9)/Rom 6:3-9 (or 6:3-4.8-9))

He was in his late 60's. I saw him bend his right knee, lower his body, and rest the palm of his right hand on the gravestone. He remained silent in that position for several minutes. Circumstances and duty prevented his coming from abroad to attend the burial of his mother. When he finally came, all was over. I can never forget the sight that unfolded before me, because the man in question was my own brother.

It was a gesture, an eloquent sign that death did not separate a loved one from the other. It proclaimed that the communion of affection, of memories, of prayers continues to course from one to the other through that symbolic contact of hand to gravestone and gravestone to hand. Today, in celebrating All Souls' Day, we Catholics want to express our conviction and belief that the union with our departed loved ones persists and continues. There is a passage in the Bk. of Song of Songs which says, "Love is as powerful as death. Water cannot put it out; no flood can drown

it." We will see, shortly after, that love is even more powerful than death. We will know why.

The popular notion about death, whose power no one can resist, is that the less it is mentioned, the better. It seems most people are not comfortable to think or talk about it. It is only the elderly who have it present in their mind, and even then, they greatly hope to be able to stretch their lifespan further. Man desires to live forever; it's the instinct for immortality. That is the reason for the universal interest on things and practices that are believed to promote health and physical well-being. And man also wants to appear forever young, even with the help of cosmetics. For youthfulness is for them a sign of immortality. Such is the popular opinion. At best it engenders optimism, at worst it raises false expectations, it's grossly misleading — for and in the hour of the great reckoning. The philosopher, in the book of Ecclesiastes, says, "We are no better than animals. After all, the same fate awaits man and animal alike. One dies just like the other."

But fortunately, we have the Christian persuasion over and against the popular opinion. And this is expressed in the opening words of the first reading, "The souls of the just are in the hands of God. They seemed to be dead, but they are in peace." It is God's love and their love of God that keeps them present and alive before him. Jesus once rebuked the Saducees who denied the resurrection, "You do not know the Scriptures or God's power. Have you not ever read that God said, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is the God of the living, not of the dead." So, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the just souls before them and after them, are not dead but alive before God. And this is because God loves them and they love God. That is why love is more powerful than death.

But are we not talking metaphorically? Is death not a plain fact, an evident truth, an object of experience? Just wait and see

what happens to the body, to what condition it will be reduced after death has come. How then are the dead alive? Perhaps the real question at the back of our mind is, "For how long will the dead body remain dead?" It is good to remember what Peter wrote in his second letter, "With the Lord, a thousand years is like a day." What is important for all of us is to know that our departed loved ones, soul and body (even when the latter is reduced to ashes) are in the hand of God, as today's Scripture says.

To bolster our confidence, and also to build our hope, when our own time will come, Paul explains in the second reading how and why the resurrection of the body will take place. Through baptism, we are united to the death and burial of Jesus Christ. We spiritually died and were buried with him so that we may live a new life and no longer be slaves of sin. Therefore, (and here's the punch line as they say) if we have been united with him through the likeness of his death, so shall we be united with him through a like resurrection.

As our message of hope, we can take home the words of the preface which we shall meet as we continue the Mass, "Lord, for your faithful people, life is changed, not ended (*vita mutatur non tollitur*, as the Latin original beautifully and tersely expresses). When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.

November 4, 2001

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle C

(Readings: Wis 11:22-12:1/2. Thess 1:11-2:2/Lk 19:1-10)

The poets of the Old Testament seem to reach the heights of eloquence and feeling when they set themselves to contemplate and compare the grandeur of the creator God on the one hand,

and the smallness of the creature Man on the other. Listen, for example, to the Psalmist on his reflections, "O Lord, our Lord, how awesome is your name throughout the earth! You have set your majesty above the heavens! When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place — What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them?" (Ps 8:2, 3-5) That was King David the poet, who composed his work ten centuries before Christ.

Now we listen to an unknown Hebrew poet who wrote a century before the birth of Jesus. His reflections are similar to those we just heard from David, "Before the Lord the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth... You love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated you would not have fashioned. Indeed, how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?" That was the poet who composed today's passage in the first reading.

Both King David and our unknown poet, so extolled the grandeur of God and exposed the smallness of man that you logically would expect the latter to slink away in fright or embarrassment, from the presence of the former, as a mouse would turn tail before an elephant. If the whole universe (which today we know is mind-bogglingly much, much vaster than what the ancients could measure by their naked eye) is like a grain from a balance or like a drop of morning dew in comparison with God who "holds the whole world in his hand", where then shall we locate the man? Proportionately, we would not discover him, even using the most powerful microscope that can be invented, to give him a place in the universe. He has become so tiny that we would have just to imagine that he exists, if ever, somehow and somewhere.

Such a man, whose smallness King David and our unknown author had tellingly emphasized, was described remarkably by Emily Bronte when she made a character in her novel "Wuthering Heights" exclaim in exasperation, "Papa talks enough of my defects, and shows enough scorn of me, to make it natural I should doubt myself. I doubt whether I am not altogether as worthless as he calls me, frequently; and then I feel so cross and bitter, I hate everybody. I am worthless, and bad in temper, and bad in spirit, almost always."

"That man has gained bad self-image, that's why," psychologists would diagnose him. Truly, it is not good to have a bad self-image. It leads you into thinking that you are worthless and good for nothing. But King David and our author of the book of Wisdom did not have the intention of berating man. On the contrary, they wanted to build up man's self-image. Listen to the concluding line of David's, "Yet (this yet deserves attention for it indicates something surprising to follow), yet you have made (men) little less than angels, crowned them with glory and honor."

Similarly, our unknown author concludes his passage, "But (this but has the same force as the above Yet; it anticipates some unexpected and undeserved good), but you spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord, and lover of souls, for your imperishable spirit is in all things!" And let us not forget that, according to Genesis 2, God created man in his likeness and image. Man's self-image is that of God.

When saints, like Teresa of Avila, claim that they are the worst sinners of the world, they do not carry bad self-image. It is just that in truly recognizing the greatness of God, they are "brought to nothing at the sight of their wretchedness." But it is on these moments of self-abasement that Teresa admitted she would be receiving notable favors from God. Not surprisingly because we know that it is God's way to humble the proud and exalt the lowly.

Paul, in the second reading, prayed that the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in his Christian converts through making themselves worthy of God's call. The Thessalonians had nothing of themselves to be proud of. Coming from humble origins, they received God's call to be glorified in Christ, "he in them and they in him".

Finally, in the gospel reading, there was this Zaccheus, not only small in stature, but a nobody in the eyes of the Jews because of his occupation. But he was precisely among those whom "the Son of Man had come to search out and save what was lost," for God casts down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly.

November 11, 2001

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: 2 Mc 7:1-29, 9-14/2 Thess 2:16-3:5/Lk 20:27-38)

The common theme of our 3 bible readings today comes in very neatly after our celebration of the feast of All Saints last Sunday. The belief in the resurrection of the body is central to our Christian faith. It is the ground that explains why we celebrate All Saints' Day in the first place. If there were no resurrection of the body, we would not see much reason for celebrating All Saints Day.

For Paul, the resurrection of the body is of fundamental necessity, that to deny it necessarily leads to deny the resurrection of Jesus. In other words, one cannot separate them: if we accepted that Jesus rose from the dead, then we have to accept that all the dead bodies of men and women will rise up from death. The only kind of separation admissible for a Christian is that of time: Jesus has already risen (also his Blessed Mother); the rest of mankind will rise on the last day.

Another good and eloquent reason in favor of the belief in the resurrection of the body is our practice and traditions regarding Christian burial. Why all the elaborate ceremonies? Why maintain memorial parks and cemeteries? Why the yearly visits to our beloved dead if there is no resurrection of the body? As a matter of fact, when we sit or kneel beside the tomb of a loved one, there is a secret cry coming from our heart that somehow, someday, we shall be joyfully reunited to them and they to us.

Our three bible readings today are both argument for and confirmation of the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. The dead shall rise again. But the readings serve a practical purpose also for us, the living. The first reading, for example, (2 Maccabees) tells us the story of how the cruel king Antiochus ordered the scalping, mutilating, dismembering of bodies of seven brothers and their mother, after failing to make them renounce their faith in God.

But what is almost unbelievable and amazes us greatly is not so much the cruelty and sadism of the king, as the alacrity and joy with which the seven brothers and their mother offered their bodies to be dismembered and killed. They accompanied the supreme offer and sacrifice of their lives with the courageous words that in the final day, God would return to them their bodies resurrected, integral, beautiful and glorious.

None of us will probably experience the kind of death these brave souls went through, I mean, the mutilation, the dismemberment, the slaughter. We all hope for a peaceful and happy death. But we do have to face, especially the elderlies among us, a special challenge that would require perhaps, a similar courage like that of the seven brothers and their mother.

I refer to the experience of gradual deterioration and loss of sight, hearing, taste and smell, and touch; the feeling of debilitation and enfeeblement in the use of legs, arms, hands, mental faculties

and so on. We will need much courage and a great deal of Christian hope to accept cheerfully and patiently these personal ordeals, which unavoidably, is the road all humans will take.

In the third reading (gospel of Luke), Jesus demolishes the argument of his contemporaries who deny the resurrection of the body. In effect, he says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, dead long ago, cannot remain permanently dead, because God is not God of the dead, but of the living. Jesus concludes his reasoning by saying something very profound, "Therefore, to him (i.e. to God) all are alive."

I think what Jesus wanted to say is that for God, whose knowledge includes and exceeds all times and all ages, there really is no distinction between the dead and the living. All, in fact are alive to him. We distinguished between dead and alive because we see the before and the after. For God, there is no before or after. Everything and everyone is eternally present to him.

How ironic it is, that while the dead are actually alive to God, some of us the living are practically as good as dead because they insist on doing or using things that lead to their spiritual or physical premature death. Hence, the prayer we find in the second reading (2 Thessalonians) is very appropriate for us all. "May the Lord encourage you and strengthen you to always do and say what is good."

November 18, 2001

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle C

(Readings: Mai 3:19-20/2 Thess 3:7-12/Lk 21:5-19)

Last Sunday, we talked about the final day when the general resurrection of the dead will take place. The onset of the cold season is reminding us with the help of radio and TV stations,

that the year is on its final stage. The Christmas decors and the Christmas chimes are in evidence in some places (like the supermarkets) already this early. Even the liturgical calendar of the church is winding up to its finale.

So, we have enough reminders about the finish or the ending of things, peoples, and activities. Even a good movie or a good dinner or a wedding reception has its ending. What seem to have no end are our problems and debts. But even these really will end hopefully to our satisfaction.

Today's three bible readings carry the same line of thought and the same tenor of message. It is inherent to everything human, or even to everything terrestrial, i.e. of this world to have its ending. Also, it is too natural for humans to forget that they are finite. In other words, we tend to act and live as if there will be no end to our favorite pastimes, pleasures, and occupations. Hence, today's bible readings are timely in giving us the necessary reminders.

When the end of anything is in sight, don't we usually perk up, strain forward, and release more adrenaline, so to speak? The student's habit to cram for the finals is proverbial. A returning passenger from abroad by air or sea, when the islands pop into sight, is another good example. Also track-runners, as they approach the finish line, manage to summon their last ounce of energy and expend it in their frenzied dash for victory.

Hence, we understand Paul's disappointment over those Christians who permitted themselves the luxury of laziness and minding others' business, when the nature of the times call for action and readiness, (second reading, letter to the Thessalonians.)

On the other hand, the proud and evil men, whose prosperity seems permanently secure and ever growing, will burn like straw. You know how dry cogon, when set on fire, leaves no trace of itself. The just, meanwhile, those who obeyed God's will, notwith-

standing the shackles of their poverty, hard life, and oppression, will, in the final day be free and happy and jumping merrily like calves just out of the stall or corral. God's saving and healing power will rise on them like the sun. (1st reading, book of the prophet Malachi).

The final day, whenever that will occur, will not be easy for mankind, as Jesus predicts in today's gospel which in itself is neither easy to grasp. Jesus has condensed in today's gospel passage three events that must be distinguished and separated in time and nature. The prediction was occasioned by a comment from some people about how beautiful and precious the furnishings of their temple were.

To their admiring appraisal, Jesus counters that firstly, their temple will be destroyed so that no stone will be left standing on another. Then, their land signified here by the word Jerusalem will be destroyed so that the population will be decimated or displaced and the capital city itself razed to the ground. The destruction of temple and land are premonitions or harbingers of the end of the world, which however will not occur right after those, even though there will be great upheavals, like earthquakes, famines and plagues in various places.

Temple, Jerusalem, the whole cosmos — these are the three different things whose destruction Jesus predicted globally in condensed form in today's gospel passage. The first two had already occurred. The last — the end of the world — is left to God's hidden decision for it to happen. And before this happens, the followers of Jesus will be subjected to manhandling and persecutions.

But it is by standing firm in God that we will save ourselves from the woes of the final day, by overcoming them, Jesus concludes the passage with this assurance, "By patient endurance you will save your lives." He endured the cross but rose gloriously after. He wants now to share his victory with us.

November 25, 2001

Christ the King (34th Sunday) Cycle C

(Readings: 2 Sam 5:1-3/Col 1:12-20/Lk 23:35-43)

I have spent more than my usual time organizing my thoughts for today's homily on the feast of Christ the King. In the meanwhile, I chanced to hear some foreign news broadcast over TV about world leaders appealing for nations to close ranks and work together to make this world a better place to live in, to promote democracy and democratic movements now springing in many parts of the region, to hasten the economic recovery of nations in the Asia-Pacific rim so that their peoples can truly enjoy the blessings of liberty, freedom and democracy.

I thought these bits of news can be incorporated into my homily, if only to get us into asking ourselves, "What can we do for Christ's kingdom when we see and hear people feel concerned, fight and even give up their lives for the sake of freedom, reform and human rights in their countries?" Are we Christians less committed, less enthusiastic, less interested in the affairs of Christ our King than these people are in the affairs of their countries?

If the lack of interest by Christians on matters about Christ's kingdom was due to the constant reminders of the world's passing away and its coming end, then that could be understandable. Who would like to work further and do something worthwhile when after all, this world will melt away and disappear? Did not the early Christians of Thessaly feel that way, as we were told in last Sunday's second reading?

If this is the case, then the three bible readings of today's feast should disabuse us from our misconceptions, and should enlighten us on the nature of Christ's kingdom. Although not of this world, yet its beginning is in this world. Hence, we should

work for its consolidation and growth not after this world disappears but during our lifetime in this world. What disappears of this world at the end of time is its present form, its appearance, with all its physical and moral distortions and imperfections.

In fact, we can hasten the disappearance of its moral ugliness by working for the intrusion of kingdom values in human affairs such as fraternity, peace, justice, compassion and mercy. To work for better relations among men is to work for Christ's kingdom. To create conditions that lead to peace, to respect human rights, to defend and uphold human dignity is to work for Christ's kingdom. To show compassion and mercy to the poor and the suffering through imaginative and determined intervention is to work for Christ's kingdom. All such programs and actions have their workplaces here in this world and yet Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

So, far from pushing us into a life of suspended animation, of paralysis, laziness and aimlessness, the catchword of the approaching kingdom of Christ should propel us to work harder in earnest and with determination. All the more reason because God has willed that we will have a place in his Son's kingdom, as today's second reading tells us.

David was anointed king of Judah and Israel. But he had to fight, in order to defend and consolidate his kingdom. His installation as king did not give him the excuse and luxury to sit back and cushion with his clasped hands, the back of his head (first reading, book of Kings). While he is the forerunner of the ideal king to come, that is Jesus the Anointed of God, David is also an example for us with regards to defending and consolidating the spiritual kingdom given to us.

I do not regret sounding very upbeat when talking to you about Christ's kingdom. In fact, it is the call of the hour, since many Christians are most excited about almost every other thing except

Jesus, the Anointed, the Messiah and his kingdom. In his crucifixion, Christ the King of the Universe, was relegated to the lowest level possible of non-entity and non-importance that he became the laughing stock and object of derision of men. They put a signboard on top of his cross, on which was written with sarcastic intention, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". The sign was calculated to tease men into finding out whether the victim had any semblance of being a king or not.

Among the jeering crowds, there was only one who saw a trace of royalty in that wretched human form. It was the good thief, who was crucified alongside with him (third reading, gospel of Luke). His dying words to Jesus were, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Let us imitate the good thief, not in his sins, but in his repentance and hope. Let us proclaim Christ's kingship and his kingdom in protest of men's refusal and lack of interest to acknowledge his rule. Let our battle-cry be that stirring song, "*Christus vincit, Christus re gnat, Christus imperat.*" Meaning Christ has conquered, Christ is reigning, Christ gives the command.

December 2, 2001

First Sunday of Advent

Cycle C

(Readings: Jer 33:14-16/1 Thess 3:12-4:2/Lk 21:25-28,34-36)

"Stand up straight and raise your heads, for your ransom is near at hand." These words of Christ should be a take-home message for us to think over and over, to assimilate and treasure forever. They constitute the punch-liner of today's gospel. And if they were not included in today's third reading, we would be cowering in fear and hiding our heads instead. This would be the natural reaction of anyone before the prospect of cataclysms in the heavens above and on the earth below.

Was there a real need for the Lord to shake us with this announcement, even as the powers of heaven themselves will be shaken when the sun, the moon and the stars will fail to give their light and the earth will resound with the uproar of the seas and waves? Could we not just wait for the end in peace and quiet? Do we not pray novenas to obtain a peaceful death? So why talk now about those terrible happenings? Life at present has so much hassles and troubles. Need we complicate it with cosmic upheavals?

Our questions seem to come out in rapid succession, the pounding of the roaring seas and waves at the end of time. Indeed, the many questions we are asking indicate that, somehow, there exists a confusion in our mind. Whoever has taught us that Christianity is an airplane flight from earth to heaven on Sleeper First Class with cocktails and martinis at hand?

It should be noted that Jesus spoke those words during his march to Jerusalem where he knew he would meet a violent death. He did not keep this a secret from his disciples. In fact, he had demanded that if they wanted to remain his disciples, they should carry their own crosses and follow him.

Thus, he never promised his disciples a painless life with a painless ending. But having accepted and undergone such, they can expect from him a blissful, never-ending existence. That is why he said, "When these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, for your ransom is near at hand." Consequently, far from being a doomsday announcement, today's gospel reading is a gospel of hope, of encouragement, of complete trust in God's fidelity.

When Jesus said that our ransom is near at hand, we can probably ask: to whom is he paying our ransom? From whom is he buying us back? Kidnapping for ransom has become prevalent in our society that when we hear of victims being released alive,

we wonder if and how much money exchanged hands. Nothing of that kind is involved here when Jesus said that our ransom is at hand. Yet we call him our Redeemer for he secured our ransom, he effected our redemption. An Old Testament concept, appropriated in the New Testament, is involved here. Ransom, or Redemption, is any and every powerful act of God to liberate his creatures from great harms, especially that of sin and eternal death. The powerful liberating act of God may take an unusual form that may appear for mortal eyes not powerful at all. For example, to liberate men from sin and death, Jesus submitted himself to death. That, however, was a powerful act of Jesus in dying, for thus he was able to liberate men.

Finally, since according to Jesus our ransom is at hand we could ask also how near is it at hand, when will it come, what day and what hour. Incidentally, all our three readings today talk about a great day. Jeremiah, in the first reading, said the days are coming, when God will fulfill the promise he made to his people. We know the promise was fulfilled when his Son Jesus became man. In the third reading, Jesus said that the great day will unexpectedly close in on us like a trap, and therefore he enjoins us to constantly pray for moral strength and to be vigilant. In the second reading, Paul advises us that while waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must make greater progress in the way of conducting ourselves honorably before God.

In other words, we do not really know when and how the great Day will come, despite apparent hints and clues. But we do know that it will come. In the face of such incertitude/uncertainty deliberately willed by God, the only logical and Christian attitude to take is to follow the advice of Jesus given in today's gospel, "Be on guard lest your spirit become bloated with self-indulgence, drunkenness and worldly cares." Let us do this, even as we prepare for Christmas during the Advent season

that begins today, so that we can stand up straight and raise our head for our ransom is near at hand.

December 8, 2001

Immaculate Conception

(Readings: Gen 3:9-15.20/Eph 1:3-6, 11•12/Lk 1:26-38)

In celebrating the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary today, we give joyful recognition to the unique holiness of the Mother of God. It is a holiness that, although given to her in full measure from the very first moment of her conception in St. Anne's womb, it grew progressively every conscious minute of her terrestrial existence. So that at the end of Mary's earthly life, we are presented with an example of utter holiness and perfection that for all times is unheard of, unrepeatable, unparalleled by any other creature of God, whether spirit or flesh, angel or man.

How can the Catholic Church and her children not rejoice and celebrate this stupendous model of holiness, this miraculous exemplar of perfection: i.e., the Blessed Virgin Mary. The three bible readings of today's Mass basically resound with this note of rejoicing.

But one must listen attentively to these readings to catch the joyful notes emanating from their words. We need to fine-tune our ears to their wavelengths because there are great many voices and interferences that want also to draw our attention. The wavelength of today's bible readings is faith.

Without faith or with faith that is inactive and sleepy, one will not see the importance of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. Catholics may matter-of-factly concede the uniqueness and perfection of the immaculately conceived Mother of God. But will they relate the holiness of Mary to their personal lives?

Mary is as far removed from sin, as her fullness of grace requires by right and propriety. How far removed from sin do we require ourselves, we who are less full of grace at the moment of our baptism, and even lesser, if not completely devoid of grace during our youth and adulthood?

Mary is the perfect virgin, always and forever. Nowadays, very few people appreciate, much less practice, virginity. If you have been keeping your virginity throughout your teen-age years, your peers or elders will consider you old-fashioned, weird, *promdi*, as they say. Such is today's low-esteem for chastity that the risk of contracting HIV or AIDS scarcely can keep people from illicit affairs.

At the risk of being considered old-fashioned and ultra-conservative, the Catholic Church rejoices greatly on this special day. She is able to present to the world the luminous model of perfection and holiness — Mary the Immaculate Virgin and Mother. Immaculate at her conception and immaculate throughout her earthly life. The Catholic Church invites all her children to joyously imitate the virtues of Mary, especially her closeness to God and her remoteness from sin.

December 8, 2001

Immaculate Conception

Alternative homily

(Readings: Gen 3:9-15.20/Eph 1:3-6.11 12/Lk 1:26-38)

Aside from their celebratory character, all the feasts of the Catholic Church have educational value. In other words, while our holy days afford us the occasion to rejoice and celebrate, they also offer us the motives and lessons for leading holy lives. Thus, their true purpose is both to celebrate and give joyful recognition to the holiness of the persons, in whose honor the holy days are set aside, and to imitate their holy lives.

This is especially true for the Sundays, which are the pre-eminent holy days of the Catholic Church. On these days we celebrate with great rejoicing the incomparable holiness of God, why he created us, why he redeemed us, and why he shared with us his never-ending happiness. In turn, by celebrating God's holiness, we are motivated and inspired to imitate him by leading holy lives.

Nothing less is expected from us, as we set ourselves to celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary today. On this day, we give joyful recognition to the unique holiness of the Mother of God. From the very first moment of her conception in her mother's womb, Mary was given holiness in full measure, yet it grew progressively every conscious minute of her earthly existence. So that at the end of her life in this world, she stood as the paragon of utter holiness and perfection for all times never to be repeated or surpassed by any other creature of God whether spirit or flesh, angel or man. It is therefore fitting and very proper for the Catholic Church everywhere to rejoice and celebrates this stupendous model of holiness, Holy Mary, and this miraculous exemplar of perfection, Blessed Virgin. The three bible readings of today's Mass basically resound with this note of rejoicing.

But one must listen attentively to them to catch the joyful sounds coming from their words. We need to fine-tune our ears to their wavelength because there are many great noises and interferences that also want to draw our attention. The wavelength of today's bible readings is faith. Without it, or with faith that is anemic, one will not see the importance for him/her of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. One may concede matter-of-factly the uniqueness of the immaculately conceived Mother of God. But will one relate the holiness of Mary to his/her own personal life?

Mary is as far removed from sin by her fullness of grace just as conversely we are so attracted to sin by the scantiness of our virtue. Mary is the perfect virgin, always and ever. Nowadays, not very many appreciate virginity, much less practice it. If you have been keeping your virginity throughout your teenage years, you will be considered old-fashioned, weird, simple-minded by others, young and adult alike. Such is the low-esteem people of today have for virtue. Chastity is so easily thrown to the winds, that not even the great risk of contacting AIDS scarcely keeps people from illicit affairs.

The Catholic Church, even though she shall be open to snide remarks of being old-fashioned and conservative, presents with joy to the world on this special day the luminous model of perfection and holiness — Mary, the Immaculate Virgin and Mother. Immaculate at her conception, and immaculate throughout her later life. The Catholic Church invites all her children to imitate joyously the virtues of Mary, especially her closeness to God and her distance from sin.

December 9, 2001

Second Sunday of Advent

Cycle C

(Readings: Bar 5:1-9/Phil 1:4-6.8-11/Lk 3:1-6)

All three bible readings of today's Mass carry a message of hope. From experience, you know how important hope is for life. In fact, you can say that life is a continuous hoping. When hope is dead, life also dies. While there is hope, life struggles on because one thinks something better lies ahead for his/her taking.

So it is that hope nurtures life, and life builds on hope. Cut the connection between the two, and what do we get? Paralysis, emptiness, chill, and even death. Hope therefore, is the engine

of life. And life is the expression of hope. By contrast, cynicism, inaction, indifference is the expression of hopelessness and despair.

Activity then, is connatural with hope. It is powered by hope. Its real name is preparation. You prepare for what you hope. The nature and quality of hope determines the nature and quality of the preparation. If your hope lies on a job abroad, you make the necessary and appropriate preparations, like getting a work contract, a passport, a visa, medical document, and the like. If your hope is a "tiger" economy for your country in the year 2000 you create an atmosphere of stability and order, you open investment opportunities, you promote quality exports, lower the interest rate on loans, democratize wealth and ownership of capital.

If preparations are not adequate, your soaring hope can be dashed to the ground. Or it could be otherwise. Assuming preparations have been laid, or as they say, fundamentals are in place, still disappointment can still await you because you had reposed all your hope in a contingent thing or person who does not or cannot last forever.

The three bible readings this Sunday touch on a hope that does not disappoint because it reposes on a person who fulfills your expectations faithfully and completely. Besides the show, besides, what adequate preparations should be done and assists you to assure the success of the preparations.

In today's second reading (Philippians 1), Paul calls HOPE the Day of Christ. The letter of Baruch (first reading, Chapter 5) calls it the splendor of God's glory, or God's glorious presence. In the third reading, Luke speaking for John the Baptist and borrowing a passage from Isaiah, calls it God's Salvation. By whichever of these **three names you call HOPE, they point to God** or to his Son Jesus Christ as the foundation of our hope. Therefore, hope cannot fail or disappoint.

As we have mentioned before, hope is important for life. It is the engine of life. It powers life. Change the word "hope" to "God" and get these affirmations: God is important for life. God is the engine of life. He powers our life. Without him in our life, we become cynical, inactive, indifferent, paralyzed (or perhaps overactive, over-busy, but for no enduring purpose). Without God, we feel emptiness; without him, prolonged life is prolonged agony.

Hope that reposes on God as its foundation is assured of success and full realization. For God assumes the greater part of the enterprise because he wants us to contribute our share, however, small. It would be unfair to leave all the burden to God for making our hope succeed.

What then is our share of the work? It is the preparations we must make, although even in this aspect, God assists us greatly. God tells us through the letter of Baruch, "Take off your clothes of sorrow and distress, and put on the splendor of God's glory. Put around you the cloak of God's righteousness, and place on your head the crown of the glory of the Eternal God. Your security comes from your righteousness, and your splendor from your devotion to me."

John the Baptist says it more plainly, without the poetic expressions of Baruch. "Turn away from your sins." "Repent and God will forgive you because the Kingdom of heaven is near. And all mankind will see God's salvation."

This is our contribution: to repent and be converted; to turn away from our sins and return to God.

December 16, 2001

Third Sunday of Advent

Cycle C

(Readings: Zeph 3:14-18/Phil 4:4-7/Lk 3:10-18)

It will not be difficult to heed the advice of the three bible readings of today's Mass. They are recommending that we should rejoice and feel happy on these days. The atmosphere of joy has set upon us almost conaturally with the setting in of the cold season and the longer nights. These in turn, announce the nearness of Christmas. But just the same, the three bible readings are not being redundant in telling us to rejoice and be happy.

In effect, they are pointing to the real joy we should look for, not only on Christmas day but also throughout our lives. They also are urging us to keep away from all that can prevent us from experiencing the real joy, because these are false or fleeting joys that can mislead or distract us so that we fail to possess the enduring and real ones. Men have devised ways of fabricating, packaging, advertising and marketing "joys" for the holiday season.

The joys that Christmas originally brought about have become saleable commodities. So, when now we can buy "joys" from store-shelves or in time spent in dance halls, nightclubs, motels and health parlors, what further need is there for today's bible readings to tell us to rejoice and be happy? If this is the way we think, then it is all the more urgent for us to listen to their message.

Paul, writing many years after the Christmas event, advises continuous rejoicing to us who are about to celebrate the memorial of Christmas, exactly two weeks/fourteen days from now. It is, therefore, not only the once and unrepeatable event called the Birthday of Jesus which produced great joy for mankind, but also its memory and annual celebration that continues giving great joy. Hence, the call of Paul to rejoice and feel happy because the Lord is coming soon, is an appropriate reading for those who are preparing for Christmas.

Even the invitation of the prophet Zephaniah, who lived six centuries before the birthday of Jesus, is an appropriate reading. In effect, he says, "The time is coming when they will say... Do not be afraid. Do not let your hands hang limp! The Lord your God is with you."

Also, John the Baptist's message is appropriate reading for the occasion, because he urges all to change their ways, to share their goods with the needy, to refrain from extortion and violence as a preparation for someone great who is coming.

Much as today's three readings are appropriate messages for the coming December 25th celebration, in point of fact, they refer primarily to the definitive and final appearance of God on the last day. We Christians live not only on happy memories but also on hope for a future event. We await not only December 25, which is our annual Christmas Day, but also the Second Coming or the Parousia, that is the Appearance of Jesus Christ on the last day.

The Parousia, or Second Appearance of Christ, should produce for Christians great joy and happiness no less than did his First Appearance or Christmas. This is the real intention of Paul, Luke and the prophet Zephaniah, in today's three bible readings.

When this time frame is taken into consideration, we can understand well why Zephaniah could say, "Sing and shout for joy. Rejoice with all your heart. For the Lord has stopped your punishment; he has removed all your enemies. There is no reason now to be afraid."

But Zephaniah went even to the extent of saying, "The Lord will take delight in you, and in his love he will give you new life. He will dance with shouts of joy over you, as joyful as people at a festival." (Translation based on the Hebrew original). Zephaniah could think of no better way to assure us of God's extreme delight and love for us than to say that God will dance with shouts of joy over us on the last day, in his Second Coming, in his Parousia.

Assured of this definitive stance of God concerning us, it will not be difficult to follow Paul's advice to rejoice always and feel happy, and also John's exhortation to transform our lives by acts of justice, of giving, and of sharing. We have a good God who, as far as he is concerned, takes extreme delight over us and will dance with joy as people do at a festival.

December 23, 2001

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Cycle C

(Readings: 2 Sam 7:1-5.8-11.16/Rom 16:25-27/Lk 1:26-38)

Today's three bible readings deal about a great mystery. Mysteries have always attracted the interest and curiosity of men and women. But there are mysteries and mysteries. Those that are totally shrouded, fully hidden, completely undetectable, will fail to attract men's attention. But those that are partly hidden and partly seen will entice men's desire to see and comprehend them more fully.

Thus the saying goes, that a beautiful child or a beautiful woman is a mystery. There are things you see and understand about them, but there remain many more things you do not see and understand about them. Therefore, they hold your attention and interest.

The first reading (2 Sam 7) serves to introduce us to the great mystery I referred to above. King David, as you might know, was in the zenith of his power, strength and glory. God had helped him reach it. Looking around and happily settled in his palace, he noticed that God's Ark of the Covenant, symbol of his presence, was kept only in a tent! Feeling embarrassed, he confided to prophet Nathan a plan to build a temple worthy of his God.

For that intention alone, God swore to David that his kingdom will never end and his dynasty will continue forever. David had

not even started to build the temple but only announced his plan to do so. And yet God rewarded him already in a manner totally unexpected by David who knew well how kingdoms on earth rise and fall.

The third reading (Luke 1) shows how God's solemn promise to David was fulfilled. It will be Jesus Christ, conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, who would inaugurate the eternal kingdom and exercise a never ending reign. But Luke focuses as much on God's fidelity to his promise to David as on God's disclosure of his mystery to save and give favor to all mankind aside from David and the Hebrew race.

The second reading (Rom 16) further explained the manner of disclosure of the great mystery. It was done gradually involving several centuries. In effect, Paul says that the mystery was hidden for long ages in the past because God kept it secret in his mind and heart. Now, however, the secret has been brought out to the open through the writings of the prophets and evangelists. Above all, it was Christ himself who commanded that the mystery be made known to all the nations so that all may believe and be saved.

Though now made publicly known to all and sundry, the mystery of salvation retains much more to be discovered and admired by us. For it is in the nature of mysteries pertaining to God that both clarity and obscurity envelop them simultaneously.

This is another way of saying that it is impossible to put all of God's majesty inside our little heads. Neither Mary understood fully the mystery as it was being disclosed to her by the angel Gabriel. That is why she asked many questions. But once enlightened by the angel, her reply was a great act of faith worthy of our imitation.

We all love to contemplate the beautiful face of a child or a woman because of the mystery they enclose within themselves.

On Christmas Day, we shall have the opportunity to contemplate the face of a virgin-mother and the face of a divine child. Let their "mystery" enfold us in its embrace.

December 25, 2001

Christmas

(Readings: Is 52:7-10/Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18)

You might wonder why this morning the three bible readings do not mention what you and every child traditionally know about the story of Christmas, and today is Christmas day. You miss hearing things like Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem, not finding a place there to rest, so Baby Jesus had to be born in a cave and laid in a manger, and some poor shepherds being told by angels that their Savior was there for them to worship. Actually, this story was mentioned in the gospel that was read in the Midnight Mass.

Had you attended the midnight Mass, its set of three bible readings would have spoken to you about the lovable aspects of the baby Jesus, his silent and unpretentious arrival into this world, his inadequate shelter and poor belongings. The readings of this daytime Mass, on the contrary, carry us to lofty heights as we are allowed to catch a sight of the divinity, majesty, uniqueness and power of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer.

Hence, last night's set of bible readings and this morning's set of other bible readings present us with two viewpoints or emphases of one and the same mystery of Christmas. As a result, we have a balanced conception of one and the same truth — that Jesus Christ is both and at the same time God and man who came to save us, to be our Redeemer. For if Jesus Christ were only a man as some so-called Christians and unbelievers claim, then he could not be of help to us; we would have remained sinners

and lacked in salvation. But if Jesus had been only God, we would not have an exemplar, or model to imitate and follow for gaining eternal life. Last night's bible readings allowed us to contemplate the manhood of Jesus under the soft light of cloudless and starry December night, so to speak. And this morning's bible readings permit us to peer into his divinity and majesty with the glare and brightness of the noonday sun, also in a manner of speaking.

John, for example, in our third reading this morning, intones in solemn language worthy of angels, that this Jesus born in time and in a particular place, existed before time, and fills the whole universe which he created in fact. Hear how John says it, "In the beginning, before anything was ever created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God."

Paul, also in lofty language (our second reading this morning), joins the evangelist John, in extolling the unreachable dignity inherent in Jesus. He is exceedingly superior to all prophets and angels, all of whom are in fact only messengers and ministers of God. It was only to Jesus God said these words, "You are my Son, today I have become your Father."

Finally, Isaiah, not to be outdone by the above two inspired writers previously mentioned in praising the arrival of the Savior with all the eloquence human language is capable of, has these words, "Break into shouts of joy, you ruins of Jerusalem! The Lord will rescue his city and comfort his people. The Lord will use his holy power; he will save his people, and all the world will see it."

Although lacking in depth, sublimity, and eloquence of the above inspired writers Isaiah, Paul and John, let us nevertheless join our voices to their splendid testimony and express our recognition of unfathomable mystery of the incarnation and birth of our Savior and Redeemer with this humble prayer: "Thank you,

Lord Jesus, for the gift of Christmas. Born of the Father before all ages, you have shared our lowly humanity; you have become a child so that we can share your divinity and become sons and daughters also of the Father. God of God, true light of true light, begotten not made, by whom all things were made, you showed yourself as a powerless baby, so that we may be empowered to rise up from our sins and go to you to offer our gift of love, worship, and service. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the Christmas."

December 25, 2001

Christmas

Alternative homily

(Readings: Is 52:7-10/Heb 1:1-6/Jn 1:1-18)

Mother Church has provided two sets of three readings for those who attended the midnight Mass last night and for those who are now attending this Christmas Day Mass. It would be difficult to say which set of readings is more beautiful to hear and to reflect upon.

But there is a difference of emphasis between the two sets of readings. Those of last night pay more attention to the lovable aspects of the Baby Jesus: his silent and unpretentious arrival into this world, his poor and inadequate possessions, the simplicity and humbleness of his surroundings and persons in attendance. The readings of this morning's Mass, on the other hand, carry us to lofty heights to view as clearly as we possibly can his divinity, majesty, uniqueness, his might and power.

The result of these two emphases, these two viewpoints, is that we have a balanced understanding of the mystery of Christmas. It serves not only to communicate the substance of the truth but also it explains the purpose why God became man in the first place. The substance of the truth is that here we have someone who is

both and at the same time God and man. And the purpose why God became man is to save us, to be our Savior.

For if Jesus had been only man and not God also, he could not be of help to us; we would have remained sinners and lacked in salvation. Similarly, if Jesus had been only God and not man also, we could not have an exemplar or a model whom to follow and imitate.

As day differs from night in that day spreads light and brightness, so do the three readings of this morning emanate divine light and brightness. John 1:1-18 (third reading) intones in solemn language that this Jesus, born in time and in a particular place, existed before time and was present in the whole universe which he created in fact. "In the beginning, before anything was ever created, the Word already existed, he was with God, and he was the same as God."

Paul, also in lofty language (second reading), joins the evangelist John in extolling the unreachable dignity inherent in Jesus. He is exceedingly superior to all prophets and angels, all of whom, truth to tell, are just messengers and ministers of God. God said to none of them these words, "You are my Son, today I have become your Father."

Finally, Isaiah, not to be outdone by the two inspired writers in praising with eloquence the arrival of the Savior, has these words to say (first reading) "Break into shouts of joy, you ruins of Jerusalem! The Lord will rescue his city and comfort his people. The Lord will use his holy power; he will save his people, and all the world will see the salvation of our God."

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the gift of Christmas. We praise and adore you in your godhead; we love and imitate you in your manhood. You are our life, our salvation and our happiness. Lord Jesus, may we all be one with you and the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

December 30, 2001

Holy Family

Sunday Within the Octave of Christmas

(But if none then December 30)

Cycle C

(Readings: Sir 3:3-7, 14-17/1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24/Lk 2:41-52)

(Alternative readings: Greek 3:2-6,12-14/Gen 15:1-6; 21:1-3/

Col 3:12-21/Heb 11:8,11-12,17-19

Lk 2:22-40 [or 2:22.39-40])

I agree wholeheartedly to a claim made by a group of children who sang Christmas carols to us Dominican fathers a little more than a week ago. Coming from Tala and wearing distinctive costumes, these healthy, vigorous, beautiful children demonstrated their skill in singing, dancing and acting that held our attention and admiration throughout their long repertoire. Amazingly, they showed no sign of fatigue, despite the late hour for their age, and their sweet smiles never faded from their faces while performing their numbers. Why this energy, this enthusiasm, this electrifying happiness? A line from one of their songs, which stuck to my memory, explains it all: "Ang Pasko ay sa amin."

I know that the familiar words of a Tagalog Christmas carol are, "Ang Pasko ay sumapit." But these children from Tala changed them into saying, "Ang Pasko ay sa amin." It is a claim all children have the right to make. And we the adults should respect it and make it a meaningful reality for them. I guess, we adults have not failed them, and all of us have done our part, in accordance with our possibilities, to make the children feel that Christmas is really for them.

So it is I came to know how a very young adult, still single and a humble wage earner, had set aside an amount from his meager salary to buy and give a battery-run toy train to his "*inaanak*"

sa binyag. When asked why he did this, his reply was something like this, "The happiness I felt in myself and the happiness I saw in the face of my godson is something not all the money in the world can buy." Then, also, another proof that Christmas is for children is that you saw, on Christmas day, whether in church or on the streets, that the children were generally better dressed and shod than their elders. As if the message was, children have more reasons to wear new clothes and shoes, and to draw public attention more to themselves.

Today, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. Today, we can perhaps ask the children to give us a little space and time so that Christmas can also be for us, the adults. Anyway, today's feast includes not only the Baby Jesus, but also Mary and Joseph. It is a celebration where children, mothers, fathers participate. And in our Filipino culture, the family includes the lolas, the lolos, the aunties and uncles, the cousins and even the yayas and cooks. So the happiness in the Filipino family is more exuberant and effusive the more extended it gets.

On this feast of the Holy Family, Mother Church presents us with bible readings that deserve our studied attention and willing implementation. The Filipino family is noted for its cohesiveness, love and care among its members, concern and support for one another in time of need. It would not be difficult to talk to Filipino families and tell them tint the Holy Family can be regarded by them not only as the model and exemplar to imitate, but also as a sign and a symbol they can identify with because of the problems they face daily, the trials they have to endure, the dangers they are exposed to, the attacks they have to guard against.

The Holy Family was not exempt from all this. And our Filipino families can draw strength and moral support from the thought and realization that just as the Holy Family weathered all the crises in their life by sticking together in love, mutual help, fidelity and service to one another, so also the Filipino families.

Problems of the Filipino family are not only stubborn and plentiful, but are increasing and multiform. They arise from within the family, like: infidelities; abandonment of responsibilities; coping out from struggles; dangers and attacks from without such as poverty, unemployment, crimes against children and adults, inducements and incentives against moral living; deterioration of peace, order, sense of justice; diminishing respect for life and property. Nor are the richer families spared from their trials. We are all in one and the same boat. Either we pull together or we sink together, as the saying goes.

But we can weather the storm? If the spirit and example of the Holy Family is assimilated and borne out by each Filipino family, rich or poor, the resulting good can be felt beyond its confines to the barangay, to the town, to the region, to the nation. This is our dream and our hope.