

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

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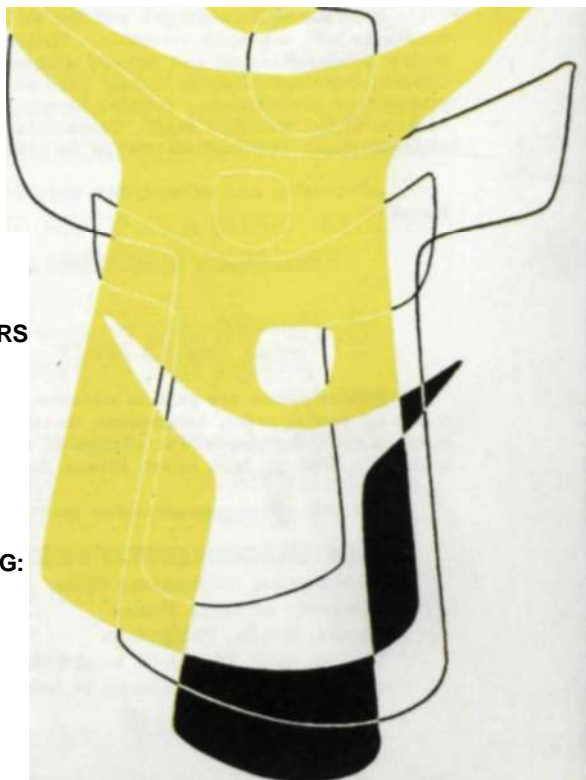
January-February 2002

**PASTORAL STATEMENT
ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
OF FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO**
CBCP

**"SOWING GOOD SEED".
THE ASIAN EXPERIENCE
OF FORMING SEMINARY
FORMATORS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS**
Leonardo Legaspi, DD

**APPEAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY**
Dominican General Chapter
* — ^

**THE JOURNEY "TO" AND "IN"
THE ASIAN YOUTH MINISTERS MEETING:
AN EXPERIENCE OF GENEROSITY,
FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE**
John Funelas, OP



BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS
The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published by-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at Lucky Press, Inc., Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned. They will, however, be given courteous and scholarly attention. Writers are reminded that the scope of this review is ecclesiastical and broadly archival. While we wish to inform the whole Church, our readership is largely clerical and this should be borne in mind by prospective contributors. Articles herein published do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Staff. Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and reviews should be addressed to the Editor.

Advertising and subscription Inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager.

Subscription Rates (Effective January 2002)

	One Year	Per Copy
Philippines	P600.00	P100.00
Foreign: (Via Air Mail)	US\$ 50.00	\$15.00

Subscriptions are paid in advance. In the Philippines, payments should be made by postal order, telegraphic transfer or check with regional bank clearing only. Orders for renewal or change of address should include both old and new addresses, and go into effect fifteen days after notification.

Address all communications to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

Ecclesiastical Publications Office

University of Santo Tomas*

Espana, Manila, Philippines

Tel. No. (632) 731-31-01 local 8251 Telefax: (632) 740-97-10

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Table of Contents

EDITORIAL	3	SEMINARY AS HOME AND SCHOOL OF COMMUNION
PASTORAL WORDS <i>CBCP</i>	5	PASTORAL STATEMENT ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF FAMDLIARIS CONSORTIO
<i>Jaime Card. Sin, DD</i>	16	PASTORAL EXHORTATION ON ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2001 WITH MARY
	21	SUBTLE ATTACKS AGAINST FAMILY AND LIFE
<i>Vicente Cajilig, OP</i>	39	REVELATION IS PRO-LIFE
<i>Leonardo Legaspi, OP, DD</i>	42	"SOWING GOOD SEED". THE ASIAN EXPERIENCE OF FORMING SEMINARY FORMATORS AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS
<i>Augustine Mendonca</i>	54	THE BISHOP AS A FATHER, BROTHER AND FRIEND TO HIS PRIESTS
<i>Ramon Aguilos, MSEM, SThD</i>	78	THE PATRON AND THE PROTEGE: A STORY OF TWO BISHOPS
<i>John Funelas, OP</i>	94	THE JOURNEY "TO" AND "IN" THE ASIAN YOUTH MINISTERS MEETING: AN EXPERIENCE OF GENEROSITY, FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

DOCUMENTATION

Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples 102 **LITURGY FOR INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES SUNDAY**

Dominican General Chapter 105 **APPEAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY**

Christian Religious Educators 111 **A BRIEF REPORT ON THE ASIA
RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS FORUM**

Jeremiah Opiniano & Jude Conniff, MM 118 **BRING SEAFARERS TO
SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION**

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Javier Gonzalez, OP 124 **SOME CLARIFICATIONS
ON RELIGIOUS VOWS**

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW

Mario Baltazar, OP 132 **HOMILIES FOR MARCH-APRIL 2002**

Seminary as Home and School of Communion

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

In the recent gathering in San Carlos Major Seminary, Makati, of seminarians who are studying philosophy coming from eight departments of Philosophy in seminaries from Metro Manila and nearby places made the above theme as their point of reference and focus. Some five hundred seminarians were in attendance. The two days gathering was a celebration of sports, rites, talks and acquaintances. It was a tiring occasion but full of joy and best wishes.

The seminary is a home: In fact, it is the extension of the homes where seminarians come from. This is at least the idea the formators and the seminarians would like their respective house of formation to become. If the seminary is a real home there must be therefore the qualities of a normal family environment: trust and confidence, respect and reverence, work and sports, study and reflection. This is therefore the task of all constituents in the seminary, including the lay staff and teachers.

Seminary is a school: This will require efficient administrators, dedicated teaching staff, conscientious personnel, and other require-

ments for a good learning institute. It too must have orderly and clean surroundings and practical facilities for thorough running of a house of formation. A well-designed program of studies is a requirement so necessary for a wholesome and integrated interaction of all elements that make up a place where the seed of vocation is nurtured and spirituality is inculcated so that the seminarians grow in the stature of Christ gradually.

Making a seminary as home and school of communion means transforming it into a center of spiritual endeavors. In fact during the last Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) the idea of making the seminary as the center of spirituality came up and was encouraged.

Pastores Dabo Vobis of John Paul II, talked about turning the ministers of God into men of communion. The vision of the Church to be an enterprise of communion in *Ecclesia in Asia* (no. 24 & 25) would only be realized if these spirit of communion is inculcated and effectively felt by the seminarians themselves during the years of formation. It needs to be further noted that if priest need to become a man of communion he must be trained in unity which the Sacred, capable of listening which enables him to be an individual ready for dialogue, and he must be disposed to render humble service to the poor sector of the society whose total liberation depends to great extent upon the effective ministry of those ordained in the ministerial sacerdotal office.

Finally, as the second year of the new decade comes, we request the people of God to give their utmost support financially, morally, spiritually and socially to the ones in-charged of the houses of formation starting from the minor seminary to the department of philosophy and the department of theology. The year for rigid spiritual and pastoral orientation and exposure must also receive equal interest and support.

Saving and Strengthening the Filipino Family*

CBCP

Circular No. 2001-65
16 November 2001

Introduction

"Family, *become* what you are!" Twenty years ago, Pope John Paul II wrote these stirring words in his apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, November 22, 1981). How increasingly urgent and contemporary this call is for all of us.

Let us briefly survey the situation of the Filipino today and recall what the papal document teaches us so that our path to save and strengthen the Filipino family may be illuminated.

The Situation of the Filipino Family

In 1981 the Pope described the global situation with regard to the family: "The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and

* Pastoral Statement on the 20th Anniversary of *Familiaris Consortio*.

culture (FC, 1). The family "is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it" (FC, 3). Twenty years later the Pope would write about the family in the same vein: "... this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, January 6, 2001, no. 47).

The words of the Pope would aptly describe the situation of the Filipino Family today.

Admittedly we still place great value on the family (For the situation of the Filipino family, see also The Catechism for Filipino Catholics [CFC], nos. 1006-11). We are justifiably proud of our close family ties. In the family we find strong support and environment for our growth. We continue to value marriage highly. We firmly believe that children are treasures given by the Lord to be loved and nourished. We extend extraordinary care at home to our elderly. Despite many difficulties the Filipino Family remains quite stable.

Providing strong support for family values, our 1987 Philippine Constitution has a marked pro-family and pro-life stance. It declares, "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution" (Art. 2, Sec. 12). A whole article is devoted to the Family (Article 15), a feature absent in previous Constitutions. It acknowledges that marriage is "an inviolable social institution" that must be protected by the State. It respects the right of couples to found and raise family according to their religious convictions. It protects the unborn from the moment of conception. It guarantees our right to profess and live our faith freely.

Unfortunately, many social situations are beginning to destroy or deform the family. Today, many Catholics live together without the benefit of a Church marriage, thus depriving themselves of the

sacrament of marriage and the sacramental grace they need in order to carry out their responsibilities as Christian couples and parents. Often there is little preparation for marriage, and couples are rushing into marriage without really knowing each other's values that would firmly preserve their marriage through periods of hardship and pain. Pre-marital pregnancy and elopement are sadly common. Economic factors threaten the unity of marriage. The forced separation of a husband from his wife or of both from their children due to overseas work is causing great suffering in the family. In all cases, the children suffer. In many cases they suffer serious psychological harm. Sometimes, separation results in the break-up of families.

Moreover, the infidelities of some public officials and media personalities cause grave scandal and at the same time lead to a lowering of the esteem for marital fidelity. Eroticism in our society in the form of various levels of pornography is also weakening the marriage bond as well as the sense of the sacredness of the gift of sexuality. Drug trafficking, the use of illegal drugs, and drug related crimes contribute to the destruction of peace and unity in the family and in the community. Finally, so-called modern ideas from supposedly developed countries penetrate our culture through mass media and insidiously deform family values and degrade our traditional esteem for marriage, family, and human life.

Compounding our tragedy today is the fact that our legislators have introduced proposals that, we firmly believe, will ultimately destroy the family as our religious faith understands it. Now in the legislature are bills allowing absolute divorce, removing the constitutional prohibition of abortion, and more aggressively pushing population control through contraception, sterilization and, yes, even abortion. We hear suggestions about same sex unions as the basis for alternative families. In schools are programs of sex education that fail to inculcate the values that would safeguard life and the sacredness of the gift of sex.

The Teachings of *Familiaris Consortio*

In the light of our situation today we must take guidance from the teachings of the Holy Father (Some of these teachings are also treated in CFC; nos. 1012-27).

"Family, *become* what you are!" The family must truly become "an intimate community of life and love" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48, cited in FC, 17). The family has "*the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love*," a love that "reflects Gods' love for humanity and the love of Christ for the Church his bride" (FC, *ibid.*).

Following the 1980 Synod of Bishops on the Family, *Familiaris Consortio* emphasized four general tasks for the family (FC, *ibid.*):

- a) forming a community of persons;
- b) serving life;
- c) participating in the development of society;
- d) sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

Forming Community, Saying No to Divorce.

The first task of the family is "to live in fidelity the reality of communion" (FC, 18) between husband and wife, between parents and their children. Communion is founded on love. Marriage is a covenant of love between husband and wife. By such a covenant, they "are no longer two but one flesh." Thus, from the beginning marriage is indissoluble. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt 19:6).

Husband and wife are "called to grow in communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving." They are called and commanded, "beyond every trial and difficulty" to remain faithful to one another, reflecting the "unconditional faithfulness with which God loves his people" (FC, 20). The power of the grace of marriage is much more than any difficulty husband and wife have to face.

We must, therefore, continue to be vigilant against proposals for absolute divorce and persistently teach against marital infidelity (Mk 10:11-12; Mt 5:27-28). At the same time we must offer help to troubled marriages and strengthen the commitment of married couples.

Conjugal communion is the basis of communion between parents and children, between sisters and brothers (FC, 21). It is love that animates the interpersonal relationships of the different members of the family. In their reception of the Sacraments and as a gift of the Holy Spirit the natural communion of love links them with Christ and the people of God (FC, *loc. cit.*). Day by day the members of the family must build up this communion of persons by their "care and love of the little ones, the sick, the aged," by their "sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows" (FC, *ibid.*). Only through a great spirit of sacrifice, forbearance, pardon and reconciliation can family communion be preserved and perfected (FC, *ibid.*).

Serving Life, Rejecting Anti-Life Mentality and Policies.

The second task of the family is to serve life. Husband and wife are cooperators in the love of God the Creator. They cooperate in "transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person." This gift of life is not only physical. It is "enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which they hand to their children and through the children to the Church and to the world" (FC, 28). Parents also serve life by educating their children. They have the primary responsibility of educating their children "in the essential values of human life" (FC, 37), such as a correct attitude of freedom, a sense of true justice, and even more importantly a sense of true love, especially of the poor. "The family is the first and fundamental school of social living" (FC, *ibid.*). It is the task of parents "to give their children a clear and delicate *sex education*" (FC, *ibid.*), that brings them

"to a knowledge of and respect for the moral norms" that guarantee "responsible personal growth in human sexuality" (FC, *ibid.*).

Even as children are precious gifts of God, we must realize that "responsible parenthood" - has to be exercised. Parents "should strive to beget only those children whom they can raise up in a human way. Towards this end they need to plan their families according to the moral norms taught by the Church" (PCP-II, no. 583), faithfully respecting "the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality" (FC, 32).

In the light of perennial Church teaching we, therefore, fundamentally reject the assumptions that underpin the government's population program. We also object to the lack of practical respect for moral and religious convictions that sometimes accompanies it. We forcefully reject the contraceptive, sterilizing and abortifacient means it uses. We want an assurance that sex education programs for the young will impart values consistent with their faith.

Renewing Society and the Church

The third and fourth tasks of the Christian family are: participation in the development of society and sharing in the life and mission of the Church.

"The very experience of communion and sharing that should characterize the family's daily life represents its first and fundamental contribution to society" (FC, 43). This authentic communion is a "stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love" (FC, *ibid.*). As a consequence, we strongly advocate "*family politics*," by which families politically intervene "so that the laws and institutions of the State not only do not offend but support and positively defend the rights and duties of the family" (FC, 44). By family politics they assume responsibility for transforming society and fulfill "the kingly mission of service in which Christian couples share by virtue of the sacrament of marriage" (FC, 47).

In serving the Church, families share in the Church's mission. Such service should "follow a *community pattern*: the spouses together *as a couple*, the parents and children *as a family* (FC, 50). The family expresses and realizes its "participation in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly mission of Jesus Christ and of his Church" through the "*love between husband and wife and between members of the family*" (FC, *ibid.*). The witnessing of such love by the family demonstrates that the family is both a believing and evangelizing community.

Today in practically all dioceses in the Philippines there are diocesan and parish programs of Family and Life. These help parents fulfill their duties and responsibilities toward their families, toward the church and toward society. We are also gratified to see Catholic movements like PREX, Christian Family Movement, Human Life International, Marriage Encounter groups, Couples for Christ, Familia, Abay Familia, and many other similar groups do their part to renew and uplift the quality of our society's political, economic, and moral life. We hope that they will help all couples in an even greater measure to achieve the tasks of Christian families.

Promoting Social Justice, Eradicating Poverty

We strongly urge all Filipinos, especially those already engaged in the family apostolate, to direct their special attention to two concerns. The first is poverty. Poverty is the silent killer of families. It forces many spouses to separate for purposes of work. It makes them vulnerable to pressures that ruin their esteem for life. Destitution makes it difficult and sometimes almost impossible for them to observe the divine law (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1887). Poverty is not God's will. Poverty is an enemy of love and life. In many ways it is contrary to human dignity. We must work to eradicate it. In a country where the great divide between the many poor and the few rich seems unbridgeable, we must all work toward social justice, the justice of the common good,

the justice that morally demands equitable distribution of the country's goods.

We call on government to put into practice what it has declared as a policy, namely, poverty eradication. Special priority must be given to housing, education, and medical care for the poor. We also call upon government leaders to eradicate graft and corruption since this terrible social injustice is nothing else but thievery of the grossest kind, the stealing of incredible amounts of public funds that could have benefitted millions of our poor people.

We call upon business leaders to place the interests of the poor above the natural desire to earn the greatest profit. We urge everyone who has the means to help set up livelihood and employment opportunities especially in these difficult times.

Our final destiny is determined by what we do to the poor. Christ said, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me.... Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Mt 25: 40, 45).

Renewing the Culture of the Family

The other grave concern today is the purification and moral renewal of the family itself. The family is "the origin of many cultural distortions that lie at the root of our problems as a people" (*National Pastoral Consultation on church Renewal*, January 2001). Parental behavior, good or bad, is passed on as an example to children. Sadly, the degradation of moral values through crime and vice is what is most visible to children as they observe adults, watch movies and television, or listen to Senate investigations of alleged crimes. Moreover, a materialistic and secularist global culture is impacting the Filipino family quite severely.

In the Filipino family then we see distorted values. For instance, while we appreciate the closeness of family members, we need to correct the "closed family" mentality, which makes of the family an idol to which the common good is often sacrificed. This idol becomes the cause of graft and corruption, and drives some officials to think more of enriching their families rather than of promoting the good of all. In contrast, the family should be the first school of integrity and justice, of peace and love.

Making the Family a School of Holiness

On October 21, 2001 the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, beatified the spouses Luigi and Maria Beltramie Quattrocchi, the first time in the history of the Church that husband and wife were beatified together in the same ceremony. Blessed Luigi died in 1951 and Blessed Maria followed in 1965. They had four children. The three living children, two priests and one lay woman, were at the beatification of their parents, who *"lived an ordinary life in an extraordinary way. Among the joys and anxieties of a normal family, they knew how to live an extraordinarily rich and spiritual life"* (Pope John Paul II. Homily at the Mass of Beatification). How truly wonderful are the ways of God! The beatification event reveals the capacity for mutual sanctification in marriage.

The life together of Blessed Luigi and Maria as spouses and parents illustrates the necessity and importance of the Church's teachings. The sacrament of marriage is a holy sacrament lived out in the realities of conjugal and family life. Marriage is a call for mutual sanctification. The grace of the sacrament nourishes and supports marriage and helps spouses to transform their lives into a "spiritual sacrifice" (see FC, 56). The Eucharistic sacrifice in which husband and wife must participate regularly represents Christ's covenant love with the Church, sealed with his blood on the Cross. In the Eucharist husband and wife receive nourishment, strength, and support, for in the Eucharistic sacrifice "Christian

spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows" (FC, 57). In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they receive pardon and forgiveness for their failures as spouses (FC, 58), as well as the grace of renewal.

Family prayer offered together with their children strengthens the communion of love in the family and obtains graces necessary for that communion to grow. This is why we must encourage in the family praying with the Word of God, devotional prayer, especially the family Rosary. Prayer, led by husband and wife, has to be part and parcel of family life. Anniversaries are special moments for prayer, moments for thanksgiving and petition (FC, 59).

In the Philippines, it is very tragic that many fathers do not provide an example, much less leadership, for their children in this fundamental area of prayer. Prayer is not a luxury. It is necessary and indispensable. Even Christ prayed. Fathers must likewise pray with and for their families. Through the family's prayer, God makes the family a sanctified and sanctifying family.

The Family, the Focal Point of Evangelization

In the light of our observations, the Filipino family has to open up to the great concerns of the community, the country, and the Church. *"The future of humanity passes by way of the family"* (FC, 86). For the family is the first and vital cell of society. It is also the *domestic church*, the church in the home, a community of love and life.

"Family, *become* what you are!" For this to take place, the Filipino family has to become the focus of evangelization as the 2001 National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal enjoined. Today the family needs deep renewal so that it can be a more effective agent of evangelization. We must make every effort to ensure that the family is where the Gospel is first heard and

witnessed to by the members. The family has to become a true school of evangelization, where every member first learns to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church. It should also be a school of holiness. The whole family would then become a witness of the Gospel to other families and to the wider society.

For our part, we your Bishops recommit ourselves to saving and strengthening the Filipino family. Personally or through our pastoral programs we shall assist and encourage families struggling in situations of great difficulty and striving to cope with the burdens of life. In every diocese in the Philippines, we will strive to make the family the focus of evangelization. We will use the resources the Lord has entrusted to us in order to achieve all that we have urged you to do, all that the Pope asks us to achieve.

Conclusion

It is in putting into practice and applying to our present situation the teachings of *Familiaris Consortio* that we most fittingly celebrate the twentieth anniversary of this great document on the Family.

May the Holy Family at Nazareth, the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, bless us all and obtain for all Filipino families the great blessings of becoming the home and seedbed of holiness, peace, unity, and progress in our land. May the Blessed Virgin Mother, Mary, the Queen of the Family, whose children we are, protect the Filipino family and bring it ever closer to her own Son, Jesus, the Savior of every family.

Pastoral Exhortation on Advent and Christmas 2001 with Mary

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

Circular 2001-66
16 November 2001

The season of Advent begins in a few weeks. Always, this time of year is always one of prayer, penitence and preparation. We await the great feast of Christmas and all that it means for us. We look forward to a new coming of Jesus into our hearts. Each year he enters in a new way into our families, our communities, our schools, our country and our world. Again, he comes to share our lives, our joys and our sorrows; again he comes to share our history. Thus each year he brings us hope anew: the Babe of Bethlehem, born of Mary the Virgin, born to bring us forgiveness, love and peace.

This hour of history which the world is now traversing is an hour of darkness, conflict, of much heaviness of heart, for all people, everywhere in the world.

In our own country, we are going through a period of much uncertainty and difficulty. Our economy is at a fearfully low point.

Right and left businesses are failing; foreign companies continue pulling out; our OCWs abroad suffer from the worldwide crisis; the jobless among us multiply day after day. Metro Manila has been officially declared - garbage-wise- in a state of emergency. If we are not blind, we can see the worsening poverty around us. Even those better off have to retrench and do without things they usually enjoy. - The press reports that problems of other kinds multiply: crime, violence, kidnappings; the anti-terrorist war rages in parts of Mindanao; rifts of division widen in the political arena; coup rumours proliferate. There is no light, sometimes it seems to us, - no light at the end of the tunnel.

Most of us believe the present administration is trying very earnestly to steer the country through the present crisis. We must continue to give it our unstinted support. It is a tribute to our people that they are bearing up with resiliency and a sense of humour. Though some feel increasingly hopeless, still most of our citizens go about their daily lives with admirable patience and down-to earth courage. We are not crushed or paralyzed. Please God, we go on; we persevere with some hope. In faith, in our trust in God, we hold on to hope.

But so many ask, *What can we do?* May be this is a time for us, in our families, our neighborhoods, our communities of work and the like, to reflect together as to what we can do together, how we lift up the morale of our nation, how we can concretely and more effectively help one another. Time, too, for us to pray together, to tap deeper into our faith, to reach up to "the things that are for our peace." - "A nation at prayer is a nation at peace."

It is with the foregoing as background that I propose to all the faithful in our archdiocese, and hopefully to all the faithful in our land, to try to realize an earnest, truly widespread campaign of prayer during all of the coming Advent and the Christmas season:

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WITH MARY

Daily Rosaries for Peace

I would like to ask *at least* a million among our people in the archdiocese, - two or three million people if possible, - to promise to pray daily one rosary (the five decades at least) for peace: peace in our country, peace in the whole world. I would like to ask as many families as possible to pray the rosary together daily, from the First Sunday of Advent, 2 December 2001, to the Feast of the Epiphany, 6 January 2002.

Better still, maybe two or three families at a time can gather together daily, and together offer a daily rosary for peace. Even if not every family member can be present each day for this common exercise of prayer, let all those family - members who can, come together and pray together.

In every parish church, of course, we will expect a *daily parish rosary* recited before at least the morning and the evening mass. Let it be "something special" : different neighborhoods, associations, and the like, can take care of one or more evenings, and make the "rosary event" truly inviting and inspiring, so that many, *specially young people*, will want to come. Once the *simbang gabi* beings, the rosary can be recited as people wait for Mass to begin. We would like Advent and Christmas 2001 be remembered as "garlanded with the rosaries for peace."

We do not need to explain why we as Filipino Catholics turn to Our Blessed Mother at this time of trial and trouble. Our country professes to be "pueblo amante de Maria", *bayang sumisinta kay Maria*. This has been true from the earliest times, the period immediately following the arrival of the Christian missionaries. We have been reminded in recent times how Our Blessed Mother has been part of the history of the Filipino people, how her presence and providence have so strikingly influenced our lives, past and

present. The great event of La Naval (1646) is specially significant for the City of Manila. EDSA UNO (1986) and EDSA DOS (2001) - seen through the eyes of faith - tell us that Our Lord answers our prayers when we ask his Mother Mary to intercede for us and our needs as a people. - Thus we invoke her again, in this hour of crisis and fear, knowing she will not fail us, that she will join us, as with her we turn again to her Son in supplication. With her, we can ask for greater compassion and solidarity among our citizens, solid improvement in our economy, the fuller realization of justice in society, the true beginning of peace in our land.

To those who ask: "Is this all we do pray?" *No, it is not.* This is the beginning, however. We start with prayer, "praying with all our hearts". As we pray, we will find out, *together preferably*, what more we can do, *hopefully together also*. - But that we *begin with the rosary*: this, all of us can do. Even children can pray with us; even the sick, the old, the bedridden, the dying. All can join in; all can be part of a common effort, a common campaign to move heaven, as we wait again the fuller coming of the Prince of Peace into our lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, please add, at the end of each decade of the rosary, the invocation:

**Mother Mary, we beg you,
bring peace to our land,
and to the whole world.**

At the end of the five decades, with the Hail Holy Queen, let us also recite the *Memorare*, attributed to St. Bernard, the prayer so much loved by many all over the Catholic world.

We ask all priests and religious, in parishes, in schools, in other communities, to really stir up support for this campaign of "daily rosaries for peace"! And we turn to our wonderful lay people, - to parents above all, - to take this campaign to heart. *Let everyone*

really take part in it! Let no one exempt himself or herself! And we will see, how Our Lord will come to our aid and powerfully hear the humble prayer of all of us together!

The Family Rosary Crusade of the Philippines is doing its share in the spearheading of this campaign. Our devoted former President, Mrs. Corazon Aquino, has been tirelessly going to parishes, schools and other communities to lead them in praying the rosary. I ask all to make a mighty effort to convert this coming Advent and Christmas into five weeks of earnest prayer.

Once again, dear faithful people of our Archdiocese, let us put heart and soul into this campaign of supplication. I ask each one to do his or her part, and I am sure that *Our Lord and Our Lady will do the rest!*

Subtle Attacks Against Family and Life

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

Circular No. 2001-45

27 July 2001

My dear People of God,

Last January 22-27, 2001, the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal was held in Manila to examine the state of the Church ten years after the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. Among the Consultation's pastoral priorities is the Family as focal point of evangelization.

Likewise, many of you have heard of the planned visit of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II on January 2003, for the IV World Meeting of Families.

These two events, one past and the other future, invite us to turn to the present and examine the state of the family today. Allow me then to share some of my deepest concerns to you, members of God's family.

I am very much aware how much you value the family, the Domestic Church, and of the efforts you exert to strengthen it. However, there are indications of real and very subtle attacks against the family that we can no longer keep silent about, and of which

I would now like to make a quick exposition. With the passage of time, there will be materials, seminars and intensive training to provide you with more details and sources of data.

The Philippine constitution specifies in Art. II, Sec. 12, one of the functions of the State: "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and *shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution*. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the support of the Government".

The family is the basic unit of society. Be assured that if the Filipino family is destroyed, the Philippine society will follow suit. We thus have to protect and strengthen the family, both through personal initiatives, and by helping the government do so. Indeed, this is a concern not only of the Church, but of civil society as a whole.

Concept of Family

Pope John Paul II said that "The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of the institution of the family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life" (*Familiaris Consortio* 1).

Today, there are certain sectors of society that wish to redefine the concept of a "family" to include (with equal legal status as the traditional father-mother-children family) same-sex unions with or without adopted children, single parenthood, multiple partnership, and adoption of animals. They accept as variations within any

family structure adultery, divorce, incestuous sex, pre-marital sex and even other forms of partners of sex for the sole purpose of achieving pleasure. We have to be fully aware of these currents and be ready to explain their detrimental effects to the person and society.

Abortion and Contraception

We also cannot but condemn abortion, or killing the baby in the mother's womb. Abortion is done either through suction, hysterectomy, saline injection, various formulations of the morning after abortive made of Levonorgestrel, and other means. Not to be left out is the abortion pill called the "RU-486", which is not simply a "contraceptive" as some would deceptively claim, but rather was invented precisely to remove the implanted baby from the mother's womb. The generic name of RU-486 is mifepristone, a chemical which blocks the action of progesterone, the hormone required to maintain a pregnancy - its mode of action is thus to abort a pregnancy that has already started.

Likewise, many people are unaware that at conception, the moment when the father's sperm meets the mother's egg cell, a new life is formed. How can this new being not be a human person? And how can some people allow abortion of this being by not allowing it to implant unto the mother's womb a few days later, as in the use of contraceptive pills (which have abortifacient effects), or the intrauterine device (which is not a contraceptive but abortifacient since it does not stop the sperm from meeting the egg)? Could the pills and IUD's even be declared unconstitutional, as they go against Art. II, Sec. 12, of our Constitution, which reads, "The State., shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception"?

Some attempt to go around this question by stating that "conception", that is, the beginning of life refers not to fertilization,

but to implantation, which takes place around five days later. Still, a review of the records reveals that the intention was clear: "it is when the ovum is fertilized by the sperm that there is human life. Just to repeat: first, there is obviously life because it starts to nourish itself, it starts to grow as any living being, and it is human because at the moment of fertilization, the chromosomes that combined in the fertilized ovum are the chromosomes that are uniquely found in human beings and are not found in any other living being" (*Record of the Constitutional Commission*, Volume 4, p. 668). Indeed, at fertilization a new individual is formed, which is distinct in its existence and genetic make-up from both the father and the mother.

And if ever one still doubts whether in the days between fertilization and implantation there is already a human person, then one should give the benefit of the doubt and respect that being as a human person, very much in the same way that a hunter should not shoot when doubting whether what is behind the bushes is a human person or an animal.

On the other hand, abortion and RU-486 should be considered unconstitutional, regardless of whether conception is deemed to take place at fertilization or implantation, as they remove the baby from the womb after conception. Could this be among the reasons for proposals to modify the Constitution?

Abroad, some even go to the extent of performing "partial-birth" or "brain-suction" abortion. They do this by delivering a healthy, viable baby in breech position (feet first), and when only the head remains inside the woman's vagina, they pierce the baby's nape with a pointed pair of scissors and insert a tube connected to the suction machine, to suck the baby's brains out. Then they harvest the dead baby's parts, such as brain cells, kidney, heart valve, and so on. They have been doing this since the 1970's, and attempts by the US Congress and Senate to ban it failed in the 1990's.

In abortion, the weak, defenseless child is brutally murdered not just by anybody but by those who are supposed to love and care for the child most - the parents and the doctors!

So many of our women have actually become unknowing victims of abortion, given the danger they are exposed to, both during the procedure and after, in the form of physical, physiological and psychological effects. Likewise, they suffer from the side effects of contraceptive pills (nausea, vomiting, headaches, weight gain or loss, hypertension, impaired vision, mood changes and depression, higher incidence of cancer, difficulty of conceiving after discontinuing use, etc.), without even having been informed by their doctors of these ill effects and other burdens, and of the natural methods which serve as effective means to carry out the decision whether to have a pregnancy or not.

Responsible Parenthood

The Church is very much one with the couples in their parental responsibilities. Thus, Pope John Paul II examines the topic of responsible parenthood from its different aspects: "In relation to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their functions... In relation to the tendencies of instinct or passion, responsible parenthood means that necessary dominion which reason and will must exercise over them. In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised, either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth..." (*Humanae Vitae* 10)

Responsible parenthood then includes making the decision whether to have another child at present or not. Thus, to think that the Church simply wants the couples to have as many children as

they physically can (quoting Gen 1:22, "God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply'") is incorrect. The Church teaches that the methods used to avoid pregnancy should always respect the moral law.

"Every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible is intrinsically immoral (*Humanae Vitae* 14). Such contraceptive actions "separate the two meanings [union between spouses and procreation] that God the Creator has inscribed in the being of man and woman and in the dynamism of their sexual communion", whereby the couple "act as 'arbiters' of the divine plan and they 'manipulate' and degrade human sexuality - and with it themselves and their married partner - by altering its value of 'total' self-giving. Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality" (*Familiaris Consortio* 32).

On the other hand, avoiding pregnancy by abstaining from sex when the woman is fertile is morally acceptable. "By means of recourse to periods of infertility, the couple respect the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, they are acting as 'ministers' of God's plan and they 'benefit from' their sexuality according to the original dynamism of 'total' self-giving, without manipulation or alteration. The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is the woman, and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control... In this way sexuality is respected and promoted in its truly and fully human dimension, and is never 'used' as an 'object' (*Familiaris Consortio* 32).

It has to be remembered too that recourse to infertile periods is acceptable only when there are grave motives. Otherwise, one would fall into the "contraceptive mentality" by using the infertile periods simply as an alternative to contraceptives, with the purpose of avoiding pregnancy even though the couple's personal situation would allow them to receive from God the gift of another child.

I invite those working in the family and life apostolate to further study and promote the modern means of determining the wife's fertility on any given day. The primitive and inaccurate "rhythm" and "calendar" methods invented as far back as the 1930's are now obsolete and have given way to the scientifically tested ones, such as the Billings Ovulation Method and the Sympto - Thermal Method. (Some attain an effectiveness rate of 99.6%, much higher than contraceptives and without any of their side effects, and are effective even for women with irregular cycles.)

True, abstinence, which could reach a week or so, could be a source of personal struggle. But this struggle builds up character and trust, and assures the couple that their love is not merely based on sexual pleasure, but on total self-donation. Statistics from other countries show that divorce rate is very low among non-contraceptive users, compared with the general population. Sometimes people listen too much to criticisms against the natural methods, criticisms coming from those who do not use the method. Isn't it about time that we listened to those who use the method and know from experience that it is indeed effective?

Sex Education

And how can we not see the need to reexamine the present form of sex education in schools? It is the main vehicle of the sexual revolution, which simply stated, means the removal of sex from the intimacy of husband-wife relationship, and bringing it out into the open. Sex is now simply seen as a means of obtaining

pleasure, independent of the responsibility to love the spouse for the rest of one's life, and independent of openness to life. From this perspective, sex can take any form at all, as long as it gives pleasure, be it with one's or with another's spouse, in premarital sex, with the same sex, by oneself, with many partners, with minors, or even with animals.

To eliminate the sense of sacredness of sex, children are now made to undergo processes of desensitization. They are given all the information about sex, more than what they actually need and can handle, resulting in promiscuity, contraceptive use, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, along with whatever physical and psychological traumas that may ensue. It is in sex education where children are introduced at a very early age (even in pre-school) to many anti-life and anti-family concepts.

The result is that instead of protecting the children from the environment, sex education tends to promote promiscuity. What concept of a family will a man or a woman who has gone through different sex partners have?

But the objection against sex education is not simply with regards to the misuse of sex. Parental authority over their children is undermined. Oftentimes children are led to think that parents know very little about sex or consider sex as taboo. (In cases where this is true, parents have to be helped and made capable of explaining matters regarding sex to their children.) The children begin to mistrust their parents when it comes to sex and intimate relationships, and by extension, when it comes to other things. The true guides are no longer the parents but their peers (who in the future will be trained in advising contraceptives and abortion) and their teachers. So many other false ideas are systematically injected into the children's minds using sex education: what is pleasurable is always good, that truth and goodness simply depend on one's personal preferences, New Age principles, etc.

Pope John Paul II says, "Even amid the difficulties of the work of education, difficulties which are often greater today, parents must trustingly and courageously train their children in the essential values of human life... Education in love as self-giving is also the indispensable premise for parents called to give their children a clear and delicate sex education. Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something common place, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person - body, emotions and soul - and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.

"Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents.

"... The Church is firmly opposed to an often widespread form of imparting sex information dissociated from moral principles. That would merely be an introduction to the experience of pleasure and a stimulus leading to the loss of serenity - while still in the years of innocence [the "latency period", which has to be respected] - - by opening the way to vice" (*Familiaris Consortio* 37).

Population Control

We also cannot fail to see the toll that population control has had in 73 countries today. The so-called "Small Family Size Norm" proposes a maximum of two children per family, the number needed to replace the father and the mother when they eventually die. But

in the long run such scheme to stabilize the population will succeed only if all children will in turn marry and give birth. But since the contrary is true, demographers say that an average of at least 2.1 children per couple is needed to maintain the population. It also has to be considered that the tendency is actually for many couples to have only one or no child, bringing down the average to around 1.8 or less children per couple. This will assure the country of population aging and underpopulation.

Over the last 30 years many developed countries have adapted the "Small Family Size Norm" of two. Consequently, they have been having only one or two children per couple, and will eventually experience a decline in population (as of now this is not yet taking place because their people live longer due to better medical care; but time will come when their many old citizens will finally die, and their population will shrink). Less children would mean less workforce and thus the need for more working immigrants, a shrinking market (who will buy toys, school supplies and children's wear?), more older citizens to support with government and private money, and so on. This could lead the country into economic and security disasters, which we have to avoid at all cost.

Such economic and security concerns are the reasons why a good number of highly developed countries invite their citizens to have more children. This they do by giving certain tax deductions and monetary rewards starting with the third child, encouraging earlier marriage, and even providing a match-making office to help the people to find a spouse. Could it be that the population growth of some developing countries actually poses a threat to countries with very low birth rates? And if so, could it be the reason why population control is pushed in developing countries, and usually set as a condition for aid given to them? These questions might be worth examining in detail.

Besides, we have to make a reality check whether our country is indeed overpopulated. Assuming but without conceding that the Philippines' population is around 76 million, it seems easy to imagine that these people could easily fit into the country's land area of 300,000 square kilometers. Why? Because if Metro Manila has 10 million people and 636 sq. km., it is safe to think that an average-sized province of almost 4,000 sq. km. could accommodate many more. But to simplify our computations, let us put even just 2 million in each province. If we multiply that figure by 75 provinces, the country would accommodate 150 million, double the current official count. A final computation: if we take Laguna's density of around 800 persons/sq. km. and apply it to the Philippines, that is, multiply it by 300,000 sq. km., the country could accommodate 240 million! True, there may be some towns in Laguna that are thickly populated, but the province as a whole doesn't seem to be so.

Now, some say that what the world lacks now is not really land area but food supply. Actually, the world can produce sufficient food. In fact, we read news articles stating that when prices of milk, cereal or lamb go down, Americans, Europeans and Australians simply eliminate the necessary quantity of these products (by killing or dumping them into the ocean) to lower supply and thus increase prices.

Still, others say that population growth has to be matched by economic growth. But why do we not achieve a greater economic growth? Couldn't it be because a certain percentage of our national budget does go to the people (in terms of projects and services), but the remaining goes to graft and corruption?

AIDS "Education"

And what could be made out of AIDS education? It is sad that the incidence of AIDS is increasing in our beloved country.

We have to be compassionate towards AIDS patients. As with any other disease, the best approach to stopping AIDS is prevention. But could the transmission of the AIDS virus (the HIV) really be stopped by using what some call "safe sex", that is, the condom? Scientific studies show that condoms may fail to stop both sperm, virus and other microorganism causing sexually-transmitted diseases due to various reasons, such as breakage, leakage, slippage, old age, improper storage and the naturally occurring minute pores present in all latex materials.

Thus, maybe it would be best to request or even require condom advertisers to state something like, "WARNING: CONDOMS DO NOT GUARANTEE PROTECTION FROM AIDS OR STD'S". Such a notice is not only scientifically accurate, but is a necessary protection for and even a right of unknowing consumers. Remember that for the same reason warnings are placed in other products, such as "CIGARETTE SMOKING IS DANGEROUS FOR YOUR HEALTH", "DRINK MODERATELY", and, "BREASTMILK IS BEST FOR BABIES UNTIL TWO YEARS OLD". Along this line, it might also be good to require chemical contraceptives to put warnings such as, PILLS HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO INCREASE INCIDENCE OF BREAST CANCER, or, PILLS CAUSE ABORTION BY NOT ALLOWING IMPLANTATION. All this is a matter of telling the truth! And the truth shall set us free! Free from all the evils these products bring, not only physically, but also spiritually.

Now, practically the only ways in which the HIV may be transmitted *through sexual contact* are the following: (1) premarital sex, (2) marital infidelity and (3) homosexual acts. By sheer logic alone, it follows that those who promote the condom to stop AIDS in general also automatically promote these three practices, because these are the only situations wherein the person "needs" the condom to stop AIDS.

Couldn't it be then that promoters of "safe sex", who know that it is not really safe, could have other agenda, maybe hidden, in mind? Why can we ask this question? Because they know that condom trust will not stop AIDS, but instead will simply give false assurances, thus increase non-spousal sexual exposure and the risk of contracting the deadly virus and sexually transmitted diseases.

Furthermore, if those promoting the condom are really sincere in their desire to stop AIDS, why do they almost never promote the technique that is 100% sure? Yes, we can stop AIDS here and now through the S.O.S. method: "Spouse-Only Sex"! That is, marital fidelity, the only effective and cheapest way to stop AIDS!

To clarify the argument further, let us take an analogy. Imagine a healthcare worker who says that a certain brand of bottled water will stop the stomachache epidemic in a certain town. And imagine that he knows that 15 out of a hundred bottles of his brand are contaminated, but does not tell this to the people. What will happen? The more the people drink that brand, thinking it is safe, the more they expose themselves to the disease. Had they known this, they would have simply boiled their drinking water.

And imagine that there is another brand that is 100% free of the germs, and is given out for free, but which the healthcare worker simply keeps quiet about. Can we really say he is sincere in his efforts to stop the epidemic? If the above analysis is correct, the same question can be asked regarding "safe sex".

Could there be some hidden agenda behind some AIDS "Education" programs? Could it be to undermine the morality of our people, especially the youth? Could it be population control (since AIDS patients die)? It would be good to find out convincing answers to these questions. The truth shall set us free!

By the way, the condom and chastity are two completely opposing approaches to the AIDS problem. You earn from the

condom, but not from chastity. The condom corrupts and weakens people, chastity forms and strengthens them. The condom destroys families and individuals, chastity builds them up. The condom spreads promiscuity, and thus sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, while chastity battles them.

Divorce

I said in a statement dated July 6, 2001, "The strength of the nation is in the family. Destroy the family by a bill like divorce and all the other values will come crumbling down".

Divorce is often presented as an exit from marital problems and a second chance at marriage. Aside from the theological considerations on the unity and indissolubility of marriage, a closer look at the experiences of countries with divorce will probably allow one to conclude that indeed divorce is not a solution to failed marriages. Divorce takes its toll on the children, the spouses, society at large and even on marriage itself as an institution.

Children are the primary losers in divorce, as they lose one parent and two of grandparents, suffer psychological trauma, and have increased risks of suicide, obesity, problems in school, drug addiction, early pregnancies, abortions and other crimes.

Spouses lose each other and possibly their children and many friends, and may likewise undergo psychological trauma, financial difficulties, humiliation and other problems. Society suffers from the breakdown of the family which is its basic unit. And in countries where social services are readily available, the state has to spend more in terms of aid to divorcees.

Behind a divorce law, there is always the tendency for couples entering into marriage not to give themselves totally to each other, given that there is a chance for them to easily part ways. Without indissolubility, matrimony cannot be considered as something

serious. More and more people would decide not to get married at all and simply live together without any assurance of stability - to the detriment of the couples themselves and the children, as well as to the members of society as a whole.

Historically, divorce laws have always started with certain conditions imposed. But eventually, they could easily be transformed to no-fault divorce - that is, any married couple may get a divorce (sometimes even within the day) for the most superficial reasons or even none at all.

We have to strengthen our families, first of all through prayer. Statistics in the United States show that 50-60% of their married couples end up in separation. But for those who are married in Church, go to Church together, and pray together, only 0.1% end up separated. As the saying goes, "the family that prays together stays together".

Furthermore, I reiterate what I wrote last July 6, 2001, that "the lawmakers must seek ways to protect the family and preserve our cherished Filipino values not destroy them. Divorce will increase the number of poor people in our midst. Divorce will bring about more spiritually impoverished children because their spiritually impoverished parents do not like to keep their marital commitments".

Euthanasia

"Euthanasia must be distinguished from the decision to forgo so-called aggressive medical treatment," in other words, medical procedures which no longer correspond to the real situation of the patient, either because they are by now disproportionate to any expected results or because they impose an excessive burden on the patient and the patient's family. In such situations, when death is clearly imminent and inevitable, one can in conscience 'refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and

burdensome prolongation of life, so long as the normal care due to the sick person in similar cases is not interrupted" (from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith *Declaration on Euthanasia*, 1980).

Thus, in cases in which the patient, because of the trauma and the ensuing consequences, is already dying, what certain means of life support actually do is simply to prolong the dying process, instead of really prolonging life. Strictly speaking, if such means are withdrawn, one does not cause the death of the patient. Rather, the cause of death is the patient's critical condition itself, and not the withdrawal of life support.

Furthermore, when there is no longer any hope for recovery, at least in the present state of medical science, and when life support measures cause too much burden (in ethical terms these are called "extraordinary means"), such life support systems may be withdrawn, even though death of the patient would follow. In such a case, one cannot be considered guilty of killing the patient. This is not euthanasia, but rather, simply allowing a dying person to actually die. Likewise, one does not hasten death (unlike if one injects a lethal substance or prescribes an overdose of drugs), but simply lets the dying process take its natural course. This is a concrete manifestation of abandonment to divine providence - God gives life, and God takes it away.

It is evident from the preceding discussion that there is absolutely no need for a law allowing Euthanasia. Any attempt to legalize euthanasia reveals a certain intention beyond allowing a dying person to actually die (an action that is both ethically and legally acceptable), and a tendency towards pragmatism and an anti-life mentality: to kill persons who are no longer useful or productive, especially when they are considered burdensome to care for. Euthanasia may even be considered as an opportunity for children to get back at their parents for having killed their siblings

while still in the womb. With this thought, we complete the cycle of attacks against the family and life: parents killing children, and children killing parents.

Conclusion

It has been my intention in writing this message to make a general presentation of the constant attacks against family and life, attacks that are orchestrated and are so subtle and may easily pass unnoticed. Given all these considerations, what are we to do? Please allow me to humbly make my appeals.

1. To all of us, please pray that the culture of love and life will truly overcome the anti-culture of death. This battle does not merely touch the human or society. It is the father of all lies rebelling against the Author of Life.
2. Likewise, let us intensify our efforts to study Church teachings on the family, even as we continue to take advantage of all the scientific and sociological data we can gather. Misconceptions on the Church's positions have to be corrected. Realistic solutions have to be offered. Only by being faithful to Christ's message will we be able to guide the family to its fulfillment. It is my desire that the topics outlined in this letter be disseminated and seriously studied by all.
3. To our educators, teachers and mentors, study the impact of these issues on the people.
4. To our legislators and policy makers, I enjoin you to take cognizance of basic laws of the land and enact laws to apply constitutional provisions protecting the family and life.
5. To our lay and civic organizations, let us plan and coordinate our efforts to disseminate as much information as we can regarding these matters, either through personal contacts, by

organizing seminars and discussion groups (in this regard, there is no need to come up with additional activities; rather, the regular meetings of these groups could be utilized) or through the effective use of the mass media. Those who can should help in the financial machinery to professionalize the efforts to protect and strengthen the family, as a volunteer army can never go far.

6. To our fathers and mothers, do not forget that the family is the first and last line of defense against the ills that could affect the individual's character, for the family is the first school of virtues and the place where the individual grows to maturity.
7. To our youth, who are beginning their journey towards marriage and family life, discover the beauty and grandeur of the vocation to love and the service of love.
8. To the priests and religious, continue guiding the flock entrusted to you, first of all through your example, and also through your words. The ultimate vaccine against all these ills is the strengthening of our spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic formation. I invite you all to go back to the basics in your pastoral activities. People who know their faith through catechesis and study and truly live it in prayer and apostolate will not be easily misled.

May Mary, Queen of the Family and Mother of Life guide us all.

Revelation is Pro-life

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

One who drives to Northern Luzon would notice a unique landmark along the national road somewhere in Tarlac. The landmark's design is depicting a baby in human palm. The big hand appears to provide protection to a fragile creature.

The hand could mean divine providence. God takes care of every child. He gives life to it; He nourishes it; He feeds it; He protects it from danger. All these mean that God is pro-life.

From that same symbol, one can proceed reflecting on the whole revelation: God in different time, places, and ways opted to reveal to humankind his love, goodness, and mercy.

First, God gave life to all creatures including the first man and woman. He protected Adam, Eve and their sons and daughters despite the first fall. He kept his promise to Abraham. He kept his promise to Jacob and his children.

To abandon the twelve tribes of Jacob would mean death. To keep their lives, **he satisfied their hunger and quenched their thirst.** From the desert, He guided them to enter the place of milk and honey. What a support to life!

The decalogue was meant to protect the family of Israel and their neighbors. The climax of revelation on the protection of life is the 5th commandment: "Thou shall not kill".

Christ, the fullness of revelation of the Father, made more complete the Father's plan to care for life. He gave his life to keep humankind "alive". His message of justice is pro-life; His message of love is pro-life; His message of peace is pro-life. On the other hand, war, injustice, and hatred are all against life.

All wars, killings, injustices, hatred etc., destroy the world order. They are the dis-acknowledgement of the good news from revelation that announces that every life is sacred.

To protect life is not only the concern of pro-lifers. The concern belong to all of humanity who are called to be in communion with the Trinity: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

The writer is wondering what transformation will it bear and bring to the world if only 10% of enthusiasm and interest given to sports, business, tourism, body building, etc. by established bodies (like towns and cities, churches and governments, schools and businesses) is directed to project that directly discourage any attack to life, especially the innocent ones in the wombs of mothers.

One can also give a second meaning to the same aforesaid hand. Let that same palm squeeze the baby to death. And that hand cannot be God's. But it could be a human hand of any body who suffocates and destroys life. It can become a hand that is anti-life.

How many human hands actually do these anti-life gestures. We have many accounts to tell: Mothers poisoning the baby while in the womb with abortifacient pills; the hands of physicians dismembering the fragile child piece by piece where while still in the womb of the mother through abortion; legal hands allowing laws to abort the children up to the 8th months old; and so on. Millions of lives are taken away every year.

God, the author of revelation and the author of life is displeased by this inhumanity of men and women themselves.

Maybe one day, we meet the Lord Jesus: We tell him, we have been successful in tourism, successful in sports, successful in business, and name all kinds of successes. What kind of reward do you think the Lord will give us? Maybe a corresponding reward! Put supposing one day we meet him and tell him: Lord 10% of my business profit, 10% of my sports enthusiasm, etc. is translated to save human lives. Guess how Jesus would react? Certainly he will give everyone of us a big smile.

This reminds me of a big painting near the crossing of EDSA and Shaw Boulevard in Metro Manila. It portrays Jesus picking a baby with this message: This is not just a matter of choice; for it is a baby.

Indeed, when Jesus sees us pick up a baby to care nourish and protect it, He will certainly give us a big "smile".

One pro-lifer give a little sharing how could everyone really develop a simple spirituality: He believes that if only each one of us really take a responsibility to save one little baby from being aborted, may be God, the author of creation and revelation, in his mercy will save the soul of each of us too!

"Sowing Good Seed". The Asian Experience of forming Seminary Formators and Spiritual Directors

LEONARDO LEGASPI, OP, DD

The image that comes to me as I reflect on Asia's experience of forming its formators is that of a man preparing to sow his field. I choose this image because we are in the process of preparing the ground for an Institute for Seminary Formators in Asia that will be accessible to all participants from Asia.

The call for such an institute was made at the Asian Synod (1998) and again affirmed at the 7th Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (F.A.B.C., Thailand, 2000). We hope to set up the Institute in three years, after careful hoeing and weeding of the ground as it were.

It is this process of hoeing and cultivation for common directions and efforts at forming seminary directors and spiritual formators that I wish to describe in this paper. In this image, one can imagine the different farm implements, hoes and spades, mirroring the work done by formators, the seedbed as the seminary and the seeds the candidates for the priesthood. This agricultural image is apt because Asia itself, despite its flourishing urban centers and skyscrapers, is still very agricultural in its context and culture.

/ speak here not as the farmer who sows the field, for the farmers in this paper are the Asian Bishops themselves, who each in his own diocese and collectively through the FABC is principally in charge of forming seminary formators. What I wish to present to you in this paper are the fruits of a decade of discourse, discussion and discernment within (he Church in Asia through the meetings and exchanges of the FABC on the task of forming formators of priests for today.

*I wish to focus on the **context, methodology and fruits** of the formation of formators of Asia.*

CONTEXT

All by itself the soil produces grain. Mk 4:28

Any good farmer worth his salt will know that the fruit is only as good as the soil in which it is planted. The soil - our Asian context - produces the fruit. From out of the depth of the soil of Asia are arising its priests and formators.

It is impossible to characterize the soil of Asia in one paper. The Asian soil includes the fertile plains of Southeast Asia, the mountain ranges of the Himalayas, the frozen lands of Siberia as well and the flooded deltas of South Asia. This variety of types of soil is paralleled in the "intricate mosaic that is Asia's many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions;"¹ as the cradle of the world's major religions and the earth's largest and most populated continent.

In the 1988 Asian Rector's Congress, the situation of Asia was characterized by two forms of hunger: hunger for God, which has always characterized the religious traditions of Asia, and in our time, the ever present hunger for bread.²

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia, November 6, 1999.

² Summary of the meetings of formators and of the responses of the Asian churches to the *Lineamenta* of the 1990 Synod.

In 1991, rectors and formators of Asian seminaries listed the following as the challenges for the Church in Asia: threatening ecological imbalance, poverty, challenge of other religions to the Christian faith, need for dialogue with all persons of good-will, population explosion, consumerism in the economic macro-micro system and the proper use of the media.³

In 1995, I characterized the dilemma faced by the Church in Asia as a dual predicament of how to proclaim the Gospel to a vast multitude whose hunger for transcendence is directed towards their ancestral religions and yet whose entry into the modern economic system is dictated by secularism where God becomes an "unnecessary hypothesis."

In *Ecclesia in Asia*, the Holy Father speaks of the conviction that deep within the people, cultures and religions of Asia there is a "thirst for living water" (*Jn* 4: 10-15), a thirst which the Spirit himself has created and which Jesus the Savior alone can fully satisfy.⁴

In an FABC Seminar on Priestly and Religious Formation held in 1999, Archbishop Quevedo of the Philippines named several implications of the Asian cultural, religious and socio-economic situation on formators and houses of formation:

- a) The fact that in many places in Asia, Christianity is seen as a foreign religion should intensify the process of religious **inculturation** that had begun with the early Church;
- b) A **theology** that is **contextualized** should emphasize the interaction between a liberating integral faith and the Asian situation;

³ *Statement on the Formation of Priests in Circumstance of the Present Day Asia*: Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors, 1991.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia, November 6, 1999.

- c) In the plurality of cultures and religious faiths in Asia, houses of formation should develop **persons of dialogue**;
- d) Seminary and religious formation needs to consider **the negative values in Asian cultures**;
- e) An aspect of the cultural world of Asia is the gradual erosion of positive cultural values because of the emergence of a **global secular culture** brought about in an accelerated manner by the process of globalization;
- f) An **incarnated spirituality** is imperative. It has to develop the deep Asian desire for contemplation as well as Asian ways of Christian prayer;
- g) The overarching emphasis in houses of formation has to be the development of **men and women of prayer**;
- h) A new and dynamic **missionary spirit** has to be developed in houses of formation;
- i) An **integral faith** must be developed that considers the socio-economic and political, cultural dimensions of life as integral to the fundamentally spiritual component of faith;
- j) Formation in the **social doctrine** of the Church is necessary and has to be contextualized;
- k) Leadership in social matters has to be passed on to competent **lay people**. Houses of formation have to pay special attention to the issue of women in Asian society;
- l) An easy method of pastoral discernment and social analysis is necessary. An abiding **sensitivity to the poor** and their many faces in Asia has to be developed;
- m) In the light of the various conflicts and divisions in Asian society, houses of formation have to develop a strong **sense of community**.

In the most recent FABC Plenary Assembly (Thailand, 2000), seven movements were observed to constitute the Asian vision of a renewed Church:⁵

- A movement towards a Church of the Poor and the Young;
- A movement toward a truly local Church, indigenous and inculturated;
- A movement toward deep interiority leading to a praying community;
- A movement towards an authentic community of faith, to be a communion of communities;
- A movement toward active integral evangelization, toward a new sense of mission;
- A movement toward empowerment of men and women;
- A movement toward active involvement in serving life.

This is the Asian context that we consider as we form our formators and from which spring the priests of Asia. Soil that does not have moisture cannot support vegetation. We pray that the Spirit waters the Asian soil in which we plant our seeds for vocations and formators *so that we may produce crop - a hundred times that what was sown* (Mt 13:8).

METHODOLOGY

The methodology the FABC has taken to respond to the hunger and thirst of Asia is the same methodology and orientation that characterizes the work of forming formators: the methodology of **dialogue**.

⁵ *A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service*, Final Statement of the 7th FABC Plenary Assembly, Samphran, Thailand, 2000.

For FABC this dialogue is addressed to Asian cultures, Asian religions and the immense multitude of the poor.⁶ In 1988, FABC shared this three-fold dialogue with the Rectors of Asian Seminaries in their First Congress. This was followed by the First Congress of Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries in 1989, the First Joint Colloquium of Rectors and Seminary Directors of Asian Seminaries in 1990, and Seminars of Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries in 1991. These critical meetings served as a "forum for reflection and sharing among those who bear the day to day responsibility for priestly formation so as to help them fulfill their delicate and demanding mission."⁷ These meetings initiated a dialogue between representatives of formators of the local churches in Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Australia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand and included speakers of similarly diverse origins and experiences.

The first meeting in 1988 focused on developing a common understanding of the context in which formation work was to proceed. This resulted in the recognition that while the hunger for God was the primary concern of the Church in Asia, the hunger for bread was also its responsibility. At the congress, the Asian Rectors recommended the following to the bishops of Asia:

- 1) A faculty development program and a continuing training of the seminary staff;
- 2) An adequate number of spiritual directors for each seminary;
- 3) An intensive spiritual formation program for all spiritual directors; and

⁶ FELIX WILFRED, *The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: Orientations, Challenges and Impact*, For All the Peoples of Asia. FABC Documents from 1970 to 1991, Rosales, Arevalo, ed.

⁷ VICENTE CAJILIG, *The Making of the Seminar of Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries*, Hundredfold Harvest, 1992.

- 4) The establishment of a pool of qualified teachers in the social sciences.

The second meeting, the Congress of Spiritual Directors, also continued this dialogue between Asian formators and Asian formation experts. Looking at the task of spiritual formation, they recommended a spiritual formation program for directors that included aspects of:

- 1) Inculturation within the context of each local Church;
- 2) Adaptation of spiritual formation to the Asian condition of poverty and suffering, leading to a life of biblical *kenosis*;
- 3) Study of different religious spiritualities leading towards inter-faith dialogue;
- 4) The positive use of the media for formation purposes;
- 5) The integration of all components of formation towards interiorization and not merely external compliance.⁸

This critical meeting also focused attention on the three needs of Asian seminaries:

- The designation of a special coordinator who sets the tone of spirituality in a house of formation;
- Due to the lack of spiritual formators, the need to integrate spiritual formation with all the aspects of priestly formation;
- Lastly, the need for on-going spiritual formation for young priests.

It is to this issue of on-going formation for priests - young priests, those in their middle-years and senior priests - that we have turned our attention, especially after the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. In 1993, Asian Seminary Formators were again called together for a conference on the Continuing Education for Priests. It was here that intercontinental experiences

⁸ Recommendations from the First Congress of Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries, Feb. 1989.

were shared from the local churches in England, the United States and Australia.

In 1990, the First Joint Colloquium of Rectors and Spiritual Directors in Asian Houses of Formation met to draft an intensive **spiritual formation program** that focused on interiorization and integration. This program focused on centrality of the God-experience in seminary formation. A formation process that emphasized interiorization rather than external conformity and achieved a proper balance between freedom, discipline and accountability. They requested that FABC organize their similar meetings at the regional level and ask specifically for the following from the Bishops:

- Specific criteria for the appointment of formators and professors;
- Definite term of service;
- Opportunities for on-going formation particularly for those involved in spiritual direction;
- A budget for the work of spiritual formators such as other seminary departments have.

The various FABC Plenary Assemblies have also been occasions for reflection and discernment of issues concerning the formation and work of Asian formators.

This journey or Asian and intercontinental dialogue has gifted us with a clearer insight into the Asian context, the Asian Church and the Asian priest. We have begun to see through our diverse realities, the common soil on which the one Spirit breathes and moves. We are moved to present to this common soil the one face, but also the Asian face of Jesus, Savior of all.

FRUITS

By their fruits you shall know them.

Mt 7:16

A man reaps what he sows (Gal 6:7). What we have begun is the start of an eternal harvest that others will hopefully reap after

us. The foundation that this journey of dialogue has made is the beginning of a common understanding of the identity or the Asian priest, the Asian formator and the locus of formation. On this foundation we will lay the seed for an Institute for Seminary Formators of Asia.

The Asian Priest

The Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC summarized the work of previous gatherings on the identity of the Asian priest. "The future priest of Asia must be a man of communion: this means that the priest become a man of the sacred, a man of dialogue, and a man of humble service".⁹

It is worthwhile to recall the words used to define the Asian priest, as it is the basis for the formation of formators:

*A Man of the Sacred is one who has a deep faith experience. He must be a witness of holiness and capable of communicating holiness to others. A Man of Dialogue: this requires the priest to be available for dialogue mentally. He must pursue dialogue with depth. To be able to do this, the priest should learn the necessary skills for creative and effective dialogical understanding. A Man of Humble Service: a lowly attitude is required of a priest who wants to render humble service. He must be familiar also with the signs of the times and must acquire a true understanding of such signs. The acquisition of skills to effectively serve society is a must.*¹⁰

The Asian Priest Formator

Following from this description, the Asian priest formator is called to have specific skills to form this Man of Communion.

⁹ Main Recommendations on Priestly Formation, V Plenary Assembly, FABC, 1990.

¹⁰ *Clergy of Asia: Lights and Shadows*, Main Recommendations on Priestly Formation, V Plenary Assembly, FABC 1990.

The FABC asks formators to absorb and orient themselves to an emerging new Christian spirituality in Asia where eastern and western traditions converge.¹¹ They also ask that formators understand the experience of other continents for a better understanding of the "universality of priesthood".¹² In 1991, Rectors and Directors of Asian seminaries underlined the key role formators play in the formation for celibacy and the need for them to be well-integrated persons.¹³ They also reiterated the importance of the personal witness of formators in imbibing the spirit of poverty and recommended guided exposures to poverty.¹⁴

*The FABC has voiced its concerns that there are not enough spiritual directors for the seminary nor are there qualified teachers in the social sciences.*⁵ They urge that spiritual directors should be equipped with counseling skills and be complemented by trained counselors.¹⁶ Further, they recommend that competent lay people, especially women,¹¹ be invited to participate in the seminary formation of future priests.*

The FABC has also spoken on the selection of formators, recommending a holistic approach that aims at identifying formators of spiritual depth, pastoral/evangelical experience and effectiveness, and academic competence.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *Statement on the Formation of Priests in Circumstance of the Present Day Asia: Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors, 1991.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Formation for Priesthood in Asia, Seventh Plenary Assembly, Discussion guide, January 2000.*

¹⁶ *Statement on the Formation of Priests in Circumstance of the Present Day Asia: Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors, 1991.*

¹⁷ *Main Recommendations on Priestly Formation, V Plenary Assembly, FABC 1990.*

The Locus of Formation

Participants of the recently concluded 7th FABC Plenary Assembly recommended that effective ways of evaluating the whole seminary system are needed. Specifically, it was recommended that formation be given in small groups for better personal guidance, (with a moderator system) and for the sake of fostering human maturity.

Seminaries must move from being a center of academic life to a spiritual center¹⁸ conducive to dialogical formation.¹⁹ We have seen that the comfortable life in the seminary mitigates against the spirit of poverty and ill prepares the seminarians to live lives that witness to poverty and simplicity. Big numbers in our major seminaries are not conducive to personality growth and formation.

The FABC further recommends that where big communities exist, the seminary be divided into small groups so that seminarians can receive personal attention and guidance, and so that they may grow in their ability to relate with others and to work in a team.²⁰

In Manila, there are "formation houses" that have sprouted around schools of theology. They usually belong to a particular diocese or religious congregation who know the prohibitive cost of putting up their own theological schools, and who at the same time desist from simply sending their candidates to traditional seminaries. Instead they rent a modest house close to the theological school and bring together a smaller number of candidates under the close guidance of one or more formators. There they live a life of community in an "unwalled setting" and commute to the

¹⁸ *Main Recommendations on Priestly Formation*, V Plenary Assembly, FABC 1990.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Statement on the Formation of Priests in Circumstance of the Present Day Asia: Seminar for Rectors and Spiritual Directors*, 1991.

seminary for their academic formation. Here they have more room for self-discovery and healthy interpersonal relationships. Here they are able to keep in touch with particular communities of faith in their diocese. Consequently, they are not distanced from the secular reality they are soon to face in their own diocese. This calls for formators themselves to become not just functionaries but community persons. *Ecclesia in Asia* recommends that seminary staff receive specific formation focused on priestly spirituality and the art of spiritual direction.²¹

Conclusion

"This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit." (Is 37:30)

We look forward to this third year when the seeds of our journey of dialogue on the Asian priest and Asian formators are gathered together to serve as the foundation for an Institute of Asian Formators.

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. (1 Cor 15:36). The fruit that the Asian formators produce - the Asian priest - will have to represent every day *in persona Christi* the redemptive sacrifice that Christ offered on the cross. Like the blades of a farmer's hoe that must constantly be sharpened, the formators must no* be strangers to this same priestly experience of *kenosis* and sacrifice. We continue to sow generously that we may reap generously for the Lord of the Asian harvest.

²¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia, November 6, 1999, n. 43.

The Bishop as a Father, Brother and Friend to His Priests

AUGUSTINE MENDONCA

Introduction

The title of this essay is derived directly from the documents of the Second Vatican Council. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, no. 28 we read: "By reason of this sharing in the priesthood and mission, priests should see in the bishop a *true father* and obey him with all respect. The bishop, for his part, should treat the priests, his helpers, as his *sons* and *friends* just as Christ calls his disciples no longer servants but friends (Jn 15: 15)."¹ If the council's teaching bears any significance for bishops and priests, the implication of these words should be clear to them. The mind of the council fathers here seems to be focussed on the importance of the mutual bishop-priest relationship expressed in those familiar images.

¹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (=LG), 21 November 1964, in AAS, 57 (1964), pp. 5-71; here at p. 35; English translation in A. Rannery (Gen. ed.), *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, a completely revised translation in inclusive language, Northport, NY, Costello Publishing Company, Dublin, Ireland, Dominican Publications, 1996, pp. 1-95, here at p. 41.

The same characterisation of the bishop-priest relationship is found also in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, no. 16: "They [bishops] should regard them as *sons* and *friends*. They should always be ready to listen to them, in an atmosphere of mutual trust, thus facilitating the pastoral work of the entire diocese."² At the heart of this statement is mutual trust that exists between a father-son or brother-brother or friend-friend relationship. Without such trust collaboration between the bishop and his priests would be almost impossible.

Emphasizing the bishop's solicitude for the well-being of his priests, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priest, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 7, states: "On account of this common sharing in the same priesthood and ministry, bishops are to regard their priests as *brothers and friends* ... are to take the greatest possible interest in their welfare both temporal and spiritual."³

In the Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, *Ecclesiae imago*, no. 107, we find the same sentiment expressed concerning the bishop-priest relationship: "Toward his priests the bishop shows himself a teacher, a *father*, a *friend* and a *brother* - rather than as one who presides over them and acts as judge - being ready with kindness, understanding, pardon and help."⁴

² Second Vatican Council, The Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus* (=CD), 28 October 1965, in AAS, 58 (1965), pp. 673-701, here at pp. 680-681; English translation in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, p. 293.

³ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis* (=PO), 7 December 1965, in AAS, 58 (1965), pp. 991-1024, here at p. 1002; English translation in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, pp. 317-364, here at pp. 329-330.

⁴ Congregation for Bishops, *Ecclesiae imago*, [English], *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, English trans. by the Benedictine monks of the Seminary of Christ the King, Mission, BC, Ottawa, Publications Service of the Canadian Catholic Conference, 1974, p. 55.

Are these images or symbols used by the Church real? Does such a relationship really exist between the bishop and his priests? These are questions whose answers are to be found within the context of each particular church. By using the symbols of a natural relationship, the Church wishes to underscore the *ontological* and *functional* aspects of the bishop-priest relationship within the context of the Church's mission in and to the world. In essence, this bishop-priest relationship is rooted in the priesthood and mission of Christ shared, even though in a hierarchic manner, by both the bishop and the priest. It is only when the bishop and his priests recognize and appreciate the fact that their identity and dignity is derived essentially from Christ's consecration and mission that they will appreciate their mutual relationship and their ministry to God's people. This was eloquently expressed by the synod fathers after their deliberations on priestly formation, in the following words: "We derive our identity ultimately from the love of the Father, we turn our gaze to the Son, sent by the Father as high priest and good shepherd. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are united sacramentally to him in the ministerial , priesthood. Our priestly life and activity continue the life and activity of Christ himself. Here is our identity, our true dignity, the source of our joy, the very basis of our life."⁵ In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*. Pope John Paul II made this reflection his own,⁶ thus confirming the importance of the genuine bishop-relationship founded on the very person of Christ.

⁵ Synod of Bishops, The Final Message to the People of God, III, in *L'Osservatore romano*, 29 October 1990, p. 1.

⁶ See John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day, *Pastores dabo vobis* (=PDV), 7 April 1992, in *Origins*, 16 April 1992, vol. 21, no. 45, p. 727, no. 18.

This presentation, rather than being a scientific inquiry, will be reflective in nature. That means I will try to reflect with you on a few important aspects of bishop-priest relationship, namely the sacramental, ecclesial/pastoral and juridical aspects.

1 - The Sacramental Nature of the Relationship

The ontological foundation of bishop-priest relationship is the priesthood of Christ. Through their sacramental ordination, the bishop and priest share in the same priesthood, even though in a hierarchic order. Holy Orders is a sacrament through which the mission of the Church entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church. It is for this reason that Holy Orders is called the sacrament of apostolic ministry.⁷ According to the witness of tradition, through their appointment to the episcopal dignity and responsibility, and in virtue consequently of the unbroken succession going back to the beginning, bishops are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line.⁸ To fulfill their exalted mission, "the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, and by the imposition of hands they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration."⁹

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the fullness of the sacrament of orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness which has been traditionally called the high priesthood, the

⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (=Catechism), Revised edition with amendments following the publication of the *Editio typica* London, Geoffrey Chapman, Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Concacan Inc., 1999, no. 1536.

⁸ See *Catechism*, no. 1555.

⁹ See *LG*, no. 21.

summit of the sacred ministry.¹⁰ By the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that bishops, in an eminent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest, and act as his representative." By virtue, therefore, of the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith, and have been made pontiffs and pastors.¹²

The ecclesial ministry of the bishop is in fact the realization of the mission of Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means when it says that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in the person of Christ the head (in persona Christi capitis)*.¹³ In this regard we read in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII:

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*).¹⁴

The ordained ministry, especially that of bishops, makes the presence of Christ visible in the midst of his disciples.¹⁵ St Ignatius of Antioch expressed this more beautifully when he said that the

¹⁰ See *LG*, no. 21; *Catechism* no. 1557.

¹¹ *LG*, no. 21.

¹² See *CD*, no. 2.

¹³ See *LG*, no. 10, 28; *CD*, no. 11; *PO*, no. 2.

¹⁴ As quoted in *Catechism*, no. 1548.

¹⁵ See *LG*, no. 21.

bishop is *typos tou Patros*: he is like the living image of God the Father.¹⁶

The priesthood of the bishop is *ministerial*. The ministry committed by Christ to his apostles is in the strict sense of the term a *service*.¹⁷ It is entirely related to Christ and to people. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of people and the communion of the Church. The "sacred power" communicated to the bishops through the sacrament of Holy Orders is none other than the power of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, whose love made himself the least and servant of all.¹⁸ In this way the priesthood of the bishop is intimately linked to the priesthood of Christ.

St Augustine once reminded a bishop on the day of his ordination: "He who is head of the people must in the first place realize that he is to be the servant of many. And he should not disdain being such, I say it once again, he should not disdain being the servant of many, because the Lord of Lords did not disdain to make himself a servant"¹⁹ The emphasis of this statement is on the nature of the bishop's ministry, that is, one of selfless service to God's people.

This teaching has been succinctly presented in canon 375 of the 1983 Code, which has no parallel in CCEO, and this canon reads:

§1 By divine institution, Bishops succeed the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who is given them. They are constituted Pastors in the Church, to be the teachers of

¹⁶ See *Catechism*, no. 1549.

¹⁷ *LG*, no. 24.

¹⁸ Cf. Mk 10: 43-45; 1 Pet 5: 3.

¹⁹ See *PDV*, no. 21.

doctrine, the priests of sacred worship and the ministers of governance.

§ 2 By their episcopal consecration, Bishops receive, together with the office of sanctifying, the offices also of teaching and of ruling, which however, by their nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with head of the College and its members.²⁰

The ministry of bishops is continued through the priesthood of the presbyterate. The council clearly taught this in the decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*. In no. 2 of this decree we read:

The function of the bishop's ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of priesthood and be co-workers with the episcopal order for the fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ.

It is important to note that the priesthood of the presbyterate is not something derived from that of the bishop. The decree *Presbyterorum ordinis* made this point very clear. In this decree we are taught that through the sacred ordination and mission received from the bishop, priests are promoted to the service of Christ the teacher, priest and king. The priests are given a share in his ministry for the purpose of building the Church here on earth.²¹

The primary mission of a priest is to prolong in the world the presence of Christ, the one high priest, by embodying him in his own way of life and making him visible in the midst of the

²⁰ English translation of canons of the 1983 Code cited in this essay are from: *The Code of Canon Law*, New revised English Translation, prepared by The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with The Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and The Canadian Canon Law Society, London. HarperCollins *Liturgical*, 1997.

²¹ See *PO*, no. 1.

flock entrusted to his care.²² The most important aspect of a priest's life is his relationship with Christ to whom he is configured. This is what we read in the apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*: "By sacramental consecration the priest is configured to Jesus Christ as head and shepherd of the Church, and he is endowed with a 'spiritual power' which is a share in the authority with which Jesus Christ guides the Church through his Spirit."²³ The exhortation continues: "By virtue of this consecration brought about by the outpouring of the Spirit in the sacrament of holy orders, the spiritual life of the priest is marked, moulded and characterized by the way of thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, and which are summed up in his pastoral charity."²⁴ Again we read in the same document: "By virtue of their consecration, priests are configured to Jesus the good shepherd and are called to imitate and to live out his own pastoral charity."²⁵ These theological statements provide much food for serious reflections in regard to the life and mission of the priest. The entire life and mission of a priest is to be guided by the example and teaching of Jesus. In essence he is the servant of Christ present in the Church as mystery, communion and mission. In the words of the same exhortation:

In virtue of his participation in the 'anointing' and 'mission' of Christ, the priest can continue Christ's prayer, word, sacrifice and salvific action in the Church. In this way, the priest is a servant of the Church as mystery because he actuates the sacramental signs of the presence of the risen Christ. He is the servant of the Church as communion because - in union with the bishop and clearly related to the presbyterate - he builds up the unity of the Church

²² See *PDV*, no. 15.

²³ *PDV*, no. 21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; also see no. 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 22.

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²⁰ English translation of canons of the 1983 Code cited in this essay are from: *The Code of Canon Law*, New revised English Translation, prepared by The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with The Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and The Canadian Canon Law Society, London. HarperCollins *Liturgical*, 1997.

²¹ See *PO*, no. 1.

flock entrusted to his care.²² The most important aspect of a priest's life is his relationship with Christ to whom he is configured. This is what we read in the apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*: "By sacramental consecration the priest is configured to Jesus Christ as head and shepherd of the Church, and he is endowed with a 'spiritual power' which is a share in the authority with which Jesus Christ guides the Church through his Spirit."²³ The exhortation continues: "By virtue of this consecration brought about by the outpouring of the Spirit in the sacrament of holy orders, the spiritual life of the priest is marked, moulded and characterized by the way of thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, and which are summed up in his pastoral charity."²⁴ Again we read in the same document: "By virtue of their consecration, priests are configured to Jesus the good shepherd and are called to imitate and to live out his own pastoral charity."²⁵ These theological statements provide much food for serious reflections in regard to the life and mission of the priest. The entire life and mission of a priest is to be guided by the example and teaching of Jesus. In essence he is the servant of Christ present in the Church as mystery, communion and mission. In the words of the same exhortation:

In virtue of his participation in the 'anointing' and 'mission' of Christ, the priest can continue Christ's prayer, word, sacrifice and salvific action in the Church. In this way, the priest is a servant of the Church as mystery because he actuates the sacramental signs of the presence of the risen Christ. He is the servant of the Church as communion because - in union with the bishop and clearly related to the presbyterate - he builds up the unity of the Church

²² See *PDV*, no. 15.

²³ *PDV*, no. 21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; also see no. 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 22.

community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services. Finally, the priest is a servant to the Church as mission because he makes the community a herald and witness of the Gospel.²⁶

Even though the priesthood of a presbyter is derived directly from the priesthood of Christ, through the anointing he sacramentally enters into communion with the bishop and with other priests²⁷ in order to serve the people of God who are the Church and to draw all humankind to Christ.²⁸ As the council teaches, the priest, in a certain sense, represents the bishop and with whom he is associated in all and generosity.²⁹ A priest can exercise his ministry only in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him. This is affirmed in the promise of obedience the priest makes to the bishop at the moment of ordination and the kiss of peace from him at the end of the ordination liturgy which imply that the bishop considers his priest as his co-worker, his son, his brother and his friend, and that he in turn owes him love and obedience. In this sense "all priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their bishop,"³⁰ The sacrament of Holy Orders, therefore, constitutes the foundation of unity of the bishop-priest relationship. Both the bishop and the presbyter share in the same priesthood and mission of Christ, even if in a hierarchic sense. It is this intrinsic sacramental unity that constitutes the foundation of the rights and obligations entailed in the bishop-priest relationship.

Ibid., no. 16.

See *PO*, nos. 7-8.

See *PDV*, n. 12.

See *LG*, no. 28; also see *Catechism*, no. 1567.

See *PO*, n. 8; also see *Catechism*, no. 1568.

2 - The Ecclesial/Pastoral Nature of the Relationship

The nature and mission of the episcopal ministry is intimately linked to the nature and mission of the Church. In his ministry to God's people, every bishop must keep in mind the characteristic notes of the Church as explained in the teaching of the Church through the centuries, but especially during the Second Vatican Council.³¹

The Church, in Christ, is a sacrament - a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race.³² The nature of the Church has been described through various Old Testament images and symbols, such *sheepfold, farm, building, temple*, etc.³³ In the New Testament imagery, the Church is seen as a body whose head is Christ, the unique Mediator. It is a visible community of faith, hope and charity established and continuously sustained by Christ, and through which he dispenses his truth and grace to all.

This visible community or society, joined together by the bond of the sacraments and built up of hierarchical organs, was entrusted by our Saviour to Peter so that he might feed it (cf. Jn 21: 17) Jesus commissioned Peter and the other apostles to propagate the Church and rule it (cf. Mt 28: 18-20) and he set it up in perpetuity as the pillar and foundation of truth (cf. 1 Tim 3:15).

In the ecclesial communion particular churches legitimately exist, each entrusted to an individual bishop. These particular churches are formed in the image of the universal Church; and it is in them and out of them that the one, unique Catholic Church exist.

³¹ *Directory*, no. 1.

³² See *LG*, no. 1.

³³ See *LG*, no. 6.

The bishop is the visible principle and foundation of unity in the particular church entrusted to him.³⁴ He is also the link in the hierarchical communion between this church and the universal Church. In a unique and visible way the bishop makes Christ's mission present and enduring in the Church, the community of salvation. He undertakes Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd and high priest and acts in his person.³⁵

The council often spoke of priests as "co-operators" of the episcopal college. In *Lumen gentium*, no. 28, we read: "The priests, prudent co-operators of the episcopal college and its support and instrument, called to the service of the people of God, constitute, together with their bishop, one presbyterate, though dedicated to a variety of duties. In each local assembly of the faithful they make the bishop present, in a sense, and they are associated with him in trust and generosity; for their part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and carry them out in their daily work for the faithful. Priests who, under the authority of the bishop, sanctify and govern the portion of the Lord's flock assigned to them render the universal Church visible in their local community and contribute effectively towards building up the whole body of Christ."³⁶

In the celebration of all sacraments, as St Ignatius Martyr already asserted in the early Church, priests are hierarchically united with the bishop in various ways and so make him present in a certain sense in every assembly of the faithful.³⁷

A priest not only represents Christ - Head of the Church - before the assembly of the faithful, but also acts in the name of

³⁴ See *LG*, no. 23.

³⁵ *LG*, no. 21.

³⁶ See Eph 4: 12.

" See *LG*, no. 28; *PO*, no. 5.

the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice.³⁸ For this very reason a priest is called a minister not only of Christ, but also of the Church.³⁹

This ecclesial relationship between the priest and the Church defines also his spirituality. Emphasizing this point, Pope John Paul II says: "Like every authentically Christian spiritual life, the spiritual life of the priest has an essential and undeniable ecclesial dimension which is a sharing in the holiness of the Church itself, which we profess in the creed to be a 'communion of saints'"⁴⁰

This ecclesial dimension takes on special forms, purposes and meanings in the spiritual life of the priest by virtue of his specific relation to the Church, always as a result of his confirmation to Christ the head and shepherd, his ordained ministry and pastoral charity.⁴¹

The ecclesial aspect of the ministerial priesthood necessarily includes the priest's membership in and dedication to a particular church. These two factors are not the result of purely organizational and disciplinary needs. On the contrary, the priest's relationship with his bishop in the one presbyterate, his sharing in the bishop's ecclesial concern and his evangelical care of the people of God in the specific historical and contextual conditions of a particular church are elements which must be taken into account in sketching the proper configuration of the priest and his spiritual life. In this sense "incardination" cannot be confined to a purely juridical bond, but also involves a set of attitudes as well as spiritual and pastoral

³⁸ See *LG*, no. 10; *Catechism*, no. 1552.

³⁹ See *Catechism*, no. 1553.

⁴⁰ See *PDV*, no. 31.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

decisions which help to fill out the specific features of the priestly vocation.⁴²

The priest needs to be aware that his "being in a particular church" constitutes by its very nature a significant element in his living a Christian spirituality. In this sense, the priest finds precisely in his belonging to and dedication to the particular church a wealth of meaning, criteria for discernment and action which shape both his pastoral mission and his spiritual life.⁴³

Within the ecclesial community the priest's pastoral charity impels and demands in a particular and specific way his personal relationship with the presbyterate, united in and with the bishop, as the council explicitly states: "Pastoral charity requires that a priest always work in the bond of communion with the bishop and with his brother priests, lest his efforts be in vain."⁴⁴

Thus, by his nature and sacramental mission, the priest assumes a special relationship with the Church. He becomes among the faithful the visible sign of the continuation and sacramental sign of Christ in his own position before the Church and the world, as the enduring and ever new source of salvation, he "who is head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Saviour (Eph 5: 23)."⁴⁵

By its very nature, the ordained ministry is "communitarian" or "collective." The council dealt extensively with the communal aspect of the nature of the priesthood,⁴⁶ examining in succession the relationship of the priest with his own bishop, with other priests and with the lay faithful.⁴⁷

⁴² *PDV*, no. 31.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *PO*, no. 14.

⁴⁵ *PDV*, no. 16.

⁴⁶ See *PO*, nos. 7-9.

⁴⁷ See *PDV*, no. 17.

The ministry of priests is above all communion and a responsible and necessary cooperation with the bishop's ministry, in concern for the universal Church and for the individual particular churches, for whose service they form with the bishop a single presbyterate.⁴⁸

The ordained priesthood is totally at the service of the Church. In this context the ecclesiology of communion becomes decisive for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity and his vocation and mission among the people of God. In the ecclesial community, the priest is a living and transparent image of Christ the high priest. Speaking specifically on this aspect of the ministerial priesthood, Pope John Paul II says: "The priesthood of Christ, the expression of his absolute 'newness' in salvation history, constitutes the one source and essential model of the priesthood shared by all Christians and the priest in particular. Reference to Christ is thus the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of priesthood."⁴⁹

The ecclesial dimension of the ministerial priesthood affirms the close relationship between the bishop and the priest. The priest belongs immediately to the structure of the Church within the context of his dynamic relationship with his bishop. The identity of both is derived from their relationship with the Church. This identity is based not only on their relationship with Christ, but also on their relationship with the particular churches entrusted to their care.

3 - The Juridical Nature of the Relationship

The relationship between the bishop and his priest is also juridical in nature. Both have rights and duties proper to their

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, no. 12.

functions. Both must recognize the reciprocal nature of their rights and obligations. After all the rights and obligations in the Church are at the service of the salvation of the Christian faithful. In this situation, it is the bishop who has the responsibility of providing leadership in the proper exercise of those rights and obligations.

The Second Vatican Council has spoken several times of the bishop in terms of a "good shepherd," "pastor," etc. These terms have been used with a specific purpose and meaning. The *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* expresses this in the following words: "The bishop considers clerics, religious and the laity not only as his cooperators in feeding a particular church but first of all as sheep of the flock entrusted to him on whom he must bestow his pastoral care, in different ways indeed, but with the one end of fostering their supernatural life."⁵⁰ In this directive, the bishop is being considered as the shepherd, the pastor not only of the people of God in general but of his priests in particular. The *Directory* highlights twelve aspects of this ministry of the bishop which are worth noting for the purpose of our reflection.

First, the bishop should show his greatest love and chief concern for his priests. He must lovingly foster in the priests a genuine appreciation of their priestly vocation so that they may live a serene life, bring joy into the lives of people they serve, and fulfill their duties faithfully. The bishop must be kind, understanding, forgiving towards his priests and assist them in their needs. A genuine love of the shepherd will foster and strengthen the spirit of obedience in his priests. Such an obedience, far from being lessened, is made more attractive if the bishop, while preserving justice and charity, indicates whenever possible the reasons of his orders to those concerned.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See *Directory*, no. 106.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, no. 107.

Second, the relationship between the bishop and his priests should be conformed to the charity of Christ. The bishop and his priests are to be mutually so joined that "the world may believe" (Jn 17:21) in their evangelical work and that they may bring forth much fruit.⁵² The relationship between the bishop and his priest must be guided by a spirit of pastoral charity.

Third, it is the duty of the bishop to foster unity among the priests of his diocese, because together with their bishop the priests of the diocese constitute one presbyterium. In order to realize this communion the bishop must take the initiative to organize programmes conducive to their ongoing spiritual and theological formation.

Fourth, the primary concern of the bishop must be directed towards the spiritual life and faithful performance of their ministry.⁵³ The bishop must be very careful in assigning newly ordained priests to offices that might be harmful to their priestly life. Therefore, when assigning them to pastoral ministry, the bishop must carefully consider the condition of each individual priest so as not to burden him with work that might by its nature or amount be detrimental to his spiritual progress. He is not to plunge the newly ordained priests into all the duties of the ministry but to introduce them gradually through an appropriate period of pastoral experience.

Fifth, the bishop must know his priests well enough to be able to assist them in their ministry. He must do everything in his power to foster friendly relationship between his priests. He must make himself available to them and visit them in their parishes or workplace. His conversation with them must be marked by fatherly kindness and brotherly attitude so that, as a result of his intimate

Cf. Jn 15: 8, 16; *CD*, no. 28.

See *CD*, no. 16; *PO*, no. 18.

relationship with them, the presbytery will have a deep sense of common responsibility and communion with one another under the leadership of their caring bishop.⁵⁴

Sixth, one of the pastorally important concerns the bishop must have for his priests is to show utmost compassion to those who are sick, the poor and those advanced in years. Towards those who might stray from their priestly commitments, he is to be patient, but firm so that any public scandal may be avoided and their priesthood saved. He is to be particularly concerned about the well-being of priests who work in remote areas where there is little possibility for interaction between priests of the diocese. Even to those who have left their priestly ministry he must be generous always with due regard for any scandal and disrepute to the priesthood.⁵⁵

Seventh, as a father of his priests, the bishop must appreciate all those who are closest to him in his ministry, that is, his own priests. He must assist them in their pastoral projects that are good to the faithful. He must respect their rights and see to it that they are also respected by others. He must defend them against unjust oppressors and never give ready ear to gossip about them. If he has to attend to any complaint against his priests, he is to act with an informed conscience. When quarrels arise it is his responsibility to have them settled as quickly as possible lest prolonged distress give rise to hatred. Charity must take the foremost place in everything the bishop does. His concern for those priests who are sick and dying must be uniquely pastoral.

Eighth, it is the bishop's obligation to promote knowledge and pastoral activity of his priests. This necessarily implies that he takes great interest in organizing appropriate programmes that are

⁵⁴ See *Directory*, no. 111.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 112.

suited to all strata of his presbyterate. He himself takes active part in all those programmes thereby showing his genuine support for their endeavours.

Ninth, in appointing his priests to different offices he must take into consideration the good of the faithful and the talents and abilities of individual priests. In undertaking important pastoral projects the bishop must seek opinions of knowledgeable persons. Because he shoulders the leadership of the diocese, the bishop must encourage responsible cooperation and creative initiatives among his priest.

Tenth, the appointment to different offices is to be guided by the greatest prudence and objectivity. That means even a remote suspicion of favouritism, arbitrariness or dishonesty must be avoided. The bishop must seek proper counsel from prudent persons and from those who by law have the duty of giving advice.⁵⁶

Eleventh, one of the most urgent issues in this matter the council wanted to address was the just and equitable remuneration of priests involved in pastoral ministry. The council urged the bishop to sincerely try to observe the statutes and recommendations of Vatican II, and the instructions flowing from the Apostolic See on this matter.⁵⁷ It is, therefore, the bishop's responsibility to see that the same remuneration is given to all who are in the same circumstances. The remuneration, with due regard for the spirit of evangelical poverty, should suffice for their proper sustenance, maintain their apostolic liberty, and make possible for them to assist the poor in some way. Such just and equitable remuneration is the responsibility of all the faithful of the diocese, which includes the religious institutes and the clergy. The council also urged the

⁵⁶ Ibid., no. 116.

⁵⁷ See *CD*, no. 16; *PO*, nos. 20-21; *ES I*, no. 8.

bishop to organize a common fund for assisting all those who are involved in pastoral ministry in the diocese.⁵⁸

Twelfth, included in the pastoral care of the bishop are also the religious who work within the diocese. They also are intimately united with the diocesan clergy in the spiritual progress of the faithful of the particular church. Especially those religious who are ordained to the priesthood, being also prudent cooperators in the episcopal order, are to be considered as belonging in a certain sense to the clergy of the diocese, inasmuch as they have a share in the care of souls and in performing the works of the apostolate under the authority of the sacred prelates.⁵⁹ For this specific reason the council said: "in fulfilling their duty toward the Church in accord with the special form of their life should show toward bishops the reverence and obedience required by canonical laws. For bishops possess apostolic authority over individual churches, and apostolic labour demands unity and harmony."⁶⁰

Both Codes have tried to address these issues raised by the council. Thus c. 384 of CIC/83⁶¹ succinctly states:

He is to have special concern for the priests, to whom he is to listen as his helpers and counselors. He is to defend their rights and ensure that they fulfill the obligations proper to their state. He is to see that they have the means and the institutions needed for the development of their spiritual and intellectual life. He is to ensure that they are provided

⁵⁸ See *Directory*, no. 117.

⁵⁹ See *CD*, no. 34; *Directory*, no. 118.

⁶⁰ See *LG*, no. 45; also see *CD*, no. 35; *PC*, no. 6; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica testificatio*, regarding the renewal of religious life according to the prescriptions of the II Vatican Council, 19 June 1971, in *AAS*, 63 (1971), pp. 522-523.

⁶¹ The *fontes* cited for this canon are: *LG*, no. 28; *CD*, no. 16; *PO*, nos. 20 and 21; *ES I*, *Intro.*, no. 7; *Directory*, nos. 107-117. The *last fons* is not mentioned under CCEO c. 192.

with adequate means of livelihood and social welfare, in accordance with the law.

The oriental Code has a similar prescription in c. 192, §4 and §5. Because of the presence of married clergy in several Eastern Catholic Churches, §5 extends the last part of the norm of CIC/83 c. 384 to include appropriate provision for the families of priests. Therefore, §5 of CCEO c. 192 reads:

The eparchial bishop is to see that the families of his clerics, if they are married, be provided with adequate support, appropriate protection and social security in addition to health insurance according to the norm of law.

These positive norms are intended to implement the teaching of Vatican II. The principal focus of these canons, which clearly reflect the guidelines provided in the *Directory*, may be summarized as follows:⁶²

First, because priests are his cooperators in his pastoral care of the faithful, the bishop has the obligation to show special concern towards them.

Second, he is required to seek their advice *informally* as "sons and friends," and *formally* through structures such as the council of priests⁶³ and college of consultors.⁶⁴

Third, he must, in the first place, recognize and *defend all their rights*, those accruing both from natural justice and from the law of the Church. In other words, he must recognize that the priest, like all the Christian faithful, have rights and those rights

⁶² See *The Canon Law: Letter & Spirit: A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law*, prepared by The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with the Canadian Canon Law Society, G. Sheehy et al. (eds), Dublin, Veritas, 1995, pp. 220-221.

⁶³ See c. 495.

⁶⁴ See c. 502.

cannot be arbitrarily curtailed or denied. In making decisions that affect priest's rights the bishop must take into serious consideration this important principle.

Fourth, he must make sure they have what they need to carry out their obligations. In other words, provide support for their prudently planned pastoral initiatives. After all the work priests do is immediately that of the bishop.

Fifth, he must provide whatever is necessary for their ongoing spiritual and intellectual formation,⁶⁵ in whatever way this can best be done in the local circumstances.

Sixth, he must make sure that all his priests have "remuneration that befits their condition."⁶⁶ This provision is to be regulated by particular law,⁶⁷ as is that for whatever the priests need by way of social welfare for "infirmity, sickness or old age."⁶⁸ In the case of married clergy, the bishop must include within this norm also the families of priests.⁶⁹

Conclusion

We could conclude our reflections on the bishop-priest relationship beginning with what St Paul says in his letter to the Philippians 2: 6-8: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied

⁶⁵ See c. 279.

⁶⁶ See c. 281, §1.

⁶⁷ See c. 1274.

⁶⁸ See c. 281, §2.

⁶⁹ For a brief list of the rights and responsibilities of bishops in relationship to their priests according to the Latin Code, see *The Manual for Bishops: Rights and Responsibilities of Diocesan Bishops in the Revised Code of Canon Law*, rev. ed., Washington, DC, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992, pp. 65-67.

himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross." Both the bishop and the priest must have the same mind of Christ. The mind of Christ was reflected in his humility and obedience. And such a mind is indispensable to episcopal and priestly ministry.

In their final message to the People of God, the synod fathers made the following statement concerning their appreciation of the ministry of their priests:

Brother priests, we want to express our appreciation to you, who are our most important collaborators in the apostolate. Your priesthood is absolutely vital. There is no substitute for it. You carry the burden of priestly ministry through your day-to-day service of the faithful. You are ministers of the eucharist and ministers of God's mercy in the sacrament of penance. It is you who bring comfort to people and guide them in difficult moments in their lives.

We acknowledge your work and thank you once again, urging you to continue your chosen path willingly and joyfully. No one should be discouraged as we are doing God's work; the same God calls us, sends us and remains with us everyday of our lives. We are ambassadors of Christ.⁷⁰

The unity of priesthood, that is, of consecration and mission, is the most important presupposition underlying the above words. We trust that the words and sentiments expressed by the representatives of the world episcopate, and made his own by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabó vobis*,¹¹ are genuine. The bishops are reiterating the unity of priesthood and its intrinsic mission. Both the bishops and the priests are regarded

See *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 October 1990, p. 1, III.

See *Origins*, vol. 21, No. 45, 16 April 1992, p. 720, n. 4.

as collaborators or partners in this mission. In expressing their appreciation of the ministry of priests, the bishops are in effect admitting the fact that their priests, as their partners in ministry, are in the vanguard as foot soldiers within the context of their own ministry.

It may be truly worthwhile for each bishop to reflect seriously on the final synodal declaration and examine if the categorizations considered at the beginning of this presentation are in any way restricted in their relationship with their priests. The images of father, brother and friend naturally evoke in us feelings of closeness, security, trust, generosity and healthy dependency. A relationship that is founded on these feelings is likely to create an environment that would be conducive to fruitful ministry.

The images of father, brother and friend express a mutuality in relationship. They necessarily imply reciprocity. In fact the strength of bishop-priest relationship is contingent upon how the priest responds to the love and support he receives from his bishop. Ultimately it is on this strength that the success of the episcopal and priestly ministry depends. For this reason, bishops and priests must continuously reflect and re-examine the quality of their relationship. A healthy and mutually enriching bishop-priest relationship would certainly prove to be the source of a vigorous and dynamic pastoral ministry in a particular church. A relationship based on genuine love and mutual trust and generosity is the cornerstone of successful pastoral ministry. In this regard the words of St Augustine may give us some food for reflective thought. Immediately after saying "For you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian," he goes on to say: "If therefore it is to me a greater cause for joy to have been rescued with you than to have been placed as your leader, following the Lord's command, I will devote myself to the best of my abilities to serve you, so as not to show myself ungrateful to him who rescued me with that price which

has made me your fellow servant."⁷² May the Spirit who prompted St Augustine to express these inspiring words bless us with the humility to appreciate our vocation to be, with our bishops, the servants of God's people.

¹As quoted in *PAY* no. 20, p. 727.

The Patron and the Protege: A Story of Two Bishops

RAMON AGUILOS, MSEM, SThD

Introduction

Of the five former bishops of the Archdiocese of Palo, two deserve special attention. Not that the other bishops' are not worth a recall. It's just that among Palo's former ordinaries - all highly esteemed and revered - this duo were, during their lifetime, "a study in parallels and in contrast." I refer to Archbishop Lino R. Gonzaga and Archbishop Cipriano V. Urgel.

Archbishop Lino Rasdesales Gonzaga, Palo's second bishop, died on August 15, 1980. On the other hand, Archbishop Cipriano Villahermosa Urgel, the fifth in line but the first installed archbishop of the archdiocese, met his creator on April 22, 1985. The former died after a courageous bout with cancer, while the latter succumbed to a heart attack. At the time of their deaths, the former was blissfully retired (as Archbishop of Zamboanga), but the latter was

¹ The other bishops who served in the Diocese of Palo were: Bishop Manuel Mascarinas (March 28, 1938 - November 16, 1951; Bishop Teotimo Pacis (February 19, 1967 - June 1, 1969); and Bishop Manuel Salvador (January 27, 1970 - February 26, 1973).

still up on his toes as Archbishop of Palo. The former was the patron, the latter his protege. The other was the mentor, this one was the disciple. Archbishop Gonzaga had the wit and humor of an entertainer; Archbishop Urgel had the seriousness of a scholar. Yet, both were no doubt dedicated and zealous pastors. Both, too, notwithstanding their achievements and accomplishments, were modest and unassuming.

It's now almost twenty-two years since Archbishop Gonzaga left, even as it is almost seventeen years since Archbishop Urgel had passed away. And before the memories of these two great churchmen fade into oblivion, I propose that we dedicate a few pages of *Boletin Ecclesidstico* in their honor.

Archbishop Lino R. Gonzaga

Archbishop Gonzaga's name was a byword to every member of the clergy of Leyte and Samar during the 1950's and 1960's and of Mindanao during the 1970's. He, too, was held in high esteem by his brother bishops in the Philippines. But famous and respected that he was, nevertheless, doing an investigation of his life is like searching for the proverbial pin on a haystack. There practically is no book written about him (or at least, not that I know of), and neither is there any publication of his works, particularly his sermons and lectures. Word has it that he ordered all his homilies, speeches and talks, including articles written about him, burned. According to his close associates, Bishop Gonzaga never wished to be remembered, an idiosyncrasy quite inexplicable for a man whose personal life, character and work just cannot escape notice. Besides, it was his personal policy to make a real effort to prepare each of his talks, even as he believed that keeping one's homilies and sermons on file for future use rendered a priest lazy!

Thanks to an old issue of *Boletin Eclesidstico de Filipinos*, which recorded some major highlights of his episcopal ordination in 1952. Through this periodical we were able to gather a few facts of this prelate's life.² We are also grateful to his niece, Mrs. Leonor Monthermoso-Almeria, a resident of Tacloban City, for volunteering some more biographical details, which, actually, must be treated more extensively in a separate paper. We can only put in some bits of those items in this short article.

Archbishop Gonzaga was born to Isidro Gonzaga and Rosita Rasdesales on May 31, 1906 in Jaro, Leyte. At age 13 he entered the Calbayog Seminary which at that time was administered by the Vincentian Fathers (or Padres Paules). After finishing his basic studies in Latin and Philosophy, he was sent in 1924 to the University of Sto. Tomas in Manila, for his theological studies. He completed his theologate in 1927. But since he still lacked the canonical age requirement at the time, his ordination was deferred until March 19, 1929, when he received the ordination oils from Bishop Sofronio Hacbang for the Diocese of Calbayog.³

Immediately after ordination, he was assigned Secretary to Bishop Hacbang. Then came a series of pastoral assignments, first as coadjutor, then as parish priest in various towns of the diocese that comprised both the islands of Leyte and Samar. He, too, for two years from 1929 to 1931 had been Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the entire diocese. Among the towns he served in the early days of his ministry was Palompon as coadjutor and Tarragona (now MacArthur) as parish priest.

² "Consagracion Episcopal de Msgr. Lino Gonzaga, Obispo de Palo, Leyte, Filipinas," in *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos* 26/30 (1952) 302-315. Archbishop Gonzaga was also an editor of this bulletin during his student days in the Central Seminary.

³ The Diocese of Calbayog at that time still comprised the two islands of Leyte and Samar. Palo became a separate diocese in 1937 by virtue of the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XI, *Si Qua in Orbe*.

When Palo was created a diocese in 1937, Father Lino began to discharge his duties in the fledgling ecclesiastical jurisdiction as Chancellor to the first bishop of Palo, Bishop Manuel Mascarifias, while serving as parish priest of the Cathedral. He also was a member of the Board of Consultors and a Censor Librorum. He became the pastor of Sto. Nino in Tacloban from 1946 until 1949, the year he returned to Palo as the Cathedral pastor. He remained the cathedral rector until his appointment as the second Bishop of Palo on November 12, 1951.⁴

He was consecrated bishop at the Santisimo Rosario Parish Church, the chapel of the Catholic University of Sto. Tomas, his Alma Mater. This was on January 28, 1952. The consecrating prelate was Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, titular bishop of Mira and Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines. Co-consecrators were Bishop Manuel Mascarifias, former bishop of Palo and bishop-designate of Tagbilaran, and Bishop Miguel Acebedo, bishop of Calbayog. Archbishop Julio Rosales of Cebu preached the sermon. With Bishop Gonzaga now at the helm, the diocese of Palo now had someone coming from its own clergy.

Running a diocese which at the time was barely fifteen years old was not easy. By 1952, there were reportedly a measly number of 67 diocesan priests and 14 religious working in the diocese which comprised the whole island of Leyte, including the Panaon Island in the south and Maripipi Island in the north. But no sooner than he had assumed work, the new bishop ordained Father Manuel Colasito, his first in a long series of ordinations for the diocese. Father Colasito would be followed by Father Antonio Almarines and Father Manuel Gomez in 1953, and by Father Cornelio Zabala

⁴ The official announcement on Bishop Gonzaga's episcopal assignment is in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (hereafter, "AAS") 45 (1953) 77.

in 1954.⁵ Bishop Gonzaga would later on reap the first fruits of Sacred Heart Seminary, when on March 17, 1956 he raised seven alumni to the priesthood: Fathers Estanislao Abarca, Alberto Bitangjol, Aluino Estalilla, Miguel Logronio, Manuel Ocaia, Filemon Quianzon and Andres Villarante. Throughout his years as bishop of Palo, Bishop Gonzaga ordained some sixty-five priests for the diocese.

The following priests, in turn, assisted Bishop Gonzaga in the administration of the diocese in their capacity as Vicars General: Msgr. Alberto Almarines (1952-1953), Msgr. Lesmes Ricalde (1953-1954), Msgr. Cipriano Urgel (1964-1962), and Msgr. Zenon Ocampo (1962-1966).

It was also during his time that the construction of a new diocesan seminary in Palo (the old seminary was then in Tanauan since 1944) was revived since it was put on hold in 1945 for lack of funds. Father Andres Villarante recounts how the bishop "required all parish priests to campaign for funds and give a certain quota on the basis of rank in the parish, under the penalty of suspension. Bishop Gonzaga meant business, since some priests were suspended for non-compliance of the order."⁶ It was on May of 1956 that the college seminarians moved into the new building. The minor seminarians joined them in June on time for the opening of classes. The formal inauguration and blessing happened on August 6, 1956 with Archbishop Julio Rosales, bishops of the suffragan dioceses and over a thousand guests in attendance.

Another landmark of the "Gonzagan period" is the present Archbishop's Residence on top of a hill overlooking the Maharlika

⁵ Cfr. Bartolome Pastor, Jr., "Leyte's Church and Clergy" (Bachelor's Thesis, Sacred Heart Seminary, 1960, Typescript), 51.

⁶ Andres Villarante, "Historical Survey of the Sacred Heart Seminary, Archdiocese of Palo," in *Stella Maris* (1983) 6.

highway, and about a kilometer away from the Cathedral. The construction started in 1959, and was completed in 1960. His moving into his new residence was a sigh of relief for this bookworm of a bishop, whose passion for reading was legendary. He had long wanted a residence where, after a hard day's work, he could retreat into the safety of a home where he could do his private readings, go through his correspondence without being bothered by visitors and callers. The "Bishop's Palace," as he had called it, was also turned into a Chancery as well as a venue for sessions in *Cursillo de Cristiandad*, a renewal movement he actively helped promote and spread throughout the country. His residence also became the place for priests' gatherings.

It was on August 13, 1966 that he was elevated Archbishop of Zamboanga.⁷ Seven years later on August 25, 1973, and after four decades of active priestly ministry, he announced his retirement and repaired to Cebu, where his cousin, Julio Cardinal Rosales, was the Archbishop. Cebu was a logical place for him to go to and to spend the rest of his sunset years. He and Cardinal Rosales, were not only blood relatives. They, too, had charted their lives as closely as possible since their seminary days in Calbayog, to their years as priests assigned in Leyte and Samar, and as bishops in their respective sees. As a resident in this historic province, he played the role of Cardinal Rosales' personal adviser and confidant. Certainly, the good cardinal could not have chosen any better person!

On March 31 1979 the diocese of Palo honored Archbishop Gonzaga on the occasion of his 50th anniversary to the priesthood, although twelve days late from the actual date of his ordination anniversary. Archbishop Gonzaga himself presided over the pontifical concelebrated mass. Present among the church dignitaries

⁷ See AAS 59 (1967) 721.

was Julio Cardinal Rosales. Imelda Romualdez Marcos, then First Lady of the land, and whom the good archbishop knew since her childhood days in the old Tacloban, flew in to grace the rare occasion. Bishop Cipriano Urgel preached the homily, while Cardinal Rosales joined Conching Rosal, the country's leading soprano, in singing the Lord's Prayer. The reception was held at the Sacred Heart Seminary, an institution so close to his heart. The seminarians rendered "An Sunat Ha Palo," a bouncy Waray-waray ditty composed for the honoree by Prof. Agustin El O'Mora; Commission on Audit Chairman Francisco Tantuico offered a toast, while Msgr. Cornelio Parado read a poem dedicated to the celebrant by the archdiocese's poet-laureate, Msgr. Zenon Ocampo.

Many vouch that Bishop Gonzaga had wished that if he were to die, he would want it to be on the day in honor of the Blessed Mother. God must have heard his prayers, for on August 15, 1980 on the feast of Our Lady's Assumption, he died of cancer of the intestine at the Cebu Doctors' Hospital. He was 74, a number which, if it were an academic grade, would have been terribly unsettling for one whose scholastic ratings soared like eagle's wings. But this brilliant prelate, who accomplished much and had reaped honors in his lifetime, met his creator in humble submission to God's will, a "failing grade-age," notwithstanding.

Archbishop Cipriano V. Urgel

Between these two bishops' life I admit it is that of Archbishop Urgel's that I have personal memorable moments to recall.⁸ How could I forget the bishop during most of my years as a seminarian, and still the bishop that ordained me a priest?

⁸ Cfr. Ramon B. Aguilos, "On Palo's First Archbishop - Guessing God's Ways Right." in *Stella Maris* (1983) 29.

The date was June 14, 1973, the day Bishop Urgel was installed the fifth bishop of Palo. He had previously served as the Bishop of Calbayog from 1962, and was replacing Bishop Manuel Salvador, who, at the time had been appointed Auxiliary Archbishop of Cebu. During his thanksgiving speech, the newly installed bishop had these words to the people: "I have requested for a simple installation ceremony, devoid of pomp and pageantry. This is because I am from here, I am no stranger to this place, and that, I do not deserve a guest's welcome." Those words struck a high note, as they reflected the bishop's person and lifestyle. Simplicity marked the installation ceremonies, all right, but nevertheless, Msgr. Urgel was accorded the honors befitting a returning hero.

Simple and unassuming, disciplined and dedicated - these, in a nutshell, describe Msgr. Cipring. While his life story was a happy one replete with achievements and colors, he preferred that it be lost in the mystery of God's ways. If ever there was something that he wanted to be remembered for, it was his dedication to the ministry and his sense of mission.

He was born on September 26, 1918 to Sixto Urgel and Francisca Villahermosa in Hindang, Leyte, but he spent his childhood days in Hilongos, a neighboring town. After a year of high school outside, he entered the minor seminary in 1933 at St. Vincent de Paul Seminary in Calbayog. That was his first stride to the priesthood.

After spending five years of studies in St. Vincent Seminary in Calbayog, he entered Seminario Mayor de San Carlos, which, like the Calbayog Seminary, was run by the Padres Paules⁹. He spent one year there, from 1938 to 1939. For his theological studies he went to UST Central Seminary where in 1942 he earned his

⁹ *Recuerdos*, (Cebu: Priest-Alumni of the Diocesan Seminaries of Cebu, 1997), 133.

Bachelor's degree in Sacred Theology *Summa Cum Laude*. But owing to the wartime conditions, he had to wait for three more years before he was ordained to the priesthood. Meantime, he spent most of his time in Palo for his pastoral exposure holding catechism classes.

His years in Palo prior to his priestly ordination seemed to have presaged what his life would be some decades later; for it was in Palo where he spent most years of his ministry, both as a priest and as a bishops.

It was on March 17, 1945 when he received his ordination at the Palo Cathedral from the hands of Bishop Manuel Mascarinas, the first bishop of Palo.

His hands were hardly dry of the ordination oils when he was immediately assigned the herculean task of running a school, the Leyte Central Academy, now St. Mary Academy of Palo. At the time that he was the School Director, he also served as Assistant Parish Priest to the Very Reverend Lino Gonzaga from 1945 to 1946, and Diocesan Oeconomus from 1946 to 1949.

Nineteen forty-nine found him succeeding Father Lino Gonzaga as Parish Priest of Sto. Nino Church in Tacloban City. Later in 1951, he was transferred to the Assumption Parish in Tanauan, Leyte. It was during his stint as the pastor in this town when things began to shape up for him. In 1952, he was appointed Diocesan Chancellor. Barely two years afterwards, the bishop, already at this time Bishop Lino Gonzaga, appointed him Vicar General. Eventually, that same year, he received his, what we might call, first hint at purple - he was appointed Protonotary Apostolic, earning for him the title, Right Reverend Monsignor. From hereon it was a play at guessing God's ways for the priests and the people who knew Msgr. Cipring - that he was a man signed on the forehead for greater things. His years in Tanauan were memorable and

fruitful, but soon, he had to leave it. For in 1959 he was appointed parish priest of the Palo Cathedral.

It came as no big surprise to many when in March 13, 1962, it was announced that Msgr. Urgel had been raised to the episcopacy. On June 12, 1962, he was consecrated Bishop and took canonical possession of the Diocese of Calbayog, replacing Bishop Manuel del Rosario, who was being transferred to the new diocese of Malolos. During the solemn rites, Archbishop Salvatore Siino, Papal Nuncio, acted as principal consecrator, assisted by Bishop Manuel Mascarifias of Tagbilaran and Bishop Lino Gonzaga of Palo. Archbishop Julio Rosales of Cebu, who preached the sermon during the episcopal ordination of Bishop Gonzaga, did a repeat - this time during Bishop Urgel's turn.¹⁰

So, the former Msgr. Cipring had to be away from his home diocese and shepherded with intense dedication the flock entrusted to him by the Holy Mother the Church.

But Providence had its own ways, though mysteriously. Eleven years afterwards, in 1973, Holy Mother the Church recalled him to Palo, this time to serve as its fifth ordinary.

Among the clergy of Palo, Bishop Urgel's elder "priest-sons," or those who were ordained by him, include Fathers Salvador Dumas and Isidoro Villarino in 1974, Fathers Florencio Gerones and Remegio Uribe in 1975. Fathers Wilfredo Alejan, Jose Alfaro, Edgardo Bilbao and Jaime "Villanueva were ordained in 1976. Three priests were ordained in 1977: Fathers Isidro Arroyo, Artemio Deloria and Cesar Petilla (incidentally, this last group of priests will be celebrating their silver jubilee to the priesthood this year, 2002). All throughout his time as Palo's bishop we can count

¹⁰ "Consecration of Most Rev. C. Urgel as Bishop of Calbayog," in *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos* 36/407 (1962) 439-440.

around 48 priests who received priestly ordination through his hands.

Meantime, those who served the diocese as his Vicars General at one time or the other were Msgr. Cornelio Parado, Msgr. Filemon Quianzon and Msgr. Leonardo Medroso (who later became Bishop). Msgr. Filomeno Bactol, whom he appointed as Episcopal Vicar for Administration in 1980, eventually was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Palo and his Vicar General in 1981.

On November 15, 1982, church bells pealed to announce the creation of Palo as an archdiocese separate from Cebu, and the appointment of Bishop Urgel as the first Archbishop of the new Metropolitan Province. That very day, we, the young priests, went up to his residence (which he renamed, "Bukid Tabor," in clear reference to the mountain where our Lord was transfigured before three of his disciples; the Lord's Transfiguration is also the titular of the Palo Cathedral) to offer him our congratulations. All he said were words of utter modesty and humility: "The honor goes to the Archdiocese, not to me. *Kun бага ha sweepstakes, naka-ending la ako* [If this were the sweepstakes, I would have only gotten the last digit of a prize-winning number]."

February 14, 1983 was the date of the Canonical Erection of the Archdiocese of Palo with the dioceses of Borongan, Calbayog and Catarman as its suffragans. It was Bishop Urgel's desire that the celebration be subdued and simple. Nonetheless, as it was a historic event, the day never passed without a spontaneous display of enthusiasm and cheers. In the morning the Palo Clergy tendered a fraternal agape at the seminary auditorium. The seminarians and the local cultural groups staged a dinner entertainment. In the evening, a testimonial banquet was offered by the civic officials and leaders. During the church rites, it was Archbishop Bruno Torpigliani, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, who installed Bishop Urgel as Palo's first Metropolitan Archbishop, while Ricardo

Cardinal Vidal, the Archbishop of Cebu, delivered the homily. Fifteen bishops and archbishops, as well as hundreds of priests from the neighboring dioceses attended the historic occasion.

Archbishop Urgel would serve Palo for two more years. In February 14-20, 1984 he presided over the first ever Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Workshop held in Cebu City. It was an unprecedented gathering of priests, religious and lay people in a weeklong seminar-workshop that articulated the vision, mission of the archdiocese, as well as objectives that were to be carried out by the archdiocese within a period of five years. Archbishop Urgel literally and painstakingly worked with his flock, reflecting and analyzing with them the current problems of the archdiocese, as well as mapping out plans and programs all for the good of the new archdiocese.

Archbishop Urgel had worked extremely hard that this took a toll on his health. On April 15, 1985, he was rushed to St. Paul's Hospital complaining of severe chest pains. He had suffered a massive stroke. One week after, in April 22, he succumbed to a heart failure, thus ending a heartwarming story of a life lived in simplicity and humility, and a priesthood served with ability and dependability."

" After the death of Archbishop Urgel, Bishop Filomeno Bactol was appointed Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante*. Archbishop Pedro Dean, erstwhile Bishop of Tagum, took canonical possession of the archdiocese on December 13, 1985. Later in March 1989 Bishop Bactol became the Bishop of the new diocese of Naval (Biliran Island).

Two for the Road

To the Clergy of Palo, especially those who lived to see these two bishops as their superiors, Bishops Gonzaga and Urgel were like two peas in a pod, although hardly identical. The former loomed larger than life, while the latter graciously preferred a humbler role. But, in the words of the late Msgr. Zenon Ocampo who belonged to their day and age, the Gonzaga-Urgel tandem was a "happy combination of a mind more of a heart, and a heart more of a mind, working together each at full steam."¹²

Divine Providence had willed that their paths were to cross right from the early years of their ministry. The young priest Father Cipring was Father Lino's assistant in the Palo Cathedral. Then came the time, when, as Bishop of Palo, Msgr. Gonzaga appointed Msgr. Urgel as his Vicar General. Here both found themselves sharing each other the thankless job of administering the diocese. Stories run how the Bishop before making an out-of-town trip would leave to his Vicar General the unpleasant task of disclosing to his priests their parish assignments. Keenly aware of his subordinate role, Msgr. Cipring would humbly oblige, the complaints, nonetheless, of some self-willed priests who champed at the bit when pressed for compliance. The disciplinarian in Msgr. Cipring would not budge, and the only recourse for these priests was - with that subtle irritant - to see the Bishop, only to realize that Msgr. Lino had the final say and would not stick to a general formula in particular cases. "The institutional church in the Diocese of Palo was at its heyday," Msgr. Zenon Ocampo wrote.

¹² Zenon S. Ocampo, "Able and Dependable," in *Stella Maris* (1983) 28. Msgr. Ocampo was a former Vicar General of the Diocese of Palo, and a for a time was the Vicar Capitular of the diocese when the See of Palo became vacant by the appointment of Bishop Gonzaga as Archbishop of Zamboanga in 1967.

When the Calbayog diocese was vacant in 1962, Bishop Gonzaga became its Apostolic Administrator. He turned out to be the harbinger of good news. He was after all preparing the way for Msgr. Urgel who was to be Calbayog's next bishop. And when Msgr. Cipring did take possession of the diocese in 1962, it was time for the younger prelate to "part ways," as it were, from his mentor who continued being Palo's head of the Church. Subsequently in 1967 Bishop Gonzaga would become the Archbishop of Zamboanga. As bishop, Msgr. Urgel pursued the same administrative policies and strategies he learned from Msgr. Gonzaga. The difference, though, was that Bishop Urgel had more freedom of movement already, being on his own. But the principle he got from his teacher still remained. Canon law had to be followed at all costs, even if in practice one had to meet disappointments.

As bishop of Calbayog, Msgr. Urgel combed the length and breadth of Samar which for a time was under his jurisdiction, except for the diocese of Borongan of the eastern province which became a separate diocese in 1962. Archbishop Gonzaga, in the meantime was strengthening the ropes of his trade as the first archbishop of Zamboanga, even as he was getting more involved in work both in the regional and national levels. Having figured prominently in the Second Vatican Council where he actively worked for liturgical reform in the Church, he became the logical choice to be the President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines from 1966-1969.¹³ He also was a major figure, if not the prime mover, of the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference, a body of bishops, priests, religious and laity, representing the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Mindanao and Sulu.¹⁴

""Past Presidents of the CBC," in Araceli Altmann Linsangan (Ed.), *Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1945-1995* (Manila: CBCP, 1995), 14.

¹⁴ Cfr. Pascuale T. Giordano, SJ, *Awakening to Mission: the Philippine Catholic Church, 1965-1981* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1988), 30.

By the time Bishop Urgel took the reins in Palo in April, Archbishop Gonzaga was about to retire from his pastoral duties in Zamboanga, and which he did two months after, in August. At 67, the Jaro-Leyte-born prelate was relatively young to entrust his job to someone else. But he figured that he had served the Lord enough, and his health was failing him to continue his pastoral duties.

Epilogue

The most striking image that I as a seminarian have of these two revered prelates was in 1979 during Archbishop Gonzaga's golden anniversary celebration to the priesthood. At the reception, the moment came when in a symbolic gesture of fraternal support, Bishop Urgel took a slice of the anniversary cake and offered it to the celebrant. Pleasantly surprised, Archbishop Gonzaga and his trademark bedimpled grin, burst into a chuckle to the delight of everyone present. The archbishop, perhaps embarrassed, for a few seconds hesitated, but soon gamely opened his mouth to receive the slice from his protegee. I was wondering if twenty-five years earlier in 1954, there was any premonition from anyone that the then newly-appointed Vicar General, Msgr. Cipring, would eventually be on Msgr. Lino's shoes as Bishop of Palo two decades later. Now, "The Child is the Father of the Man," so I thought, recalling that famous Wordsworth line which I learned in high school.

By God's sheer steering of circumstances, Archbishop Gonzaga and Archbishop Urgel now find themselves "living" under one roof. Their earthly remains are reverently interred at the Palo Metropolitan Cathedral, at a mausoleum intended for the former bishops of the diocese. In an uncanny situation, Archbishop Urgel's grave is on floor level, perhaps in humble deference to Archbishop Gonzaga, his mentor, whose remains are in a tomb above the ground. Even

in death; there still is a show of respect and reverence by a protege to his patron.

But these two bishops are certainly living under one roof far beyond tombstones and graveyards. Having gone back to the bosom of the Father, they now are enjoying the bliss of eternal reward for their pastoral labors and toils. What better roof is there than God's everlasting love? What better "place" is there than the one where there is no Greek or Jew, master or slave, man or woman, and yes, patron or protege, mentor or student?

Certainly, there are a thousand and one ways to describe two of Palo's five former bishops. But what more apropos a line than the one from Prophet Daniel: *"The learned will shine as brightly as a vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as brightly as stars for all eternity"* (Daniel 12, 13).

The Journey "To" and "In" the Asian Youth Ministers Meeting: An Experience of Generosity, Friendship and Love

JOHN FUNELAS, OP

An ordinary story deeply experienced, reflected upon and fondly remembered becomes extraordinary. I believe that any story involving faith and persons is always extraordinary. Such was my experience of the Asian Youth Ministers Meeting in Taiwan. And I think that I owe it to the youth to tell my story.

The Invitation

The invitation came from Fr. Vicente Cajilig, OP, of the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference (FABC). The meeting was scheduled August 17-21 in Fu Jen University, Taipei, Taiwan. At first, I was not really interested. What did it have to do with my being a teacher of philosophy and a school administrator? However, on second thought, considering my other responsibilities in the University as Regent of the High School Department and adviser of the UST DOMNET (Dominican Network) Youth Group, I decided to go. I rationalized that perhaps this was God's way of making me improve my youth ministry.

The way to Taipei was not easy. Although the necessary permission from my superiors was immediately granted, and the recommendation from the organizers was obtained, with only one week before the meeting, I still had no visa and plane ticket. Maybe, it was because of miscommunication or negligence. Perhaps, it was part of God's plan. The value of something depends on the difficulties demanded in obtaining it. The reminder is crystal clear: not to rely too much on other people; timely communication is of paramount importance. Fortunately, after "cramming" through the agency and the Taiwanese education and cultural center (there is no Taiwanese embassy, because of the "one-china policy"), I was all set to go.

The dawn I left home seemed foreboding. The rain was heavy. The announcer in the transistor radio alertly reported that some areas of the metropolis were flooded and that classes in primary and secondary schools had to be suspended. There was a typhoon. Everyone was warned to be extra careful. I was really hesitant to go. I kept deliberating whether it was worth the effort and expenses. But I could not back out. "Let it be. Let God be." It was a blessing that Fr. Castigador, the Rector of the Central Seminary was with me in the car. His presence was reassuring.

An Encounter with my People and the Old Man

The trip from Manila to Taipei was relatively smooth. We touched down at the Chang Kai Shek International Airport at around 9:50 AM. I could see excitement in the faces of Filipinos who would be working there as contract workers. There was a kind of solemn silence in the arrival area; unusual to Filipinos who are known for their boisterous laughter. Conversations were kept low. They moved in a group, distinguished by the jacket they wore which bore their company's logo. As they marched single file queuing to the immigration officer I could not help but muse: these

are my people; they, whom, our government call the "modern heroes" because of their dollar remittances; they, who left their loved ones just to earn a better living abroad which they could not find in our country. I silently uttered a prayer for their safety and success. My introspection was interrupted by the immigration officer, a young charming lady, who seemed new to her job. She diplomatically inquired whether I came to work. I told her that my visa indicated otherwise, to which she smiled. I had a good first impression of Taiwan and her people.

Frankly, I was really very excited to visit this country. However, I was bothered by the possibility that nobody would pick me up at the airport. I admit that this trip was not well planned, not having personally contacted persons whom I could turn to in case of emergency. I psyched myself up by thinking that this country was not really very foreign to me; that this was not my first time to travel abroad; and that God was always with me.

My fear turned out to be real. No one was there to meet me. So I calmly went to the Tourist Information booth and inquired how to get to Fu Jen University. The lady in charge was kind. I learned that the University was far from the airport. She handed me a map and instructed me how to get a taxi or a bus going there. I waited for one hour hoping that one of the organizers would pop out to pick me. A white polo-dressed man approached me offering to take me to Fu Jen Univesity for 1,000 Taiwan dollar. Just then, I met a Filipino worker named Alex who accompanied me to the bus terminal. I also met another Chinese Filipino, Louie Lao, from Candelaria, Quezon, who was with me in the bus going to Taoyuan. He also gave me pointers how to get to the University cheap and safe. The bus stopped at Taoyuan around 12 noon. I was happy to see a McDonald's but withheld my lunch judging that the first thing to do was to reach the University. I took a taxi and negotiated for a 300 NT fare. The driver was an old man,

65 years old, who spoke little English. I sensed that he pitied me because I told him that I was a poor student from the Philippines who was in Taipei just to attend a conference. My looks would have been convincing.

During the trip, we were very jolly. We laughed at our inability to understand each other very well. It seemed to me then that laughter was the bridge in language barrier. In broken English, he told me about the war between China and Taiwan, about the economic woes his country was experiencing at that moment, that he did not like the police (upon seeing a patrol car ahead of us), that his wife had been to Manila; and that he was a happy old man, with four grandchildren. I told him that I was also a "happy boy" (because he called me a boy) to which he boisterously laughed. In moments of silence, I prayed silently for this Buddhist old man, and for my two "kababayans" who were very helpful at the airport, that the good Lord abundantly rewards them for their generous help.

Home Away From Home

Then I was at Fu Jen Catholic University. After some inquiries I was referred to Fr. Michael Go, SVD, the Vice-President of the University. It was just the right timing. Joy and Agosh, members of the Teresiana Association, who are members of the organizing committee were also there. Fr. Go drove me to the Dominican convent (St. Albert Priory) located just a few meters away from the University. Along the way, Fr. Go explained to me the meaning of Fu Jen. I cannot recall everything he said but what struck me was that the goal of the University is to inculcate among its students study, harmony, and benevolence to become real "gentlemen". He added the observation that among Catholic universities, Fu Jen seemed to be the truly inculturated university because of its sensitivity and appropriation of the Chinese culture.

Compared to the St. Albert Convent here in the Philippines, the St. Albert Priory of Taipei, which also houses the Dominican seminarians, is a little more modest. The building seems old and the rooms (at least my room) are little bit smaller. But the Dominican fathers and brothers are hospitable. They were surprised to see me, for I have not given them advance notice. Fr. Larry Singian, OP, a Filipino Dominican assigned there as a Master of Students, was very accommodating. I was truly happy being there. I immediately felt at home. I went to the chapel to thank God for delivering me safely HOME.

Out of Fu Jen towards Hualien

I thought that from that point on, my journey would be smooth. I was wrong. The travails continued... I was informed that the venue of the meeting was transferred to another city, Hualien, which was four hours away by train. So I packed up hurriedly again and headed westwards. Their railway system was very efficient. And the countryside scenes were marvelously beautiful. The view of their mountains, gorges, agricultural fields, villages, and beaches made one reflect on the beauty and power of the creator. I easily forgot the hassles I went through and thanked God for the opportunity to travel.

The Asian Youth Ministers Meeting

Two AYMM volunteers picked me up at the train station and drove me to the St. Paul Catechetical Center where the meeting was being held. After the hitches I experienced, it was truly a relief to arrive at my destination. The organizers were very apologetic for the miscommunication. Perhaps to make up for the troubles they caused me, I was treated with a little special attention. They allowed me to be a regular participant of the meeting though

I was not able to attend the Asian Youth Day (AYD) held a week earlier, which was a requirement for participating in the AYMM. It was easy for me to bond with the group.

There were 94 participants, volunteers and staff coming from all over Asia. The group was divided into four sub-regions: Southeast Asia (Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia); East Asia (Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Hongkong, Macau); South Asia (India, Nepal, Sri-Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh). Among the participants two were bishops, many were priests (diocesan and religious) and sisters, and youth leaders who comprised the majority. Not all were Catholics though. Some had difficulty expressing themselves in English. Being with them was an experience of communion amidst the diversity of cultures in the Church. Only one thing united us: the call of Pope John II to all young people to solidarity, to become holy and to be the saints in this century. AYD and AYMM were offshoots of the World Youth Day (WYD).

It was actually a workshop meeting. There were four workshop groups: Liturgy, Social Justice and Development, the Word, and Community Leadership. I joined the social justice and development group considering that this is the most problematic in our country. What were discussed during the sessions were not really totally new to me. I have known them from my social philosophy classes and read them from the social encyclicals. What was different however was the first hand account of experiences of injustices by the participants especially in the Southeast Asia sub-region. The reality is that there are people suffering from injustices worse than what I experience in the Philippines. There may only be very little we can do to solve this problem, but the challenge is to do our part, to act on this very little, for collectively our efforts may change the world for the better. See - judge - act - are the triune principles in dealing with social problems. The emphasis is the love and care of a human person, God's most beautiful creation.

Perhaps what I learned more from that meeting was not so much the intellectual but the emotional input. It was a very beautiful feeling to have so many friends, learning from their experiences working with and for the youth. The atmosphere of the whole meeting was very alive and joyful. The meeting was a reflection of the richness and beauty of our Christian faith.

The last night was the most festive. We had a program. There were songs, music and dancing. Perhaps to get back at the priests and sisters, the youth leaders organized a MISS & MR AYMM competition. Only priests and sisters were qualified to join. An Italian priest working in Japan was Mr. AYMM and his partner was a sister from Taiwan. It was really fun. It was truly a "meeting," learning with so much fun.

Back Home

My way back home was less exciting. If not for a scheduled dissertation defense of which I was the chair, I would have extended my stay in Taiwan. Kaohsiung is another city worthy of a visit because it is the place where the seat of the Taiwanese Dominican Province is located. I would have wanted to meet my friend, Fr. Paul Pan, and my feared and revered professor, Fr. N. Castillo who are stationed there. So, I just spent my last day in Taiwan visiting Dominican convents and gallivanting in Taipei. Fr. San Roman, the Spanish Dominican priest who is in charge of the mission in mainland China, spoke to me about the need of vocation and the challenge of missionary work in China. I told him that if asked to go to that mission, I would not hesitate to obey. Indeed, there is still so much that needs to be done in the Church of Asia. "The harvest is many but the laborers are few. Let us pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more workers to Asia."

Being early at the airport, I spent time listening to the happy and sad tales of our Filipino contract workers. Two female workers were presumably being deported by the police due to, illegal stay or working illegally.. Despite setbacks, they still manage to smile and laugh. "Well, Father, it is part of the risk; it is part of the Taiwan trip." Just like life. The lessons come when you risk to step a foot away from the other, in a journey. Perhaps it is why Homer has said: "The journey is the thing." And for Christians, isn't it our faith in God that keeps us going? Ask the Asian youth. Ask our overseas contract workers. With God, everything is worth the risk; the trip will be safe. My Taiwan trip, the Asian Youth Ministers Meeting, was a gift. It is an experience of human friendship and of God's generosity and love. It is also a reminder for me to act, and to share my gifts to others.

DOCUMENTATION

Liturgy for Indigenous Peoples Sunday **EPISCOPAL COMMISSION ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

The theme of our celebration this year of Indigenous Peoples Sunday is **the Renewal of Philippines Society through the Strengthening of Indigenous Peoples' Communities.**

The theme of renewal has been very much in our consciousness as a Church for a long time now. Vatican II in the mid-'60s, the PCP II in 1991, the Great Jubilee last year, and early this year, the NPCCR (the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal) - all zeroed in on making a new start in the life of the Church: *aggiornamento*, up-dating, reconversion, re-evangelization - renewal in its various forms.

Where do the nation's Indigenous Peoples figure in that thrust for renewal?

The NPCCR endorsed nine priorities for the consideration and action of the whole Philippine Church. Nowhere in those nine are the indigenous peoples mentioned explicitly as a focus for the Church's renewing action. But they are there in the Consultation's concern for empowering the laity towards social transformation (2nd priority), for the active presence and participation of the poor in

the Church (3rd priority); likewise in its endorsement of inter-religious dialogue (8th priority) and the Church's mission *ad gentes*, our evangelizing of non-Christian peoples (9th priority).

The NPCCR took place shortly after EDSA II and already then, the question of the Church's rather inadequate presence among the poor was raised. The question became even starker later in May with what is often talked about as "EDSA III".

Time and again the Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples has tried to bring into our collective consciousness the plight of our indigenous people. They are - as they have been for generations - the poorest of the poor in the country today, the most neglected, the most exploited, the most marginalized.

For us in the Church, the ever disturbing question is: What do we do, feel, think as avowed Christians in their regard - and of that of the poor in general in the Philippines today?

The Gospel read in today's Mass should disturb us even more. It is about the ten lepers Christ cured, only one of whom returned to give him thanks. Christ asks sadly: "Were not all ten made clean? The other nine where are they? No one has come back to give praise to God except this foreigner" (Lk 17, 18-19).

"This foreigner" - he was a Samaritan, one whom the Israelites of Jesus' time looked down on as not quite as worthy as they, God's chosen people, thought themselves to be - much as many Filipinos today look down on largely un-Christianized, un-colonized, indigenous peoples? "No one has come back to give thanks except this foreigner." That too is happening today as we see indigenous peoples embracing the Gospel and doing so with immense gratitude. The most of us who have been Christians for generations take our faith for granted and are not as keenly aware of its injunction to be for the least of Christ's brothers and sisters? And we do not give thanks as we should?

To get back to the theme of this Sunday's celebration: If the indigenous peoples of the Philippines have not been treated as well as other more established groups of the country and government is slow in responding to their needs, they are now beginning to wake up to the fact that they will be listened to only when they themselves are strengthened and acts as communities. Hence our theme. They will contribute much to the renewal of Philippine society only when they become strong as communities, very much like what is happening today in dioceses where the BECs are asserting themselves precisely as communities.

If we need the NPCCR's bidding for us to be concerned about the presence and participation of the poor in the Church, we must be concerned just as strongly for the presence and participation of indigenous peoples in the nation's life. It is to that end that they must strengthen themselves as communities and the rest of us help and support them to so strengthen themselves.

Appeal to the International Community

DOMINICAN GENERAL CHAPTER

August 8 2001, on the Feast of Saint Dominic

On the feast of Saint Dominic, the Dominican General Chapter raises a pressing appeal to the international community.

The delegates, coming from more than one hundred countries, express their strong preoccupation concerning the repeated attacks directed against human dignity in three particular domains. Far from wanting to impose its vision of the world and faithfulness to its tradition, the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) invites all men and women of good will to work together to put an end to these situations of injustice which destroys the human person.

By maintaining the death penalty on the one hand, and by enacting international sanctions on the other, sanctions which hit civil populations without discernment, and, finally, by depriving the weakest of the possibility of access to the means of care, our society maintains in place the structures which demean those who are the victims as well as those who tolerate these structures.

Confident in the capacity of the human person, who is created in the image of God, to resolve the evils which he inflicts upon himself and having borne this experience in all five continents, the members of the Order appeal to the men and women of good will, and more particularly those who belong to the Catholic faith, to do all they can to transcend these situations of injustice and allow for our societies to become the means in service to the fulfillment of humanity.

Call for the Abolition of the Death Penalty

A/ Call for the Abolition of the Death Penalty.

Reunited at Providence, R.I., U.S.A., from July 9 to August 8, 2001, the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers, which gathers the delegates of Dominican Friars from more than one hundred countries, calls upon all the states of the international community to abolish the death penalty, without delay and in all circumstances.

In the name of the Christian faith and of principles common to our humanity, the General Chapter calls on all people of good will, and especially Catholics, to work ardently for the abolition of the death penalty and to become actors for a culture of life.

B/ Call for a Moratorium on Executions.

The death penalty goes against the political virtue of clemency. Not only does it destroy the life of the person it is applied to, but it also injures the dignity of the citizens in whose name it is pronounced or applied.

Moreover, judicial statistics indicate that this punishment is not dissuasive. They also show that the death penalty is often applied in a discriminatory way to the detriment of the most deprived, particularly of those who belong to minorities.

By its definitive character, the application of the death penalty deprives the condemned of all possibility of amending their ways, but also of the faculty of making reparation for the prejudice done to their victims.

Moreover, by its irreversible character, it also deprives society of all means of review in the case of judicial error. It places the burden of responsibility for the death of an innocent person on the citizens, in whose name the verdict was given.

Therefore, taking on as its own the call for a moratorium made by Pope John-Paul II (Christmas 1998), the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers asks all Governments that have not yet abolish the death penalty to suspend executions without delay.

Call for the Lifting of Economic Sanctions

Gathered at Providence, R.I., U.S.A., from July 9 to August 8, 2001, the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers, which gathers the delegates of Dominican Friars from more than one hundred countries, call for the revision of the economic sanctions.

The economic sanctions, imposed as an alternative to the use of force, notably against Iraq and Cuba, have not obtained the desired effects for democracy and peace, but have had devastating effects on the civil populations.

Imposed by the Security Counsel of the United Nations to assure the return to peace in the Gulf region, economic sanctions against Iraq have brought about the death of several hundreds of thousands of children below the age of five (500, 000 according to the same organization, between the years 1991 - 1995, alone).

According to a U.N. study (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/33), these sanctions have therefore violated international law. They have damaged peoples that the U.N. has as its mission to protect, as

recognized by the Secretary General of the United Nations (CS : 24/03/2000).

Maintaining such economic sanctions without time constraints is now aimed more at protecting particular interests than re-establishing the peace and security of the populations concerned. Furthermore, it contributes, to maintaining a climate of violence in the international community.

Based on its Christian faith and on an ethic respectful of the dignity of all human life, and recalling the fundamental principles which govern the international community, the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers calls all parties in the conflict to look for alternative means of the pacific settlement of disputes.

Taking up the appeals of Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Etchegaray, the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers, through the voice of its permanent delegate to the U.N., renews the call addressed to the politicians in charge and to the citizens of the countries involved, especially to Catholics, to apply all within their efforts to bring to an end the sanctions that, still today, strike civil populations indiscriminately.

The fight against hiv-aids in developing nations

Bearing in mind the sacred character of life, we, the delegates of the Dominican Friars from more than one hundred countries, reunited at Providence, RI, USA, from July 9 to August 8, 2001, appeal to all the countries of the world concerning the global threat that is represented by the aids epidemic. We unite our voices to the voice of the Holy See to request that the national and international organizations do all that is in their power to improve the lives of those suffering from this disease and to support prevention programs that respect the dignity of the human person.

The aids epidemic is a world-wide tragedy. It has taken on alarming proportions in countries of the South and especially in the sub-Saharan parts of the African continent. According to the UN, of the 34.3 million patients throughout the world, 24.5 million live in Africa alone, and of these, very few have access to care.

The disease is global; but access to care is not globalized. Nevertheless, while a vaccine has yet to be discovered, the means of containing this epidemic exist. These means are of three categories: medical care; intensive campaigning for information and educational efforts; structures for adequate care in all countries that have been contaminated.

The deterioration of public health in many developing countries has attracted the attention of international opinion to the greater difficulties that these countries face when it comes to the access and fabrication of medications within the actual limits of the World Trade Organization.

The necessary remedies for the prevention and treatment of AIDS are sold at a prohibitive price for the poorer countries, which are the most affected. However, certain firms have been accused of being preoccupied with profits as witnessed by the Johannesburg lawsuit of April 2001. Even if, for the first time, the lawsuit has brought about a retreat on the part of the firms and has permitted one to hope for a reduction in the prices of treatments by means of generic drugs, the problems remain.

- We denounce the perverse effects of the actual use of these pharmaceutical patents (the TRIPS Agreement - Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property) which prevents access to generic medications in developing countries, and we are oppose to a revision of these agreements that would be unfavourable to the impoverished and the deprived.

- We ask the governments of the wealthiest countries to agree on a reduction of the debt for the poorer indebted countries in order to allow them to allot this money in the fight against HIV.

- We ask that the governments of developing countries, assisted by the NGO's, put in place an effective policy of information and prevention, of defense of the family and of education of human sexuality; that they make the fight against AIDS a national priority; that they import and that they produce generic drugs in greater quantities; that they assure, with international help, that the necessary material structures are in place so that the sick can have access to care.

- We ask the Organization of the United Nations (Onusida) to act through all the means necessary, along with pharmaceutical industries and with governments, to put in place an effective policy to fight against AIDS in developing countries, and to activate the Fonds de Soutien Therapeutique International (FSTI).

A Brief Report on the Asia Religious Educators Forum

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS

Chiang Mai, Thailand
07-14 October 2001

We are 30 women and men, Christian Religious Educators from 13 countries of Asia with varied experiences derived from our engagement in the life of local parishes, church institutions, theological seminaries and church-related schools.

- We have come to affirm our common calling as religious educators, to share our stories of life and work, our hopes and dreams; to explore new ways of teaching and learning; to make connections, build community and draw inspiration from each other.
- We have come offering our gifts in music, poetry, art, liturgy, writing, teaching, facilitating, documenting, reporting — skills developed through years of extensive work among children, young people, women and men, school directors, college presidents, church leaders, Dalits, Tamils, Maoris, Aborigines, Indigenous Peoples in Burma, Thailand, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

- We affirmed and celebrated our common "spirituality for life" through sharing our journeys, our struggles and life-stories. Listening to each one, we realized that each of us is a story, even as we have a common *Story* to share with other. Each story reminds us of our context, which in turn shapes our passion and compassion through the ministry of religious education.
- As we explored our common journey as educators, we affirmed that it would be helpful to clarify a vision of education. Our shared hope is to emerge as a movement of people, a movement of educators sharing a new vision, founded on ecumenical spirituality inspired by Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher.
- Part of our common story is the unique context of Asia with its diversity of peoples, cultures, languages and religions; realities of poverty, injustice, powerlessness and marginalization of many; problems resulting to fundamentalism, ethnic and religious rivalries, power and arms race.
- We live in a world that is becoming more integrated into a uniform, hegemonic system controlled by imperial powers and principalities which put the economy, the military, the whole spectrum of science and technology as integral parts of a global industrial civilization. It is based on limitless competition, breaking all legal limits and respecting no one, and which result in further divisions and conflicts among peoples and nations. It renders nation states as inadequate instruments for political governance and national sovereignty. Indeed, no stone is left untouched by this complex and amorphous enemy: globalization.
- We recognize the enormous problems brought about by globalization; and that many people have preconceived ideas

about the 'otherness' of large sectors in society, which adds more pain to existing differences. This calls for greater responsibilities in ways that include healing and reconciliation.

- In such a context, we struggle to re-tell our common Faith Story of God's will for "fullness of life for all" as shown in the life and ministry of our model teacher, Jesus Christ. We realize that this involves the dismantling of colonial influences in our thinking, our methods, our ways of doing education, especially education in religion.
- We celebrate and affirm our struggles
for genuine contextual and cross-cultural education;
for creative and participatory learning and teaching;
for more meaningful inter-faith and gender inclusive collaboration;
for dialogue;
for peace and reconciliation;
for unity in diversity;
for the transformation of individuals, churches and societies.
- We believe that life is not an object of mathematical computation, scientific exploration or genetic manipulation. But the global industrial civilization has masterminded the most effective means of destroying life through nuclear and biochemical warfare.
- If we affirm life, we affirm that life is sovereign. When life is sovereign, then we affirm that God is sovereign.
- The crisis of Christian Education is that churches are not capable of responding to the challenges of globalization. But, when we begin to talk about life, we are already responding to globalization.

- The Bible itself can be a book of power for life. It speaks about the Word of Life. It speaks about Jesus Christ as the Life of the World. It speaks about the fullness of life for all and promises life abundant. It is life that cannot be destroyed.
- Asian peoples have wisdom for life. The Christian faith can be strengthened in Asia by popular historic religious traditions. In plural contexts, it is important to use shared elements in the culture, e.g., concepts of neighborhood and community, festivals like harvest or the Festival of Lights. Shared symbols and meanings are drawn from shared culture and from the life and work of the people in a community. Sometimes a shared culture precedes religious differences and provides a shared ground (origin, derivation, location, or place).
- Education is about wisdom for life, where people are the subjects of experience. To do Christian education is to be radically critical, to resist any modernistic approach that controls not only people, but also time and space. To do Christian education is to challenge the forces of death, for people to experience the liberating aspect of education and find a world that is filled with beauty and joy, love and compassion.
- Education is about addressing historical injustice, redeeming activity and concern for justice for all creation. It gives children and youth life and liberation from the power of death. It takes into account inter-generational needs, people and not books as the 'textbooks' and that our story is formed in community.

- Education values sound praxis, contextual theological development and rich spirituality. It encourages the realization of self and the realization of the reign or 'kingdom' of God. It inspires courage, persistence, faithfulness and a willingness to walk and work alongside the other as essential elements. It suggests that religion is about paying attention to God, the sacred, self, other end creation and that fundamental to the teaching-learning process are the desires to change power to pathos and to make experiential "the Word: I am with you".
- A main concern for Christian Education is how to put Jesus Christ in the center of life. An important task in education is to enable those with whom we work to find their name for and understanding of their God and what they hold as sacred. This implies revisiting, reclaiming, and restoring cultural, social and moral heritage. Liturgical life is the context and content for Religious Education. Worship is not simply a ritual but a "living together experience".
- In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in theological education. There is a movement from dogma to life, which has found expression in many forms - field education, immersion, community research, community projects - programs and activities that allow for deeper engagement in the realities surrounding people's lives.
- The family is the basic unit for Christian education. It is the task of the Church to enable families to take up this responsibility. They recognize that the shape of the family has radically changed in recent years and ask: "what constitutes family today and what shape does enabling need to take?" Sunday School classes need review. Should age categories be used? How can interaction between generations be encouraged and enabled? How can church members

learn from each other? What is our vision of education and what constitutes and shapes that vision?

- We have come to realize that a truly ecumenical vision of the whole world as God's household should guide our work and passion of education in religion. This calls for a new orientation:
 - *Pluralism towards difference, otherness or plurality.* We need to guard against too exclusive and too inclusive stances, which can actually mean religious arrogance or imperialism to others. We can model a pluralist approach, which is committed to one's own faith commitment but open to learning from and with those of other faith commitments.
 - *From Christian Education to Religious Education.* As Christian educators, we need to continue education in the "first language" of our Christian faith. But as Asian Christian educators, we also need to move on to the "second language" of Religious Education - which is the language of conversation and dialogue with other Asian religions.
 - *From traditional mission orientation to contemporary mission perspectives.* Since we are Christians, mission is at the heart of our life and work as educators. However, we need, to move from the goal of conversion (read proselytism) to healing and reconciliation; from the need to become the majority to being content with being the minority (e.g. salt, yeast and mustard seed); and from being caught up with doctrinal issues to being concerned about deep spiritual concerns.
- We are conscious that we, Asian Christian Educators, are just a few of the many Religious Educators in Asia. Our

hope is that we can begin to reach out to other Asian religious educators at local, national and regional levels, and work in partnership for the promotion of the "fullness of life for all" through an ecumenical religious education for life.

- We have pledged to continue our networking, exchange, and sharing even after this first Asia Religious Educators Forum (AREF) and we look forward to the second AREF in 2003.

Bring Seafarers to Spirituality of Communion (AOS East and Southeast Asian Workers told)

JEREMIAH OPINIANO* & JUDE CONNIFF, MM**

DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES - CHAPLAINS, religious workers and pastoral associates of the Apostleship of the Sea in East and Southeast Asia were called to transform the spirit of globalization in order to strongly promote the spirituality of communion among seafarers and their families.

Bishop Precioso Cantillas, the AOS' Episcopal promoter in the Philippines, said October 11 that the AOS must transform the negative effects of globalization unto seafarers into something positive that will "teach and lead seafarers to this spirituality of communion."

Cantillas, a Salesian who heads the diocese of Maasin, Leyte province (north of Davao City), said AOS needs to translate "what holiness means today (in the realm of globalization) to a seafarer and to the other members of the People of the Sea."

* Jeremiah N. Opiniano is the project officer (migrant's desk) of the Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI) based at Ateneo de Manila University.

** Bro. Jude Conniff, MM is the regional coordinator for East and Southeast Asia of the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS).

"As captains of the ship, all of us involved must endeavor to provide all opportunities for the People of the Sea to live holy lives," Cantillas in the closing liturgy of the Second AOS East and Southeast Asia Regional Conference held from October 8 to 11 at the St. Charles Borromeo Retreat House here (965 kms. southeast of Manila).

Sanctification should be the end destination of the work of AOS, Cantillas concluded, as "this will make us and seafarers see the value of faith, and help us understand the value of the spirituality of communion."

Some 40 lay and religious participants from the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea participated in the AOS regional meeting, which is a prelude to AOS' 21st World Congress slated October 2002 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Incidentally, Davao City hosted the 20th AOS World Congress in 1997.

Connecting land and sea

In opening the conference, AOS International secretary-general Fr. Gerard Tronche, M. Afr. Said AOS chaplains and pastoral associates must be "across land and sea, become a better instrument of dialogue and solidarity, and become a regular gangway wherever is needed."

AOS, the Vatican-based Tronche added, should "connect land and sea in solidarity". "The AOS should not be independent workers as they are doing the work of the Church," he added.

AOS workers, Tronche said in an interview October 9, "are welcoming visiting seafarers on behalf of the local Christian community. They help in the pastoral care of local seafarers and families on behalf of the local people."

But the AOS leader also expressed concern over those on-board who have no opportunity to attend Masses and receive the sacraments while working on-board.

"We can say that the Church is also at sea because seafarers are the Church. They go with their baptism, marriage and confirmation - they are full-fledged Christians when they are at sea," he said.

Tronche, during the closing rites, said that the AOS in east and Southeast Asia "is not drifting," which is a situation that seafarers avoid when the ship has no engine.

"In this conference, we have not been drifting. To use another image, we have a rope in front of us and we start following a lead, and I think we are in line with that lead," he said October 11.

Despite the negative effects of globalization that are affecting seafarers, Tronche said globalization has provided new means for communication, dialogue and even solidarity, to which creative strategies are needed.

Extending more pastoral care

Participants, in a conference resolution, said seafarers plying in the ports of Asia are heavily hit with globalization. They also vowed to extend more pastoral care to seafarers and all those affected by the changes in the maritime industry.

The statement also called on AOS bishop promoters, national directors, chaplains, and pastoral associates to "encourage seafarers to become missionaries by promoting the AOS spirit to them and show their love and faith to God while they are on board."

Among the commitments made is the expansion of AOS in terms of building more groups and Stella Maris centers; encouraging more maritime ecumenical partnerships; sharing of pastoral experiences to other AOS-present countries in the region; formation programs for AOS pastoral associates, and information dissemination on problems of the maritime industry.

Aside from these, AOS pastoral workers in East and Southeast Asia have also committed themselves to address the plight of illegally recruited fishermen; to provide more counseling and re-integration activities for seafarers' families; to deploy volunteers for sailing chaplaincy ministries to ocean-going vessels; to increase ship visitations and Masses on board; and to further networking with local and international groups involved in the maritime industry.

The AOS regional conference, said Maryknoll brother and conference organizer Jude Conniff, is held in preparation for the 2002 AOS World Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Tronche, meanwhile, said the east and Southeast Asia meeting is the third of eight AOS regional meetings worldwide for the Rio de Janeiro meeting.

The World Congress carries the theme "Apostleship of the Sea in a New Globalized World," a challenge which may call for a more pro-active role of the AOS and of the Church, according to the AOS international website. The East and Southeast Asia regional conference also carried the same theme.

AOS, which is under the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People under Japanese archbishop Stephen Fumio Hamao, is the international network of Catholic associations and groups providing pastoral care for seafarers in some 98 countries worldwide.

AOS, which is also known as *Apostolatus Maris*, operates in 416 ports including fishing ports, worldwide. In those 416 ports, 80 of them are Stella Maris centers, while 50 AOS groups are working with Christian seafarers' ministries that are associated with the International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA).

In East and Southeast Asia, AOS is present in the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Hong Kong. Statistics from the regional conference secretariat showed that AOS has 17 Stella Maris centers and offices for its apostolic teams in the seven countries that participated in the conference.

The Philippines, incidentally, has the most number of AOS presence with two Stella Maris centers and five offices.

AOS in the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong also has three bishop promoters, 13 priests, 22 full-and part-time lay staff (also called pastoral associates), 38 group and individual volunteers, and six partner institutions. AOS is also present in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei Darussalam.

AOS traces its roots in 1899 when a Jesuit, Father Egger, formed the first AOS branch under the auspices of the Apostleship of Prayer Society. The Holy See gave the final seal of approval of AOS on November 21, 1957.

In 1920, the Catholic port ministry was conceived and developed in Glasgow, Scotland, by Rev. Donald Macintosh, Arthur Gannon, and Peter Anson, who were concerned about the lack of witness the Church was showing aboard ship. Two years later they approached Pope Pius XI, who bestowed his blessings on the ministry and encouraged the Apostleship of the Sea to extend its mission to the oceans and shores of all the hemispheres. Gannon and Anson would later on become members of the Society of Jesus.

AOS is guided by the 1997 apostolic letter *Motu Proprio* by Pope John Paul II, which laid down the pastoral responsibilities and structures of the world's largest Catholic seafarers' ministry organization.

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

SOME CLARIFICATIONS ON RELIGIOUS VOWS

LETTER:

During the preparation retreat for our perpetual profession the retreat master spoke about the meaning of religious vows. Although it was not difficult to understand what he meant, I found quite confusing some of the expressions he used. For instance, he said that the religious vows are "sacred" *[Are not rather the persons who pronounce them the ones made sacred?]*; that, through the religious profession, the religious "consecrate themselves" to God *[Is not rather God the one who consecrates them?]* and he spoke of our forthcoming vows sometimes as "solemn," other times as "perpetual" *[Is there any difference between a 'solemn' and a 'perpetual' vow?]*.

To these questions I add another one which for sometime has developed a certain curiosity in me, namely: *Why make our profession kneeling down before our superior? Being the religious profession a consecration to God, wouldn't it be more meaningful to make it while kneeling down before the altar or a crucifix, for instance, rather than before another human being, even if he/she is God's voice?*

Could I request some clarifications on the above mentioned points through the pages of the *Boletin*? Thank you very much.

REPLY

Although I do not fully share the reasons why this letter has been passed to me with the request to produce some answer to the points in it mentioned, however, after giving the matter some thought, I feel I cannot refuse the request of giving some comments on the questions formulated in the letter, mainly from a canonical point of view, in a spirit of service also to our readers.

Is it correct to refer to the religious vows as "sacred"? Are not rather the persons who pronounce them the ones made sacred?

Both questions are correct and could perfectly be answered with a "yes." Such an answer, however, may need some justification.

The Second Vatican Council called these vows *sacred* (cf LG, 44), although it did not elaborate why. The reason, however, is easy to guess: Religious vows are sacred because *vows are acts of the virtue of religion*, which is in turn an extension of the virtue of justice.

This has some worth noticing implications. The object of the virtue of *justice* is to give each one what is his/her own, what belongs to him/her, according to the principles either of equality or of just proportion. In the case of the virtue of *religion*, that "each one" refers exclusively to God. Thus the virtue of religion has as specific object to render to God the worship, the honor and the devotion that belong to Him, and which humankind owes Him. (Obviously, all that we can offer to God is something that we have received from God himself; henceforth we will always be indebted to Him. Besides, we can never attain the "equality" or "just proportion" in our relations with God).

The virtue of religion is practiced through different acts, being the *vow* the most perfect of all, especially when the "vowed" reality is the person itself. "If a man devotes his whole life to the divine service, his whole life belongs to religion, and thus by reason of the religious life that they lead, those who are in the state of perfection are called *religious*." (*St Thomas, ST.II-II, 186, 1 ad 2*).

Religious, then, are "vowed" to God, with the meaning that the expression has in the theological tradition. St Thomas adds on this regard: "His whole life will be *an act of religion*." Does this mean that any activity of the religious, even their mere breathing, is a personal *act of religion, of worship to God*? It does!

In addition, the religious are the "immolated victims" to God, since they have made the complete sacrifice of their persons at the moment of their profession. The Church has reflected this worshipping characteristic of the religious in the Code of Canon Law: "Religious thus consummate a full gift of themselves as a *sacrifice* offered to God, so that their whole existence becomes a *continuous worship* of God in charity." (c.607 §1).

So, summarizing, the vows pronounced by the religious in their profession are "sacred" as they are part of the virtue of religion. For the same reason those who through them publicly pledge themselves to the practice of the three evangelical counsels are "consecrated" persons.

Can it be properly said that through the religious profession, the religious "consecrate themselves" to God? Is it not rather God the one who consecrates them?

In the common parlance, we say that the religious consecrate themselves to God through their religious profession. Even in the

translation of the Vatican II documents we read that "...he [the religious] *consecrates himself* wholly to God..." (LG. 44). Yet this is only one way of talking for, properly speaking, the religious *do not* consecrate themselves to God, but they are rather *consecrated* by Him.

In order to understand this we have to delve first with the meaning of consecration.

Consecration is the passage of a thing (or in our case of a person) from the profane sphere to the sphere of the sacred. There are two moments in the process of consecration: the purification or "detachment" from the profane things [*devotio* in Latin, *anathema* in Greek], and the admission in the world of the sacred through the "consecration" or communication that the divine makes of itself. Only thus a thing or a person is finally consecrated. This is the meaning of consecration *in its theological sense*.

Aside from this theological sense, there is another meaning of consecration that could be called "sociological" or "personal" and which implies the *total dedication* of the whole life to something very specific. So we express ourselves when we dedicate our life to research, to politics, to take care of the sick, to the household chores, to the service of God, etc. And this is what we mean when we say that the religious "consecrate themselves" to God. Actually, what is meant is that the religious, thanks to the help God communicates when He calls them to a particular vocation, *dedicate* themselves to God; He, in turn, with His consecratory hand, *consecrates* the religious to the point of configuring them to his Son.

Therefore, properly speaking, the religious do not consecrate themselves to God, but they are the ones being consecrated by Him. [*Deo sacratus* = "he or she is consecrated by God"]. Those who totally dedicate themselves to God (the religious) are *consecrated*.

In this case the consecration is *God's action*. For, in fact, only God can "consecrate" a person, "change" it, "sanctify" it, "make it participant of His own sacrality."

The Code of Canon law (surprisingly?) summarizes in an excellent manner such theological reality: *"Religious life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church the marvelous marriage established by God as a sign of the world to come. Religious thus consummate a full gift of themselves as a sacrifice offered to God, so that their whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in charity"* (c. 607 §1).

Is there any difference between 'solemn' and 'perpetual' vows?

Yes, there are some differences between solemn and perpetual vows, in the context of religious profession. To start with, all solemn vows are perpetual, while not all perpetual vows are solemn.

First, it is a matter of terminology. As it is well known, religious institutes are divided into Orders and Congregations. Only the members of *Orders* pronounce "solemn" vows [N.B. In general, all the members of Orders profess solemn vows; the Society of Jesus, where only *some* profess solemnly, is an exception]; this terminology is not applied to *Congregations*, whose members' vows are "simple" (cf. c.1192), whether "temporary" or "perpetual."

But beyond the difference in terminology, more important is the connotation of such terminology, specifically, the nature and the juridical effects attached to the "solemn" character of some vows, as expressed in the law of the Church. Solemn vows obtain *a peculiar consecration* or God's blessing, which confers them a *special stability*. Furthermore, solemn vows *render null their contrary acts*, while simple vows affect only the lawfulness of the same.

For instance, regarding the radicalism of the renunciation to goods contained in the solemn vow of poverty: "*Professed religious who, because of the nature of their institute, totally renounce their goods, lose the capacity to acquire and possess goods; actions of theirs contrary to the vow of poverty are therefore invalid. Whatever they acquire after renunciation belongs to the institute, in accordance with the institute's own law*" (can. 668 §5). This figure is called in law "loss of radical ownership" and the norm refers to the religious who have pronounced solemn vows.

Solemn vows are always perpetual, as referred to the religious profession. The perpetual profession is the one made *until death*. Actually, only the perpetual profession is the *true religious profession*, because it demands the radical or total dedication for the Kingdom; temporary profession lacks the *totality* in the "time" and in the object of the "renunciation." But even between the "perpetual" and the "solemn" profession there is some qualitative difference.

Why make the profession kneeling down before the superior? Being the religious profession a consecration to God, wouldn't it be more meaningful to make it while kneeling down before the altar or a crucifix, for instance, rather than before another human being, even if he/she is God's voice?

Well, I could not help but smile while reading this question. Not because I consider it an irrelevant question but because of the simplicity of the argument. As in most cases, the reaction is simply the result of ignorance of traditions that leads in turn to a misunderstanding of certain gestures. The best answer then may come by itself once we know the historical background of the facts.

Most religious Orders and Congregations prescribe that the religious profession be made in the hands of his/her superior, who

is the representative of God. Such ritual is still kept, for instance, in the profession of Dominicans.

This gesture of holding hands has a deep meaning which can only be grasped by a good knowledge of the historical background of this practice.

It has been said that the religious who bind themselves to the three evangelical counsels by vows *totally dedicate* themselves to God, loved beyond all things" (LG, 44) and are "consecrated" to God. Now, the original Latin term for "dedication" is *mancipatio*. The term derives from Roman law and has obviously juridical meaning. It was the solemn manner of transferring to someone else the ownership of things or persons. It took place in the presence of five witnesses and a notary, in accordance with a fixed ritual and form. If what was "mancipated" was a person, the latter was taken by his/her hands, as indicated by the ethymology of the verb "mancipatur." It ruled the relations between the "lord" and the slave. The juridical act contrary to it was the "emancipatio," which consisted in the "granting of freedom" to the slave. Hereinafter he was called "libertus." Likewise, it took place through a specific ritual called '*manumittere*' or "to loose his/her hands" or "leaving him/her free."

From Roman law the practice passed on to the common medieval law. It was carried out through the "oath of fidelity" which the slave made to his/her feudal master. The slave placed also his/her hands on the master's hands.

The law that regulated the monastic life took this legal figure of medieval law, giving a spiritual meaning to it. In fact, the religious made profession in the hands of his/her superior, who is God's representative.

In the letter, Superiors are described as "God's voice." Is that correct? My perception is that the widespread idea, especially

among women religious, that Superiors are "God's voice" is not precise. To begin with, God is never wrong, while Superiors are. It would be much proper saying that they hold "God's place." That is why they have to be "in contact" with Him, living in continuous listening, through prayer and discernment, to become faithful interpreters of His will. Notwithstanding, religious must obey their Superiors, even with the risk of the latter being wrong. Superiors are accountable to God; thus, when commanding something, they must do it "with fear and tremor."

Homilies for March-April 2002*

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

March 3, 2002

Third Sunday of Lent

Cycle A

(Readings: Ex 17:3-7/Rom 5:1-2. 5-8/Jn 4:5-42)

Perhaps you will not find a more touching human-interest story from the pages of the New Testament than this chapter 4 of the gospel of St. John which you have listened to just now. The beauty of this story lies in the simple account of a lively conversation, a friendly debate, I would even say, between a simple village woman from Samaria and Jesus who interacted with her in all simplicity.

Who can afford not to be moved on hearing a conversation start with such prosaic topic like asking for a drink of water, then end up with a sublime affirmation by an entire unlettered village people that Jesus is the Savior of the world? God seems to enjoy doing his things by proceeding first from simple matters, then building them up into a powerful and sublime finished product.

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

As with his actions, so are his teachings. Simplicity at their beginning, sublimity in their ending.

What simpler thing than water? What simpler fact than to feel thirsty after a long journey by foot on a hot day? Yet it was through this very simple fact of feeling thirsty and of wanting therefore to ask from somebody for a drink of water that Jesus gently lead a woman out of her narrow outlook of life and her sinful situation into a grander vision and fuller existence. He sat down by Jacob's well and ordered his apostles to go to the village to buy food. He did this so that he could talk with the Samaritan woman alone whom he knew would be coming along at this hour to fetch water. Everything at this point and what followed next seemed to happen by chance and pure coincidence. But all these details were orchestrated by Jesus because he wanted to help this woman and her fellow-villagers. "Give me water to drink" was the opening gambit of the Lord. And from then on, the road was easy for the woman to gain freedom, truth and salvation.

What is instructive about this story is that we, the listeners or observers, can easily identify with the woman in her weaknesses, rationalizations, and excuses. Few cases there are that you know, I believe, of women having six husbands, none of whom is the real one. But many instances come to our mind about men having six wives, none of whom is the real one.

How many among us do not have the propensity to rationalize our mistakes, just like the Samaritan woman, and to give excuses for escaping blame and culpability? How many among us do not make the convenient and self-serving appeal to innocence about a misdeed by just saying, "My conscience is clear," even when it is less clear than muddy water? Matters would be simpler for us if we humbly acknowledge our wrongdoing and say with the Samaritan woman, "I see you are a prophet, sir." Then Jesus can lead us to the waters of freedom, peace of conscience and salvation.

And that takes us back to the topic of water which is also broached by the first reading (book of Exodus). Accordingly, the people of Israel, just recently freed from slavery in Egypt, were on the brink of falling again into some other kind of slavery - self-centeredness, impatience, distrust of God's providence. With insolence, they demanded Moses to give them water in that desert, otherwise they will stone him to death. Hardly concealing his displeasure over the people, God ordered Moses to strike a rock whence water gushed forth.

Water issuing from a rock at the stroke of a stick? Whoever has seen such thing, or imagined it could happen? Not even Moses. To Paul, it became a symbol of Jesus offering salvation and life to all mankind (Rom 5, second reading). For, just like Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Whoever drinks the water I will give him, will never be thirsty again. The water I will give him will become in him a spring which will provide him with life-giving water and give him eternal life."

The world is like Jacob's well. Whatever it can offer, no matter how dazzling and exhilarating, is limited and temporal. From it we can carry only so much to fill a water-jug like that of the Samaritan woman. But the wellspring that Jesus offers to build within our hearts gives water that rises up to eternal life. For that wellspring is Jesus himself, and that water is his Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

March 10, 2002

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Cycle A

(Readings: Sam 16:1, 6-7, 10-13/Eph 5:8-14/Jn 9:1-41)

The three bible readings of today's Mass appear, at first glance, disconnected from one another. But a little more effort and concentration on our part will show the common thread that runs

through, them. Admittedly, each of the readings carries a particular and distinct message. Hence, the appearance of disconnectedness. But we can sense their distinct messages converging and building up into a common idea that eventually kindles our faith, stirs our hope, and quickens our love.

Let us start from the first reading (book of Samuel). What is its particular message? God wanted another king to replace the failed Saul. He sends his prophet Samuel to the obscure village of Bethlehem where Jesse lives with his eight sons. As he presented to the prophet his sons, one after the other, Samuel was wondering whether any of them, all fine-looking, healthy and strong lads, might be the favored one of God.

Although Samuel was impressed by them, God rejected all seven. Additionally, God reminded Samuel that in his choices, the Lord looks at the heart and not at outward appearances. But what about the eighth and last son? Jesse did not bother at all to call David from the field pasturing the sheep. He considered him too young, inexperienced, and very unlikely to qualify for something like becoming the king of Israel.

But as the first reading states, God does not think like mortals. He chooses what men reject, and he rejects what men choose. And so, the young boy David was anointed by Samuel to be the next king of Israel. Immediately after the anointing, the Spirit of God took control of David and remained with him from that day on.

How did the participants in God's choice of a king reacted. The scripture is silent about this but I would imagine that the seven brothers were greatly surprised at the outcome of the selection process. Yet, to their merit, they did not complain. But the most surprised of all, I think, was the boy David himself. Yet, to his merit also, he did not decline God's call nor offered excuses. In both cases, the respect for God's sovereign freedom to do what he wants shines forth clearly in this lovely story.

Next, let us go to the third reading (gospel of St. John). It is the story of a man born blind who is forced to beg for a living. How sad and pitiful an existence, is it not? Now you want to know what men think about his case. Instead of giving words of comfort or acts of mercy, they begin to ask, "Did he or his parents sin so that he was born blind?" Even Jesus' disciples were not above this sort of cruel question that contains an illogical element for it implies that the blind beggar could have sinned before his birth. The Pharisees, on their part, were dead sure he did commit sin at birth; "totally born in sin" was how they put it, and they lambasted him for daring to lecture them on whether Jesus was a prophet or not.

In this story, we see the propensity of men to think darkly of their fellow-beings even to the point of being illogical and ridiculous themselves. They rejected the blind beggar a priori. But God chose him to be the object of his love and wondrous power. So it happened that those who cannot see now see, and those who say they see cannot now see. For the blind beggar not only came to see the world as it is but also the Messiah who would redeem the world; meanwhile the Pharisees sank deeper in the darkness of unbelief in the Messiah, despite the obvious miracle performed by him.

Finally, let us hear the particular message of the second reading (Paul's letter to the Ephesians). It reminds us that once, we all used to be in the darkness, but now we are in the light when God chose us to be his people. That happened in our baptism. As there exists a contrast between light and darkness, so also there is a difference between life in the light and life in the darkness. Paul states this more clearly when he appeals to us to abandon our sinful activities done in the cover of the darkness, and to come out under the glare of the light to do only what is good, righteous and true.

Ever inclined to backslide and to enjoy slumbering in the twilight zone where darkness and light mingle, we are vigorously aroused by the words of reveille of St. Paul, "Awake, sleeper, and rise from death, and Christ will shine on you!" They are a trumpet call signaling for a change in life and heart, from a reject to a chosen person (first reading), from darkness into light (second reading), from blindness into clear vision (third reading). The call for change, for transformation, for new creature is the common thread that runs through our three bible passages of today.

March 17, 2002

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Cycle A

(Readings: Ez 37:12-14/Rom 8:8-II/Jn 11:1-45)

The three bible readings of today's Mass invite us to reflect on death, a topic one among others, appropriate for preparing for Holy Week, which is just around the corner. Many of course, do not find this topic a pleasant matter to talk about. Those, for example, who belong to the younger generation, those who are in the pink of health and strength, those among the elderly who think they are indestructible.

But most of the aging population accept the inevitability of death. They observe and feel the gradual encroachment on their bodies of the hoary spectre of Father Time. Their favorite reading from newspapers is the obituary section where every now and then, they discover the names of old friends and acquaintances.

It is said that death is a valuable teacher and a sobering mentor. This is true for those who regard it in a Christian manner, but not for those who view it as an unwanted necessity. The prophet Isaiah rebuked those of his countrymen who threw all cautions to the winds in exasperation and despair for being unable to escape the fact of death, despite efforts and wishes to the contrary. They said,

"We might as well eat and drink! Tomorrow we will be dead." (Isaiah 22:13). In the eyes of God, this is unpardonable sin (ibid. 14).

Less serious, but still stupid are the remarks casually dropped by people when someone dies, "Well, that's it. Everything must come to an end, like it or not." For such people death is the *finis*, the curtain call, the goodbye forever. How gloomy, how creepy this conclusion, isn't it?

Where among the categories of peoples, I have mentioned above, do we fit? And what about the unarticulated viewpoint of the Israelites in Ezekiel's time? God verbalized it for them and for us in the famous chapter 37 of Ezekiel's book (whence is taken our first reading). The prophet was shown a valley full of dry human bones lying helter skelter. Can these bones come back to life, Ezekiel was asked? God then gave him this explanation.

The dry bones represent Israel. They have been scattered to all corners of the globe because of their sins. They are dried up, without any hope and with no future. But God, in his mercy and forgiveness, will gather them again and breathe new life in them. So, Ezekiel witnesses the grand spectacle of pieces of bones rattling and creeping towards their respective parts; of muscles and nerves inching their way to their proper places; of human skins spreading a cover on the rehabilitated frames. Then, God sends a spirit of life into them and presto! all stand up like a fresh army of strong and valiant soldiers.

Martha (in our third reading) blows hot and cold with regards to the fact of death. On the one hand, she truly believed that Jesus is the life and the resurrection so that whoever believes in him will live even though he/she had died. On the other hand, when Jesus ordered the tomb of her own brother Lazarus, who had died, to be opened, Martha hems and hums saying, "Lord, there will be a bad smell, for he has been buried four days."

Are we like Martha? We should not be. Rather, let us be among those whom Paul describes and gives reassurance to, in today's second reading. He refers to those Christians in whom the Spirit of God lives, because they allow Jesus Christ to live in them and control their lives. In this case, Paul assures us that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, will also raise our dead bodies on the final day.

In this same letter, some chapters after, Paul writes, "None of us lives for oneself, no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (14:7-8). These words of Paul had been translated into Filipino and put into Church music that is sung at the beginning or the end of some Masses. I hardly hear now that hauntingly beautiful and evocative song whose first two lines are full of meaning. "Walang sinuman ang nabubuhay para sa sarili lamang."

Paul wants to tell us that if we do not try living alone for ourself but for Christ, then we shall not die alone but will be with Christ who will raise up our dead body.

March 24, 2002

Passion Sunday

Cycle A

(Readings Is 50:4-7/Phil 2:6-11/Mt 27:11-54)

Holy Mother Church presents us today with three bible readings that can be aptly called the jewels of holy scripture. She has, carefully chosen from her treasure-chest three precious stones of matchless beauty, beholding which we are led to exclaim along with the army officer and his men in today's gospel, "Clearly this was the Son of God!"

St. Matthew's narration of the crucifixion of Jesus gives the impression of an eyewitness account. Whether he used his own words or availed of traditional materials, the plain reporting of facts, without any attempt at elaboration, shows an interest for objectivity and simple truth. An honest reader of this report, with the interior prompting of grace, can readily be led to confess, "Clearly this was the Son of God."

But we could further ask, "How come not all who saw the crucifixion of Jesus arrived at that confession?" And they are people who should have known better? Here were the pagan army officer and his men who witnessed the crucifixion and the accompanying signs. Seeing all that happened, they acknowledged the divinity of Jesus. But here also were the religious leaders and their followers who insulted Jesus to the very end. With cruel sarcasm, they taunted Jesus that if he got down from the cross to save himself, they would believe in him.

The reason why some people cannot believe in Jesus is because they themselves set the conditions for believing and do not leave that to God alone. They want to act like gods and to bend the Lord to their wishes. Hence, they place themselves outside the pale of salvation.

God has pre-set, pre-determined from eternity the conditions for mankind's salvation. These are known through revelation in scriptures. Not only men must accept these conditions to avail of salvation but even the man Jesus willingly accepted them in order to implement his Father's plan of salvation. Thus Isaiah 50 (first reading) had predicted that the Lord's Servant or implementor (meaning Jesus) would obey to the fullest and not deviate in the slightest what God has determined for him to do. Even when insults would heap upon him, or people spit in his face, or enemies pull out the hairs from his beard, he will not draw back or walk away.

After Isaiah's passage about the Lord's Servant, we have this superlative Christian hymn that Paul integrated into his letter (Phil 2, second reading). It recalls in song how the man Jesus utterly submitted himself to God's plan of salvation. This plan called for two stages of action: first, a downward movement of complete divestment of the rights and privileges owed to his being a divine person, through a process of increasing suffering and humiliation. And second, an upward movement of complete exaltation in power and honor owing to his obedience, through resurrection, assignment to him of the highest place and the greatest name and proclamation of him as the Lord and God of all creation.

This ancient Christian hymn, now forever preserved in Paul's letter, brings to mind what Jesus himself told his listeners on one occasion, "Unless the wheat grain falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it produces many grains." (Jn 12:24). Or, "He who humbles himself will be exalted." (Mt 23:12b).

If such was the mind and the destiny of our Master and Lord, could there possibly be another attitude and another destiny for a disciple and servant of Jesus? Paul denies such possibility and tells us to have the same attitude as Jesus so as to deserve a similar destiny.

On this feast of Palm Sunday, Christians recall and mark the joyous and triumphant entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem. However, they are urged to listen devotedly and to integrate courageously into their lives the sober message of today's most beautiful bible readings. It is a message that says acceptance of the cross is the only road to ultimate victory and happiness.

March 31, 2002

Easter Sunday (Morning Mass)

(Readings: Acts 10:34, 37-43/Col 3:1-4/Jn 20:1-9)

A Happy Easter to all of you. Surely, there must exist very good reasons why Easter or Resurrection Sunday brings happiness to us to be able to wish each other a Happy Easter. Let us, however, not forget that Easter Sunday, and all the happiness that is associated to it, has been preceded by a Good Friday, as necessarily as any Sunday is always preceded by a Friday.

This reminds us of the truth, otherwise susceptible of being forgotten, that the glory of the Resurrection is the fruit of the pains of the Passion and Death. The relationship between the two is that of effect and cause. Just as any effect calls for its cause, so Resurrection calls for Passion and Death. Besides, we cannot truly speak of a resurrection if there was no previous passion and death.

We can also look at it this other way: Good Friday leads to Easter Sunday, as necessarily as any Friday always leads to a Sunday. This reminds us, once more, of the truth that all sacrifices accepted/done in God's name and for God's sake lead necessarily to their due rewards. What went by with Jesus, that is, his sacrifices being rewarded by the Father with glorification, will also, go by with each of us. Our sacrifices will never be in vain.

Thus, pain and happiness, in the present condition of createdness, are related to one another according to the necessary relation of cause and effect, of principle and consequence. In his glorious risen body, Jesus Christ retained the marks caused by the nails and the spear in an obvious reference to the truth that he gained the glory of his resurrection and exaltation through the painful process of suffering and dying.

This takes us to the next question, quite sensitive as it is inescapable, given our human bias. Crucifixion is the most cruel, humiliating, violent death-producing punishment ever invented by the human mind. Could not all this suffering avoidable and preventable for Jesus? Was he not the Son of God, the only begotten, beloved Son of the Father? Could not the Father have thought of other ways, more human, more civilized and just as effective, of redeeming and saving mankind?

To all these questions, and similar others you may raise, the answer is yes and yes. Yet, the actual fact is that, contrary to human expectations and sensibilities, Jesus died a violent death by crucifixion because it was his Father's will. Did that mean that God takes pleasure in carnage and gory processes which crucifixion is in reality? Was sin more powerful that it could strike death even to the sinless One, the Son of God? Has death a greater say than God's mercy? Were the enemies of Jesus guiltless because he had to die anyway? To all these questions, the answer is no and no. Then why did God allow Jesus to be crucified?

John, who before could not understand that Jesus needed to die first before entering into his glory, would write later on, "God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world to be the means by which our sins are forgiven."

Paul, who exhorts us to start living a heavenly life because in principle, we have resurrected along with Jesus, also writes, "God did not even keep back his own Son but offered him for us all."

As for sin and death (its natural consequence) they have overstepped their bounds by daring to harm the sinless One, the spotless Lamb of God.

In punishment for their audacity and arrogance, God the Father destroyed the power of sin and death by resurrecting and exalting his beloved Son Jesus Christ. He also made him the source of

resurrection and salvation for all who would believe in him. Hence, the Good News that Peter brought to the household of Cornelius is also meant for us. Peter assures us that he was eyewitness to the risen Christ, having eaten and drunk with him three days after his death, and that he was commanded to preach the gospel to everyone so that those who would believe will find salvation in Jesus' name.

March 31, 2002

Easter Sunday

(Afternoon Mass)

(Readings: Acts 10:34, 37-43/Col 3:1-4/Lk 24:13-35)

Our three bible readings today affirm repeatedly and emphatically the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion, death and burial. We welcome this repetitiousness and emphasis because by it, Mother Church wants to drive home to our consciousness that belief in the Risen Christ should become the environment in which we live, the air we breathe, the light we move around with, the food we draw life and strength from.

This reminder is particularly good for Filipino Christians who by idiosyncrasy or by circumstance of life are more drawn to the sorrow of Good Friday than to the felicity of Easter Sunday. We Filipinos feel sympathy for the underdog of society, for the oppressed, the innocent victims because we think, we too, are the underdogs, the oppressed, the whipping boys of nations.

Hence, the figure of a Jesus betrayed, falsely accused, unjustly sentenced, tortured and vilified, nailed to a tree, pierced with a lance, forgotten by men and seemingly by God also - strikes a more responsive cord in the heart of a Filipino Christian than does the portrait of a resurrected Christ. In our popular religiosity, we have created a pious culture complete with crucifixions around the theme of Good Friday which has become an object of curiosity and admiration for tourists and foreign visitors.

Why is it that while we carry in our person no symbol of the resurrection, the cross is an ubiquitous pendant adorning the neck or earlobes of saints and sinners, even of criminals and villains as you oftentimes see in movies or TV. Is it because the Resurrection is too abstract a truth for representing it graphically and turning it into a handy little ornament that we can carry about in our body? Is it because the Filipino Christian has a bias towards the gloomier side of life, of guilt-feelings and remorse so that not only the Abels but also the Cains among us wear a cross as a talisman against dangers and catastrophes?

Good Friday is not the end-all of the Holy Week. Good Friday should lead to Easter Sunday. You certainly know of many Christians who seldom or never go to Mass on Sundays, including Easter Sunday. But they do not fail to go to Church on Good Friday, even if, as you well know, there is no Mass on that day. There is a need of correcting such attitudes and biases. There is a need for a balanced appreciation of the mysteries of the passion, death and resurrection.

For all the attraction that Good Friday has on the Filipino people, he should not fill the calendar of his life with many Good Fridays that he practically leaves no space for Easter Sundays. Death is not the end of everything. It should not paralyze us with fear and bind us with inertia. Christ has conquered death, and in his power we shall also conquer death. Death is a transition to life, to a transformed life. Good Friday is a transition to Easter Sunday.

Mother Church repetitiously and emphatically sounds a call to us today to awake to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. It is the culmination, the crowning point of all that preceded it, the fulfillment of the divine promises in the Old and New Testaments, the scriptures and predictions about Jesus. His resurrection proves that Jesus Christ is God, is Savior of mankind, is Source of our

own resurrection and life, even as he declared, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

The inevitability of death should not cause us to raise our hands in surrender. Death for us is the gate opening to a new and perjurating life. Even before death closes the lids of our eyes, we should struggle to transform our world according to the spirit of the Gospel. But the transformation should start from us, so that its rippling effects become wider and continuously touching the shores of other souls. Let us not allow our potentials for becoming good and doing good to others remain in the tomb of fear and inaction. In the power of Christ, who broke the fetters of death and emerged victorious from his tomb, let us also arise from our prison of sin and vices and together walk in freedom and joy towards the kingdom of God that Jesus has won for us.

March 31, 2002

Easter Sunday (Afternoon Mass)

Alternative homily

(Readings: Acts 10: 34, 37-43/Col 3: 1-4/Lk 24: 13-35)

A Happy Easter to all. The word Easter or East has lots of things to teach us. We point to the east as the place of sunrise. I can tell who and what kind of person you are by finding out whether you prefer watching the sunrise or the sunset. Sunrise, it seems, is for active people, while sunset is for the romantics. Sunrise is for the young, the restless, the idealist, the dreamer just as sunset is for the old, the tired, those who seek rest after a hard day.

One can also tell what kind of a Christian you are by asking whether the passion of Christ appeals more to you than his resurrection, not that there is a contradiction between the two, but

that a preference for one or the other somehow reflects on your behavior.

Consider, for example, the attitude of the two Emmaus disciples heading for home at sunset. It had been a hard day for both of them; what disappointments, what failed expectations, what shattered dreams they were carrying in their heavy hearts! They had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus. They saw him die. For them, the end has come, the curtain has fallen, the sunset has taken hold.

Jesus himself, in today's gospel reading, had to rebuke his Emmaus disciples for their pessimism, for harboring thoughts that his death marked the end of everything that Jesus stood for, and for being slow to believe in his resurrection despite the assurances of the women of their group and the investigation made by some of those from them at the tomb.

All three bible readings, in fact, bid us to look to the east, to the sunrise, to the beginning of a new day, to the start of an era in our lives, to the first spring of energy, to the first ray of hope, to the first sound of music, to the first song of joy - again, Happy Easter to all of you.

April 7, 2002

Second Sunday of Easter

Cycle A

(Readings: Acts 2: 42-47/1 Peter 1:3-9/Jn 20:19-31)

Our reflection on the three bible readings today and drawing of a conclusion or message thereof, should be done within the context or from the premise that Jesus has risen from the dead.

This is so because our Lord's resurrection is the key reason why and how the early Christians behaved and lived in the manner and lifestyle reported by the three readings. Similarly, the belief

that Jesus is again alive becomes the yardstick by which one can measure the correctness of behavior and life among present-day Christians.

Thus, for example, the early Christians spent most of their waking time in learning from the apostles, in taking part in fellowship or community activities, in attending regularly to community prayers and meals (first reading). This was because of their conviction that their Lord Jesus, whom they saw suffer and die, rise and ascend into heaven, was nevertheless again in their midst, very much alive, though invisible.

How else can one explain the devotedness the early Christians showed to one another, as if they belonged to just one family, sharing their possessions and goods so that none of them would lack of necessary things? How else can one account for the fact that they met daily in the temple to pray, and in their homes to share meals and eat with glad and humble hearts?

Are we Christians of today motivated with a similar spirit? Can we approximate, at least in some instances, what they did on a regular and daily basis like their meeting as a group in the temple or elsewhere for praying and praising God, like their putting properties and goods at the service of those who experienced need?

We are generally unable to do this. We lack in community spirit, we fail to build fellowship ties that were so much in evidence among them. We fall short in all this because our belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after he died, has remained in the realm of theory and not gone out to operate in actual situations.

How many of us, for example, believe and feel that Jesus is at our side, watching, helping, prodding, supporting us in all and every single occasion where we have to act or desist from acting. If we do not feel that way, could it not be perhaps because, like

doubting Thomas, we reason out that we have not personally seen the risen Lord, nor have put our fingers on the scars of his hands, nor our hands on his side (third reading)?

For sure, were we given the privilege of experiencing his glorious presence, that would be an incalculable advantage, just as it was for the apostles and the early Christians. But is this necessary and a requisite for living out the Christian life?

Jesus, in today's gospel, states, "Happy are those who believe without seeing me." And also Peter, in his letter today (second reading) writes, "Although you have never seen him, you love him, and without seeing, you believe in him and rejoice with inexpressible joy touched with glory because you are achieving faith's goal, your salvation."

These words of Peter call for attentive reflection: in fact, the whole passage of this second reading merits our attention. He is trying to say that we can live out our Christian life with all its struggles and joys even if we had not seen or touched the Lord personally as the apostles and the early Christians did. It is faith that amply substitutes for the physical encounter with the risen Christ. It is faith that produces in us the same results as did the physical appearance of the risen Lord to Thomas, to the other apostles and the first Christians.

That is why Peter could say to the later generation of Christians (and to us for that matter) that we love Jesus Christ although we have never seen him, we believe in him and give ourselves utterly to him even without having seen him, and surprisingly we rejoice in him with inexpressible joy touched with glory. So, we also can love, can commit ourselves, can rejoice as did the apostles who saw the risen Lord. Faith enables us to do these acts. Besides, through faith, we are achieving its goal, that is, our salvation, for as Peter says, God the Father has given us a new birth that draws

its life from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and together with this new birth, an imperishable inheritance kept in heaven for us and guarded by the power of God. That is why, even if we do not see him, we can love God passionately if we want, we can commit ourselves to him permanently if we desire, we can rejoice in him with inexpressible joy. But in this case, it is God who (in the first place) really sees us, loves us and touches us.

April 14, 2002

Third Sunday of Easter

Cycle A

(Readings: Acts 2:14, 22-33/1 Peter 1:17-21/Lk 24:13-35,

Everyone can recognize a good story when he sees one. And the storyteller or writer need not invent everything he narrates. Diligence in researching, imagination in composing, sensitivity in expressing, truthfulness in communicating, these are the qualities that make for a superb author. In today's gospel reading, we are favored with a good story, and we can substantiate the above qualities in its author, Luke.

Luke concludes his gospel with a most touching story that is exclusively his just as he began his gospel with that immortal and very human story of Christmas also exclusively his. Both concluding and introductory stories of Luke are not found in the other gospels. It is a lucan trademark, that's why. Here, in the final pages of his gospel, just like in the opening pages of the same, we find the typical lucan topics: about Christian discipleship, about faith as knowledge, about hospitality that merits salvation.

Emmaus was the location of today's story. To this town, two men, former disciples of Jesus, were returning to resume their previous life. They had been followers of the man from Nazareth, treading in his footsteps from Galilee to Jerusalem. They had been

impressed with his teaching, miracles and wonders, as were the crowds of peoples also. But it was in Jerusalem where the world broke over their heads. They had thought that Jesus was the Messiah that people expected. In Jerusalem, however, the two disciples had seen the Master hanging on the cross, his life draining away with every drip of his blood, giving up his spirit with a pained loud cry. His death was a shock for them. Everything was finished. What further steps did they need to take but to go home to Emmaus and pick up the threads of their former life, unexciting for sure but more down to earth. Not even the assurances of the women and the men in their group that Jesus was alive, could shake away their sense of defeat. They could be disciples no more.

It was thus while returning to their hometown that Jesus joined them on the road and took part in their conversation. But they did not recognize him. Faith is seeing, is knowing. Since their faith was shattered, they were unable to see, to know Jesus in their travel-companion. Jesus needed to restore their faith and draw them back into discipleship. Still on the road, he began by explaining to them those parts of the bible that referred to him, leading the two fellow-travelers to understand that the Messiah had to suffer and die and rise again according to scriptures, and that they need not be scandalized because everything had been planned beforehand by God.

As they were getting nearer to Emmaus, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. The two men insisted that he stayed with them for the night, and Jesus obliged. When all three were seated for the meal, Jesus took bread, pronounced the blessing, broke it and began to distribute it to them. It was at this moment that their eyes were opened and recognized him; whereupon, he vanished from their sight.

Their hospitality earned the restoration of faith; faith made them see the risen Lord; seeing the Lord, their commitment for

discipleship was re-ignited. They immediately left Emmaus and returned in haste to Jerusalem to rejoin the other disciples there and await whatever the future had in store for them, good or bad.

Luke recorded for us this beautiful story for our edification. Many of us have experienced or are experiencing disappointments and doubts about the ways of God. Is he really in control of the happenings in our lives and in the world, we seem to ask secretly in our hearts. Do we not sometimes feel like going back to our Emmaus to lick the wounds of our discouraged souls and renounce our discipleship with Christ? Fortunately, it is Luke again who in his other work Acts of the Apostles, has recorded in today's first reading, the vigorous sermon of Peter also for our edification.

Remember, it is this same Peter who also abandoned his Master and renounced his discipleship, momentarily for sure, but was recalled by Jesus in order to confirm and strengthen the rest of the Lord's disciples. He said in this part of his sermon, "It is impossible that death should hold Jesus prisoner." So why should we, disciples of Jesus, be held prisoners of our doubts and disappointments? Not only through sermons but by means of a letter (second reading) that Peter continued to confirm and strengthen us. He wrote, "Realize that you were delivered from the futile manner of life through Christ's blood which is beyond all price... So you must center your faith and hope in God." Hence, being so delivered, let us live with God permanently as our center.

April 21, 2002

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Cycle A

(Readings: Acts 2:14, 36-41/1 Peter 2:20-25/Jn 10:1-10)

In today's Mass, Mother Church has offered us three bible readings that concerned matters close at the heel of the resurrection

of Jesus. These are timely lessons for us to read considering that we are only three Sundays away from our celebration of Easter. It is as if Mother Church wanted a repeat in our lives of what took place in the lives of the first Christians when the resurrection-event was still fresh in their memory.

Let us begin with the first reading which recalls the maiden sermon Peter, after receiving an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, gave to the Jewish crowd. He accused them in a straightforward manner of killing the One whom God had made their Lord and Messiah, but forthwith he invited them to repent of this sin to believe in the Messiah and receive baptism. Those who accepted Peter's message (there were three thousand of them), began on a course of life that made them an object of admiration and respect to the rest of the population. Peter had grounded his appeal to them to repent, be converted and receive baptism on the unshakable divine assurances of receiving pardon of their sins, meriting God's Kingdom and being gifted with the Holy Spirit.

In the second reading that reproduces a passage from Peter's letter, written three or four decades after the resurrection-event, the chief of apostles sounded a call for Christians to lead holy lives amidst a world whose materialistic values made it very difficult for them to practice their faith and remain loyal to Christ. The costly price that Jesus had paid for their freedom so that they could live in accord with God's will, was what Peter mentioned as the moving factor for the Christians to accept their daily crosses and follow in the footsteps of the Lord. The price paid was neither silver nor gold or anything "that moth and decay can destroy, or thieves can break in and steal." They were ransomed by the blood of Christ; they were healed by his wounds. Hence, they should not begrudge suffering also for Christ's sake if this is required for keeping the faith.

In the passage of this same letter, Peter went to the extent of describing in detail what sacrifices Jesus accepted, as examples for us to emulate. Jesus committed no sin, and no one ever heard a lie come from his lips. When he was insulted, he did not answer back with an insult. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but placed his hopes in God, the righteous God. Admittedly, these were acts requiring great sacrifice from Jesus to carry out for our sake. Should we not, in proportion to our strength, do likewise for the sake of Jesus? This is what St. Peter was trying to convince us to do.

Finally, in the third reading, we hear the voice of Jesus himself, who tells his audience that he has come into this world in order that men/women may have life - life in all its fullness. He can give to everyone fullness of life because he is full of it himself, having risen for instance from death after he was killed. In fact, he said somewhere in John's gospel, "I am the life." (See John 14:6).

Life and the business of living it out is a very complicated affair. Living it out in all its fullness is even more complicated. But what amazes me no end is that everyone wants to have a full life and to enjoy it to the hilt. So everyone makes it his business to teach everyone else how to do it. For example, on TV talk shows or advertisements, people tell you what, when, how and why to use lipstick on the ground it can contribute to the fullness of your life. This persuasion is borne out by the fact that a superpower nation spent, just for cosmetics, the same amount of money (a whopping nine billion dollars) that the world spent for basic education of all its inhabitants. Indeed, mankind's priority is being made to stand on its head. This was true before and in Jesus' time; as it is still true in our time. As a consequence of everyone putting his/her grain of salt into the soup, there is widespread confusion, deception and disillusionment. Even the direct listeners of Jesus' parable of the sheepfold did not understand what he meant.

He had to explain it to them a second time around. It should now be clear to them and to us all that only Jesus, and he alone, can give life in all its fullness. All others who also claim they can, are fake imitators of Christ, nay, are thieves and robbers who come to steal, kill and destroy. They do not enter through the sheepgate for fear of being discovered along with their wicked plans. The true owner does not need to jump over the wall to enter the sheepfold; he calmly uses the gate and calls out by name his sheep to lead them to pasture. In fact, the owner, in this instance Jesus, is the gate himself. Whoever enters through him will have life and have it to the full.

April 28, 2002

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Cycle A

(Readings: Acts 6:1-7/1 Peter 2:4-9/Jn 14:1-12)

The passage from Peter's letter that is reproduced in today's second reading, presupposes that his addressees, namely the early Christians, were familiar with the Old Testament books. Because the six verses that comprise today's brief second reading are studded as with jewels with quotations from the books of Exodus, Isaiah and Psalm 118. Without explicitly citing his sources, Peter, nonetheless, was confident that his readers understood him. This goes to show that the early Christians knew their bible better than we, present-day Christians do. What seems more amazing is that Peter, a former fisherman with no formal education and literary training, proved to be a profound, eloquent preacher and letter-writer at home with almost any book of the bible.

I guess this was a fulfillment, among others, of what Jesus had predicted in today's gospel ending where he said, "I solemnly assure you, the man who has faith in me will do the works I do, and far greater than these." He allowed the possibility, without

any sense of regret, that his disciples, particularly his apostles, will accomplish more spectacular deeds in terms of number and places than he was able to do during the three years of his public life in the narrow confines of Palestine. We saw this in the growth and spread of the Church, spearheaded by the dedicated work of apostles and lay Christians alike in the first century and those who succeeded them in the ensuing centuries.

Actually, our gospel reading tells us more than just a prediction by Jesus of future works of his apostles, which at any rate is disclosed only at the end of the passage. Rather, the whole passage is a farewell discourse delivered exclusively to his apostles at the Last Supper when death was about to remove him during three days from their midst. Our liturgy reproduces this discourse very opportunely as we approach Ascension Sunday, when Jesus' visible presence will permanently be taken away from their and our sight until his Second Coming.

Any farewell discourse is a solemn moment, and it draws our greatest attention and willingness to comply with its final requests. What are the points taken up in Jesus' farewell speech? (1) His departure shouldn't cause his disciples sorrow or anxiety for his going away was to prepare a place for them in his Father's house. (2) Having done this, Jesus will come back to take them to where they could all be together again forever with the Father. (3) Jesus is the way leading to true life with the Father, who is somehow already seen and possessed by anyone who believes and sees Jesus, the reason being that Jesus and the Father are one. (4) It is the responsibility, therefore, of Jesus' disciples to have faith in him, to put all their trust in the Master to be able to continue his works on earth and even do far greater than these.

One can notice easily the very personalist and intimate tone as well as images used in this farewell address of Jesus. That is to be expected at any rate in any farewell speech. That is why

it was remarked above that this farewell discourse was directed exclusively to the apostles, not in the sense that it was not intended for us also, but in the sense that, from this point on of John's gospel, all discourses of Jesus are not for public consumption but for his intimate friends. You cannot be intimate with the public, can you? With your friends you can say things that you do not tell to the public.

Since the farewell discourse of Jesus is also intended for us, his intimate friends and disciples, we might like to know what are his "works" that we must continue to do, "works" that could be far greater than those he did. I believe Peter answered that in his letter, which today's second reading carries. Accordingly, we have been constituted and must remain as living stones in God's spiritual edifice where Jesus himself is the cornerstone, approved and precious in God's eyes. Furthermore, we should conduct ourselves as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to proclaim the glorious works" of God who called us from darkness into his marvelous light. Constituted by Jesus Christ as a royal, holy priesthood, all of us (clergy and lay people) have been dedicated to offering spiritual sacrifices to God out of our lives, our persons, our properties, actions and sufferings.

Finally, today's passage from the Acts of Apostles (first reading) offers us a quick glance into God's spiritual edifice, whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ and the original living stones are the apostles and the first Christians. All of the latter are engaged in their respective roles of preaching and doing charitable works. We, present-day Christians have also been co-opted and inserted into this edifice as living stones for the glory of God to engage also in spreading God's word and doing charitable works.