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MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
FOR THE 36TH WORLD
COMMUNICATIONS DAY

John Paul II

CHRISTIAN HUMANISM AND
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

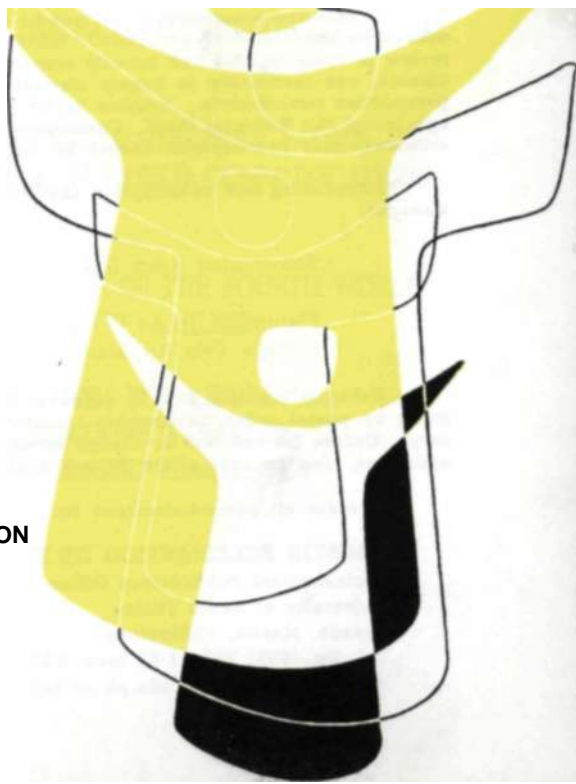
Francis Card. Arlze, DD

"OUR FATHER" IN THE CONTEXT
OF JESUS' SEVEN LAST WORDS

Vicente Cajillg, OP

SALUBONG: GOSPEL PROCLAMATION
THROUGH POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

James Kroeger, MM



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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

EDITOR	FR. VICENTE CAJILIG, OP.
ASSOCIATE EDITOR	FR. HONORATO CASTIGADOR, OP.
EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS	FR. FAUSTO GOMEZ, OP. FR. JOSE MA. TINOKO, OP.
BUSINESS MANAGER	FR. ROBERTO PINTO, OP.
PUBLICATION ASSISTANTS	ANGELITA R. GUINTO ARNOLD S. MANALASTAS
COVER DESIGN	REYMOND RODRIGUEZ

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Ecclesiastical Publications Office

University of Santo Tomas

Espana, Manila, Philippines

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

e-mail: eccpubli@ust.edu.ph or boletin@ust.edu.ph

Table of Contents

EDITORIAL	161	INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN SEMINARY FORMATION
DOCUMENTATION		
<i>Francis Card. Arinze, DD</i>	163	CHRISTIAN HUMANISM AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
<i>Tamerlane bona, OP</i>	176	ADDRESS OF CONCESSION TO FRANCIS CARDINAL ARINZE
<i>YMCA, CCA & FABC</i>	182	TOWARDS A CULTURE OF PEACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY
<i>FABC Offices</i>	190	FINAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE FABC-OSC BISHOPS' MEET 01
PASTORAL WORDS		
<i>John Paul II</i>	194	MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR THE 36TH WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY
<i>Jaime Card. Sin, DD</i>	199	ACTIVITIES OF THE FOURTH WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES
	203	GUIDELINES FOR LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS IN MALLS AND RELATED PLACES

<i>Vicente Cajilig, OP</i>	206	"OUR FATHER" IN THE CONTEXT OF JESUS' SEVEN LAST WORDS
<i>James Kroeger, MM</i>	220	SALUBONG: GOSPEL PROCLAMATION THROUGH POPULAR RELIGIOSITY
<i>John Samaha, SM</i>	226	BLESSED POPE JOHN XXIII AND CHRISTIAN UNITY
GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW		
<i>Mario.Baltazar, OP</i>	232	HOMILIES FOR MAY-JUNE 2002

Interreligious Dialogue in Seminary Formation

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

As early as 1996, Paul Cardinal Poupard, President for Pontifical Council for Culture, while in Manila expounded the topic "The Dialogue between Faith and Culture." It was a keynote address delivered by the said cardinal in the 10th of January 1996 at the University of Santo Tomas. He reminded the participants during the meeting of what the Holy Father emphasized in his visit for World Youth Day in the Philippines in 1995. John Paul II encouraged the community to train leaders in all the important field of life - "leaders who have made a personal synthesis between faith and culture." This is for the service of the community and society.

The seminarians who will be leaders in their community have greater duty to pay attention to dialogue between faith and culture. *Ecclesia in Asia* revisited again this point (no. 31).

Last year when the Holy Father visited the French seminaries, September 18, 2001, he talked about the "solid formation" of future priests and emphasized the importance of interreligious dialogue. This is part of the integral formation given to seminarians.

Furthermore, in Asia the interest is greater. Let us consider for instance the case of the Thai Bishops. Pope Paul II has called on Thai bishops to find suitable ways of presenting Jesus Christ to Thai people and to dialogue with followers of other religions in their country. He asked them to communicate Jesus with "joy and conviction" and to show respect and esteem of the cultural and spiritual values of Thai people.

Francis Cardinal Arinze who gave a talk on Christian Humanism and Interreligious Dialogue last November 24, 2001 in the University of Santo Tomas emphasized the idea that interreligious dialogue is an expression of christian humanism. In fact he said that both Christian humanism and interreligious dialogue are engaged in efforts to defend or safeguard human rights. This is an engagement that appeals to people across religious frontiers. And true believers see God as the final origin and basis of man's dignity and rights.

Teaching methodology and Interreligious Dialogue, the writer deems that what is needed today is an effective skill. This skill will require rootedness on reality, make a clear reading of situations, clarify the gospel values in reflection, and finally take decision and action. The acquisition of skill is tedious and needs time and effort with a greater hope that leaders will eventually acquire a methodology for an interreligious dialogue that they can make use of in their respective places.

DOCUMENTATION

Christian Humanism and Interreligious Dialogue*

FRANCIS CARD. ARINZE, DD

Thanksgiving

We all kneel before God in a spirit of thanksgiving on this occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Carmelite Monastery in Quezon City. This Diamond Jubilee is a milestone, an occasion for reflection, thanksgiving, a look at the future and a prayer of supplication.

I express my deep gratitude to the renowned University of Santo Tomas for its kindness in conferring on me the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*. I see in this gesture its appreciation of the efforts of the Catholic Church in the promotion of mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between Christians and the followers of other religions. It is therefore no surprise that the university has asked me to propose to this august assembly some reflections on *Christian Humanism and Interreligious Dialogue*.

* Doctoral Response of Most Rev. Francis Arinze, DD at the University of Santo Tomas on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Carmelite Monastery, November 24, 2001.

After a clarification and delimitation of the terms in question, we shall examine how Christian humanism expresses itself in interreligious relations and indeed why such dialogue is one of its major priorities today. Interreligious Dialogue, however, goes beyond Christian humanism and has characteristics all its own. It would be good to consider some of these and also to recount some recent experiences of interreligious dialogue. The relationship between dialogue and the proclamation of Jesus Christ will be mentioned. We shall close with a prayer for the future.

Christian Humanism

The name humanism was originally given to the intellectual, literary and scientific movements of the fourteenth century through the early sixteenth. Effort was made to see every branch of learning with reference to the culture of classical Greek and Roman antiquity. In the widest sense of the term, humanism refers to any philosophy or teaching which emphasizes the worth and dignity of human beings, seeks the welfare of the human race and rejoices in what humanity has been able to achieve.

This is not the place to go into details about different types of humanism such as literary humanism (study of the classics, especially Greek and Latin), philosophical humanism and nontheistic or even atheistic humanism. Here our focus is on Christian humanism.

It pays to spell out some of the characteristics of Christian humanism. Man is seen as created by God, as depending on God for existence and performance and as being finally not properly explained or understood without reference to God. Added to this is that man has been redeemed by the Son of God who took on human nature for this purpose. Man is richly gifted by God with intellect and will, with emotions and aspirations. This man is capable of great good but also of considerable evil. All along the

ups and downs of history, man has said, done, made and written things which are precious elements of the patrimony of each civilization. Human institutions and achievements deserve respect. Christians rejoice at these elements and are ready to cooperate with all people who do not believe in Christ, and even those who do not profess a definite religion, in order to give a face to humanism that will better correspond to the truth about man.

Christian humanism supposes a contemplative spirit, the ability to see humanity in the light of God, to see the face of Jesus Christ in each brother and sister. It supposes too a prayer of intercession for human beings with all their needs. Similarly interreligious dialogue requires an attention to what God is doing, to how the Spirit is acting, in the hearts and minds of people of different religions, and even in their traditions and rites. Constant contact with God in prayer will help to sustain interreligious relations which are not always easy.

Christian humanism therefore differs from other forms of humanism because it sees man as made by God in his own image and likeness (cf Gen 1:27), it looks on man and his life and activity in the light of divine revelation, and it does not lose sight of the final end of man which is the beatific vision, to see God face to face after life on earth. Christian humanism therefore aims at the development of the whole human person and so is interested in fields such as the following: human rights, respect for life, the right to religious freedom, the promotion of cultural, social, economic and political development and ecology, the environment in which humans live. We shall say more on human rights shortly.

The teachings of the Second Vatican Council exemplified Christian humanism in the best sense of the word. In the Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, for example, the first major consideration is the Church and man's calling: nn 11-45. The dignity

of the human person (12-22), the community of mankind (23-32), man's activity throughout the world (33-39), and the role of the Church in the modern world (40-45), are the four chapters. The first chapter on the dignity of the human person, is of special interest to our topic. The Council, among other things, says that man is made in God's image as a social being, that original sin has introduced evil in human activities, that the exalted gifts of freedom and conscience need to be trained and disciplined, and that the mystery of death and the fact of God as creator need to be honestly faced. In paragraph 22, the Council says that "only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light". That means that to understand the human being we have to reflection on the Son of God who "for love of us and for our salvation came down from heaven" (*Credo*) and took on human nature. Jesus Christ who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) is himself the perfect man. "By his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being ... He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin" (cf Heb 4:15). The Council goes on to spell out a biblical and theological anthropology complete with an appreciation both of human dignity and of the human need for salvation, through the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Paul VI in his homily to close the IX Session of the Second Vatican Council on 7th December 1965, underlined that the Council had stressed love for the human being and that the parable of the Samaritan had been the paradigm of the spirituality of the Council (cf in *Enchir. Vat. I*, 456). The Council had looked on the modern world in a positive, indeed optimistic way, pointing out its errors but even more respecting and honouring its values, sustaining its efforts and purifying and blessing its aspirations (cf *ibid*, 457). Pope Paul VI demonstrates a healthy harmony between anthropology and Christology when he says: "We remember how

on the face of every human being, especially when made transparent in his tears and sufferings, we can and should recognize the face of Christ (Mt 25:40), the Son of Man. And if on the face of Christ we can and should recognize the face of his heavenly Father - he who sees me, said Jesus, sees also the Father - our humanism becomes Christianity and our Christianity becomes theocentric, so much so that we can also say: to know God it is also necessary to know man" (in *Enchir.Vat.I*, 462).

Pope John Paul II takes up the point and traces the place of man in any healthy Christian humanism. In his very first encyclical letter he says: "The Church cannot abandon man, for his 'destiny', that is to say his election, calling, birth and death, salvation or perdition, is so closely and unbreakably linked with Christ. We are speaking precisely of each man on this planet... This man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission: he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 14).

In the rest of this paper it will be seen that the attention which the Church gives to the human person leads necessarily to interreligious collaboration.

Christian Humanism and Human Rights

Christian humanism pays great attention to human rights. And this is a rich area for interreligious collaboration.

Christian humanism sees some fundamental human rights as coming from God who created each human being as an individual person with inalienable dignity. Examples are the rights to life, to self-expression, to religious freedom, to found a family, to associate with other human beings, to work.

Therefore Christian humanism looks with approval at the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations Organization. There are other documents which treat human rights, such as the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights of 1990, the Arab Charter on the Rights of Man of 1994, the Holy See's Charter on the Rights of the Family of 1983, the European Convention on the Rights of Man, A Universal Declaration on the Rights of Minorities in 1993, etc.

The major conviction of Christian humanism regarding human rights is that when the promotion of the dignity of the human person is an inspiring principle, when the pursuit of the common good is a major commitment, then there are solid and lasting foundations laid for peace. When, however, human rights are ignored, despised or trampled upon, when the pursuit of personal or sectional interests unjustly prevails over the common good, then the seeds of instability, rebellion and violence are being sown.

Peace will come, Pope John Paul II tells a delegation of the Conference "Bethlehem 2000", "when the dignity and the rights of human beings created in the image of God are recognized and respected" (in *Avvenire*, 20 Feb 1999, p. 14).

Here are some of the human rights about which Christian humanism is particularly concerned in the world of today because they are so easily violated: the right to life, to religious freedom, to participation, to live in peace, to associate with others, to express one's opinion, to found a family and to be free from discrimination because of race, ethnic origin, sex, language or social status. It is clear that all these are fruitful areas for collaboration between people of different religious convictions.

The Major Thrusts of Interreligious Dialogue

It is important that we be agreed on what we mean by interreligious dialogue. This term is meant to cover the various

forms of relations with people of different religious traditions. Such interaction and collaboration, hopefully positive and constructive, can be aimed at better mutual knowledge, more exact information on the other, mutual enrichment, lessening or removal of tensions and misunderstandings, and promotion of common projects undertaken to make this world a better place in which to live (cf *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 9). Genuine interreligious dialogue should dispose the partners to greater openness to the action of God within each of them and to a greater commitment to the truth, especially as regards God, religion and conscience.

Many people think of interreligious dialogue as an intellectual exchange in which learned people expose their religious beliefs, moral code and ritual and hold a debate with their interlocutors. It has to be stated right away that the dialogue of doctrinal discourse is indeed one form of dialogue. But it is not the most important. And it is not the form of exchange which should for psychological reasons be promoted first. In any case, most people are not well prepared for this type of dialogue because they are not theologians or professors who can articulate in a scientific way the tenets of their religious community. And unless and until the members of a dialogue group have reached a high level of mutual trust, it is likely that a discussion of elements of belief will raise the temperature in the room and generate more heat than light.

The form of interreligious dialogue within the grasp of most people is the dialogue at the level of daily life. In this type of contact, people of different religions interact in the family, in the place, of work or recreation, and in society in general, drawing from the ideals in their religions, without necessarily discussing specific religious questions.

There is also the dialogue of social works by which believers of two or more religions join hands to promote some project for the benefit of society such as a hospital, a trade cooperative, a

drug eradication programme, a rescue operation for children or women in danger, a movement of reconciliation between warring factions and the promotion of peace.

A fourth form of interreligious exchange is the dialogue of religious experience. In this form of dialogue, people deeply committed to living their religion exchange experiences on topics such as union with God, prayer, silence, self-control and surrender to God or the Absolute.

Since the word dialogue evokes the idea of discussion in the minds of many people, it may be better to talk, not of interreligious dialogue, but of interreligious relations, contacts, cooperation or collaboration. Whatever form it takes, one can see that it has much to do with Christian humanism. A closer look at this relationship would now be helpful.

Interreligious Dialogue as an Expression of Christian Humanism

There are many reasons why Christian humanism finds in interreligious dialogue one of its expressions.

The vision of the human being which animates Christian humanism finds a welcome expression in interreligious collaboration. Christian humanists are convinced of the exalted dignity of the human being created in God's image, and of the equal dignity given by God the Creator to every man and woman, no matter to what religion or race they may belong. Moreover, Christians believe that Christ took on human nature and died on the cross for all men and women. These are very strong reasons for respecting everyone and being willing to accept others and work with them.

It is encouraging to read what people of other religions have to say on the human being. "All people are children of God", wrote the Emir Abdelkader in a letter sent in 1862 to the Bishop of Algiers,

a letter in which he said that he intervened to save Christians from a massacre by the Druze in Damascus. "Jesus, explaining that the kingdom of heaven resides in man, has revealed to us the greatness of man", said Rabindranath Tagore of India. "When people sacrifice the human race for religion, they are idolators violating the sanctity of human life", said Dr Zaki Badawi, Chairman of the Council of Imams and Mosques of the U.K.

Most religions will agree with the Second Vatican Council which extols the dignity and centrality of the human person in this world created by God: "Man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all socio-economic life" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 63).

Both Christian humanism and interreligious dialogue are engaged in efforts to defend or safeguard human rights. This is an engagement that appeals to people across religious frontiers. And true believers see God as the final origin and basis of man's dignity and rights. Speaking on February 5, 1986, to representatives of various religions in India, Pope John Paul stressed this point: "As followers of different religions, we should join together in promoting and defending common ideals in the spheres of religious liberty, human brotherhood, education, culture, social welfare and civil order. Dialogue and collaboration are possible in all these great projects" (in Gioia, ed., *Interreligious Dialogue*, 327). The motivation for such collaboration by people of several religions is truly religious. It is based on shared values given life by religious convictions. The Pope pointed this out to the Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace on November 3, 1994. He said: "These values are not just humanitarian or humanistic - they belong to the realm of the deeper truths affecting man's life in this world and his destiny ... Through interreligious dialogue we are able to bear witness to those truths which are the necessary point of reference for the individual and for society: the dignity of each and every human being, whatever his or her ethnic origin, religious

affiliation, or political commitment" (ibid. 529). As I said to the Muslims of the world in my 1997 Message for the end of Ramadan: "It is in fact in the name of God that every authentic believer shows respect for each human person. Religion cannot be thought to authorise us, on the basis of our differences, to adopt negative attitudes towards one another" (in *Meeting in Friendship*, p. 62).

Both Christian humanism and interreligious dialogue have the promotion of world peace as a priority. War can be precipitated by a few people. Peace requires sustained collaboration by all. Peace has no frontiers. There is no separate Catholic peace, Orthodox peace, Jewish peace, Muslim peace, Hindu peace or Buddhist peace. Humanity is in one boat. The safety of all is the concern of all.

All Christian humanists and promoters of interreligious collaboration are concerned that no one should cite God or religion in support of violence or war. God is the God of peace and not of war, the God of love and not of hatred, the God of life and not of death. Interreligious collaboration must continue says Pope John Paul II: "In the climate of increased cultural and religious pluralism which is expected to mark the society of the new millennium, it is obvious that this dialogue will be especially important in establishing a sure basis for peace and warding off the dread spectre of those wars of religion which have so often bloodied human history. The name of the one God must become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace" (*Novo Millennia Ineunte*, 55).

The year 2001 has been declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations as the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Both Christians humanism and interreligious collaboration are highly interested in the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Since religion exercises much influence on culture and indeed is a transcendent dimension of it, it is in the interest of

harmony between people of different religions and cultures that all forms of cultural war or religious tension be avoided and that people learn to meet others who are different. The world has this year been shaken by terrible dimensions of catastrophe which extremists can visit on their fellow human beings.

Christian humanism may develop a different emphasis in each continent. In Latin America it may be liberation. In North America it could be solidarity. In Africa inculturation is a priority. In Asia harmony is very much appreciated. And in Europe the renewal and re-evangelization of a secularized and multiethnic society could be the emphasis. In each case, interreligious collaboration becomes a necessity if the desired goals are to be achieved. "The importance of dialogue for integral development, social justice and human liberation needs to be stressed ... There is need also to join together in trying to solve the great problems facing society and the world, as well as in education for justice and peace" (*Dialogue and Proclamation*, 44).

Interreligious Dialogue goes beyond Christian Humanism

The above reflections should not be taken to suggest that interreligious dialogue is just a part, or an expression, of Christian humanism. It goes beyond Christian humanism.

To begin with, there are believers who sincerely engage in interreligious dialogue with great fruit, but they do not share the Christian faith. It will be found, however, that there are many values which they share with Christians.

Interreligious dialogue promotes the growth of the dialogue partners if the desirable conditions are present, such as openness to God's action, sincere search for religious truth and values, openness to other people, respect for others with their differences, readiness for self-examination and self criticism and willingness to work with others (cf Pope John Paul II: *Message for World Day*

of Peace, 1983). Well conducted dialogue can produce fruit such as the following: removal or reduction of prejudices and caricatures between the religions, disposing of people of one religion to live in peace and harmony with people of other religions, readiness to address together common challenges such as abuse of drugs, corruption in public life and discrimination against people because of their language, race, sex or social status.

For a Catholic, interreligious dialogue is not just an expression of Christian humanism; it is part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. By evangelizing mission is meant all that Jesus Christ sent his Church to do. Pope John Paul II in the fifth chapter of his encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, refers to the paths of mission. The list includes silent witness to Christ (like Charles de Foucauld in the desert among Muslims), proclamation, conversion and Baptism, inculturation of the Gospel, interreligious dialogue and works of charity, social assistance or human promotion. In this Catholic vision, interreligious contacts are one of the ways in which the followers of Christ can meet people of other religious convictions. Since religion is proposed, not imposed, respect for the human dignity of other people dictates that where they sincerely want to remain in their religion, Christians should seek contact and collaboration with them in one or more of the four forms of interreligious dialogue already discussed. Such dialogue, says Pope John Paul U, "is a path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father (cf Acts 1:7)" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 57).

From the vantage point of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, I can give witness that although we do not demand that Divine Providence show us immediate results, the various dialogues in which we engage are not fruitless. Such, for instance, are our dialogues with four major Islamic World Organizations and with the Al-Azhar on a yearly basis, our colloquia

with the World Islamic Call Society in Libya and Al-Albait in Jordan, our two world Christian-Buddhist colloquia and especially the 1986 Assisi World Day of Prayer for Peace convoked by the Holy Father and the 1999 World Interreligious Assembly organized by our Pontifical Council in the Vatican City. These gatherings do not pretend to solve all the problems. But they are indications of the proper direction which humanity should take. They are signals. They are messages. They are eloquent appeals to the extremists to retrace their steps. And they are an encouragement to religious, cultural and spiritual bridge-builders to persevere in their task.

It is clear that both Christian humanism and interreligious dialogue leave intact the right, and also the duty, of the Christian, to share with others "the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:8). Interreligious dialogue is not only not opposed to the proclamation of Christ, but rather both are elements in the general mandate given the Church by her Divine Founder. If a Christian loves his or her faith and is convinced about it, should we not expect that person to be anxious to share this Good News with all who freely welcome it? "Woe to me", says St Paul, "if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).

Respected Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Faculty, Students and distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let us thank God for 75 years of life and witness of the Carmelite Monastery in Quezon City. We are all enriched by the values stressed and proposed by Christian humanism. We have no doubt that by interreligious dialogue these values are shared and promoted. And such dialogue attains even more distant horizons which Divine Providence directs.

By the intercession of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Mother of Jesus the Saviour, may God help each one of us, according to our various vocations, to live these values with conviction, generosity and perseverance.

Address of Concession to Francis Cardinal Arinze*

TAMERLANE LANA, OP

The visit of His Eminence, Cardinal Francis Arinze to this country and the growing realization of our Catholic Universities of the Philippines on the need to take seriously the task of interfaith dialogue appear to me more than a mere coincidence. In the symposium organized by the Association of Catholic Universities of the Philippines (ACUP) in Baguio City in February of this year, there was a talk delivered by Fr. Vicente Cajilig, O.P., the Executive Secretary of the FABC Commission on Education, entitled "An Attempt to Introduce Interfaith Dialogue to ACUP." There was no doubt that the talk made an impact on the Presidents and Administrators present in the symposium so that when we deliberated on the theme for the University Presidents' Forum scheduled for this month of November, there were suggestions to center the discussion on "Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogues." The symposium, which was held just last week in this University, was highlighted by the open and enriching exchange of experiences of

* Conferment of Honorary Degree, Doctor Humanities to Francis Cardinal Arinze, President Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, University of Santo Tomas, 24th November 2001.

the University Presidents and top Administrators from 25 Catholic Universities of the Philippines. The sharing on the interreligious dialogue of the University Presidents in Mindanao who take care of significant number of Muslim students was indeed an eye opener to those of the other parts of the country who have to contend also with the presence of students of different faiths, although insignificant in number, and other Christian denominations. The forum was characterized by openness and candor; the experience brought realizations of our own inadequacies to address the needs of our non-Christian students and even of our tendencies towards intolerance and indifference to their religious beliefs. I believe that Cardinal Arinze's visit is providential than mere coincidence. As it were, the Catholic Universities here in our country have fittingly made a response to Cardinal Arinze's talk entitled 'The Role of the Catholic University in the Promotion of Interreligious Dialogue' which His Eminence delivered at the University of Leuven on November 3, 1998. In that talk, he reiterated what Pope John Paul II has expressed in the document *"Ex Corde Ecclesiae"* as the role of University to promote dialogue among cultures: "A Catholic University must become more attentive to the cultures of the world today, and to the various cultural traditions existing within the Church in such a way that will promote a continuous and profitable dialogue between the Gospel and modern society." Since religions are deeply entrenched in various cultures, this dialogue places demands not only on the level of life and culture but also of faith. Cardinal Arinze succinctly described the extent of which the Catholic Universities could contribute to the promotion of dialogue especially through its theological task of seeking to understand this aspect of evangelization in the light of revelation. The Cardinal concluded the talk by listing some specific services which the Catholic University can perform for the Catholic community in matters touching other religions.

The role of the Catholic Universities to contribute in the promotion of interfaith dialogue in this part of the world becomes even more expedient in the light of the Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *"Ecclesia in Asia"*. It may not be presumptuous to say that in this continent teeming with peoples of varied cultures and religions, only in the Philippines is Christianity an essential component of civilization. This privileged position undeniably entails a responsibility that the Church in the Philippines takes upon herself in the face of the greater evangelical role that devolves upon the Church in Asia as envisioned by the Pope in this Apostolic Exhortation.

The document introduces us to words and ideas that might have been strange in the Church vocabulary before the Vatican II's Declaration *"Nostra Aetate"* and the succeeding Church documents that deal with interreligious dialogue like the encyclical *"Redemptoris Missio."* The Papal Exhortation on the Church of Asia speaks of the inseparable connection between communion and mission - mission simply flowing from communion, vice versa. The document says: "Communion with Jesus which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves, is the indispensable condition for bearing fruit: and communion with others which is the gift of Christ and his Spirit is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give. In this sense, communion and mission are inseparably connected. They interpenetrate and mutually represent both the source and fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion." In my understanding then this concept of communion understood in two senses happily gets rid of any trace of exclusiveness, or prejudice or intolerance to people not belonging to the same faith. There is a communion that internalizes (the communion which Christians share with one another that flows from the communion Christians share with the Father, united with Christ in the Spirit's bond of Love); and then

there is a communion that externalizes, that is, it seeks out others, and reaches out to those not belonging (or at least not fully belonging) to the Christian family. Now the latter is said to be essentially part of the Church's mission, and when concretized in the Asian context, it takes the form of a *dialogue*. This dialogue, however, need not stand in opposition to "proclamation" of the Gospel which basically forms part of the Church's missionary activity. They in fact complement and mutually enrich each other, as articulated in the Church document "Dialogue and Proclamation" issued by the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue headed by no other than our honoree Cardinal Arinze. The Pope expresses the desire of the Church of Asia to engage in dialogue - a dialogue in life and culture, and most importantly a dialogue in faith: ecumenical and interreligious. There is depth and richness in that particular document which could not easily be captured in a short talk like this, but there is indeed a gospel of hope that it brings to the Church of Asia. It is a gospel response to the situation in Asia perceived to be the arena of violence and conflicts - ethnic, political and cultural; where conflicts are made complex by the complicity of politics, economics, religion and culture; where Christianity carries a heavy burden of colonial history; where religious fundamentalism is on the rise in defense of its confessional orthodoxy and identity against intrusion from other faiths and against the threats of globalization, commercialism and materialism.

Now what role would the University of Santo Tomas play in responding to the challenge raised by the Pope to the Church of Asia? The University understands that the papal document is not meant only to be enshrined in a nicely bound booklet; it is meant to be continually reflected on and hopefully give impetus to initiatives taken by the Church people of Asia to enter in a partnership with other peoples of different cultures and faith toward

the pursuit of communion and full life in Asia. In relation with this, there is a perceived need by the Pastors of the Church for more formation for dialogues, and schools, houses of formation are enjoined to take the challenge. In the face of this, I believe that the University of Santo Tomas, the oldest University in Asia that takes pride of its almost 400 years of education grounded on strong Catholic tradition, does not have any option but to take the lead. That is why it now makes a stride to build its own human and physical resources that would enable the University to become a Center that would hopefully contribute to the theological reflections and understanding of this important mission of the Church in Asia.

But for this we need an inspiration and a paragon. Cardinal Arinze's presence does not only serve as an inspiration to all of us here in the University, but it also provides us with an encouragement to intensify our resolve to pursue our mission in the formation of Christians with the maturity of faith, liveliness of hope and ardor of love to be able to reach out to all our brothers and sister in Asia in the common pursuit of a culture of life, a culture of human rights and a culture of peace and harmony. His Eminence's life and works have been dedicated to the promotion of this culture of peace especially among peoples of various religions and cultures. One of his books entitled "Meeting Other Believers" which serves as a very helpful primer on Interreligious Dialogue, is a simple yet forceful presentation of a topic facing the Church at the onset of this millennium. As the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, his guidance and wisdom have undoubtedly stirred the aspiration of the Church to become the Church of Communion and the Church of Dialogue for all the peoples of the world. He has pursued this task effectively and credibly because his actual engagement in dialogue has been backed up by the effective witness of a life, imbued with God-experience. His unwavering pursuit of peace through dialogue is

certainly what the world direly needs at this time that it is threatened by conflicts that are deeply rooted in differences in ideals, culture and beliefs. It is for these reasons that the University of Santo Tomas takes pride in paying tribute to this great man of God and Pastor of the Church. In behalf of the academic community' of this University, I hereby concede to the petition of the Academic Senate of the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas to grant the degree, Doctor of Humanities, "*Honoris Causa*" to His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Arinze. May God continue to keep him and bless the dedicated service he is rendering to humanity.

Towards a Culture of Peace in the 21st Century*

YMCA, CCA & FABC

ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION ON SOCIAL ADVOCACY

Introduction

At the beginning of the new Millennium, we as Christians in Asia-Pacific, are perturbed by the numerous situations of violence and conflicts that are threatening many nations and even the whole of humanity. We are being confronted by a multitude of forces, both global and local that attack the core of the human person and the human community. We are being challenged to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and address these issues in and through the Ministry of Social Advocacy. We as Christians are called to be promoters of peace in the context of violence and conflicts through education for peace and social advocacy.

It was the urgency of this task before us that moved us as Christian organisations to come together to foster new Ecumenical endeavours in order to address our current global crisis based on

* Final Statement of the Ecumenical Consultation on Social Advocacy. Consultation jointly organised by the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA's, Christian Conference of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, held on 4th-8th October 2001, at the Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand.

the culture of death and violence. Thus Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA's, the Christian Conference of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences organised this Joint Consultation on Social Advocacy, from 4-8 October 2001, at the Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand. We, twenty-nine participants, in Asia and Pacific, through a process of dialogue deepened our common understanding of the realities of our peoples and the societies that we live in. Without Faith there can be no new and creative actions, and it is for this reason that we reflected on the meaning of our faith so that we would be able to translate these into actions. Our commitment to social advocacy, we believe is based on our determination and willingness to journeying together as Christians, committed to working for the Kingdom (Reign) of God. We hope through this process to foster greater collaborative efforts in the building up of new network of committed Christians to meet the challenges of the new Millennium. This is indeed our common and concerted response to the call of the Lord in the context of Asia-Pacific.

1. The Context of the Challenges Today

- 1.1 Our analysis of Asian-Pacific realities point to the numerous negative effects of the impact of globalisation and the subsequent economic and political, social and religious and ethnic upheaval. With the emergence of various forms of Neo-Liberalism, accelerated by the process of Globalisation, the role of the Nation State is being undermined and diverted from its basic responsibility of promoting the common good and protecting the basic human rights of individuals. We believe that the State is not the servant of the Market Driven Economy but has the sacred duty of being the Protector of the People.
- 1.2 In the area of economic life, the phenomenon of mega-mergers has led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and has given rise to gross inequalities so evident in our

Region. These trends take away the very life support systems from the majority of our peoples so that they are no longer able to live with dignity as human persons. Science and technology, knowledge and information and communication technology, seem to give priority to the growth and expansion of capital and investments for profits, rather than satisfy the basic human needs of persons and communities including food, health services, sanitation and education. The subtle promotion and pursuit of a culture of individualism, materialism, consumerism, and excessive competition move people and communities away from the fundamental values of the respect for human dignity and stewardship of the ecology and a way of life that stresses the transcendental and spiritual.

- 1.3 It is this lack of political will, to engender policies for the common good, that breeds inequality and creates an increasing gap between the rich and the poor in our nations. It is also clear that this emphasis on the material and economic aspects of development is creating communities that are slowly being marginalized and sidelined, becoming breeding ground for division and fragmentation of our communities. Various forms of religious fundamentalism often related to the negation of ethnic and fundamental human liberties and rights by both the global forces and national governments are emerging. Violence of the People is justified as a response to both Global and National Violence. Often such volatile situations bring misery and sufferings to millions of people in the Region. Furthermore, there is a growing sense of insecurity when ethnic and religious communities become targets for each other's anger and revenge.
- 1.4 A new social scenario is emerging before our very eyes. We see the gradual erosion of the agricultural base of our economies, the displacement of millions of people internally and externally, the situation of millions of migrant workers who

have to leave their homes and families to work as contract labour with little security and under deplorable conditions. There is the gradual and blatant increase in the trafficking of women, girls and boys and the feminisation of poverty accompanied by violence on women. The rapid deterioration of ecology and environment is largely due to the pace of unethical and unsustainable development resulting in the indiscriminate destruction of natural resources and the environment.

- 15 The prevalence of Greed in an organised manner within the systems that promote various forms of neo-liberalism based trade and capital liberalisation has created inequalities and institutionalised injustices in the economic, political, ethnic and religious spheres. This leads to feelings of oppression or hopelessness, hatred, prejudice, and desire for vengeance, resulting in violence. The lack of good governance and social structures that deal effectively with political, economic and social inequalities in our society has resulted in a culture of intolerance where people lack respect and understanding of each other and there is domination of one race, caste over the other, Historical grievances have also caused individual violence, violence of the people, and violence of the State. Declining religious values and increasing religious fundamentalism have also brought about clashes and conflicts.

2. Our Faith Reflections in the context of Asia-Pacific

- 2.1 We believe that the Gospel calls us to speak and act for social justice. To advocate on behalf of the poor, oppressed and marginalized is an integral part of the practice of our faith. As Christians, we are committed to non-violent means such as the use of spiritual force or moral pressure. The subject matter and means of our advocacy should be informed by and give expression to our faith. We see the need to a return to

an authentic spirituality that revitalises our relationships as members of the community of Jesus, so that we will be the salt, leaven and light for the transformation of the world. We realise that our journeying together has to be with people of all faiths and believers so that peace can become a reality for us and for the future generations.

3. Our Understanding of Social Advocacy

- 3.1 Social Advocacy** is seen as an on-going process of influencing decision-makers with a commitment in the pursuit of TRUTH and thus bring changes to social policy or to enforce laws or to repeal them if they violate norms of UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS. It is also a process of offering alternatives by enacting new laws and influencing behaviour and changes in lifestyle.
- 3.2 The Process of Social Advocacy** thus begins with identifying the needs and rights of the disadvantaged in society, involving a comprehensive, in-depth social analysis and reflection, including faith analysis. It calls for justice and solidarity with the suffering, and works towards the creation of equitable power structures.
- 3.3 The Levels of Social Advocacy** include the *Global, Regional, National* and *Local*.
- 3.4 The Dimensions of Social Advocacy** should include awareness education and communication about issues and strategies for appropriate actions, such as, creating networks and alliances, techniques for monitoring and lobbying of decisions-makers to organise public campaigns, and consumer actions. The creation of alternatives is indeed the greatest challenge for promoters of social advocacy.

4. Our Responses as Christians to Social Advocacy

As members of the Ecumenical Partnership in the Asia and Pacific we can by engaging in Social Advocacy, make peace a reality and nurture signs of hope among our people through

- a. Education in linking Faith and Life, giving priority to all the People of God to foster greater Christian involvement in the transformation of the world.
- b. Proper training in the values, change of attitudes and acquire skills required for Social Advocacy.
- c. Recognising the importance of this formation for promoting Social Advocacy within each of our Churches/Ecumenical Organisations, and the total Christian Community.
- d. Building a new network of collaboration and co-operation in the area of Social Advocacy.
- e. Inculcating a new spirituality based on the Gospel of Jesus that will bring persons and communities to be involved in social advocacy.

5. What can we do as Ecumenical Partners?

We can work towards promoting a common understanding of Social Advocacy in the context of Asia and Pacific today as Ecumenical Partners by:

- a. Sharing the Church's teaching on ethical and social issues today and in dialogue keeping in mind the interreligious perspectives:
- b. Sharing and exchanging of practical experiences in the area of advocacy, including human rights, migrants, rights of women and children, ecology and environment, etc.

- c. Being involved in the formulation of programmes and processes for formation and education of pastors, the laity particularly youth and women, and families.
- d. Working together on the processes and programmes to integrate Advocacy into the pastoral plans of the local church and the Bishops' Conferences, and local units of the organisation.
- e. Deepening the knowledge and practical skills in the area of communications, publications, use of Internet and web sites, education campaigns, international and local campaigns, etc. to spread the message of social advocacy.
- f. Identifying new like-minded partners for collaboration in the area of advocacy in order to promote greater justice and peace.
- g. Intensifying the efforts of individual organisation in Social Advocacy as planned during the Consultation.

6. Urgent Tasks Ahead for Peace and Non-Violence

Being deeply concerned about prevalent situation in the world today, the participants identified some key causes of violence and conflicts in the world today. We see the urgency to create a culture of peace with justice. In the context of the conflicts among civilisations and the clash of civilisations we are being challenged to promote a Dialogue of Civilisations through the building up of a Civilisation of Love and Peace. As Ecumenical Partners committed to building communities characterised by justice, love and peace, we can:

- a. Focus on dialogue and education to create understanding of the, other views be it in economic, political, racial, religious issues, directed at root causes.
- b. Work in partnership among the Ecumenical Partners, including people of other faiths, to educate our constituencies and others

for transformation. This can be in the form of the exchanges of our publications and documents.

- c. In order to be promoters of peaceful and non-violent methods in conflict resolution, we can look into the possibilities of developing some modules for Peace Education for use among the members of the Churches and Ecumenical Organisations.
- d. Play a more prominent role of mediators or reconcilers in conflicts, ensuring healing and reconciliation. This can be through the Ecumenical networks that we can promote in each of our countries.
- e. We can work more closely with other Interreligious groups and NGOs that are also promoting human dignity and human rights. In this way the Ecumenical Network can make Social Advocacy for Peace as an affirmation of life.
- f. Look for more creative ways in which we can incorporate spirituality as an integral dimension of our responsibility of promoting social advocacy.

Conclusion

We hope to continue the journey that we began through this Consultation by ensuring that we will more consciously share our resources by keeping each other informed of our programmes and activities and strengthen this informal network that we have developed at the level of the Asia and Pacific Region. The Organising Committee of this Consultation thus sees as its responsibility the need to meet from time to time, to search for ways and means to further follow-up on the deliberations of the Consultation.

Final Considerations of the FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet 01

FABC OFFICES

Theme:

**"Novo Millennio Ineunte: FABC Concerns -
Communication Challenges. FABC Offices
present their vision & concerns"**

We, the 33 Bishop-chairmen and secretaries of episcopal commissions for social communication of 12 countries in Asia and some officials of Catholic media organizations have come together for the 6th "FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet" in Hong Kong from 22 to 27 October 2001.

Having had the opportunity to listen to the concerns of the FABC-Offices of Evangelization, Laity and Human Development as well as representatives of the Christian Conference of Asia, and studied the Holy Father's apostolic letter "Novo Millennio Ineunte" we offer the following reflections on our communication apostolate in the new millennium.

The Spirit of Novo Millennio Ineunte (NMI) is expressed in the Gospel verse *due in ahum!* (put out into the deep). The

document is a call to renewal of life, attitudes, structures, approaches, programs and activities giving way to new zeal, new methods and new expressions for a more effective evangelization. It is a call to holiness, a deeper spirituality, braving divisions and barriers and taking up the challenges of countercultures to a spirituality of communion.

It arises from a right understanding of the paschal mystery and the Trinitarian relationship that was made accessible and tangible through Incarnation i.e. God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ. It urges us to the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ.

NMI implies, beside others, going beyond, launching into action, having courage, creativity, venturing, listening as well as finding new ways in our apostolate. It is a going forth based on hope and faith. It demands a change in one's personal ways of living because "without Christ, we can do nothing" - Jn. 15:5 (NMI 38).

We are called to live this life rooted in the context where we are, with the right knowledge, attitude and skills required to communicate.

Some Communication Challenges:

In the context of Asia, the challenge of communication lies primarily in the person of the communicator, who accepts the cross and vulnerability of the God-man and shuns all pomp, triumphalism and ambivalence. The Christian communicator must become a credible and relevant messenger of the Good News.

We realize that in the areas of evangelization, laity and human development, whose concerns we have heard, communicators and media practitioners must have a clear understanding of the concerns and work of these FABC offices, and consider the implications for their work. We especially recognize the following challenges:

1. Communicators must develop a deep spirituality of communication, rooted in prayer, emulating Jesus Christ - the perfect communicator (BM'98*, 1; BM'OO, 1). To catch the fish *in altum*, one needs to be with the Lord.
2. Communicators in the Church need a deeper understanding and adequate skills in analyzing social, political, cultural, religious and moral issues.
3. Communicators should promote the communion of communities (cf. "A New Way of Being Church in Asia" BM'97; "Communicating Love and Service" BM'OO; NMI, 43f)-
4. Communicators need to become more the voice of the poor, oppressed, exploited and marginalized, than of the rich, powerful and influential (BM'97; BM'OO).
5. Communicators must promote human dignity and human rights with special emphasis on women and children; they are to answer issues on morality, religion, spirituality.
6. Communicators should accentuate the good rather than the bad news that sells, and should not be afraid to denounce evil (BM'97; BM'99).
7. Communicators must promote media education, helping people especially the young in the right use of Internet, television, radio, print and film (cf. BM'96, 5.4; BM'97, 5d).
8. Communicators should promote values that strengthen family relations as antidotes to domestic violence, generation gaps, broken families, child abuse (BM'99).
9. Communicators must promote greater participation of the laity in the life and mission of the Church (BM'OO).
10. Communicators should encourage everyone in the Church to promote Radio Veritas Asia and other vital means of missionary work (BM'96).

* BM - FABC-OSC Bishop's Meet

11. Radio Veritas Asia, FABC's project, should devise and effect a new approach to program and audience research. A feasibility study to reintroduce English programs and broadcasting through the Internet (streaming) is strongly suggested. English is fast becoming the unifying language also in Asia.
12. Social teachings of the Church should be spread through the media, e.g. using websites, in a language that is easily understood by ordinary people (cf. BM'96, 5.2). Young people should be invited to help Christian communicators in this area.
13. Communication formation and training especially in new media for Bishops, clergy, religious and lay must be undertaken (cf. BISCOM** II; BISCOM III).
14. Communicators should network among themselves and exchange information especially during crisis situations (cf. BM'97).

In conclusion, we suggest that:

- The Church must invest more personnel and finances to achieve professionalism in the work of communication.
- At the 7th FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet 2002, these final considerations and their fulfillment should be the basis for evaluation and national reports.

** BISCOM - Bishops' Institute for Social Communication

Message of the Holy Father for the 36th World Communications Day

JOHN PAUL II

*THEME: "Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel"
Sunday, May 12, 2002*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Church in every age continues the work begun on the day of Pentecost, when the Apostles, in the power of the Holy Spirit, went forth into the streets of Jerusalem to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in many tongues (cf. *Acts 2:5-11*). Through the succeeding centuries, this evangelizing mission spread to the far corners of the earth, as Christianity took root in many places and learned to speak the diverse languages of the world, always in obedience to Christ's command to preach the Gospel to every nation (cf. *Mt 28:19-20*).

But the history of evangelization is not just a matter of geographic expansion, for the Church has also had to cross many cultural thresholds, each of which called for fresh energy and imagination in proclaiming the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. The age

of the great discoveries, the Renaissance and the invention of printing, the Industrial Revolution and the birth of the modern world: these too were threshold moments which demanded new forms of evangelization. Now, with the communications and information revolution in full swing, the Church stands unmistakably at another decisive gateway. It is fitting therefore that on this World Communications Day 2002 we should reflect on the subject: "Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel".

2. The Internet is certainly a new "forum" understood in the ancient Roman sense of that public space where politics and business were transacted, where religious duties were fulfilled where much of the social life of the city took place, and where the best and the worst of human nature was on display. It was a crowded and bustling urban space, which both reflected the surrounding culture and created a culture of its own. This is no less true of cyberspace, which is as it were a new frontier opening up at the beginning of this new millennium. Like the new frontiers of other times, this one too is full of the interplay of danger and promise, and not without the sense of adventure which marked other great periods of change. For the Church the new world of cyberspace is a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message. This challenge is at the heart of what it means at the beginning of the millennium to follow the Lord's command to "put out into the deep": *Due in altum!* (Lk 5:4).

3. The Church approaches this new medium with realism and confidence. Like other communications media, it is a means, not an end in itself. The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Above all, by providing information and stirring interest it makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian message, especially among the young who increasingly

turn to the world of cyberspace as a window on the world. It is important, therefore, that the Christian community think of very practical ways of helping those who first make contact through the Internet to move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of Christian community.

At a subsequent stage, the Internet can also provide the kind of follow-up which evangelization requires. Especially in an unsupportive culture, Christian living calls for continuing instruction and catechesis, and this is perhaps the area in which the Internet can provide excellent help. There already exist on the Net countless sources of information, documentation and education about the Church, her history and tradition, her doctrine and her engagement in every field in all parts of the world. It is clear, then, that while the Internet can never replace that profound experience of God which only the living, liturgical and sacramental life of the Church can offer, it can certainly provide a unique supplement and support in both preparing for the encounter with Christ in community, and sustaining the new believer in the journey of faith which then begins.

4. There are nevertheless certain necessary, even obvious, questions which arise in using the Internet in the cause of evangelization. The essence of the Internet in fact is that it provides an almost unending flood of information, much of which passes in a moment. In a culture which feeds on the ephemeral there can easily be a risk of believing that it is facts that matter, rather than values. The Internet offers extensive knowledge, but it does not teach values; and when values are disregarded, our very humanity is demeaned and man easily loses sight of his transcendent dignity. Despite its enormous potential for good, some of the degrading and damaging ways in which the Internet can be used are already obvious to all, and public authorities surely have a responsibility to guarantee that this marvelous instrument serves the common good and does not become a source of harm.

Furthermore, the Internet radically redefines a person's psychological relationship to time and space. Attention is riveted on what is tangible, useful, instantly available; the stimulus for deeper thought and reflection may be lacking. Yet human beings have a vital need for time and inner quiet to ponder and examine life and its mysteries, and to grow gradually into a mature dominion of themselves and of the world around them. Understanding and wisdom are the fruit of a contemplative eye upon the world, and do not come from a mere accumulation of facts, no matter how interesting. They are the result of an insight which penetrates the deeper meaning of things in relation to one another and to the whole of reality. Moreover, as a forum in which practically everything is acceptable and almost nothing is lasting, the Internet favours a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes feeds the flight from personal responsibility and commitment.

In such a context, how are we to cultivate that wisdom which comes not just from information but from insight, the wisdom which understands the difference between right and wrong, and sustains the scale of values which flows from that difference?

5. The fact that through the Internet people multiply their contacts in ways hitherto unthinkable opens up wonderful possibilities for spreading the Gospel. But it is also true that electronically mediated relationships can never take the place of the direct human contact required for genuine evangelization. For evangelization always depends upon the personal witness of the one sent to evangelize (cf. *Rom* 10:14-15). How does the Church lead from the kind of contact made possible by the Internet to the deeper communication demanded by Christian proclamation? How do we build upon the first contact and exchange of information which the Internet makes possible?

There is no doubt that the electronic revolution holds out the promise of great positive breakthroughs for the developing world;

but there is also the possibility that it will in fact aggravate existing inequalities as the information and communications gap widens. How can we ensure that the information and communications revolution which has the Internet as its prime engine will work in favour of the globalization of human development and solidarity, objectives closely linked to the Church's evangelizing mission?

Finally, in these troubled times, let me ask: how can we ensure that this wondrous instrument first conceived in the context of military operations can now serve the cause of peace? Can it favour that culture of dialogue, participation, solidarity and reconciliation without which peace cannot flourish? The Church believes it can; and to ensure that this is what will happen she is determined to enter this new forum, armed with the Gospel of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

6. The Internet causes billions of images to appear on millions of computer monitors around the planet. From this galaxy of sight and sound will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard? For it is only when his face is seen and his voice heard that the world will know the glad tidings of our redemption. This is the purpose of evangelization. And this is what will make the Internet a genuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man. Therefore, on this World Communications Day, I dare to summon the whole Church bravely to cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world "the glory of God on the face of Christ" (2 *Cor* 4:6). May the Lord bless all those who work for this aim.

Activities of the Fourth World Meeting of Families

JAIME CARDINAL SIN, DD

Circular No. 2002-04
10 January 2002

"The Christian Family: Good News for the Third Millennium"

My dear people of God:

The challenges at the onset of the third millennium call for greater hope, courage and vigilance. This call is especially true for us Christians who are called to hold aloft the light and truth of Jesus Christ. We are called to build a civilization of life and love. And this mission is entrusted particularly to the family. The Holy Father has always emphasized that "humanity passes by way of the family." (*Familiaris Consortio* 86) The family is at the center of humanity. Whatever happens to the family will ultimately affect society. When the institution of the family breaks down, the moral fabric of society is likewise threatened. When the family is strengthened and nourished, the good of society is promoted and enhanced.

Mindful of these issues and concerns, the Holy Father called for a World Meeting of Families in Rome in 1994. The Second Meeting was convoked in 1997 at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During the Great Jubilee Year 2000, the Pope invited all families back to Rome.

For the Fourth World Meeting of Families in 2003, the Pope has decided to hold it in Asia, here in our very own shores from 23 to 26 January. Manila is humbled and honored to host this auspicious event. We accept this gift and responsibility with greater fervor and conviction since the Holy Father has called the Third Millennium, the "Asian Millennium" - the millennium for the proclamation of the name and Gospel of Jesus in Asia. We are called "to share with our Asian brothers and sisters what we treasure as the gift containing all gifts, namely, the Good News of Jesus Christ." (*Ecclesia in Asia* 19). Asia is home to nearly four of the six billion people of the world. Of these four billion only 120 million are Catholics, 70% of which are Filipinos. It is therefore to every Filipino Catholic, to every Filipino Catholic family, that the mission to evangelize Asia is entrusted more forcefully. The time has come for us to lead in proclaiming and living out the Gospel of Jesus to the world. And this mission will pass by way of the family. It is for this reason that the theme for this important gathering is **"The Christian Family: Good News for the Third Millennium."**

To prepare for this event, I call on all our Catholic faithful to pray and participate. Let us pray for the success and fruitfulness of this meeting. Let us implore the Lord to cleanse our minds and hearts so that we may readily receive and heed His message for our families.

Let us also participate. Throughout the year 2002, the Church in the Philippines will prepare by way of catechetical activities and congresses involving all arch/dioceses, parishes, Catholic organi-

zations and various Church sectors. Let us get involved in these celebrations. The preparation phase is divided into five stages:

- Festival of Fathers in March
- Festival of Mothers in May
- Festival of Youth in August
- Festival of Children in October
- Grand Concert of Families in December

The Fourth World Meeting of Families will have two simultaneous congresses from 23 to 24 January 2003: the International Theological and Pastoral Congress (ITPC) and the Congress for Children. These congresses seek to address the role and mission of the different members of the family in the face of increasing difficulties and sometimes confusion, on account of rapid social change and new pressures and threats.

There will be other celebrations reflective of the fiesta spirit of Filipinos. On 25 January, there will be Eucharistic celebrations all over the Archdiocese of Manila, which will be done in different languages (e.g. English, Italian, Spanish, French, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Korean, Cebuano, etc.) for the various delegations to participate. It will be Filipino hospitality at its best again for our delegate-families!

Let us also fervently pray for the arrival of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. If he comes, the vigil on 25 January will be held in his presence. It will be a moment of songs, prayers and faith testimonies of families with the Pope. And on the final day, we hope and pray that the Supreme Pontiff will preside at the Closing Eucharistic Celebration. On this occasion, Pope John Paul II will bless the entire Church, especially all families that they may truly be seedbeds of faith and proclaimers of the Good News of Christ, especially in the vast continent of Asia. He will send forth every Christian family to be evangelizers of the third millennium.

Let us ardently prepare for the Fourth World Meeting of Families. Let this occasion be a moment of kairos, of grace and hope for the Philippines, for Asia and for the whole world. Let us join together in this common cause so that the family may truly become an "intimate community of life and love" (*Gaudium et Spes* 48) and a communion of persons bonded by relations of mutual respect and love, radiating the selfless love of Jesus Christ.

Now is the time to pray and prepare. Let us get moving as one family!

May the Holy Trinity, upon whose image of communion and mission every family is imaged, bless and empower every Christian family to become builders of civilization of true life and love.

May the Holy Family of Nazareth: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, guide and inspire every Christian family to embody the Good News for the third millennium.

Guidelines for Liturgical Celebrations in Malls and Related Places

JAIME CARDINAL SIN, DD

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The life of faith of Filipino Catholics is predominantly characterized from the earliest times by its focus on the sacraments of the Church. Even today this finds clear expression in the great number of attendance at the Eucharistic celebration. Our people find the celebration of the sacraments and especially the Eucharist & true source of nourishment for their life of faith as they face the challenges of life.

With the changes taking place in the lifestyle of our people, in an urban setting, and the growth in the number of our Catholic faithful, there have also been changes in the manner by which the Church has been trying to address these needs and to deepen her fidelity to the command of Christ to be ministers of the mysteries of Christ.

It has been a growing phenomenon that the celebrations of the Eucharist, especially on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligations,

is celebrated in shopping malls. We would like to address this issue and help our pastors and lay people even grow in a more genuine love of the Holy Eucharist in consideration of the following:

1. "Masses in shopping malls serve primarily the spiritual needs of the community of employees working in the shopping malls." (Guidelines for Liturgical celebrations outside of places of Worship, CBCP Monitor, November 5, 2000)
2. "The celebration of the Eucharist should be celebrated in a respectable place." (cf. Canon 932; GIRM 268) Lobbies, hallways and the likes expose the celebration of the Eucharist to shoppers and passers-by who are not participants of the celebration and thereby, cause distraction and disrespect to the celebrating community. The organizers of the Mass in shopping malls need to take great prudence and effort to provide for a respectable place for the celebration. Unless this is provided, the celebration of the Eucharist shall be withheld in shopping Malls.

Related to this, proper liturgical vessels and furnishings like the altar, lectern, vestments and liturgical books should be provided by the organizers of the celebration.

3. The Masses in shopping malls can in no way substitute for the parochial setting where a Christian normally belongs. Therefore, the assemblies in liturgical services in shopping malls need to be led to a lively awareness that they are members of their respective parish communities, where they should regularly gather for the Sunday Eucharist, (cf. Guidelines for Liturgical Celebration Outside Places of Worship, CBCP Monitor, November 5, 2000)
4. Before a Mass in shopping mall is celebrated, the organizers of the Mass need:

- a. To present a request letter to the parish priest of the place where the shopping mall belonging;
 - b. A recommendation letter from the Ministry for Liturgical Affairs;
 - c. A letter of permission from the local ordinary or the district Bishop.
5. Pastors are responsible for the celebration if these are done within their territorial boundaries and therefore should ensure:
- a. That utmost reverence and devotion are accorded to the celebration of the Eucharist;
 - b. That commercialism is avoided and all financial matters be dealt with accountability.

Let us bring Christ to the people. Let us bring out Christ in the hearts of all peoples. May all things be restored in Christ.

"Our Father" In the Context of Jesus ' Seven last Words

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Introduction

A homily on the "Lord's Prayer", delivered recently in a chapel, has served as an inspiration in the writing of a reflection that tries to connect the prayer of the Master with his seven last words, which are usually dealt with during the *siete palabras* on Holy Friday. This is a very popular practice in the parishes all over the Philippines. And the local *siete palabras* could reach many people through the use of modern technology like the radio and television. This reflection will put forward challenges to the believers in the context of today's realities.

I think our most beautiful prayer in the Church is no other than the Lord's Prayer. It is short, Father-centered, practical, and touches the very core of human daily needs. One could always go back to the time he/she learned this prayer and ask himself/herself whether his/her understanding of the prayer has grown in time. If yes, what are these new meanings? If not, why and can one really make it still relevant to one's personal predicament?

The effort to relate the Lord's Prayer with the *siete palabras* is rather exciting. It makes us recall how to hallow the name of the Creator, and recognize that the daily bread comes to us through others. There is so much evil around our surroundings: in families, church organizations, business enterprises, government offices, barangay settings, and many others. How can the usage of the prayer catapult or reverse these multi-faceted situations? How can our personal predicament help us to understand better the prayer that our Lord Jesus taught his disciples?

For ecumenism, the said prayer is one that can effectively bring together different Christian denominations. It is a compliment to the prayer of Jesus *that all may be one: ut unum sint*. It is the secret weapon against divided groups, many of which are equally ardent in working for the fulfillment of the dream of the Divine Master. Yet all must look forward to the time when the psychological, cultural, and religious biases of separated parties may be transcended.

The Lord's Prayer could easily be understood and accepted by people of different religious persuasions other than the Christian. The concept of the Father has parallel acceptance in great religions. The hunger of daily bread is felt by all peoples. And the avoidance of evil is in the prayers of all, be it from sectors that keep primitive belief to advance sectors like the Muslims, Buddhists and others. May this reflection serve as an opener and an aid for a renewed understanding of one's faith, and that of others, lived in the context of daily living. The days of the Holy Week are opportune time for meditation that will recall the prayer of the Master *that all may be one*.

The First of the Last Words:

Father forgive them. . . . Forgive us our sins

As we utter *forgive us our sins* every time we pray to the Father, I am wondering what really comes to the mind of the one praying. Is it only a lip service that he or she is doing or is it something more than this? The prayer demands something very difficult to do. But I think it is a condition so that the Lord will deliver us from evil.

We complain because we have been victims of the viciousness of others. This is our common experience. The others could mean a lot of people around our environment. It can mean people who are close to us and have turned enemies. Or they can be our real enemies.

We must realize that enemies can multiply. If we go to the story of Abel and Cain, we are told that fraternal story, upon opening the first pages of Genesis. Maybe it is really the will of the Father that soonest we should realize this truth. What did Abel really do as to merit the ire of Cain? Simply because the former offered the best of his harvest to the Lord is no fault of his own.

This biblical story is followed by another very famous narration of the ire of the eleven sons of Jacob upon their brother Joseph.. The lot of Joseph was to be thrown to the well and to be sold later because of the jealousy of the eleven.

For both stories, we are told by the Savior, at the foot of the cross, one and the only way out. Forgiveness is the way out. On the cross the reason for the call to forgive is given: *for they do not know what they are doing*.

Think of this reason. Is this not also the reason, most of the time, why we should forgive as in the Lord's Prayer? The

absence of knowledge. It seems that most of the time, when we complain against those who sin against us, it is the absence of knowledge of our person, motivation, intentions, and direction. The inhumanity of our abusers seems to prevail because they do not know.

How about those who, with all knowledge, accuse us of things of which we are innocent? This is a more difficult situation. When there is malice, the only way out really is the grace of God given to us. This could be the grace of true love: when one sees only the good deeds, when one is given the grace of patience, when one is given the grace to be free from envy, etc. All because love forgets everything, and only wishes the good of the beloved.

Both the malicious accuser and the victim have a clear instruction from the Lord's Prayer. For those whom we offend, we ask forgiveness; for those who offend us, we offer forgiveness.

Second of the last Words:

...With me in Paradise - Your kingdom come

Amen, I say to you today that you will be with me in Paradise. Paradise... Do you know that when I was a little boy, I dreamt quite often of going to heaven? It was a dream I knew it then, as I know it today. But do such dreams have meaning?

I can almost perfectly say that I am not alone in that dream. Many of you may not have a different experience. Going to heaven is all what we want. And people who had a special experience about going to heaven for a while have told their stories. Their stories have been popularized. And there are doctors who have no explanation for the stories of some patients who told them that somehow, some time in their life, their spirit was out of their body. Moreover, the saints collaborate with their stories. For one who believes, there is no need to seek for explanation. For one who does not believe, no explanation will be acceptable enough.

When we pray that the kingdom of the Father may come amidst us, we really mean that heaven may start while we are on earth. But the Father tells us: *only when you follow my will*. When what prevails is our will, we cannot hollow the Father's name. And the temptation to follow our will is strong. We are liars if we say that all the time, it is the Kingdom of the Father that reigns in our heart. No, it is not. Most of the time, it is our will. No wonder why heaven is far. We do not dream of it to come to us while on earth.

My daughters and sons, tell me what you want. I will give all that you need to come to heaven. You have my Son, your kins, your friends, your neighbors. All I created for heaven. But heaven will come only when you do what is my will.

My will is found in what you denounce and renounce. Have I not made you prophets when you were baptized? I have invested you with gifts. Do not hinder your sisters or brothers when they wish to perfect the gifts given to them. Do not denounce them. Affirm the gifts I have given them. Do not be jealous of them. For I have given you more than enough. What have you done with them?

Yes, today we find many movements authored by the Spirit of God. Movements that build community, strengthen the family, study the Bible, attend to the sick and others. They dedicate themselves to justice and peace. And where do you belong? Do you support this undertaking or just keep denouncing and rejecting? And you blame those who would make you insecure. You are insecure because you are lagging behind. *You are lagging because you stop my will. Alas my son, my daughter, humbly recognize my will in these things taking place in the Church today. Be my prophet making earth, heaven.*

Third of the last Words:
Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother -
Our Father/Mother in heaven

It used to be strange before to call God as Mother. Jesus calls Him Father. But in recent times, theology has become more open to another role of God: He is not only Father; he also plays the role of a Mother - that nurturing, generating, gentle, motherly caring role. The Catechism for Filipino Catholics uses the phrase "motherly father". It says: "God as fullness of life embraces both the paternal and maternal dimensions of love and infinitely more!"

In the entrustment and in the role of Mary to be the mother of John, who represents the rest of us claiming to be disciples of Jesus, the feminine angle of motherhood of the Triune God, is revealed. This revelation is not in the gender sense but in the defined role of the specific motherhood of Mary, which to one and more extents and senses explains the motherhood of God.

Mary became the mother of the Church at that very moment when Jesus entrusted her to John and the rest of us of humanity. Tradition and history tell us so much about the functions Mary played in the Church starting from the cenacle after the death of the Master when the disciples were too afraid to go out. Mary was there as an inspiration, a consoler, a fortifier, as a Mother. Because of this, the disciples understood the motherhood of God. The Father seemed to have abandoned them. He has left them, and only a representative of both was there: Mary, who got the assignment from the Father to bear his Son, and another assignment from a dying Son to be the Mother of John and all.

From then on Mary was active, in a general way, for the whole Church and in a special way for individuals. For the former, we have the stories in Eastern Church where Mary is richly recorded

and venerated in icons. Moreover we have Our Lady of Loreto, of Lourdes, of Fatima, etc.

In a particular way, our devotees could tell us how Mary is truly a mother to them. The faithful who go to Piat, to Manaoag, to Baclaran, to Zamboanga and others. Even in Mindanao she is very active among Muslim brothers and sisters. The residents of Zamboanga have a great respect and devotion to our Lady of Pilar. Add to this the devotees of Penafrancia in Naga, Candelaria in Iloilo, of Poong Ina in Central Luzon. Who can really match the works of Mary in the Church?

Recent movements, including some in protestant denominations, recognize the divine help that comes to them. Yes, from the Father, but through the mediating and exemplary role of Mary as Mother of the Church (Vatican II). God the Mother, if we dare to use the inclusive language today, is better and more clearly revealed in that unique woman, who accepted the assignment from the dying Son, while nailed on the cross, that has become the symbol of salvation.

Fourth of the Last Words:

Why have you forsaken me? - Deliver us from evil!

"My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" This is the word that speaks of apparent abandonment of the Son by the Father. It is a question that tells about the anxiety of the Son. Has God really abandoned him? If such is the case, who will then deliver him?

The second of the last words of the Lord seems not for him. He is speaking on behalf of all of us. The Father is always united with the Son. On the cross, it is the man in Christ that puts forward the question.

The man in Christ is what makes him one with us. Who will deliver us from the pang of the daily cross? Man is powerless to face the daily challenge of life. Who will deliver us from evil? It is still the Father who will deliver us from evil. But when will he deliver us from the evil that is in us?

The heavenly Father would say: *"The evil is in your heart, when you do not forgive"* He would further say: *"When you do not forgive, how can you ask forgiveness for your sin?"* I know that it is difficult to forgive. But my demand from you is not only to forgive but also to forget. Aha, only then shall you be free sons and daughters. Look, my children, at your neighbors. You love me through your effective love for one another. Then no evil shall fall unto you. No evil of sickness, for that I will heal; no evil of anxiety, for you will live in confidence. No evil of insecurity, for in me your Father, you shall find lighter all the burdens you carry. In the long run, while on earth, it is you who will become Father to your neighbors. Through me, it is you who will deliver them from evil. In me, through you, they will have the cure of anxiety. You are the one I will answer when you ask the question through the mouth of my Son.

I have not abandoned you. I will never abandon you. It is you who always abandon me. That is why you are crying while crucified on the earthly wood: Why have you forsaken me?

You have to try harder and harder. I know what is in your heart. Do not pretend. Accept the evil in your heart. By the acceptance, I will heal you. I cannot leave you forsaken. For I heard your cry through my Son. Yes, I am your heavenly Protector who will provide you all. I mean all that you need for your salvation. Believe me, my sons and daughters. I will deliver you from all evil. The evil that is in your heart. The evil that is from your neighbor's heart. The evil amidst you all. In your family, in society, in your country, in the world. But only on one condition. Cry

with my Son nailed on the cross. For there is no salvation except in Him, and in him alone. Tell this to all people. My desire is that all will acknowledge me as the Father who sent a Son in order to bring harmony in the world. Invite all who do not know me to come to me. I am the Father of the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Taoists, and even of those who just recognize me in nature. I am the Father of all.

Fifth of the Last Words:

*/ **thirst** - Give us today our daily bread*

God gives us everyday our daily bread. Because we ask Him to give us this bread every time we pray to our Father. Many of us have enough basic sustenance in life. What we may have is more than what we truly need. God, however, may withhold from us what we want out of greed.

While we have enough daily bread, still others do not have. There is no need to make a very difficult searching to know this. Some seventy percent of the population of the country is poor. Go to the slum areas in big cities of the country and you will find the disheartening conditions of our people. Go to the provinces and still you will find the lack of basic needs. Can we say that the kingdom of God has come to them?

This leads us to visit our cupboards. We also ask: what have we done with our extra allowance? Did you extend extra help to a needy person living so close to your home or residence? There are so many of them. They are waiting that the bread of the Father be theirs too. They are waiting that the bread of the Father be theirs, too, through you. They are waiting that their thirst be quenched. So many of them. When you give, you will have bread more than what you need. You will have drink more than what can quench your own thirst. The Lord wishes to say: */ will not*

forget your hands that extended help to me just through the hungry you feed, and the thirsty to whom you offer drink. The daily bread multiplies, through you. Then more water for drinking increases in the jar of your heart. Look into your cupboards and water jars. See the extra things there. That is the daily bread for others. There in the jar of your heart is the surplus liquid for daily drink.

How can we forget Gandhi? In his practical poverty, he enriched others. In the simplicity of his life, he gathered wisdom. That is why other leaders of his time would seek audience from him. He gave in his poverty. He filled the world in need of example through his simple life. The Father gave him his daily bread. Because he was simply satisfied with what he needed for himself. The divine protector never abandoned him.

Another figure of modern times that just relied on the Father for daily bread is the great woman of our age: Mother Teresa. How God multiplies the daily bread to the Missionaries of Charity, the official name of her congregation! The congregation has multiplied to over thousands. And the religious principle is to allow God to work his way daily through the reliance on divine providence. Found in the chapels of the said congregation, whether the sisters are in Manila, Moscow, Pakistan, Calcutta or Rome, is the two word phrase: / *thirst*. The Lord crucified thirsts for another Jesus in the person of the religious, or in the person of the auxiliaries of the congregation. For in them is dramatized again Jesus' last expression of a human need. The crucified Lord thirsts for souls and hearts that can empathize with the slum dwellers, the drug addicts, the abandoned children and the old men and women who have no where to go. All these are embraced by the arms of the dying Master, who in his weakness cried: / *thirst*.

Sixth of the last Words:

It is Finished - Amen

Amen I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he...

There are times in our life when we are tempted to announce our "false yes" and our "pretended no". We cannot say immediately our great "Amen". What do we mean?

The story of a son, who was told by the father to go and work in the field and said "yes" but did not go, and another son who said "no" to their father and yet went, is also our story. Starting from our baptism when we, or through our godparents, already promised to be faithful in the Christian community. But do you realize that from the time one gets to the age of reason that promise has been always in trouble? That promise is put at stake all the time. Every time we are tempted to say yes, there is always the danger of doing the opposite. We are guilty of a "false yes", meaning we just pretend to be what we are not. Are we not daily hypocrites? We cannot say a real "Amen". Let us be truly ourselves. Let it be the "Amen" of John the Baptist. And this "Amen" should permeate the daily hour of one's living.

But wait for a moment. We also have hours of greatness. Yes, many times we hesitate saying "yes". We would rather say in fact our "no" just like the other son in the story. Yet, we would feel within ourselves a profound uneasiness. Until we come to our more noble self. It is in this case that we become aware of our "pretended no". We did not mean our initial negative response to the invitation of the father to do our task in the field. We humbly strike our breast and follow the instruction of our Master who is talking deep within our consciousness. This is the time when our good conscience prevails. The "pretended no" becomes our great "Amen".

The "Amen" in the Lord's Prayer must always be like that "great amen" of the baptizer John, whose task in the wilderness was to convert the Scribes, Pharisees, tax collectors, and other seekers of the kingdom announced by Jesus' great precursor. His business is to preach the return to the kingdom, through personal conversion of everyone who came to him and were baptized. When we strike our breast today, and we realize our pretension and come to the business of saying sorry, it is the eventful concrete coming of the kingdom in our hearts. The work of John is finished in our converted heart, which has become the dwelling place of the good graces of the Lord and has turned to be the seat of lived faith, expectant hope, and abundant charity. Then Jesus can shout with a loud voice, addressed to the Father and all disciples at the foot of the cross: *It is finished*.

It is finished because the reason why he comes down to earth is to bring back all who accept the preaching of repentance to the vineyard and fold of the Father, who is in heaven but also on earth. You and I, all of us, who say "Amen" is as great as John, if not greater as Jesus affirms (Mt 11:11).

Seventh of the Last Words:

***Father into your hands I commend my Spirit -
Your will be done***

Two hard news have reached me while I was preparing this portion of our reflection on the last words of Jesus: the announcement of two deaths. One is about the passing away of a friend's grandmother, who was seventy-five years old; another is the death of the mother of my cousin's wife. The two announcements helped me focus on my reflection. The sadness that goes with the news helped me recall my own wrestling with death itself a few years ago.

The death of our old friends and relatives may bring sorrow but is easy to accept. Time does not stop. The whole process of life continues. When the earthly body arrives at its last moments of functioning, and the spirit no longer can dwell in this earthly domain, that same spirit will escape from the bodily prison and liberates itself going to a boundless world where the immortals are destined to go. The immortality of the soul, as we Christians believe, as well as the others who believe in the respect of ancestors and therefore believe in the life that is beyond this earthly existence, is better understood.

It is in this moment of hearing news about death that one may also grasp the meaning of: *into your hands I commend my spirit*. This is the last thing to be accepted by a decent mind that hopes through life that there will be an end. But this end is the door and beginning of eternity. This disposes well the soul about to meet the Creator. This soul repeats what is taught by the divine teacher: your will be done.

My own wrestling with death was during the time when my mortal body incurred a sickness that was responsible for the collapse of the normal system. I could hardly eat; I was bleeding. I had to do everything in bed. And I had to lose all my shame. It is in this moment when one has to entrust all to the mercy of the Lord. But I could feel deep in me a kind of spiritual energy, which I offered to people at that time who asked for my sacrifices and prayers. In that predicament of entire bodily sickness, I only decided to do one thing: to keep my breathing. Breathing was my link with life. Then I understood the meaning of the pericope in Genesis: God breathed through the nostril of the first man. Then I understood clearly that breath is spirit.

Breath as spirit is one truth that I learned in that trying situation. But that is not the only situation where we can learn great lessons in life. In moments of trial, of separation of people

who have marital problems, in time of other sicknesses as experience by people who have one type of terminal cancer, in time of loneliness because one is away from their loved ones, in time when business is collapsing, in time when one son or friend is enslaved by drags, and many others. These are the times of commending the situation to the goodness and mercy of the heavenly Father. Yes, Father your will be done. But show us the way to understand your plan for us. We are in the brink of losing all our strengths. Time when any sense of hope seems to eclipse from the understanding of our heart and mind. But your will, anyhow, shall be done. Just as your Son commended his Spirit to you, so do we.

Salubong: Gospel Proclamation through Popular Religiosity

JAMES KROEGER, M.M.

Evangelization, in the experience of missionaries, catechists, preachers, and Hturgists, is immensely enriched by drawing upon the insights and rituals of popular religiosity. In diverse cultural milieus, pastoral agents are discovering that their task of announcing the Gospel is facilitated and enhanced through the creative use of popular ritual and dramatics. In a word, folk religious practices are a resource-for-evangelization awaiting full exploration.

Often culturally unique, local traditions and pageants can creatively portray core themes of Christianity and biblical faith. Such inculturated proclamation originates in the encounter of life and faith; it is then celebrated through the pageantry and festivity of popular religiosity. This approach to liturgy and evangelization enables communities to artistically portray their lived Christian identity.

Lively expressions of a community's faith-life need not raise undue anxieties about dogmatic orthodoxy or faithfulness to biblical texts. On the contrary, popular forms of piety should be welcomed as tools of evangelization, because dramatics, pageantry, socio-

religious rituals and festivity can often constitute, in themselves, an actual proclamation of biblical faith!

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI's famous exhortation on evangelization in the modern world, a lengthy section is devoted to the role that popular piety should play in announcing the Good News. While noting its possible limitations, the pope asserted that "if it is well oriented, above all by a pedagogy of evangelization, it is rich in values; ...one must be sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values.... When it is well oriented, this popular religiosity can be more and more for multitudes of our peoples a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ" (48).

RESURRECTION RITUALS IN THE FIESTA ISLANDS

The story is told that one Easter Saint Peter noticed that many Filipinos were absent from heaven. Upon inquiry, he discovered that they all had returned to earth to celebrate the Resurrection festivities in their own hometowns. This humorous tale captures the magnetic quality of the Easter ritual, known locally as the "meeting"; it dramatizes the encounter of the risen Christ and his mother on Easter morning.¹

In the darkness before the crack of dawn, two processions begin wending their way through the streets of the town. Literally, several hundreds join in the activities which begin around 4:00 a.m.

One procession is composed of the townsmen. This all-male group follows the statue of the risen Christ, clad in gold-embroidered white silk and holding his victory standard. The statue

¹ This ritual is popular throughout the entire country; each region and ethno-linguistic group has its own terminology to describe the event: *salubong* (Tagalog), *pagsugat* (Cebuano), *sabet* (Ilocano), *tonton* (Bicolano), and *abet-abet* (Pangasinan).

is borne aloft by young men who consider it a unique privilege to be chosen to carry the risen Jesus.

Another procession, composed of the women of the town, follows the statue of the sorrowful mother (*mater dolorosa*). She is in mourning, her face covered by a black veil; her hands are clasped in sorrow. The somber mood of Good Friday dominates the two processions.

Both groups, praying and singing as they follow their separate routes, emerge into the town square where additional crowds are waiting. With coordinated movements, they simultaneously approach the arch of "meeting." The first light of dawn is breaking; the little male and female angels are positioned around the arch; flowers and decorations abound.

A white-clad angel is lowered ever so carefully from the pulleys inside the arch. She intones the *Regina Caeli Laetare, Alleluia*; then, to the accompaniment of the band, all the choirs of angels on the arch break into their Easter chants. At the end of their singing, the lead angel slips her finger through a ring atop the Virgin Mother's black veil. As the angel is slowly raised up on the arch, she removes the veil and reveals the gleaming ivory face of the Virgin. Mary meets her risen Son - to the wild, yet prayerful, enthusiasm of the expectant crowd. The band strikes up a rousing anthem and the faithful enter the church to continue celebrating in Word and Sacrament the Easter liturgy. Christ is truly risen!

DRAMATIZED-YET AUTHENTIC-FAITH AND PROCLAMATION

The foregoing scene of resurrection encounter - meeting the risen Jesus - is true proclamation in pageantry, drama, and song. It is eminently faithful to the gospel narratives of the resurrection, which themselves can be understood as "faith dramas."

A survey of the appearances of the risen Jesus reveals a rich variety in the different scriptural accounts by the evangelists; they were addressing different communities with unique theological interests and purposes. Despite great divergence in the details, each author seeks to communicate the same fundamental experience: the crucified one is risen and alive! Surely, this was also the Virgin Mary's experience.²

New Testament exegetes (e.g. Dodd, Lane, L6on-Dufour) detect the presence of a pattern in most resurrection encounters.³ The Gospels are perceived to include five paradigmatic elements in their narratives:

- (a) The mood is one of confusion, sadness, fear, disappointment, despondency; Jesus' followers are in darkness and their minds are clouded (Lk. 24:21; Jn. 20:11; 20:19; Mk. 16:3).
- (b) The initiative for the encounter comes from Jesus; he accompanies the disciples wandering in their confusion (Lk. 24:15; Jn. 20:19, 21:4, Mt. 28:9, 28:18).
- (c) There is a word of greeting or a gesture of peace (Jn. 20:19, 20:26; Mt. 28:9; Lk. 24:36).
- (d) The climactic point is reached and centers on the experience of recognition (Jn. 20:16, 20:20, 20:28, 21:7, 21:12; Lk. 24:31; Mt. 28:9; 28:17).

² Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "The Easter Experience of Our Lady," *Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis* 19, nos. 2-3 [58-59] (1988), 145-163. See also: Daughters of St. Paul, eds., "Easter Meditation," *The Vatican II Weekday Missal* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1975), 717.

³ C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: A Study in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: M.U.P., 1968), 104-7; Dermot Lane, *The Reality of Jesus* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1975), 51-52; X. L6on-Dufour, *Resurrection de Jesus et Message Pascal* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), 126-130.

- (e) A mission command from Jesus concludes the encounter (Mt. 28:18-20, 28:10; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:48; Jn. 20:17, 20:21, 21:15 ff.).

A retracing of this biblical-liturgical-catechetical paradigm of the resurrection is now possible in tandem with the dramatic "meeting/V'encounter" that Filipino popular religiosity celebrates early on Easter morn. In fact, the parallelism is almost self-evident:

- (a) Darkness reigns as the drama begins to unfold before dawn; it appears that the gloom and hopelessness of death have been victorious. Mary is weeping, clothed in a black veil.
- (b) Jesus draws near to his friends wandering through the streets of town; the dual processions present Jesus looking for his sorrowful mother.
- (c) Jesus' word of greeting is placed on the lips of the interpreting angel: "Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven, Alleluia."
- (d) The climactic moment of recognition is the central focus; Mary's black veil of sadness is removed to reveal her joyful face carved from polished ivory; her facial expression proclaims: "It is the Lord"!
- (e) The crowds move into the church to hear the scriptures proclaim their mandate to be witnesses of the resurrection; the sacrament of the Eucharist empowers the faithful for their mission.

Reflection further reveals that the biblical pattern of resurrection encounter, so poignantly dramatized in the inculturated Easter pageantry found throughout the Philippines, is an authentic paradigm of our own Christian experience. We so often walk in darkness, failing to recognize the reality of Christ among us; Jesus calls us personally by name to acknowledge his living presence; we need Word and Sacrament to heal our blindness; when we recognize that Jesus the Christ is alive, we are impelled into mission to announce the Good News to all creation.

IMPETUS FOR INCULTURATED EVANGELIZATION

Commenting on the religious dramatization that surrounds Easter in the Philippines, a Filipino author has correctly noted that the Easter Encounter is "the very crown of the Filipino's *Semana Santa* (Holy Week)".⁴ This is a compliment to ordinary people's valid intuitions and insight into scriptural faith; for them, as for Saint Paul, meeting and recognizing the risen Lord is central: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and your believing it is also in vain" (I Cor. 15:14).

Taking their cue from each local church's genius (the Philippine expression serves only as one example), catechists, evangelizers, pastors and theologians must continue searching for more effective tools of exegesis and inculturated proclamation to announce Christ's living presence. Creative cultural expression ought to address the need of every generation to be "re-evangelized" in its attitudes, motivations, and values. Indigenous proclamation seeks to overcome the split between faith and culture that challenges all societies - be they in first, second, or third world countries.

In a word, then, renewed examination of the role of dramatics, art, song, dance, pageantry, and festivity can certainly be a unique key to making the faith truly alive in people's hearts, imagination, and daily experiences. These tools can rescue proclamation from the heavily verbal mode (which often dominates in parish catechesis and liturgy). Such creative evangelization effectively reaches a wide audience of diverse ages and backgrounds.

On Easter Sunday ask any Filipino - even a four-year-old child - and you will hear: "Jesus is alive! I saw him meet his mother; Mary is happy and smiling"! Without doubt, here is living liturgy and proclamation! Here is authentic inculturation of the faith!

⁴ Nicanor G. Tiongson, "The Easter Salubong," in Alfredo Roces, ed., *Filipino Heritage VII* (Manila: Lahing Pilipino Publishing, 1978), 1848.

Blessed Pope John XXIII and Christian Unity

JOHN SAMAHA, SM

From the very first day of his pontificate the invitation to separated Christians to return to the bosom of the Church was one of Pope John's dominant leitmotifs. He understood this call to unity in terms of his duty as the good shepherd and brother to all. He saw it even in terms of dogma: one arrives at the sheepfold of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Pope; salvation comes in fellowship with him.

In his first radio message Pope John expressly invited "the whole Church of the East to return, immediately and voluntarily, to the common parental household. This invitation was extended in a spirit of pronounced gentleness and humility. The first Christmas Message repeated the call, again with an eye directed more toward the Orthodox Church."

The public announcement of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, made on January 25, 1959, spoke of an "invitation to the separated communities to seek unity." Later the official promulgation mentioned the "renewed invitation to the faithful of the separated communities so that they too may follow us in a friendly way in this quest for unity and grace."

The Eastern Churches also occupied the foreground in his subsequent addresses. "We do not wish to hold a historical trial, our aim is not to point out who was right and who was wrong. The responsibility is shared on both sides. We want simply to say: let us come together, let us put an end to the divisions."

Pope John's first universal prayer intention for January 1960 reflected his abiding pastoral concern: "May all those who are seeking for the true Church more deeply perceive the desire of the heart of Jesus for the unity of his children and thereby be led to unity."

Any misunderstandings prevailing in the *oekumenia* concerning the catholicity of the council were clarified by the pronouncement that the council should be "an invitation to the separated brethren, who glory in the name of Christian, so that they may return to the universal flock, the guidance and protection of which Christ entrusted to St. Peter in an unshakeable commandment of his divine will." The council extended this sign of holy harmony.

The stages along the way to reunion with the Eastern Church were more closely marked out: first rapprochement, then cooperation. Section III in *Ad Petri cathedram*, entitled "Church Unity," cautiously appealed to the ecumenical movement as well as to the "movement of sympathy for the faith and institutions of the Catholic Church and a constantly growing esteem for the Apostolic See." This was combined with an exposition of the traditional Roman concepts of unity.

Cardinal Secretary of State Tardini discussed the main line of ecumenical procedure at a press conference held on October 30, 1959. He saw little probability of an invitation to the representatives of the separated Churches, but those representatives who wished to do so could certainly be present as observers. At any rate the most important preparatory documents would be brought to their

attention so that they could adopt a private position in regard to them.

Ecumenical cooperation was to be carried out by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, established on Pentecost 1960, at the same time as the conciliar missions "in order that our love and our good will toward Christians separated from the Apostolic See may stand out even more visibly, and in order that the latter can more easily follow the work of the council and find the way to achieve that unity which Jesus beseeched from his heavenly Father."

The first act of the Secretariat, under the direction of Cardinal Bea, was the private reception that the Pope tendered the Primate of the Church of England, Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher of Canterbury, on December 2, 1960. This led to the appointment of a permanent representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. It also ushered in visits from many other ecumenical church leaders, all of whom came on their own initiative. The most important of these visits were the following: on November 15, 1961, Bishop Arthur Lichtenberger, Protestant Episcopal Church, U.S.A.; on December 20, 1961, D. Jackson, President of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A.; on October 15, 1962, Fred P. Corson, President of the World Conference of Methodists; on February 8, 1963, Leslie Davidson, President of the Methodists of Great Britain; on February 25, 1963, Brother Roger Schutz, the Prior of Taizé; and on March 28, 1963, Archibald C. Craig, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Pope John had presented a pastoral program to the members of the council commissions in which the intriguing formula of the opening address of October 11, 1962, was repeated. In contrast to former councils this time it was more than a question of this or that point of doctrine or discipline which had to be called back

to the pure sources of revelation and tradition. Rather it was a question of "the substance of human and Christian thought and life," the "pivot to which every baptized person must hold fast." Membership in the Church is not merely a simple mark of an individual character in each person. Rather it is of an eminently social character. The teaching regarding the Church as preached by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 is another illustration of the Church's evangelical idea. It was quoted as evidence of Catholic unity, from which countless groups are separated and to which, nevertheless, they are desirous of returning.

Cardinal Bea elaborated the guidelines of Pope John's pastoral method in order to create an atmosphere of 'fellowship in Christ' by recognizing the baptism of all Christians and by treating them as "brothers and sisters in Christ." As a result the different communities acquired confidence in the Pope and were ready to send observers to the council. There was no talk of possible doctrinal discussions on the subject of reunion, but there certainly was talk of a greater clarification in regard to dogmas.

Nevertheless the encyclical *Aeterna Dei* on Pope Leo I formulated the concept of Church unity with the same clarity as *Ad Petri cathedram*. It called for a return to and a union with the Bishop of Rome in the spirit of Chalcedon, doing so at a time just after the Orthodox had entered the World Council of Churches in New Delhi and ignored the "unity" document, which contained no clarifications of a dogmatic nature. The apostolic constitution *Humanae salutis* was promulgated December 25, 1961. It dealt with the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, and declared that the fundamental truths of the faith ought to receive a greater elucidation. It asked that the preconditions of reciprocal love be created "so that the desire for unity among the Christians separated from the Apostolic See may be quickened further and smooth- the road back for them."

At the height of Pope John's pontificate prominence was given to the point of view which held that the way to the reunion of separated Christians could also be smoothed by return of the Church to the purity of her origins. Catholics were urged to strive for a greater esteem and a more exact knowledge of separated Christians (General Prayer Intention for May 1962). The theme acknowledging that formulations of dogma contained presuppositions that were conditioned "considerations of an ideological-historical character" was examined by Cardinal Bea on May 22, 1962, in Munich.

Moreover, during the selection of the Christian communities that were to be invited, all ecclesiological requirements were dropped. The only requirements laid down were that the communities have "a certain constancy," and show a real interest in the invitation and a readiness to maintain friendly contact. Only non-Christian religions were excluded from consideration.

Just before the beginning of the council Cardinal Bea went to Moscow for negotiations With the Russian Orthodox Church. He succeeded in winning this Church over to the idea of sending observers because Pope John had combined his deeply felt ecumenical concerns with a plan for peace.

Pope John found a provisional method of ecumenical cooperation for making Christian unity manifest by the inclusion of observers in the conciliar proceedings. This plan met with everybody's satisfaction. They were filled with hope by the declaration in the opening address. Pope John made a distinction between the substance of doctrine and its historically conditioned formulation, as well as by his conception of a threefold plan of unity of the Church with all Christians and persons of good will. Pope John gave convincing expression to this vision with his fatherly words at the "familiar and intimate" reception tendered the observers at the ecumenical council on October 13, 1962. Later he was to confirm this vision with the desire that he expressed on his

deathbed: "I burn to work and to suffer for the approach of that hour in which the prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper will be a reality for all."

Other documents added nothing essentially new. Talk of a "return" of the separated brethren was even dropped. On November 20, 1962, Pope John dramatically intervened in the conciliar vote on the revelation schema, which had bogged down. His stand in favor of its revision in the ecumenical spirit, as espoused by Cardinal Bea and as desired by the majority of the council Fathers, was one of the most convincing demonstrations of the ecumenical sincerity of his pontificate.

John XXIII's Christlike concern identified and reaffirmed the ecclesiological bases for unity. With gentle determination he undertook these initial steps toward rapprochement necessary for dialogue and understanding. With genuine charity he gave direction, with energy he lent impetus "that all may be one."

Homilies for May-June 2002*

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

May 5, 2002

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Cycle A

(Readings: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17/1 Pt 3:15-18/Jn 14:15-21)

In putting together and reflecting on the three bible readings of today, we get to know a few things that took place at the time of Jesus and what those same things signify and do for us today. That is the beauty of the bible. While it narrates to us a history (happenings in the past), it also shows how those historical events are shaping our lives today. We are and live like this or that because of the past, and the past, although it had its day, still lives and continues in us. The past and the present fuse together, and we are held in a sort of eternal moment where the past did not go away nor the present spends itself into a foggy memory.

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

Let us begin with the third reading. Jesus announces to his disciples his impending departure to heaven, but assures them he will find a way of remaining with them just the same. The manner will be more spiritual, but nonetheless real, as was his physical presence. This is by sending them the Holy Spirit who in turn, will remain permanently with them and will show how Jesus never left them actually despite appearances to the contrary. Thus, they will find out that they were never left orphaned but that the Holy Trinity was always with them, and they in God the Trinity.

In the first reading, we learn how the apostles and the early Christians, powered by the conviction that God was with them, went about in every direction preaching the Good News of salvation, and working all kinds of miracles for the benefit of souls and bodies in their hearers.

Then in the second reading, we learn from the fisherman-turned-chief of the apostles, namely Peter, the profound theological reason for all those wonderful changes and events that have taken place. He summarizes them all in one sentence worth remembering, "Christ died for us once and for all, a good man dying on behalf of sinners, in order to lead them to God."

All that was history. But what was history, what was past is still alive and active in men to this present day, and will be so till the end of time. That is the beauty, it was said above, of the bible, the beauty of history in the bible.

If Christ died on behalf of sinners, then along with the early Christians and ancient peoples, we of today and all other peoples of future generations (being all sinners that we are) will benefit from the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus that occurred once in Jerusalem. Jesus did not have to die each time for a particular group and generation. Peter stated that Jesus died once and for all. His death was beneficial for each and every sinner from the beginning of mankind to the last individual in the future.

It occurs to me that since all these happenings and the teachings that are derived from them are recorded in the bible, then we must cultivate a love and interest for God's written Word. The early Christians amazed us greatly when they turned their sad experiences of being persecuted for their faith into an opportunity of preaching and spreading their faith to other peoples and countries. They must have felt how precious was God's Word for them because not even persecutions and ridicules could make them abandon it. On the contrary, it drove them to share it with others.

Peter wrote to Christians to be ready at all times, to give upon request the explanation of the hope they carried in their hearts. What is this hope that we carry in our hearts but the Lord Jesus Christ who is in our hearts and venerated there by us? This hope includes the other Paraclete or Helper whom Jesus promised to give us and stay always with us. He will teach us all truth, every word about God. The Holy Spirit is the author of the written word about God. He reveals the Father through scriptures. Since we all received the Paraclete, as Jesus had promised, and on the basis of our empowerment by this same Holy Spirit, we are duty-bound and consider it an honor and privilege to spread everywhere at all times the Good News of salvation to the best of our ability and in the manner proper to our condition. Such has been done by the early Christians, such we must do, present Christians. They have passed on to us the flaming torch of faith, we must pass on to future generations the torch still aflame.

May 12, 2002

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

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

Our celebration today of the Ascension of Jesus into heaven is for us a precious opportunity to enrich our knowledge and deepen our love of God by reflecting on this great mystery of our faith. Since childhood, we learned from our catechism that forty days after his resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father. Perhaps we never bothered to ask ourselves or others what all this meant and implied. And if the question is put to us now, we probably would answer by repeating the familiar words of the Apostle's Creed.

With the changed attitude and mentality of people in the past four or five decades due to the enormous progress and pervasive influence of the sciences and technology, it would not be surprising to hear questions being raised such as these in regards to the mystery we are commemorating: how and where in the heavens did Jesus go? Into which solar system or galaxy or quasar did he transfer? What velocity did he attain as he lifted? How did he overcome the earth's gravity? What was the effect of weightlessness on his body? Then, unable to get the answers to their questions, some have dismissed as fiction the belief of Christians in the Ascension.

True, a scientist will never get from the bible the answers to his questions if formulated in the above manner, because the bible was never meant to be a textbook on astronomy or astrophysics. But this does not mean that the Ascension of Jesus never took place. It points to a transcendental event that embraces many more truths than the mere fact of Jesus going up to heaven.

This is borne out by today's gospel reading which, in contrast to the two others, has no explicit mention about the physical and visible lifting up of Jesus into heaven. Why was the gospel of Matthew, from the group of the so-called Synoptic gospels, chosen to be read on this day when it does not explicitly mention the

Ascension of Jesus? This goes to show that there is something more to this mystery than the mere fact of Jesus physically going up to heaven. What then is the significance that we Christians hold that Jesus went to heaven?

Jesus ascended into heaven in order to sit definitively at the right hand of the Father, just as we say when reciting the Apostle's Creed. The lifting up of Jesus is therefore the definitive reward of his human nature, its exaltation and glorification. It was proper and just that his human nature, which was subjected to so much humiliation and suffering, should be rewarded by being glorified. He who was crucified between two criminals, should now occupy a seat of honor at his Father's right hand. Going up to heaven and sitting at God's right hand expresses adequately the glorification that Christ's human nature so rightfully deserved. How in concrete and through what physical means the glorification and exaltation took place, Matthew, whose gospel is read today, does not inform us nor was he concerned about describing it to us. In concluding his book, he wanted to emphasize that Jesus was finally supremely glorified by the Father in having been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

All the good things that came to Jesus on his Ascension to heaven, we hope to achieve also at the proper time. His ascension lays the basis for our hope of our own ascensions, just as his resurrection from the dead is the basis for our future resurrections. This is the great hope to which God calls us, as St. Paul stated in today's second reading, and concerning which he encourages us to keep alive in our hearts and minds by constantly thinking and believing in it.

May 19, 2002

Pentecost

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

You have just heard the narration of a wonderful happening to the early church in the first reading (Acts 2). Of how the Holy Spirit descended upon all the disciples of Christ with sounds of strong wind blowing and in tongues of fire. Of how those disciples, after having been filled with the Holy Spirit, started to talk in different languages praising God and speaking about his mighty works.

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

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

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

However, in answer to your query of why the Holy Spirit is not coming down on us in the form of tongues of fire and with

the sound of great winds blowing. It is because he has already come down and stayed with the Church as Jesus had promised. So there's no point in asking the Holy Spirit to come to the Church when he is already there and staying permanently in it until the end of time.

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

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

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

May 26, 2002

Trinity Sunday

Cycle A

(Readings: Ex 34:4-6, 8-9/2 Cor 13:11-13/Jn 3:16-18)

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the summit and the greatest of all mysteries a Christian believes in and embraces. In fact, all other Christian mysteries owe their origin, realization and purpose to this fundamental mystery. Today, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Trinity. We should expect that Mother Church would exhaust all her treasures of wisdom, eloquence, and splendor to sow justice to this great mystery. Surprisingly, she brings together three bible readings that are the shortest, compared to those of the other feasts: a total number of only ten verses. Compare this to the readings of Pentecost Sunday and to those of Ascension Sunday, both of which are doubly longer.

Could Mother Church be sending signals that the human tongue is unable to give adequate praise to the Holy Trinity and handle properly such eminent theme? Indeed, the Holy Trinity is the profoundest of mysteries as it is also the most exalted of all realities. Here we face two extreme poles as far apart as they can be: profundity and eminence, depth and height. So our minds are boggles and our tongues get speechless. Silent adoration of the mystery would be the more proper stance a Christian could take.

Nonetheless, today's three short bible readings have an indispensable purpose. They discover for us what we ourselves cannot discover about the Holy Trinity. What really is there about God that is shared equally by the three divine persons? What distinctive attributes or qualities are they noted for? We can frame many more questions about the Holy Trinity, but the two just mentioned are basic and can suffice for the moment.

The three bible readings concur in the answers they give to the two questions above. What is God? God is love! So, love is what defines God. The Father is love, the Son is love, the Holy Spirit is love. Not that love is a separate reality of which the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit partake as from a source. If love is anything, it is because God is love. If love is anywhere, it is because God who is everywhere, is love. Love is inseparable, indistinguishable from God because God is love itself. It is impossible to think of God if love is not, nor of love if God is not.

If God is love and is his definition, it is not difficult what answers to expect concerning the second question: what attribute is God noted for, and what of each of the three Persons in God. The first reading (Ex 34) says, "I, the Lord, am a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered and who shows great love and faithfulness." In the second reading (2 Cor 13), Paul invokes upon his readers the divine blessing in those familiar words we hear at the start of the Mass, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Paul wishes for his brethren the favor, the love, and the friendship of the Blessed Trinity.

Finally, the third reading assures us in Jesus' own words that God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son in sacrifice, so that everyone who believes in him may not die forever but may have eternal life. In conclusion, we may ask ourselves, "Aside from our liturgical celebration and in consonance with it, what is the simplest and most practical way to honor and give recognition to the great mystery of the Holy Trinity? It is by making and saying the sign of the cross properly and devoutly. For in doing so, we are reminded of the great and abiding love the three Divine Persons have among themselves and for us. Who by them have been created, redeemed and called to share in their eternal life and happiness.

June 2, 2002

Corpus Christi

Cycle A

(Readings: Dt 8:2-3, 14-16/1 Cor 10:16-17/Jn 6:51-58)

Our present society is seminar-conscious. The holding of seminars is so pervasive and popular that we can rightly talk of seminar-explosion, just like we talk of information-explosion in this age of computers. There are seminars of one day, three days, one week duration. They deal with infinite variety of themes and pressing issues.

A common factor among them is that seminars intend to give you instant knowledge and skills on the subject matters they tackle. Another is that they present you with a battery of effective speakers to assure impact and success.

Without emitting judgment on their long-term effectiveness, seminars are justifiable on two grounds: things are changing too fast; and people have less time on their hands. So people resort to seminars to meet the challenge of rapid changes and spend on it the shortest time possible. Obviously, those who perceive things otherwise, do not show much interest on seminars nor believe in their effectivity.

Whether one is interested in seminars or not, the fact is that as Christians we are faced with a challenge this Sunday and we have little time together to discuss it. I refer to our belief and practice regarding the Body and Blood of Christ, whose solemnity we are celebrating now. It is a challenging issue because of the few, if not declining, numbers of Church-goers nationwide compared to the general population of Catholics, and because of the proportionally small turn-out of communicants.

We are faced with symptoms of anemic Christian life that has repercussions in both individual and social fields. Can we, therefore, have a ten-minute seminar, call it sermon, on the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ? How effective is that going to be? Will it give us instant knowledge, instant skill? Would that be desirable? I am crossing my fingers because we have as speakers, Moses, Paul and Jesus himself in today's bible readings.

In the first reading (Deut. 8), Moses reminded his fellowmen how God provided for them during their forty years of wandering in the terrible desert of Sinai. The Lord miraculously fed and gave them water to show that their survival was due not so much to their own efforts as to God's providence. His wonder-food and miraculous drink were the mysterious manna and the rock-drawn water. God, thus, taught his people that their life depended not on bread alone, but on whatever he says to them. Should not people of today clamor for the spiritual manna and the spiritual water (that is, the Body and Blood of Christ) as they traverse life's vast and terrifying desert?

In the second reading (1 Cor 10), Paul alluded to the regular celebrations of the Lord's Supper, as Holy Mass was then called, during which the Christians, by sharing in the one cup and partaking of the same loaf of bread, really receive the Body and Blood of Christ as food and drink. As with the ancient people of Israel who survived in the desert because of an uncommon bread and uncommon water, so now the new Israel, that is, the Christians, can survive in their faith amidst this unfriendly world by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Finally, in the third reading (John 6), Jesus categorically states that if we do not eat his flesh or drink his blood, we cannot have true life in ourselves despite our claims to be living creatures. Why? Because his flesh is the real food and his blood is the real drink that give eternal life to anyone who receives them.

There are three things incomprehensible in this world: one is that people cling tenaciously to life in this world and will try everything from vitamins, elixirs, tissue graftings to face-lifts, aerobics, yoga and whatever, only to discover in the end that one must part from this life just the same. The other is that some people, by contrast, seem to seek hastening their death by taking drugs, alcohol, sniffing shabu or chain-smoking and the like. The third is that here is Jesus offering his body and blood as the means for a vigorous and wholesome life here and hereafter but there are few takers. To all these people I can only say, "What a pity."

I hope that this ten-minute sermon/seminar will make us more appreciative of the Holy Mass which is the re-enactment of the Last Supper, the repetition in an unbloody manner of the sacrifice of the Cross, and the memorial and expectation of the Second Coming of Jesus and of his Father's definitive kingdom.

June 9, 2002

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

(Readings: Hos 6:3-6/Rom 4:18-23/Mt 9:9-13)

The gospel reading of any Sunday Mass usually determine the choice of the accompanying first and second readings. For this reason we can discover the common theme that binds them together so that all three readings clarify and complete one another. For example, the first reading from the book of Hosea was so chosen because Jesus, in today's gospel, cites a text from it to explain why he called Levi to be his apostle, a decision that the Pharisees strongly criticized.

Let us therefore reflect on the text of Hosea quoted partially by Jesus. The prophet said speaking for God, "It is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocaust."

Why did Hosea write these words? What was he trying to say? Of course, the sense of the text is quite clear. But Jesus implied there is a deeper meaning in the text when he said in today's gospel, "Go and learn the meaning of those words..."

Hosea was born in the 8th century BC in the northern half of the divided kingdom of Israel where he exercised his prophetic ministry. Still he pronounced oracles that concerned the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Like the other prophets, Hosea needed to remind often the people of their obligations as partners in the covenant between them and God. It was Hosea who first time ever dared to represent that covenant in the form of conjugal relationship and duties arising there from where God is the husband and Israel is the wife.

Hosea stumbled into this daring comparison from the insights he gained of his own unhappy marriage where keeping faithfully his duties as husband, his wife in contrast had been playing the prostitute. No wonder he could label the Israelites as harlots for abandoning the worship of the true God in favor of the Canaanite divinities or at best for reducing the Lord to only one among many other inexistent lords of the land.

Hosea did not rebuke his contemporaries for failing to offer God sacrifices and holocausts. In fact, God was nauseated with their sacrifices of animals, wine and field products, which besides did not differ much from what the pagan Canaanites practiced before their false gods. So the Israelites were treating the Lord or if he excesses and depravity that such a ritual implied.

What then was missing in the sacrifices of the Israelites which otherwise had been prescribed and commended by their mosaic law? It was "faithful love," *hesed* as Hosea wrote in Hebrew. It was that kind of love which partners in a covenant, here conceived by the prophet as a conjugal relationship, owe to each other. While God was consistently faithful in showing love to Israel his bride.

Now we understand why Jesus quoted Hosea to explain his actions to his critics, the Pharisees: Ultra conservative in matters of sacrifices and observant to a fault in the avoidance of ritually unclean things and persons, the Pharisees expected Jesus to avoid the company of unclean people such as Levi and his co-professionals. But Jesus retorted, "It is hesed, love that I desire, not your sacrifices which are hollow and loveless. I find this love in Levi and all repentant sinners. As regards myself, being the leading partner in the new covenant. I show 'faithful love' to all who accept me.

If we reciprocate Jesus' faithful love for us, we will deserve what St. Paul, in the second reading, wrote about Abraham's faith whose constancy in believing in God's promises despite all adversities "was credited to him as justice," that is holiness and perfection.

June 16, 2002

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

(Readings: Ex 19:2-6/Rom 5:6-11/Mt 9:36-10:8)

"We are his people; the sheep of his flock. He made us, his we are. So let us sing joyfully to the Lord, let us serve the Lord with kindness. For God our Lord is good, his kindness endures forever." I have borrowed the words of the Responsorial Psalm to indicate what feelings and sentiments this Sunday's three readings should produce in our hearts. For they tell us that we are God's people, that he cares for us as a good shepherd cares lovingly for his sheep, that our consequent duty is to worship, praise and serve the Lord.

Let's take, for example, the first reading (book of Exodus). It narrates the story of what took place for the Israelites when they

pitched camp in front of Mount Sinai three months after leaving Egypt on foot. This story, is told and recorded in the bible, not only for its historical interest, but in the words of the New Testament author of Hebrews, as an enduring example and instruction for us who live more than thirty centuries after and for future generations even. The story goes this way. God wanted to forge between him and the Israelites a covenant (an ancient, biblical word for alliance, agreement). Accordingly, he sent for Moses to propose the idea to the people and if they agreed, they shall be God's special people among the rest of the nations which also were his possessions anyway. The Israelites would then be for God a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. He will be a God for them. Their obligation? To have and to obey no other God but the Lord.

In order to persuade the Israelites to agree to the terms of the covenant, Moses was told by God to remind the people how the Lord, in response to their cry of anguish and distress, delivered them from Egypt with a mighty hand and brought them safe and sound, far in front of Mt. Sinai. Needless to say, therefore, the Lord is a mighty God both for delivering, protecting and shepherding a nation which in their weakness agreed to enter into an alliance or covenant with him. The idea of an alliance/agreement/covenant is not a modern idea. It is as old as the bible (just recall Abraham, Noah, and even Adam; they were all involved in a covenant/alliance with God). It is the logical thing to do and to expect whenever the weak, conscious of their disadvantage, join and unite with the strong.

The idea of covenant/alliance between God and mankind, between the mighty, eternal One and the short-lived and full of trouble as Job describes man, is forcefully brought out in today's gospel reading. For Matthew show us how the heart of Jesus was greatly moved to pity when he saw the crowds lying prostrate from exhaustion like scattered sheep without a shepherd. The scenario

reminds us how also God in the Old Testament times was moved to pity when the Israelites called out to him for deliverance from the crushing weight of Egyptian slavery.

The first words we hear from Jesus after he felt pity for the crowd were these, "The harvest is good but the laborers are scarce. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest." He felt pity as a shepherd feels towards troubled sheep. But when Jesus verbalized his feelings, he compared the crowds to a good harvest just waiting for more laborers to gather them. Why, this is very significant! Jesus saw that this suffering humanity was in the right disposition (the harvest is good, he said) to forge a covenant/alliance with. So, we now speak of a new covenant, framed and sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ, joining God and mankind in a relationship of reciprocity. The Lord will then be our God, and we will be his people.

Paul, in the second reading, shares with us his reflections on that relationship of reciprocity which we call new Covenant or new Alliance. Certainly, we cannot speak of perfect reciprocity, given the unbridgeable distance in nature and kind between the two partners of the alliance, where one is God who lacks nothing and the other one is man who needs everything. The relationship, therefore, leans heavily and almost exclusively to the advantage of the creature-man.

That was what Paul meant when he wrote, "At the appointed time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless men... It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us... For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son, it is all the more certain that we who have been reconciled will be saved" by the same Son who now lives, is alive forever. Paul concludes his reflections with a sort of victory-cry for having become the privileged partners in the New

Covenant or New Alliance, "We go so far as to make God our boast!" If God is with us, who will dare go against us!

June 23, 2002

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

(Readings: Jer 20:10-13/Rom 5:12-15/Mt 10:26-33)

Life in this world is never short of sacrifices. I know it is an added sacrifice to your already long list of problems to come regularly to Church for your Sunday Mass, considering the very hot or very rainy weather we are enduring at this time of the year. Your other neighbors and fellowmen, for this same reason, just folded up and decided not to come to Church, and looked for ways to beat the heat or pass the time of forced seclusion.

What amazes me more is that those of you who come regularly to Mass on hot or rainy Sundays, do not let go off a whimper of complaint about the other discomforts and contrarities you have been or are enduring like having to walk on dusty or muddy streets and sidewalks, inhaling the polluted air from exhaust engines and uncollected or strewn garbage. In other circumstances and from other peoples, tempers would easily flare, howl, and protests fill the air, authorities make themselves scarce because the public is in an angry mood.

But you can afford a smile. You go about your duties silently and uncomplainingly. Or when complaints are in order, you do it coolly and temperately. What takes to keep your cool in the midst of all your problems, anxieties and afflictions? Your children manage to go to school in clean and fresh uniforms, despite threats of transportation strikes, rallies against tuition fee increases; insufficient numbers of classrooms, textbooks and teachers; dangers from drug-pushers, hold-uppers, kidnappers. Yes, what does it takes to keep your cool up to this moment?

The message of the three bible readings today is an easy piece of cheesecake for you to take despite the challenges it offers. This is true, so long as you remain firm to your reputation of hardness and long-suffering.

Thus, for example, Jeremiah in chapter 20 of his book (our first reading today) describes the helplessness and hopelessness of his situation. He commands our compassion and sympathy. He is especially hurt by the treachery of his friends on whom he relied best. Yet, Jeremiah is an honorable man dedicated to his duty. Feeling the whole world turning unjustly against him, he finds his sole comfort from God who takes his side. Thus, he is able to emerge victorious over his worst fears.

All of us have our own fears to fight. Like fears that keep us from doing what is right for fear of offending those who would rather do wrong. Fears to say "no," lest by saying so we lose friendship, opportunity or job. Fears of not succeeding, although we have placed our best efforts to it.

In the third reading (Matthew 10), Jesus, who experienced fear in his human nature, teaches us that if fear we must, we should fear God rather than man. The reason is men can harm only the body, but God can punish both body and soul in hell.

The bible is replete with statements such as this one, "Happy the man who fears the Lord." Why? Because God will stand by him; God will take his side. No sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge. So, how can a God-fearing man/woman be abandoned when he/she is of much more worth than a sparrow?

In the second reading (Rom 5), Paul discusses death, the greatest of human fears. Death is no cheap enemy. It hacks away at every living creature on earth, men not excluded. Death struck with arrogance even the Son of God. But in doing so, it dealt itself a deadly blow. Christ conquered death, and those who live and die in his grace, have been empowered also to conquer death.

Hence, what Christians among you cannot beat the hot or rainy weather, endure the other discomforts and contrarities of life, undergo all kinds of sacrifices, face all troubles and problems and still sport a smile in all these instances? Furthermore, we have been coached and trained by Christ, Paul and Jeremiah, through our readings today, to face our greatest fear, namely death. So, shall we be intimidated by other lesser fears?

It has been said, not without rhetorical flourish, that man's greatest fear is fear itself. For us Christians, however, our greatest fear is to offend God. When, therefore, we shall have cultivated this healthy kind of fear and respect for God, then we shall not be bothered too much by other sorts of fear. John tells this more beautifully when he wrote, "There is no fear in love." Fear disappears for those who love God (cfr. 1 Jn 4:18).

June 30, 2002

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

(Readings: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16/Rom 6:3-4, 8-11/Mt 10:37-42)

Did you ever stop for awhile to find out what Jesus really meant by saying in today's gospel reading, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow after me cannot be my disciple"? I wonder. Did anyone among you ever carry a cross? I wonder. Unless perhaps you were an altar boy when you were young, and carried a cross during procession. But surely Jesus did not mean this, did he?

How about carrying a necklace with a cross on your neck? Many people do that nowadays and for some it has become a fad, not necessarily for devotion. Some even sport expensive necklaces with big or tiny crosses, which are nice to see. Does the mere wearing of such jewelries satisfy the requirement of Jesus? I wonder.

What about the calamities and hardships we have to endure in life that are caused by nature like typhoons, draughts, earthquakes, or those occasioned by the negligence, lack of foresight, greed and uncaringness of men? Are these also crosses that we have to carry? I guess so, and they constitute a great part of our life's bitter experiences. Include here sickness, getting old, loss of job, accidents and others.

We do not like these things to happen. But God allows them to happen anyway. The crucifixion was the most unsavory experience for Jesus, but he endured it because it was his Father's will. It will result into mankind's salvation. Our crosses, when carried lovingly, will also be salutary for us and for others.

The pronouncement of Jesus that his followers will have to endure calamities and hardships, is no excuse and much less a license to inflict calamities and hardships on others. The words of Jesus are very clear, "one must carry his own cross," and not "one must put a cross on another." Sad to say, the adding of crosses on another's back seems to be the pastime of many people, even those who call themselves Christians.

The second reading also calls us to stop for awhile to find out its real meaning. Paul says we died with Christ, and with Christ we _N rose from death to a new life in fellowship with the Father. Paul was speaking to Christians who were then alive, and is speaking now to us who are still alive. Although we have not died, yet Paul says we died. Although we have not risen because we did not die, yet Paul says we have risen to new life. Now, how is that? Still alive, we have died. Still not resurrected, we have risen to new life. That's the mystery of our baptism. This is the great sacrament that makes us both die with Christ and arise with Christ in order to live a life of fellowship with the Father.

Finally, the first bible reading explains in some sort of way why this dying with Christ and arising with him is worth undergoing, despite the inevitable implication that we would then have to endure throughout our life on earth, calamities and hardships. The interesting anecdote of the prophet Elisha and the well-to-do couple of Shunem gives us a rationale or justification of the command of Jesus for his disciples to carry everyday one's cross and follow in his footsteps.

The couple of Shunem cared for the physical needs of the prophet Elisha because they regarded him as a holy man of God. Now, who can be regarded holier than Jesus who is holiness itself and makes people holy? For attending to the needs of the holy prophet Elisha, God rewarded the childless couple of Shunem with the gift of a baby boy. For taking up with Christ the difficult path to walk, for carrying everyday one's own cross in obedience to Christ's command, what will the Father not reward us with?

Our response to the first reading was, "Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord." If we tried counting our blessings in this life from our good Lord, we would be singing everyday his goodness. And if we tried counting by faith and hope our blessings in the life to come, then we would be singing more heartily his goodness to us everyday, not to say that in heaven where we hope to arrive, we will be spending our time singing the goodness of the Lord. Now you know better the meaning of that response. In the midst of your difficulties, when your crosses seem to be getting heavier, try repeating those words in your heart, "Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord."