

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

Vol. *I.XXVIII*, /N«. 830

May-Junv 2002

**MESSAGE FOR THE XXXIX WORLD DAY
OF PRAYER FOR VOCATION**

John Paul II

**PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY-
ADDENDA-CORRIGENDA, 2001**

Charles Bransom, Jr.

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF BISHOPS

Leonardo Legaspi, OP, DD

THE WAY WE VOTE

Rolando de la Rosa, OP



BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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

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

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

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

Subscription Rates (Effective January 2002)

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

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

Address all communications to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

Ecclesiastical Publications Office

University of Santo Tomas

Espana, Manila, Philippines

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

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

*Table of Contents***EDITORIAL**

- 254 XVI WORLD CONGRESS
OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

DOCUMENTATION*John Paul II*

- 255 LETTER TO PRIESTS FOR
HOLY THURSDAY 2002
- 270 THE PRIEST, PASTOR AND GUIDE
OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY
- 276 MESSAGE FOR THE XXXIX WORLD DAY
OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Charles Bransom, Jr.

- 283 PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY-
ADDENDA-CORRIGENDA, 2001

PASTORAL WORDS

Leonardo Legaspi, OP, DD 287 THE CHANGING IMAGE OF BISHOPS

Emmanuel Mijares

- 305 PREPARING FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
MEETING OF FAMILIES, JANUARY 2003:
A SPIRITUAL AND ECCLESIAL ITINERARY

Rolando de la Rosa, OP

- 321 THE WAY WE VOTE

CONSULTATIVE WORDS*Javier Gonzalez, OP*

- 336 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE IN A DIOCESE

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW*Mario Baltazar, OP*

- 347 HOMILIES FOR JULY-AUGUST 2002

XVI World Congress of Catholic Education

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

At press time, over 1,000 people meet at the center of conventions in Brasilia. They come from eighty countries of the world. The congress lasts from April 15 to 20 of 2002. The theme of the meeting is: "*Persona Nueva para un Mundo Nuevo*" or "New Person for a New World."

Luminaries in the Catholic Education in Europe, Middle East, Asia, Australia, Africa and North, Central and South Americas exposed position papers which were supported by actual experiences in the educational fields. Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski of the Congregation for Catholic Education presented a major paper and with a UNESCO representative.

From Asia are representatives from India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Thailand and Indonesia. During the time when people move more often, the topics on Education amidst the multicultural and interreligious world and the challenges of modern times were among the points touched. Concrete discussions on sub-continental issues follow where from. The congress is sponsored by OIEC (Office de l'Enseignement Catholique or Catholic International Education Office) which is celebrating its 50th year. The congress will have effects later on the direction of Catholic Education.

Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2002

JOHN PAUL II

Dear Priests,

1. With deep emotion I am sending you this traditional Holy Thursday Letter, taking my seat beside you as it were at the table in the Upper Room at which the Lord Jesus celebrated with his Apostles the first Eucharist: a gift to the whole Church, a gift which, although veiled by sacramental signs, makes him "really, truly and substantially" present (Council of Trent: *DS* 1651) in every tabernacle throughout the world. Before this unique presence, the Church bows down in adoration: "*Adoro te devote, latens Deitas*"; she is unceasingly moved by the spiritual raptures of the Saints and, as the Bride, she assembles in an intimate outpouring of faith and love: "*Ave, verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine*".

To the gift of this singular presence, which brings him to us in his supreme sacrifice and makes him our bread, Jesus, in the Upper Room, associated *a specific duty of the Apostles and their successors*. From that time on, to be an apostle of Christ, as are the Bishops and the priests sharing in their mission, has involved being able to act *in persona Christi Capitis*. This happens above

all whenever the sacrificial meal of the Body and the Blood of the Lord is celebrated. For then the priest as it were lends Christ his own face and voice: "Do this in memory of me" (*Lk* 22:19).

How marvellous is this vocation of ours, my dear Brother Priests! Truly we can repeat with the Psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord" (*Ps* 116:12-13).

2. Joyfully meditating once again on this gift, I would like this year to speak to you about an aspect of our mission to which I called your attention last year at this same time. I believe that it warrants further reflection. I mean the mission which the Lord has given us to represent him not just in the *Eucharistic Sacrifice* but also in the *Sacrament of Reconciliation*.

Between the two sacraments there is a profound relationship. The Eucharist, the summit of the sacramental economy, is also its source: all the sacraments in a sense spring from the Eucharist and lead back to it. This is true in a special way of the sacrament charged with "mediating" the forgiveness of God, who welcomes the repentant sinner back into his embrace. It is true that as a re-enactment of Christ's Sacrifice, the Eucharist also serves to deliver us from sin. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us: "The Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins" (No. 1393). Nevertheless, in the economy of grace willed by Christ, this purifying power, while it directly cleanses from venial sins, only indirectly cleanses from mortal sins, which radically compromise the believer's relationship with God and his communion with the Church. "The Eucharist," the *Catechism* continues, "is not ordered to the forgiveness of mortal sins. That is proper to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church" (No. 1395).

In insisting on this truth, the Church in no way wishes to detract from the role of the Eucharist. Her intention is to grasp its significance in relation to the whole sacramental economy as instituted by God's saving wisdom. This, after all, is what Saint Paul clearly indicated when writing to the Corinthians: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement upon himself (*1 Cor* 11:27-29). In line with this admonition of Saint Paul is the principle which states that "anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1385).

3. My dear Brothers in the Priesthood: in recalling this truth, I feel a pressing need to urge you, as I did last year, to rediscover for yourselves and to help others to rediscover the beauty of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In recent decades and for a variety of reasons, this sacrament has passed through something of a crisis. More than once I have drawn attention to this fact, even making it the theme of a gathering of the Synod of Bishops, whose reflections I then presented in the Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*. On the other hand, I cannot fail to acknowledge with deep joy the positive signs which, in the Jubilee Year especially, have shown that this sacrament, when suitably presented and celebrated, can have a broad appeal, even among the young. Its appeal is enhanced by the *need for personal contact*, something that is becoming increasingly scarce in the hectic pace of today's technological society, but which for this very reason is increasingly experienced as a vital need. Certainly, this need can be met in various ways. But how can we fail to recognize that the Sacrament

of Reconciliation - without confusing it with any of the various forms of psychological therapy - offers an extraordinarily rich response to this need? It does so by bringing the penitent into contact with the merciful heart of God through the friendly face of a brother.

Yes, great indeed is the wisdom of God, who by instituting this sacrament has made provision for a profound and unremitting need of the human heart. We are meant to be loving and enlightened interpreters of this wisdom though the personal contact we are called to have with so many brothers and sisters in the celebration of Penance. In this regard, I wish to repeat that the usual form of administering this sacrament is its *individual* celebration, and only in "cases of grave necessity" is it lawful to employ the *communal* form with general confession and absolution. The conditions required for this form of absolution are well known; but perhaps we should remember that for absolution to be valid the faithful must have the intention of subsequently confessing their grave sins individually (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1483).

4. With joy and trust let us rediscover this sacrament. Let us experience it above all for ourselves, as a deeply-felt need and as a grace which we constantly look for, in order to restore vigour and enthusiasm to our journey of holiness and to our ministry.

At the same time, let us make every effort to be *true ministers of mercy*. We know that in this sacrament, as in others, we are called to be agents of a grace which comes not from us but from on high and works by its own inner power. In other words - and this is a great responsibility - *God counts on us*, on our availability and fidelity, in order to work his wonders in human hearts. In the celebration of this sacrament, perhaps even more than in the others, it is important that the faithful have an intense experience of the face of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Allow me therefore to speak to you on this theme, imagining as it were all the places - cathedrals, parishes, shrines or elsewhere - in which you are daily engaged in administering this sacrament. Our minds turn to the pages of the Gospel which reveal most directly the merciful face of God. How can we fail to think of the *moving meeting between the prodigal son and his forgiving Father*? Or the image of the *sheep which was lost and then found*, and which the Shepherd joyfully lifts onto his shoulders? The Father's embrace and the Good Shepherd's joy must be visible in each one of us, dear Brothers, whenever a penitent asks us to become ministers of forgiveness.

In order to bring out certain specific aspects of the unique saving dialogue that is sacramental confession, I would like to use the "biblical icon" of *the meeting between Jesus and Zacchaeus* (cf. *Lk* 19:1-10). To me it seems that what takes place between Jesus and the "chief tax collector" of Jericho resembles in a number of ways the celebration of the sacrament of mercy. As we follow this brief but powerful story, we try to capture in Christ's demeanour and in his voice all those nuances of wisdom, both human and supernatural, which we too must strive to communicate if the sacrament is to be celebrated in the best possible way.

5. The story, as we know, presents the meeting between Jesus and Zacchaeus as if it happened by chance. Jesus enters Jericho and moves through the city accompanied by the crowd (cf. *Lk* 19:3). In climbing the sycamore tree, Zacchaeus seems prompted by curiosity alone. At times, God's meetings with man do appear to be merely fortuitous. But nothing that God does happens *by chance*. Surrounded by a wide variety of pastoral situations, we can sometimes lose heart and motivation because so many Christians pay too little attention to the sacramental life, and even when they do approach the sacraments, they often do so in a superficial way. Those who hear many confessions and see how people ordinarily

approach the sacrament can be disconcerted by the way certain penitents come to confession without even a clear idea of what they want. Some come only because they feel the need to be listened to. Others because they want advice about something. Others have a psychological need to be released from burdensome feelings of guilt. Many, on the other hand, feel a real need to restore their relationship with God, but they confess without being really aware of the obligations which this entails. They may make a poor examination of conscience because they have little knowledge of the implications of a moral life inspired by the Gospel. Is there any confessor who has not had this experience?

This is precisely the case of Zacchaeus. Everything that happens to him is amazing. If there had not been, at a certain point, the "surprise" of Christ looking up at him, perhaps he would have remained a silent spectator of the Lord moving through the streets of Jericho.

Jesus would have passed *by*, not *into*, his life. Zacchaeus had no idea that the curiosity which had prompted him to do such an unusual thing was already the fruit of a mercy which had preceded him, attracted him and was about to change him in the depths of his heart.

Dear Priests, with so many of our penitents in mind, let us re-read Luke's magnificent account of how Christ behaved: "When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today' (*Lk* 19:5).

Every encounter with someone wanting to go to confession, even when the request is somewhat superficial because it is poorly motivated and prepared, can become, through the surprising grace of God, that "place" near the sycamore tree where Christ looked up at Zacchaeus. How deeply Christ's gaze penetrated the Jericho

publican's soul is impossible for us to judge. But we do know that that *same gaze looks upon each of our penitents*. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we are agents of a supernatural encounter with laws of its own, an encounter which we have only to respect and facilitate. For Zacchaeus, it must have been a stunning experience *to hear himself called by his name*, a name which many of his townsmen spoke with contempt. Now he hears it spoken in a tone of tenderness, expressing not just trust but familiarity, insistent friendship. Yes, Jesus speaks to Zacchaeus like an old friend, forgotten maybe, but a friend who has nonetheless remained faithful, and who enters with the gentle force of affection into the life and into the home of his re-discovered friend: "Make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today" (*Lk 19:5*).

6. Luke's account is remarkable for the tone of the language: everything is so personal, so tactful, so affectionate! Not only is the text filled with humanity; it suggests insistence, an urgency to which Jesus gives voice as the one offering the definitive revelation of God's mercy. He says: "I must stay at your house", or to translate even more literally: "I need to stay at your house" (*Lk 19:5*). Following the mysterious road map which the Father has laid out for him, Jesus runs into Zacchaeus along the way. He pauses near him as if the meeting had been planned from the beginning. Despite all the murmuring of human malice, the home of this sinner is about to become *a place of revelation*, the scene of a miracle of mercy. True, this will not happen if Zacchaeus does not free his heart from the ligatures of egoism and from his unjust and fraudulent ways. But mercy has already come to him as a gratuitous and overflowing gift. *Mercy has preceded him!*

This is what happens in every sacramental encounter. We must not think that it is the sinner, through his own independent journey of conversion, who earns mercy. On the contrary, it is mercy that

impels him along the path of conversion. Left to himself, man can do nothing and he deserves nothing. Before being man's journey to God, confession is *God's arrival at a person's home*.

In confession, therefore, we can find ourselves faced with all kinds of people. But of one thing we must be convinced: anticipating our invitation, and even before we speak the words of the sacrament, the brothers and sisters who seek our ministry have already been touched by a mercy that works from within. Please God, we shall know how to cooperate with the mercy that welcomes and the love that saves. This we can do by our words and our attitude as pastors who are concerned for each individual, skillful in sensing people's problems and in delicately accompanying them on their journey, and knowing how to help them to trust in God's goodness.

7. "I must stay at your house". Let us try to penetrate these words still more deeply. They are a proclamation. Before indicating a choice on the part of Christ, they proclaim the will of the Father. Jesus appears *as someone with a precise mandate*. There is a "law" which he too must observe: the will of the Father which he accomplishes with such love that it becomes his "food" (cf. *Jn* 4:34). The words which Jesus speaks to Zacchaeus are not just a means of establishing a relationship but *the declaration of a plan drawn up by God*.

The meeting unfolds against the background of the Word of God, which is one with the Word and the Face of Christ. It is here too that the encounter which is at the heart of the celebration of Penance must begin. How poor if everything were reduced to the skills of human communication! Awareness of the laws of human communication can help and should not be overlooked, but it is the Word of God which must sustain everything. That is why the rite of the sacrament provides for the proclamation of this Word to the penitent.

This is a detail that should not be underestimated, even if it is not always easy to implement. Confessors very often find it hard to communicate what the Word demands to those who have only a superficial knowledge of it. Obviously, the actual celebration of the Sacrament is not the best time to make up for the lack. This should be done with pastoral insight during the time of preparation, by offering basic pointers that allow penitents to measure themselves against the truth of the Gospel. In any event, the confessor should not fail to use the sacramental encounter to lead penitents to some grasp of the way in which God is mercifully reaching down to them, stretching out his hand, not to strike but to save.

Who can deny that the dominant culture of our time creates very real difficulties in this regard? Even mature Christians are often hindered by it in their efforts to live by God's commandments and follow the guidelines set out on the basis of the commandments by the Church's magisterium. This is the case with many issues in the area of sexual and family morality, bio-ethics and professional and social morality; but it is also true of problems regarding obligations in the area of religious practice and participation in the life of the Church. For this reason there is a need for a catechesis which the confessor cannot offer at the moment of celebrating the sacrament. It would be best to make this catechesis part of a deeper preparation for confession. With this in mind, penitential celebrations with community preparation and individual confession can be very helpful.

To clarify all of this, the "biblical icon" of Zacchaeus provides *yet another important cue*. In the sacrament, the penitent first meets not "the commandments of God" but, in Jesus, "the God of the commandments". *To Zacchaeus, Jesus offers himself*: "I must stay at your house". He himself is the gift that awaits Zacchaeus, and he is also "God's law" for Zacchaeus. When we see our encounter

with Jesus as a gift, even the most demanding features of the law assume the "lightness" of grace, in line with that supernatural dynamic which prompted Saint Paul to say: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (*Gal 5:18*). Every celebration of Penance should cause the soul of the penitent to leap with the same joy that Christ's words inspired in Zacchaeus, who "made haste and came down and received him joyfully" (*Lk 19:6*).

8. The availability and superabundance of mercy should not however obscure the fact that it is only *the premise of salvation*, which reaches fulfillment to the extent that it meets *a response in the human being*. In fact, the forgiveness granted in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not some external action, a kind of legal "remission of the penalty", but *a real encounter of the penitent with God*, who restores the bond of friendship shattered by sin. The "truth" of this relationship requires that we welcome God's merciful embrace, overcoming all the resistance caused by sin.

This is what happens in the case of Zacchaeus. Aware that he is now being treated as a "son", he begins to think and act like a son, *and this he shows in the way he rediscovers his brothers and sisters*. Beneath the loving gaze of Christ, the heart of Zacchaeus warms to love of neighbour. From a feeling of isolation, which had led him to enrich himself without caring about what others had to suffer, he moves to an attitude of sharing. This is expressed in a genuine "division" of his wealth: "half of my goods to the poor". The injustice done to others by his fraudulent behaviour is atoned for by a fourfold restitution: "If I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold" (*Lk 19:8*). And it is only at this point that the love of God achieves its purpose, and salvation is accomplished: "Today salvation has come to this house" (*Lk 19:9*).

Dear Priests, this journey of salvation, so clearly described in the story of Zacchaeus, should guide us and help us accomplish with wise pastoral balance our difficult work in the ministry of the confessional. It is a ministry always beset by two opposite extremes: *severity* and *laxity*. The first fails to take account of the early part of the story of Zacchaeus: mercy comes first, encouraging conversion and valuing even the slightest progress in love, because the Father wants to do the impossible to save the son who is lost: "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Lk 19:10).

The other of the two extremes, laxity, fails to take into account the fact that the fullness of salvation, not just offered but also accepted, the salvation which truly heals and restores, involves a genuine conversion to the demands of God's love. If Zacchaeus had welcomed the Lord into his home without coming to an attitude of openness to love and reparation for the harm done, without a firm commitment to living a new life, he would not have received in the depths of his heart the forgiveness which the Lord had offered him with such concern.

We must always be careful to maintain a proper balance in order to avoid falling into one or the other of these extremes. *Severity* crushes people and drives them away. *Laxity* is misleading and deceptive. The minister of pardon, who exemplifies for penitents the face of the Good Shepherd, must express in equal measure the mercy already present and at work and the pardon which brings healing and peace. It is on the basis of these principles that the priest is deputed, in dialogue with the penitent, to discern whether he or she is ready for sacramental absolution. Undoubtedly, the delicacy of this meeting with souls, at such a personal and sometimes difficult moment, demands the utmost discretion. Unless it appears otherwise, the priest must assume that, in confessing his or her sins, the penitent is genuinely sorry and is determined to make amends. This can be more readily assumed if there are

suitable pastoral aids for sacramental Reconciliation, including a time of preparation for the sacrament, in order to help penitents come to a more mature and satisfactory sense of what it is that they are looking for. Clearly, when there is no sorrow and amendment, the confessor is obliged to tell the penitent that he or she is not yet ready for absolution. If absolution were given to those who actually say that they have no intention of making amends, the rite would become a mere fiction; indeed, it would look almost like magic, capable perhaps of creating the semblance of peace, but certainly not that deep peace of conscience which God's embrace guarantees.

9. In the light of what has been said, it is all the more evident why the *personal encounter* between confessor and penitent is the ordinary form of sacramental Reconciliation, while the practice of general absolution is only for exceptional circumstances. It is well known that the practice of the Church moved gradually to the private celebration of penance, after centuries in which public penance had been the dominant form. Not only did this development not change the substance of the sacrament - and how could it be otherwise! - but it actually expressed this substance more clearly and made it more effective. This happened not without the aid of the Holy Spirit, who here too fulfilled the mission of leading the Church "into all truth" (*Jn* 16:13).

The ordinary form of Reconciliation not only expresses well *the truth of divine mercy* and the forgiveness which springs from it, but also sheds light on the *truth of man* in one of its most fundamental aspects. Although human beings live through a network of relationships and communities, the uniqueness of each person can never be lost in a shapeless mass. This explains the deep echo in our souls *when we hear ourselves called by name*. When we realize that we are known and accepted as we are, with our most individual traits, we feel truly alive. Pastoral practice

needs to take this into greater account, in order to strike a wise balance between gatherings which emphasize the communion of the Church and other moments which attend to the needs of the individual. People ordinarily want to be recognized and looked after, and it is precisely this nearness to them that allows them to experience God's love more strongly.

Seen in these terms, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is *one of the most effective instruments of personal growth*. Here the Good Shepherd, through the presence and voice of the priest, approaches each man and woman, entering into a personal dialogue which involves listening, counsel, comfort and forgiveness. The love of God is such that it can focus upon each individual without overlooking the rest. All who receive sacramental absolution ought to be able to feel *the warmth of this personal attention*. They should experience the intensity of the fatherly embrace offered to the prodigal son: "His father ... embraced him and kissed him" (*Lk* 15:20). They should be able to hear that warm and friendly voice that spoke to the tax collector Zacchaeus, calling him by name to new life (cf. *Lk* 19:5).

10. Accordingly, confessors too need *to be properly trained* for the celebration of this Sacrament. It must be celebrated in such a way that even in its external form it has all the liturgical dignity indicated in the norms laid down in the Rite of Penance. This does not exclude the possibility of adaptations for pastoral reasons, where the situation of the penitent truly calls for them, in light of the classical principle which holds that the *suprema lex* of the Church is the *salus animarum*. Let us make the wisdom of the Saints our guide. And let us move with courage in *proposing confession to young people*. We must be close to them, able to be with them as friends and fathers, confidants and confessors. They need to discover in us both of these roles, both dimensions.

While we remain firmly anchored in the discernment of the Church's magisterium, let us also make every effort to keep our theological training truly up-to-date, especially where emerging ethical issues are concerned. It can happen that in the face of complex contemporary ethical problems the faithful leave the confessional with somewhat confused ideas, especially if *they find that confessors are not consistent in their judgments*. The truth is that those who fulfill this delicate ministry in the name of God and of the Church have a specific duty not to promote and, even more so not to express in the confessional, personal opinions that do not correspond to what the Church teaches and professes. Likewise, *a failure to speak the truth because of a misconceived sense of compassion should not be taken for love*. We do not have a right to minimize matters of our own accord, even with the best of intentions. Our task is to be God's witnesses, to be spokesmen of a mercy that saves even when it shows itself as judgment on man's sin. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (*Mt 7:21*).

11. Dear Priests! Know that I am especially close to you as you gather with your Bishops on this Holy Thursday of the year 2002. We have all experienced a new momentum in the Church at the dawn of the new millennium, in the sense of "starting afresh from Christ" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29 ff.). We had all hoped that this momentum might coincide with a new era of brotherhood and peace for all humanity. Instead we have seen more bloodshed. Once again we have been witnesses of wars. We are distressed by the tragedy of the divisions and hatreds which are devastating relations between peoples.

At this time too, as priests we are personally and profoundly afflicted by the sins of some of our brothers who have betrayed the grace of Ordination in succumbing even to the most grievous

forms of the *mysterium iniquitatis* at work in the world. Grave scandal is caused, with the result that a dark shadow of suspicion is cast over all the other fine priests who perform their ministry with honesty and integrity and often with heroic self-sacrifice. As the Church shows her concern for the victims and strives to respond in truth and justice to each of these painful situations, all of us - conscious of human weakness, but trusting in the healing power of divine grace - are called to embrace the "*mysterium Cruris*" and to commit ourselves more fully to the search for holiness. We must beg God in his Providence to prompt a whole-hearted reawakening of those ideals of total self-giving to Christ which are the very foundation of the priestly ministry.

It is precisely our faith in Christ which gives us the strength to look trustingly to the future. We know that the human heart has always been attracted to evil, and that man will be able to radiate peace and love to those around him only if he meets Christ and allows himself to be "overtaken" by him. As ministers of the Eucharist and of sacramental Reconciliation, we in particular have the task of communicating hope, goodness and peace to the world.

My wish is that you will live this most holy day in peace of heart, in profound communion among yourselves, with your Bishop and your communities, when we recall, with the institution of the Eucharist, our own "birth" as priests. With the words of Christ to the Apostles in the Upper Room after the Resurrection, and calling upon the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Regina Apostolorum* and *Regina Paris*, I warmly embrace you all as brothers: Peace, peace to each -and every one of you. Happy Easter!

From the Vatican, on 17 March, the Fifth Sunday of Lent, in the year 2002, the twenty-fourth of my Pontificate.

The Priest, Pastor and Guide of the Parish Community*

JOHN PAUL II

*Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies, Monsignors and Fathers,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ!*

1. With great joy I welcome you, on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Clergy. I cordially greet Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation, and I thank him for his kind words addressed to me in the name of all present. I greet the Cardinals, Bishops and the participants in your Plenary Assembly, which has focused on an important topic for the life of the Church: *the Priest, Pastor and Guide of the Parish Community*. Stressing the function of the priest in the parish community, one brings to the fore the centrality of Christ who should always be prominent in the mission of the Church.

Christ is present to his Church in the most sublime way in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. In the Dogmatic Constitution

* The Holy Father's address to the Plenary Session of The Congregation for the Clergy, 23 November 2001.

Lumen gentium, the Second Vatican Council teaches that the priest *acting in persona Christi* celebrates the Sacrifice of the Mass and administers the Sacraments (cf. n. 10). As my venerable predecessor Paul VI so aptly observed in his Encyclical Letter Mysterium fidei, which followed the Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 7, Christ is also present through preaching and the guidance of the faithful, tasks to which the priest is personally called (cf. AAS 57 [1965] 762).

2. The presence of Christ, which thus takes place in a daily and ordinary way, makes the parish an authentic community of the faithful. It is therefore of fundamental importance for the parish to have a priest as its pastor and the title of pastor is specifically reserved to the priest. The sacred Order of the presbyterate represents the indispensable and irreplaceable condition for him to be appointed pastor validly (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 521, 1). Certainly, other faithful can actively collaborate with him, even full-time, but because they have not received the ministerial priesthood, they cannot replace him as pastor.

What determines this singular ecclesial centrality of the priest is the fundamental relation he has with Christ, Head and Pastor, as his sacramental representation. In the Apostolic Exhortation Pastores dabo vobis, I noted that "the priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the relation which the priest has to Christ, such that the "sacramental representation" to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church" (n. 16). The ecclesial dimension belongs to the substance of the ordained priesthood. It is totally at the service of the Church, so that the ecclesial community has an absolute need for the ministerial priesthood to have Christ the Head and Shepherd present in her. If the common priesthood results from the fact that the Christian People are chosen by God as a bridge with humanity and that every believer belongs to this people, the ministerial

The Priest, Pastor and Guide of the Parish Community*

JOHN PAUL II

*Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies, Monsignors and Fathers,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ!*

1. With great joy I welcome you, on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Clergy. I cordially greet Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation, and I thank him for his kind words addressed to me in the name of all present. I greet the Cardinals, Bishops and the participants in your Plenary Assembly, which has focused on an important topic for the life of the Church: *the Priest, Pastor and Guide of the Parish Community*. Stressing the function of the priest in the parish community, one brings to the fore the centrality of Christ who should always be prominent in the mission of the Church.

Christ is present to his Church in the most sublime way in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. In the Dogmatic Constitution

* The Holy Father's address to the Plenary Session of The Congregation for the Clergy, 23 November 2001.

Lumen gentium, the Second Vatican Council teaches that the priest *acting in persona Christi* celebrates the Sacrifice of the Mass and administers the Sacraments (cf. n. 10). As my venerable predecessor Paul VI so aptly observed in his Encyclical Letter Mysterium fidei, which followed the Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 7, Christ is also present through preaching and the guidance of the faithful, tasks to which the priest is personally called (cf. A AS 57 [1965] 762).

2. The presence of Christ, which thus takes place in a daily and ordinary way, makes the parish an authentic community of the faithful. It is therefore of fundamental importance for the parish to have a priest as its pastor and the title of pastor is specifically reserved to the priest. The sacred Order of the presbyterate represents the indispensable and irreplaceable condition for him to be appointed pastor validly (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 521, 1). Certainly, other faithful can actively collaborate with him, even full-time, but because they have not received the ministerial priesthood, they cannot replace him as pastor.

What determines this singular ecclesial centrality of the priest is the fundamental relation he has with Christ, Head and Pastor, as his sacramental representation. In the Apostolic Exhortation Pastores dabo vobis, I noted that "the priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the relation which the priest has to Christ, such that the "sacramental representation" to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church" (n. 16). The ecclesial dimension belongs to the substance of the ordained priesthood. It is totally at the service of the Church, so that the ecclesial community has an absolute need for the ministerial priesthood to have Christ the Head and Shepherd present in her. If the common priesthood results from the fact that the Christian People are chosen by God as a bridge with humanity and that every believer belongs to this people, the ministerial

priesthood is the fruit of an election, of a specific vocation: "he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve" (Lk 6, 13-16). Thanks to the ministerial priesthood, the faithful are made aware of their common priesthood and they live it (cf. Eph 4, 11-12); the priest reminds them that they are the People of God and makes them able to "offer spiritual sacrifices" (cf. 1 Pt. 2,5), through which Christ himself makes us an eternal gift to the Father (cf. 1 Pt. 3,18). Without the presence of Christ represented by the priest, the sacramental guide of the community, this would not be an ecclesial community in its fullness.

3. As I said before, Christ is present in the Church in an eminent way in the Eucharist, the source and summit of ecclesial life. He is really present in the celebration of the holy Sacrifice, and when the consecrated bread is kept in the tabernacle "as the spiritual heart of the religious and parish community" (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium fidei*, AAS 57 [1965], 772).

For this reason, the Second Vatican Council recommends that "parish priests ensure that the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the centre and culmination of the entire life of the Christian community" (Deer. *Christus Dominus*, n. 30). Without Eucharistic worship as its beating heart, the parish dries up. Here it is helpful to recall what I wrote in the Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*: "Among the many activities of a parish, none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist" (n. 35). Nothing will ever be able to replace it. The Liturgy of the Word by itself, when it is really impossible to ensure the Sunday presence of a priest, is praiseworthy to keep the faith alive, but it must always keep the regular celebration of the Eucharist as the goal to be achieved.

Where a priest is lacking one must ask the Lord with faith and insistence, to raise up numerous and holy labourers for his

harvest. In *Pastores dabō vobis* I repeated that "today the prayerful expectation of new vocations should become an ever more continual and widespread habit within the entire Christian community and in every one of its parts" (n. 38). The splendour of the priestly identity, the integral exercise of the pastoral ministry united to the efforts of the whole community in prayer and personal penance, are the irreplaceable elements for an urgent pastoral activity to recruit vocations. It would be a fatal mistake to be resigned to present difficulties, and act as if we should prepare ourselves for a Church of tomorrow that some imagine as being almost without priests. In this way, the measures adopted to remedy the present scarcity, in spite of all good will, would be seriously harmful for the Ecclesial Community.

4. Moreover, the parish is a privileged place to announce the Word of God. It includes a variety of forms and each of the faithful is called to take an active part, especially with the witness of a Christian life and the explicit proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers to lead them to the faith, or to believers to instruct them, confirm them and encourage them to a more fervent life. As for the priest, he "proclaims the word in his capacity as "minister", as sharer in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church" (*Pastores dabō vobis*, n. 26). To fulfill this ministry faithfully, corresponding to the gift received, he "ought first of all to develop a great personal familiarity with the Word of God" (ibid.). Even though he may be surpassed in the ability to speak by non-ordained members of the faithful, this would not reduce his being the sacramental representation of Christ the Head and Shepherd, and the effectiveness of his preaching derives from his identity. The parish community needs this kind of effectiveness, especially at the most characteristic moment of the proclamation of the Word by ordained ministers: for this reason the liturgical proclamation of the Gospel and the homily that follows it are both reserved to the priest.

5. Also the function of guiding the community as shepherd, the proper function of the parish priest, stems from his unique relation to Christ the Head and Shepherd. It is a function having a sacramental character. It is not entrusted to the priest by the community, but, through the Bishop, it comes to him from the Lord. To reaffirm this clearly and exercise this function with humble authority is an indispensable service to truth and to ecclesial communion. The collaboration of others, who have not received this sacramental configuration to Christ, is hoped for and often necessary.

However, these cannot in any way substitute the task of the pastor proper to the parish priest. The extreme cases of shortage of priests, that advise a more intense and extended collaboration of the faithful not honoured with priestly ministry, in the pastoral care of a parish, do not constitute an exception to this essential criterion for the care of souls, as is indisputably established by canonical norm (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 517, 2). In this controversial sector, the interdicasterial Exhortation *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, that I approved in a specific way, is a sure guide to follow.

In fulfilling his duty as guide, which is his personal responsibility, the pastor will surely obtain help from the consultative bodies foreseen by canon law (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 536-537); but these must remain faithful to their reality as consultative bodies. Therefore it will be necessary to guard oneself from any form that tends *de facto* to weaken the leadership of the parish priest, because the very structure of the parish community would be distorted.

6. I now turn my affectionate and grateful thoughts to pastors throughout the world, especially to those who work in the outposts of evangelization. I encourage them to continue in the mission of evangelization that is strenuous but precious for the whole Church.

I recommend to each one to turn, in the daily exercise of pastoral care, to the maternal help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, seeking to live in profound communion with Her. In the ministerial priesthood, as I wrote in the *Letter to Priests, on the occasion of Holy Thursday 1979*, "there is the wonderful and penetrating dimension of nearness to the Mother of Christ" (n. 11). When we celebrate Holy Mass, dear Brother priests, the Mother of the Redeemer is beside us. She introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son. "*Ad Jesum per Mariam*": may this be our daily programme of spiritual and pastoral life!

With these sentiments, while I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I impart to each one a special Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to all the priests of the world.

Message for the XXXIX World Day of Prayer for Vocations*

JOHN PAUL II

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. To you all "beloved of God and saints by vocation, grace and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rm 1,7). These words of the Apostle Paul to the Christians of Rome introduce the theme of the next World Day of Prayer for Vocations: "The vocation to holiness". Holiness! This is the grace and aim of every believer, as the Book of Leviticus reminds us: "Be holy, because I, the Lord, your God, am Holy" (19,2).

* Message of Pope John Paul II for the 39th World Day of Prayer for Vocations to be observed on 21 April 2002, Fourth Sunday of Easter. The theme of the Message is "The Vocation to Holiness." In his message, the Holy Father stated that "every vocation in the Church is at the service of holiness. Some however, such as the vocations to ordained ministry and consecrated life, are at the service of holiness in a thoroughly unique manner. It is to these vocations that I invite everyone to pay particular attention today, by intensifying their prayers for them." The Holy Father signed the Message on 8 September and it was released for publication and promotion on 24 November.

In my Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* I invited all to place "pastoral planning under the heading of holiness", to express the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity... The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction" (n. 31).

The main task of the Church is to lead Christians along the path of holiness, so that, illuminated by the intelligence of faith, they may learn to know and contemplate Christ's face and to rediscover in Him their own authentic identity and the mission that the Lord entrusts to each of them. In this way, they are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph 2,20-21).

The Church gathers within herself all the vocations God raises up among his sons and daughters and is transformed into a radiant reflection of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. As a people gathered together by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Church carries within herself the mystery of the Father who calls everyone to praise His name and to fulfill His will; she preserves the mystery of the Son who, sent by the Father to announce the Reign of God, invites everyone to follow Him; she is the repository of the mystery of the Holy Spirit who consecrates for the mission those whom the Father has chosen through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Since the Christian Community is the place where all the various vocations raised up by the Lord express themselves, in the context of the World Day of Prayer that will take place on 21 April 2002, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Third Continental Congress for vocations to ordained ministry and to consecrated life in North America will be held. I gladly send my best wishes to its promoters and to the participants and express my heartfelt congratulations for an initiative that deals with one of the pivotal problems of the Church in America and of the new evangelization of the continent. I invite everyone to pray, so that this important gathering may produce a renewed commitment to the service of vocations and a more generous enthusiasm among the Christians of the "New World".

2. The Church is the "home of holiness" and the charity of Christ, poured out by the Holy Spirit, is her soul. In her, all Christians help one another to discover and fulfill their own vocation by listening to the Word of God, in prayer, by assiduously participating in the Sacraments and incessantly seeking the face of Christ in every brother and sister. In this way each person, according to each one's gifts, advances along the path of faith, keeping hope alive and acting through charity (cf *Lumen gentium*, 41), while the Church "reveals and experiences anew the infinite richness of the mystery of Jesus Christ" (*Christifideles laici*, 55) and assures that the holiness of God is manifested within each state and situation of life, so that all Christians may become labourers in the vineyard of the Lord and build up the Body of Christ.

Every vocation in the Church is at the service of holiness. Some however, such as the vocations to ordained ministry and consecrated life, are at the service of holiness in a thoroughly unique manner. It is to these vocations that I invite everyone to pay particular attention today, by intensifying their prayers for them.

The vocation to ordained ministry "is essentially a call to holiness in the form which derives from the sacrament of Orders. Holiness is intimacy with God, it is the imitation of Christ, who was poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for souls and a giving of oneself on their behalf and for their true good; it is love for the Church which is holy and wants us to be holy, because this is the mission that Christ entrusted to her" (*Pastores dabo vobis*, 33). Jesus calls the Apostles "to be his companions" (Mk 3,14) in a privileged intimacy (cf Lk 8,1-2; 22,28). Not only does he share with them the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf Mt 13,16-18), but He expects a surpassing faithfulness from them, consonant with the Apostolic ministry to which He calls them. He demands a more rigorous poverty from them (cf Mt 19,22-23), the humility of a servant who becomes the last of all (cf Mt 20,25-27). He asks of them faith in the powers they received (cf Mt 17,19-21), prayer and fasting as effective tools of apostolate (cf Mk 9,29) and unselfishness: "You received without pay, give without pay" (Mt 10,8). From them He expects prudence together with simplicity and moral rectitude (cf Mt 10,26-28) and abandonment to Divine Providence (cf Lk 9,1-3; 19,22-23). They must also be aware of the responsibilities they assume, as they are administrators of the Sacraments established by the Master and labourers in His vineyard (cf Lk 12,43-48).

Consecrated life reveals the intimate nature of every Christian vocation to holiness, and the straining of the entire Church-Bride towards Christ "her only Spouse". "The profession of the evangelical counsels is intimately connected with the mystery of Christ, and has the duty of making somehow present the way of life which Jesus himself chose and indicated as an absolute eschatological value" (*Vita consecrata*, 29). Vocations to these states of life are precious and necessary gifts, which demonstrate that, even today, the following of Christ, chaste, poor and obedient, the witness to

the absolute primacy of God, and the service to humanity in the manner of the Redeemer represent privileged paths towards the fullness of spiritual life.

The small number of candidates to the priesthood and consecrated life reported in some situations today, must not lead us to expect less and settle for a mediocre formation and spirituality. Rather, it should urge greater attention to the selection and the formation of those who, once constituted ministers and witnesses of Christ, will be called upon to confirm with holiness of life, what they announce and celebrate.

3. It is necessary to adopt all means to ensure that vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, essential for the life and holiness of God's People, are continuously at the centre of spirituality, of pastoral action and of the prayer of the faithful.

May Bishops and priests be, first of all, witnesses to the holiness of the ministry they have received as gift. With their life and teaching, may they show the joy of following Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and the renewing efficacy of the mystery of His Easter of Redemption. May they make visible by their example, in particular to the young generations, the inspiring adventure reserved for those who, in the footsteps of the Divine Master, choose to belong completely to God and offer themselves so that every person may have life and have it to the full (cf Jn 10,10).

May consecrated men and women, who live at "the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission" (*Vita consecrata*, 3), show that their existence is firmly rooted in Christ, that religious life is the "home and school of communion" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 43), that in their humble and faithful service to mankind pulses that "creativity of charity" (ibid., 50) which the Holy Spirit always keeps alive in the Church. Let us not forget that the strength of every vocation lies in the love for contem-

plation, in the joy of serving others, in chastity lived for the Kingdom of Heaven and in the generous devotion to one's own ministry!

Families are called to play a decisive role for the future of vocations in the Church. The holiness of marital love, the harmony of family life, the spirit of faith with which the problems of daily life are confronted, openness towards others, especially towards the poorest, and participation in the life of the Christian community form the proper environment for their children to listen to the divine call and make a generous response.

4. "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest" (Mt 9,38; Lk 10,2). In obedience to Christ's command, every World Day of Prayer for Vocations distinguishes itself as a moment of intense prayer, that absorbs the entire Christian community in an incessant and fervent invocation to God for vocations. How important it is for Christian communities to become real schools of prayer (cf *Novo millennio ineunte*, 33), capable of educating for dialogue with God and forming the faithful to open themselves ever more to the love with which the Father "so loved the world that he gave His only Son" (Jn 3,16)! Prayer, developed and lived, will help us to be guided by the Spirit of Christ to collaborate in building up the Church in charity. In this context, the disciple grows in an ardent desire that all may encounter Christ and achieve the true freedom of the children of God. This eagerness will lead the believer, following the example of Mary, to be ready to pronounce a full and generous "yes" to the Lord who calls him or her to become a minister of the Word, the Sacraments and Charity, or to become a living sign of Christ's chaste, poor and obedient life among the people of our time.

May the Lord of the harvest provide many holy priestly and religious vocations for His Church!

Holy Father, look upon this humanity of ours,
that is taking its first steps along the path of the Third
Millennium.

Its life is still deeply marked
by hatred, violence and oppression,
but the thirst for justice, truth and grace
still finds a space in the hearts of many people,
who are waiting for someone to bring salvation,
enacted by You through Your Son Jesus.
There is the need for courageous heralds of the Gospel,
for generous servants of suffering humanity.
Send holy priests to Your Church, we pray,
who may sanctify Your people
with the tools of Your grace.
Send numerous consecrated men and women,
that they may show Your holiness in the midst of the
world.
Send holy labourers into Your vineyard,
that they may labour with the fervour of charity
and, moved by Your Holy Spirit,
may bring the salvation of Christ
to the farthest ends of the Earth. Amen.

Philippine Episcopology - Addenda-Corrigenda, 2001

CHARLES BRANSOM, JR.

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

- N. 169 **Porfirio R. Iligan** - died 6 March 2001 at Naga City.
- N. 178 **Nicolas Mondejar** - resigned 25 July 2001.
- N. 186 **Miguel C. Cinches, S.V.D.** - resigned 21 April 2001.
- N. 199 **Ireneo Amantillo, C.Ss.R.** - resigned 18 October 2001.
- N. 202 **Federico O. Escaler, S.J.** - resigned from the titular see of Girus Tarasii and assumed the title of Bishop Prelate of Kidapawan 18 February 1978; first Bishop Prelate of Ipil 23 February 1980.
- N. 205 **Protacio G. Gungon** - resigned 18 October 2001.
- N. 212 **Manuel C. Sobrevinas** - resigned 22 October 2001.
- N. 215 **Vicente M. Navarra** - Apostolic Administrator of Bacolod 28 August 2000; Bishop of Bacolod 24 May 2001.

- N. 222 **Orlando Beltran Quevedo, O.M.I.** - the title of his second co-consecrator, Bishop Federico O. Escaler, was Bishop Prelate of Ipil.
- N. 256 **Romulo Tolentino de la Cruz** - Coadjutor Bishop of San Jose de Antique 8 January 2001.
- N. 266 **Carlito Cenzon, C.I.C.M.** - Vicar Apostolic of Baguio 18 January 2002.
- N. 271 **Crisostomo A. Yalung** - Bishop of Antipolo 18 October 2001.
- N. 278 **Antonio Javellana Ledesma, S.J.** - the title of his second co-consecrator, Bishop Federico O. Escaler, was Bishop Prelate of Ipil.
- N. 284 **John Forrosuelo Du** - Bishop of Dumaguete 21 April 2001.
- N. 288 **Antonieta Dumagan Cabajog** - Bishop of Surigao 21 April 2001.
- N. 290 2001, 12 July, at Davao, Cathedral of San Pedro Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Fernando R. Capalla, Archbishop of Davao and by Msgr. Generoso C. Camina, Bishop of Digos consecrated Msgr. **Guillermo Vega Afable**, Titular Bishop of Vadesi, Auxiliary of Davao, born at Davao 3 April 1951; priest 24 April 1976; named 21 April 2001.
- N. 291 2001, 2 August, at Manila, Santa Cruz Church Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Diosdado Aenlle Talamayan, Archbishop of Tuguegarao and by Msgr. Sofio Guinto Balce, Bishop of Cabanatuan consecrated **Sofronio A. Bancud, S.S.S.**, Titular Bishop of Bida, Auxiliary of Cabanatuan, born at Atulayan (Tuguegarao)

8 December 1948; priest 2 May 1977; named 24 May 2001.

- N. 292. 2001, 31 August, at Manila, Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin, Archbishop of Manila assisted by Msgr. Crisostomo A. Yalung, Titular Bishop of Ficus and by Msgr. Jesse Eugenio Mercado, Titular Bishop of Talaptula consecrated Msgr. **Socrates Buenaventura Villegas**, Titular Bishop of Nona, Auxiliary of Manila, born at Manila 28 September 1960; priest 5 October 1985; named 25 July 2001.
- N. 293. 2001, 8 September, at Roxas City, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines assisted by Msgr. Onesimo Cadiz Gordoncillo, Archbishop of Capiz and by Msgr. Angel N. Lagdameo, Archbishop of Jaro consecrated Msgr. **Jose F. Advincula**, Bishop of San Carlos, born at Dumalag (Capiz) 30 March 1952; priest 14 April 1976; named 25 July 2001.
- N. 294. 2001, 27 November, at Manila, Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin, Archbishop of Manila assisted by Msgr. Socrates Buenaventura Villegas, Titular Bishop of Nona and by Msgr. Ireneo A. Amantillo, Bishop emeritus of Tandag consecrated Msgr. **Nereo P. Odchimar**, Bishop of Tandag, born at Bacuad (Tandag) 16 October 1940; priest 19 December 1964; named 18 October 2001.
- N. 295. 2001, 12 December, at Imus, Cathedral Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin, Archbishop of Manila assisted by Msgr. Manuel C. Sobrevinas, Bishop emeritus of Imus and by Msgr. Pedro D. Arigo, Titular Bishop of Mactaris consecrated Msgr. **Luis Antonio G. Tagle**, Bishop of Imus, born at Manila 21 June 1957; priest 28 February 1982; named 22 October 2001.

- N. 296/ 2001, 27 December, at Ozamiz, Cathedral Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines assisted by Msgr. Jesus Armamento Dosado, Archbishop of Ozamis and by Msgr. Fernando R. Capalla, Archbishop of Davao consecrated Msgr. **Edwin Angot de la Pena, M.S.P.**, Bishop Prelate of Marawi, born at San Juan (Dumaguete) 5 April 1954; priest 22 April 1981; Prelate of Marawi 25 June 2000; named Bishop Prelate of Marawi 22 October 2001.
- N. 297. 2002, 6 January, at Rome, Saint Peter's Basilica Pope John Paul II assisted by Msgr. Leonardo Sandri, Titular Archbishop of Cittanova and by Msgr. Robert Sarah, Archbishop emeritus of Conakry consecrated Msgr. **Adolfo Tito YHana**, Titular Archbishop of Montecorvino, Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea, born at Naga City (Caceres) 6 February 1948; priest 19 March 1972; named 1 3 December 2001; Apostolic Nuncio to the Solomon Islands 5 February 2002.
- N. 298. 2002, 8 January, at Dumaguete, Cathedral of Saint Catherine of Alexandria Cardinal Ricardo J. Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu assisted by Msgr. Onesimo Cadiz Gordoncillo, Archbishop of Capiz and by Msgr. John Forrosuelo Du, Bishop of Dumaguete consecrated Msgr. **Julito B. Cortes**, Titular Bishop of Severiana, Auxiliary of Cebu, born at Paranaque (Manila) 4 July 1956; priest 24 October 1980; named 24 October 2001.
- N. 299. 2002, 10 January, at Zamboanga, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Msgr. Carmelo Dominador Flores Morelos, Archbishop of Zamboanga assisted by Msgr. Antonio Javellana Ledesma, Bishop Prelate of Ipil and by Msgr. Angelito Lampon, Titular Bishop of Valliposita consecrated Msgr. **Martin Jumoad**, Bishop Prelate of Isabela, born at Kinasang-am. Pardo (Cebu) 11 November 1956; priest 7 April 1983; named 21 November 2001.

The Changing Image of Bishops*

LEONARDO LEGASPI, OP, DD

The topic of my talk is on "The Changing Image of Bishops." The context from which this topic emerged was the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops whose theme was "The Bishop: Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World." I wish to try as much as possible to elaborate this topic directly from the primary documents of the Synod and to avoid giving you my own interpretations. The synodal documents I refer to are the *Instrumentum Laboris*, the opening and closing homilies of the Pope, the *relatio ante* and *post disceptationem*, and selections from the personal interventions of the bishops.

It is also useful to situate the topic of my talk within the total context of the synod. The synod's main thrust is on the bishop as a servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world. Its key terms are "servanthood", the "Gospel of Jesus Christ", and "hope of the world". Our talk today is on a sub-topic of this

*Talk delivered by His Grace, Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, OP, DD, Archbishop of Caceres during the CBCP Seminar on Bishops Concerns, Betania Retreat House, Tagaytay City, January 2002.

overarching theme. Nevertheless, it is an important corollary to it - because it helps develop what kind of image a servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should possess and what personal changes or conversion he should undergo if he is to be a sign of hope.

In our topic, the operative words are "change" and "image." They need to be clarified. What do they mean? What change is in question here? Is it a change that puts aside outdated images and the adoption of those deemed more attuned to modern times? Or rather, is it to restore past images abandoned in the rush to be more fashionable to contemporary demands? Which image of the bishop is affected by this process of change? Is it his image as a pastor? As an administrator? As a mediator in times of social and political unrest?

The intent of the Synod was certainly not to change the essential identity of the bishop. This identity is permanent. It is that sacred character, both ontological and spiritual, imprinted by the grace of the Holy Spirit on the Bishop-elect making him the living image of Christ, Teacher, Shepherd, High Priest. Rather than dealing with a drastic, radical change in the identity of bishops, the synodal discussions were concerned with discerning what relevant images should be drawn out and emphasized from our traditional triple *munera* of teaching, sanctifying and governing. The Synod was concerned, therefore, not with a metamorphosis or radical change of identity but with reflections and insights on what today's bishops should be and should do, what spiritual values and temporal roles and functions should be emphasized in the light of recent historical and pastoral events affecting the Church.

In the light of historical and pastoral events - this Synod began barely three weeks after that horrendous event of September 11th. Fresh in the minds of all, including those of the synodal participants, were the electrifying images of two passenger planes slicing

into twin office buildings. In my own intervention, I noted that in the aftermath of these terrorist attacks, there lay in ruins not only buildings, but also the hopes and dreams of modern men and women for a better world. Once again, the whole of creation groans in travail as we witness today the tragic result of what St. Augustine saw in the 5th century, namely, that the City of Man founded on self-love is essentially a divided city, a civilization of confusion and strife.

And into this landscape of despair, this Synod of Bishops entered bearing a message of hope. The question is whether the world will take notice, listen and believe in our message. In his homily at the Synod's opening Mass, Pope John Paul II also referred to this problem of credibility. The widely read Catholic weekly THE TABLET noted in its editorial that the Synod offered little by way of surprises or fresh ideas. It urged the bishops to be bolder, recalling what the Pope declared in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* that this is a time for boldness. The question being asked in media was whether the Synod bishops failed to courageously confront and deal with the harsh realities of today's world? We ourselves are confronted with such a question and as we read and listen to the synodal discussions, we hopefully will receive insights that will help us reflect on our own response to contemporary problems.

It is not an easy task, as you can readily imagine, to synthesize the interventions of some 250 bishops from 110 countries and whose topics ranged widely from the spirituality of bishops to collegiality and decentralization, from formation of catechists to translation of liturgical books, from the need of ongoing formation for bishops to the uniqueness of monastic life in the Church.

Thus I saw the need for my sharing today with you to have a conceptual framework that could somehow help you who were

not at the synod, to catch the flavor and the spirit behind its many varied inputs. One intervention impressed me as being able to situate us in this matter, namely, that of Bishop Raymond J. Lahey of St. George's, Canada. His contribution bore the title: "The Bishop: Sacrament of God's Visitation". Permit me to quote lengthily from his paper since I think it offers us an orientation useful in ordering and sorting out the varied array of synodal ideas.

Bishop Lahey begins by emphasizing that, although the episcopal office is generally understood in terms of **what the bishop does**, it is more urgent to recognize **who the bishop is** for God's people. Who then is the bishop? To start with, we should go back to the Greek etymology of the term "episcopo" whose usual translation is "oversight". Thus, some Protestant reformers at times translated *episkopos* functionally as "overseer" and described bishops as "superintendents". But in the New Testament, the primary understanding of "episcopo" comes instead from its verb - "episkeptomai" meaning "to visit", specifically the visitation of God.

Thus, notes Bishop Lahey, it is important for us to understand that in the New Testament, the primary meaning of *episcopo* is the visitation of God in Jesus Christ and only secondarily is it the administrative usage of "overseer". The bishop is then the one most entrusted specifically with the duty to keep in the grace of God's visitation the local church under his care, so that in its midst, the visit made 'once-and-for-all' in Jesus Christ becomes present anew from age to age. Thus the bishop comes primarily among his people not as "overseer" but as "visitor" who keeps alive the saving mysteries. He is for and with the local church - the sacrament of God's visitation in Christ Jesus. And Bishop Lahey beautifully expands this theme as he notes: "This renewed biblical understanding allows us to see the bishop above all else as the sacrament of God's mercy, for mercy is the first characteristic of the divine visitation."

In conclusion, the Canadian bishop reflected that "This consistent proclamation, celebration, and living out of the grace of God's merciful visitation will keep the local church from any perception of being a church that excludes, and will conform it, instead, to the image of Christ, its great Shepherd and Bishop, who came to rescue the lost and the scattered. Its qualities will be compassion, healing, forgiveness and welcome... It is this experience of the local church as a place where God's mercy is truly encountered that will bring people of every time and every place to proclaim anew: 'God has visited his people'." The bishop, then, is truly an apostle of hope.

In his opening homily, the Holy Father, spelled out his emphasis on the need "for the Shepherds' word to be credible" by giving "proof of a conduct detached from private interests..." The Pope reminded the bishops to take the route of poverty, pointedly saying: "We, venerable Brothers, are incited to look into ourselves about our attitude towards earthly goods and about the use made of them. We are asked to verify to what point in the Church the personal and community conversion has achieved towards an effective evangelical poverty." It was an emphasis that one European media observer said startled the bishops, some of whom go in and out of the synod in their limousines. But it is also an emphasis that our Archbishop Quevedo echoed in his intervention made on October 5th when he said: "To image the poor Jesus today, we Bishops must also be with the poor to present Jesus as their hope... Above all we need to be poor. This requires profound conversion of heart so that we may have the mindset and the values of the poor Christ..." It was a much-appreciated reflection. Archbishop Quevedo concludes by noting that "As a bishop I can only be poor if I follow the pattern of the Incarnation. With God's grace, through immersion in the lives of the poor, I take on the condition of the poor. I become poor in spirit and in

fact. My own evangelical poverty would be an eloquent sign to the poor of God's love of preference for them. Even then, at the end of every day, the Spirit of God will surely stir my heart with the questions: "Am I truly a Shepherd and Servant of the Poor? Are they my friends with whom I spend quality time? By my life and ministry, am I truly the sign of Christ who is the *Spes Pauperum*?"

Many of the synodal interventions depicted various images of the bishop derived from his vocation and ministry. The *Relatio Post Disceptationem*, the document which summarized the interventions and was preparatory to the discussions within the Working Groups, pointed out the variety of these images. In hopefully readable Latin, it stated: *Agitur de imaginibus pastoris, piscatoris, solliciti custodis, patris, fratris, amidi, consolatoris, servi, magistri, viri fortis, sacramenti bonitatis, etc. Agitur de imaginibus quae Episcopum praesentant tamquam virum fidei et virum visionis, virum spei et virum luctae, virum mansuetudinis et virum communionis.*

That is quite a comprehensive list but Archbishop Ivan Dias of Bombay added another one. He said: "Besides the three icons presented in the *Instrumentum Laboris* to illustrate the image of the bishop as servant-leader, namely, the Good Shepherd, the Fisher of men and Jesus washing the feet of His apostles, there is yet another icon which expresses it meaningfully: namely, Jesus going up to Jerusalem on a donkey's back. Like that, donkey - which symbolizes humility, docility and service - a bishop must lift Jesus high in his life..."

Suffice it to say that the *Relatio* did not pick up this image. Instead, the Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, chose the image of the Good Shepherd as the image that best depicts the Bishop. It is the image of the *Bonus*

Pastor qui dat vitam pro ovibus suis. Linked to this image is the need for courage to face today's de-Christianized society to which the bishop must be a witness of hope. A bishop must be a guide, a spiritual leader who indicates the path to be trodden. He must be a father to his priest, one who educates, encourages, guides and connects them. He must promote collaboration through dialogue and he must know how to listen and arrive at a decision based on his conscience and not rely on the majority opinion of advisers.

Cardinal Jean Honore, the archbishop emeritus of Tours, France pointed out four dimensions that allow us to recognize the good shepherds. These are: (1) nearness to the People of God entrusted to them; (2) privileged attention towards priests; (3) welcoming new forms of institutes of priest and of the consecrated life; and (4) a predilection for the poor.

The archbishop of Bogota, Colombia, Cardinal Pedro Rubiano Saenz, whose Church as he says is in a permanent situation of conflict, added that the bishop must proclaim the truth with courage and clarity, defend life and promote human rights. He must not be tempted to use the weapons of the mercenary but those of the Good Shepherd, namely, reconciliation, forgiveness, Christian love extended to enemies and persecutors.

A useful source for finding a good summation of the synodal suggestions related to the changing image of the bishop are the reports of the various language working groups. Archbishop Quevedo was the relator or rapporteur of the English Working Group A - which made these recommendations: (1) the bishop as promoter of affective collegiality; (2) the bishop as teacher of faith and of the spiritual life. These recommendations were echoed by the Spanish Working Group B who also underlined the image of the bishop as teacher of faith and doctor of truth and as disciple and teacher of the spiritual life. It also listed the bishop as animator

of life in the parish and as promoter of vocations. I shall not expand on these images since the themes of spirituality and communio will be developed by the other speakers.

Given all these multiple images with their constant demands and increasing responsibilities, the bishop finds himself overwhelmed and runs the risk of becoming, what is described in popular terms, a "burnt-out" case. Thus, a number of interventions highlighted the need for what Bishop Joseph Cheng Tsai-fa of Tainan, Taiwan described as "harmony between the divine and the human and to find an equilibrium based on the humanity of Jesus Christ. In this regard, the bishop of Broken Bay, Australia, warned against the eccentricities of bishops which produce frustration and helplessness among the people of God. This happens when the episcopal ministry is seen as a special status rather than as a servant role; a career path for bishops rather than a life devoted to service.

Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Belgium noted that the bishop lives amidst paradoxes - he must be everything at the same time - preacher, sanctifier, pastor. He must be forceful yet merciful. The Cardinal wryly remarks that only Jesus Christ is capable of bearing all these titles and putting them into practice.

Cardinal Re also echoed the recommendation given earlier by Joseph Cheng of Taiwan. The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops must fully appreciate the burdens we bishops carry when he advised us to take care of cultivating a lifestyle that favors serenity and equilibrium, so that goodness, comprehension, hope and encouragement may be found in us. In this connection, several speakers talked of the need for the permanent formation of bishops in order, as Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, pointed out that we be more able to revive the gift of God which was entrusted to us in our episcopal ordination. This need was emphasized by the President of the

Episcopal Conference of the Netherlands, Cardinal Johannes Adrianus Simonis, archbishop of Utrecht. He said: "I was young and inexperienced then when, thirty years ago, I began as a Bishop. Thinking back, I understand how important formation is, but also how difficult it is to find a place for it in an already full agenda. Therefore, I hope that there will be some impetus from the outside that, for example, indicates a framework to integrate permanent formation in our life as bishops."

Still on this subject, Bishop Donald James Reece of Antigua and Barbados, remarked on the need for bishops to have a sabbatical during which they could take refresher courses in the area not only of doctrine but also on scientific and technological developments that impinge on the nature and dignity of the human person, or affect the progress of peoples in their struggle for justice and peace. He wonders whether a further devolution of ministries would give bishops more time and opportunity to focus on those matters linked to their three-fold munera. Bishop Reece concludes that our modern times call for "new methodology, new expressions, and new fervour."

This brings to mind the intervention of Bishop Cyril Baselios Malancharuvil, metropolitan archbishop of Trivandrum of the Syro-Malankars, India. He cites the need to distinguish between the ideal image we bishops ought to bear from that actual image we have in the exercise of our ministry. And here the good bishop cites this story. Once there was a funeral at which many glowing speeches were made glorifying the deceased. At the end of the speeches, the widow was so confused that she asked her son to go back and check if it is truly his father who was in the coffin and the object of all the praises. Bishop Cyril then concludes that there is need to narrow this discrepancy between the ideal and the actual by our example of shepherding the flock of Christ rather than lording it over them.

The Archbishop of Vrhbosna who is also the President of the Episcopal Conference of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cardinal Vinko Puljic, has comments that might interest some of us who have made pilgrimages to that area. He talks of relationships with religious, saying: "While most of the consecrated persons operating on the territory of the local ecclesial districts remain faithful to the charism of their Institutes and commit themselves without reservation to the promotion of apostolic works for the good of the Church and civic society, unfortunately, certain members of the Order of Franciscan Friars Minor and those expelled try to impose their own points of view in the individual dioceses, substituting the authentic charisms of their Institute with pseudo-charisms, a serious threat for the Church and for her... unity."

With such problems, one no longer wonder why bishops age quickly.

The archbishop of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Cardinal Bernard Agre, had some observations of interest to bishops from the Third World. He spoke of the temptations or tensions which bishops face. He notes that the fact that bishops can be very efficient and creative could make them appear as nothing more than directors or administrators or project managers of NGOs. He also talks of the growing gap between North and South. The treatment from people of the North is at times one of deception. The poor South is like the half-dead traveler on his way to Jericho, whom Luke wrote about. The rich North refuses to stop and aid him, demanding instead in the name of "the new conditions of international aid" that the South lift themselves up. But when the economy and interests of the North are threatened, overnight aid is unblocked and funds start flowing. This incoherent policy and the unjust poverty that results are felt by the bishop. He awakens the conscience of the powerful and of the small; he participates in the struggle against famine, endemic AIDS and tries to bring reconcili-

ation in the midst of armed conflicts. For these actions, seen as political, he is applauded by some and calumniated and detested by others. Thus the bishop is constantly torn apart and divided.

The many new burdens today's bishop has to confront and bear were also recognized in the *Relatio Ante Discepcionem*. It noted that an overview of the tasks facing bishops can be very unsettling. "How, we might ask ourselves, can we ever hope to deal with all of this? Morfe humans that we are, are we striving beyond our capacities?"

"The high demands of the episcopacy are truly fearsome" - this was the conclusion of Bishop John Lee Hiong Fun-Yit Yaw of Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. He proposes then that bishop-elects must be given sufficient opportunities to be informed, exposed, and formed before assuming office. He cites the need to re-look at the practical and human needs of the bishop. He notes that traditionally, the retirement age of a bishop is 75 years. But in his view, people in the tropics begin to lose vitality, both physically and mentally by the time they are 70 years old. At this age, some bishops in the tropics feel hesitant to make decisions or else delay giving directions on vital matters. His conclusion? We "should be merciful" and permit these bishops, presumably from tropical climes (like ours?) to have the option to retire at 70 years (!).

Mercifully, there was silence in the aula after that recommendation.

In contrast, media was quite talkative about issues, which though important, seemed to me of secondary importance to the overall theme of the Synod. I refer to the question of the synodal procedures. It was reported by media that having to listen to some 200 plus interventions while seated in a poorly ventilated aula, the bishops had to struggle mightily against being bored. Some succumbed, causing the lodging of complaints from bishops who

said they could not hear what was being said because of their neighbor's snoring. But, in my opinion, this was not a problem for the bishops coming from the tropics - since we are used to warm and crowded conditions and have the endurance to give or listen to long speeches.

A number of criticisms regarding the synodal procedures were voiced, but it was Cardinal Danneels who offered concrete ways for their improvement. He suggested that the individual interventions be printed beforehand and distributed for reading outside the synod hall. This would avoid having to listen for two weeks to speeches. A committee would synthesize the main ideas and then present them for discussion in a plenary session. The Belgian cardinal spoke of the possibility of convening Synods more frequently, but with a more restricted number of participants and with only one or two themes to be fully discussed. However, the *relatio* which was presented after the conclusion of the interventions and which was intended to prepare for the discussions within the Working Groups, made no mention of this problem nor of the suggestions offered for reforming the synodal process.

The critiques given should not minimize the deserved recognition of the diligent preparatory work and the helpful documents from the Council and staff of Cardinal Jan Schotte, CICM, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops. I wish to take special note of the 124-page *Instrumentum Laboris* whose comprehensive exposition of the main ideas derived from the Synod's theme provided many invaluable insights for the bishops. A cursory look at its Index will confirm this. The *Instrumentum Laboris* has five chapters under the following headings: (1) A Ministry of Hope; (2) The Mystery, Ministry and Spirituality of the Bishop. This second chapter has these sub-headings: (a) The mystery and grace of the episcopate; (b) the sanctification of his ministry; (c) the spiritual itinerary of the bishop. The third chapter's title is: The Episcopate: the ministry

of communion and mission in the universal church. The fourth chapter, entitled: the bishop in service to his church - is amplified carefully in the following subtitles: (a) the bishop in his particular church; (b) communion and mission in the particular church; (c) the episcopal ministry in service to the Gospel. The fifth and final chapter ties everything together and links the previous chapters to the Synod's main theme: In service to the Gospel for the hope of the world.

I recommend that you obtain a copy. You will, I am confident, find much inspiration and useful reflections in its pages. This *Instrumentum Laboris* can be found in the Internet at the Vatican website which, is: <http://www.vatican.va>

In the early part of my talk, I had noted the reflections of the Canadian bishop, Raymond Lahey. You will recall his observation that it is the experience of the local church as a place where God's mercy is truly encountered that will bring people of every time and every place to proclaim anew: "God has visited his people". We can now consider some statements made in the Synod which reflect this idea of people experiencing the church as a place of God's mercy.

Our own Bishop Ramon C. Arguelles dwelt on the need to care for the needs of the more than seven million Filipinos scattered in two hundred nations around the globe. This implies that bishops of both the Church *a quo* (from where the migrants came) and the Church *ad quern* (to where the migrants went) need to transcend the interests of their national borders and adopt a universal perspective, protecting the rights of all displaced persons and alleviating the pain of exile suffered by migrants, as well as recognizing their evangelical potential. This means, observed Archbishop Gaudencio B. Rosales of Lipa, that bishops "must be more sensitive to suffering, more compassionate, more self-sacrificing, more forgiving, more encouraging, hopeful and brave."

For the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper, the bishop of today must possess an ecumenical spirit. For this well-known theologian, "the ecumenical issue is not an accessory. It is the center of the pastoral work of the bishop. The ecumenical commitment is one of the great challenges at the beginning of the new millennium". He emphasized that ecumenism *ad extra*, namely, dialogue with other Christians has as precondition, ecumenism *ad intra*, namely, we must achieve spirituality of communion first of all in ourselves in order to present a welcoming Church to other ecclesial communities. It is perhaps of some interest to note that Cardinal Kasper did not talk about the relationship between the universal church and the local church - an issue where he differs from that officially espoused by the other famous German theologian, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. It was the Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano who, speaking two days after Cardinal Kasper, mentioned briefly but pointedly that "before the local Church, the universal Church existed, and this both ontologically and temporally." Cardinal Kasper disagrees with this position and argues for the simultaneous pre-existence of the universal church and the particular churches. However, this controversy was not picked up in this Synod, since it was not intended to be forum for theological debates but rather, a fraternal meeting *cum et sub Petro* on pastoral matters.

We have chosen from the synodal interventions many images of the bishop: the man of compassion, the apostle of hope, the defender of the poor, the teacher of faith, the servant of the People of God, father to his priests, consoler of the afflicted. But as the Synod progressed, there was one image that kept intruding into these more or less pleasant images of the bishop - the suffering image of bishops in conflict-torn areas. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Bishop Michel Sabbah, is an example. At the synod he reminded

us that "it is in the domain of justice and peace, where hate and death often reign that the bishop is invited to make known the love of God for all human people and all peoples without distinction... However, this sometimes requires the bishop to go against the current of a regional position or even of world opinion... it is required of the bishop to be a prophet who makes the right word reach as far as the oppressor as well as the oppressed." In this period of terrorism, his perspective was of someone at the frontlines of death. He analyzed the causes of terrorism as he said: "The Word of God starts from Jerusalem; but also war and peace start from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the city of the roots for the whole Church, thus for all bishops. It is the Bishop's duty to help human society in the struggle against terrorism. It is his duty to help identify the roots of evil: to know political injustice, as for example, the destiny of the people of Palestine; ... and the embargo on Iraq which makes life inhuman to millions of innocent people... That is where the deep causes of terrorism lie and where the bishops should help the international community to have the courage to tackle the situation and find a solution."

The archbishop of Bogota, Columbia, Cardinal Pedro Rubiano Saenz continues this theme of life and death. He shared with us his country's continuing tragedy, a condition not unknown to us and from its fullness we pray God's mercy will spare us. Cardinal Saenz said: "The scourge of guerrilla warfare and drug trafficking has put the Church in Columbia in a permanent situation of conflict... Evangelization thus implies a vocation for martyrdom and in fact we have a long list of martyrs: a bishop has been murdered by a guerrilla group, another has been kidnapped twice, others have been threatened; priests, religious and pastoral agents have died in terrorist attacks... there was the case of a mass kidnapping in the middle of the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist; two priests are in the hands of guerrillas today." In this situation,

the bishop must, said the Cardinal from Columbia, be a "witness of hope, proclaiming the truth with courage and clarity... in an area of conflict he is the Minister par excellence of Reconciliation and Forgiveness, who perseveres in Christian love, who loves his enemies and forgives those who persecute us." Brave and challenging words from a brave man.

The churches in Rwanda and Sudan likewise face similar conditions of internecine, bloody warfare. Rwanda, for example, as described by Bishop Anastase Mutabazi of Kabgavi, is plagued by ethnic wars, the unceasing flow of refugees, the great number of widows and orphans, the devastation of AIDS and a runaway poverty condition. The theme was: "We are all brothers. Stop the war!" Sudan, on the other hand, confronts the problem of religious persecution due to that country's systematic campaign of Islamisation and Arabisation. The government carries out frequent aerial bombardment of civilian targets to drive people from oil-rich areas.

Thus far, in my talk today, I have tried to share with you the thoughts and hopes and prayers of the Fathers of the Synod - quoting their words directly and minimizing as much as possible any interpretations coming from me.

Having said that, allow me now to give some personal reflections on selected topics treated in the Synod.

On the permanent formation of bishops. Here I saw four approaches, namely:

1. The development of a spirituality of attention and marvel. Like a true "pontifex", the bishop must build a bridge between the Gospel and the world. The spirit of God acts therein, even in the person still searching.
2. Acquiring the necessary abilities to bear witness in our times. The bishop must be well informed of the development of society. He must also learn how to find the right words and

use the right tone, starting from an authentic faith. In this way, the bishop acquires great respect when he intervenes in public life.

3. Keeping up with developments in the theological sciences. These are continuously growing so that it would be unfortunate not to keep up with them.
4. Learning how to collaborate. Collaboration with his priests and deacons and certainly with lay men and women is an enrichment for the bishop and at the same time is a continuous learning process.

On the role of the Bishop today. The bishop is no longer simply a pious private believer, but a public witness. He must confront problems not only to save himself but also to defend the faith, to correct errors and deepen the discernment on reality. He cannot set himself apart from the actual situation of faith in society, but must give testimony to the faith while also considering the factors of danger and harm. The power of the bishop for *testimonium fidei* is not restricted to prayer only. He is also responsible for doctrinal judgment, which comes above all from the power of governing and which calls for the setting of regulations, the correction of errors and promotion of justice relevant to the doctrine of faith. The *potestas testandi* reaches its fullness in the *potestas judicandi*. In consequence, bishops are not only called to bear witness, feed and care and form the faith, but also to judge it, and impose discipline accordingly.

On the bishop as keeping watch over his flock. The bishop is one who keeps watch. He cares for hope as he watches over his people; he pays attention to where danger lies. This image is one of the strongest in the book of Exodus. There, Yahweh is the one who will keep watch over his people. Keeping watch is quite different from overseeing. To oversee refers more to the care of doctrine and of customs, while to keep watch is to allude more

to the act of caring. To watch over speaks of one on the lookout for signs of imminent danger. To keep watch implies that one is in control. It speaks of hope, hope whose source is in the merciful Father who keeps watch over the movements of the heart of His children. Together with this image of Yahweh watching over the exodus of His people, we also recall the more familiar image of St. Joseph as he keeps watch until sleep overtakes him and brings him dreams of the Child and His mother. From his keeping watch, there grows in St. Joseph a love for deep silence.

To end my sharing of synodal highlights related to the changing image of the bishop, I quote from the closing homily of the Pope who said: "In these weeks the image of the Good Shepherd was recalled many times in the Synod. In fact, it is the 'icon' that inspired many holy bishops down through the centuries, and which, better than any other, defines the ministry and life style of the successors of the Apostles... At the dawn of the third millennium, the Church continues to rely on the ideal figure of the bishop, that of the Pastor who, configured to Christ in holiness of life, expends himself generously for the Church entrusted to him, at the same time carrying in his heart the solicitude for the churches spread over the face of the earth."

As I left the Synod, I brought with me a deep sense of admiration and respect that grew with each day in the process of listening and relating to bishops from all over the world. They did not give the impression that they were out to display their theological knowledge nor to boast of their pastoral successes. They were simple, humble men talking about problems often beyond their capacities to solve and dangers beyond their control to eliminate. These they faced daily with quiet fortitude and faithful perseverance. Their natural humility and courage left a deep impression in me; I was proud to be in the company of such men, thankful to the Church for having chosen and consecrated such men to carry on the work of Jesus Christ. It changed my own image of myself as a bishop - hopefully for the better.

Preparing for the International Meeting of Families, January 2003: A Spiritual and Ecclesial Itinerary

EMMANUEL MIJARES

We are still unable to forget what our eyes saw on television: the huge disaster that hit the United States, in New York and Washington: terrifying events which convinced us that together with the great good that undeniably exists on our planet, the spirit of evil is alive more than ever before. With diabolic light it can carry out acts of destruction capable of plunging all humanity into anguish.

How can we face such power, and not surrender to it?

All free spirits of the world are rebelling against it; governments are working to hold it back militarily and politically?

And what about us? What should we do as individuals and as expression of an ecclesial reality, like the family to successfully deal with the problems of our world today? If others have intensified their revolution aimed at the triumph of evil, if they have prepared themselves for this, also personally, with a long and demanding discipline, if they have demonstrated that they are ready

to die for their ideas, do we not feel that the hour has arrived to risk everything for the triumph of good?

Thus started the tone of Chiara Lubich in addressing in a monthly telephone conference call to at least 2 million Catholics and men of good will all over the world. This invitation could be taken also by all Christian families who are preparing for the International Meeting of Families in Manila next year.

As to the how is the purpose of this article which I would like to offer to all families and family movements in the church.

First we have to know our right place in the church. St. Therese of the Child Jesus became a reformer until now in the church because she discovered her place. One physical scientist once said: "bring me in the right place and I will move the earth". Our ecclesiological place in the Church springs from the following considerations:

1. Right understanding of your identity as laity.

You are the laity, i.e., all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. This, however is more negative definition. In a positive way, the lay are those who, by baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."¹ Since you are incorporated into Christ through baptism you constitute the People of God. The Second Vatican Council, opened itself to a positive vision and asserts "the full belonging of the lay faithful to the Church and to its mystery. At the same time it insisted on the unique character of their vocation."² You "ought to have an ever

¹ LG, 31.

² Christifideles Laici, 9.

clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church."³

2. *Right understanding of Vatican II ecclesiology:*

Before Vatican II, there was an accentuation of hierarchical and pyramidal aspect of the Church. Yves Congar says regarding this matter, "the Church was presented... as an organized society, constituted by the exercise of those powers invested in the Pope, the bishops, the priests." After Vatican II the Church was presented as mystery of communion of the Trinity.⁴ "*Communio* is the foundation on which the Church's reality is based. It is a *koinonia* that has its source in the very mystery of the Triune God and extends to all the baptized."⁵

The Trinitarian origin of the Church is presented by describing the economy of salvation: the finality of the most free and hidden, i.e., the gratuitous and ineffable plan of the Father is the elevation of mankind to the participation of the divine life in communion with the Trinity: "the eternal Father, with a most free and hidden plan of wisdom and goodness, created the universe and decreed to raise mankind to the participation of the divine life."⁶

The unity of mankind with God and of men and women among themselves fulfilled in the reconciling action of the Incarnate Word, is actualized historically in the Church and will be fulfilled in glory: "He planned to assemble in the Holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. She was prepared for

³ Pius XII, Discourse to the New Cardinals, 29 February: AAS 38 (1946), 149.

⁴ *Christifideles Laid*, 19.

⁵ John Paul II "Vatican II was the Spirit's gift to the Church." in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition), #10, 8 March 2000, p. 4.

⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 2.

in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the old covenant. Established in the final era, the Church was made manifest by the outpouring of the Spirit. At the end of the times she will achieve her glorious fulfillment. Then as maybe read in the Holy Father, all just men from the time of Adam from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church." (LG, 2). This affirms that the Church in its visible and historical form is the sacrament that is the sign and chosen instrument, of the divine plan of the unity which stretches from the creation to the parousia. In other words the Church is the historical participation in the Trinitarian unity, the actualization began under the veil of the signs of salvation which springs from the divine initiative, the mystery of the sacrament "of the intimate union with God and the unity of the whole human race." (LG,1).

The church is the sign and sacrament of this trinitarian unity. She is structured in her communion according to the image and likeness of the Trinitarian communion. (LG, 8) This self definition of the Church maintains its distance both from uniformity and from all divisive discord, (cf. LG chapters II-IV).

We should have a certain change of mentality from a pyramidal concept of the church towards a Trinitarian concept, the one of "communio" which is the essence of the church. The plan of God is that "the whole human race might become one People of God, [hierarchy and laity alike] form one body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit." This intention of the Creator will only be realize "when all who possess human nature, and have been generated in Christ through the Holy Spirit, gazing together on the glory of God, will be able to say 'Our Father',⁷ i.e., to become one big family of God in communion

⁷ PCP II, Art 102.

with one another. Vatican II certainly represents the ecclesiology of communion, as affirmed by the *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. For the Pope, the "the domain of communion (*koinonia*), . . . embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church. Communion is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the Eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us (cf. Rom 5:5), to make us all "one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). This is an important area in which there has to be commitment and planning on the part of the universal Church and the particular Churches."⁸

As lay faithful, rather than giving emphasis to our distinction as laymen, or lay movement from the hierarchy, more than to our unity with the whole church, we should be having the time to undergo a certain conversion in our mentality that unity with the whole church is fundamentally and ontologically prior than our distinction as lay faithful with the same hierarchy. Like in the pedagogy of revelation, God first revealed Himself as one and then through Christ's passion, death and resurrection we were able to receive the revelation that God is three persons, distinct but one.

In the idealized picture of the early Jerusalem community and in Paul's description of the Church as the body of Christ we can see the following characteristics of the Church. There is first of all the unity of the believers. But this unity is a unity in diversity. In the Church there are different charisms and ministries but there is only one body. The diversity does not destroy the unity. But it brings out the complementarity and necessary contribution of the different charisms and ministries. Sharing and mutual interaction of the different members also characterize the Church. This mentality is necessary to see other family movements as really part of the same family of the church.

⁸ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 42.

3. *Right awareness of the criteria of ecclesiality:*⁹

Any family movement or ecclesial reality in the church has to be conscious, therefore of her ecclesial identity. The following basic criteria might be helpful in evaluating any association, movement or reality of the lay faithful in the Church as to whether they are more inserted in her bosom.

a) The primary importance of the call of every Christian to holiness, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful" and in a growth towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity. Whatever association of the lay faithful there might be in the church, they have always to be more an instrument leading to holiness in the Church, through fostering and promoting "a more intimate unity between the everyday life of its members and their faith".

b) Present should be the responsibility of professing the Catholic faith, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium, as the Church interprets it. For this reason every association of the lay faithful must be a forum where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content.

c) The witness to a strong and authentic communion in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible center of unity of the universal Church, and with the local bishop "the visible principle and foundation of unity" in the particular church, and in "mutual esteem for all forms of the church apostolate". The communion with Pope and bishop must be expressed in loyal readiness to embrace the doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives of both Pope and Bishop. Moreover, church communion demands both an acknowledgement

⁹ cf. *Christifideles Laid*, 30.

of a legitimate plurality of forms in the associations of the lay faithful in the Church and at the same time, willingness to cooperate in working together.

d) Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals, i.e., "evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of the people's conscience, so as to enable them to infuse the spirit of the Gospel into the various communities and spheres of life." From this perspective, every one of the group forms of the lay faithful is asked to have a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participates in a re-evangelization.

e) A commitment to a presence in human society, which in light of the Church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person.

Therefore, association of the lay faithful must become fruitful outlets for participation and solidarity in bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society.

The fundamental criteria mentioned at this time find their verification in the actual fruits that Various group forms show in their organizational life and the works they perform, such as the renewed appreciation for prayer, contemplation, liturgical and sacramental life, the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life; a readiness to participate in programmes and Church activities at the local, national and international levels; a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians; a desire to be present as Christians in various settings of social life and the creation and awakening of charitable, cultural and spiritual works the spirit of detachment and evangelical poverty leading to a greater generosity in charity towards all; conversion to the Christian life or the return to the Church communion of those baptized members who have fallen away from the faith.

4. *Right understanding of the relationship between the clergy and the laity.*

We can understand better therefore the laity in its prior relation to the Church as *communio* especially its special link with the hierarchy. They are related to and with one another in a reciprocal ordering of one priesthood in Christ towards one another. *Lumen Gentium* says: "Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless ordered to each other. Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ."¹⁰ This specificity of the priesthood of the ordained ministry cannot be defined as a greater intensity (essence in scholasticism would mean all ways of existence, and this exaggerates the difference and cannot be accepted in the light of Vatican II which clearly sees each priesthood ordered to each other) or a lesser intensity since the ordained priesthood is seen within the total context of the wider ministeriality of the Church. But rather, on the basis of the participation of all the baptized in Christ's priesthood, which is the foundation of the unity prior to any distinction.

The ministry of the ministerial priesthood does not exhaust the ministry of the Church, rather the ordained ministry - of bishop, presbyter or deacon - because it acts *in persona Christi capitis*" i.e., in so far as it is a ministry of communion and unity, refers and relates to all the other members of the body to the varied

¹⁰ *LG*, 10. The formula "essential et non grad tantum", phrased so carefully in the conciliar text, has to be interpreted from its historical origin: it comes from an allocution of Pope Pius XII (Nov. 2, 1954) which was used in refuting any idea of a delegation or a parity (equality) in the relationship between community and sacred ministers.

" *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.

charisms and services. The ordained ministry is a ministry of synthesis but it is not a synthesis of all ministry.¹²

5. *Right understanding of the Co-essentiality between the Institutional and the Charismatic Dimension of the Church.*

It is also said that this millennium is not anymore the winter but the springtime of the Church. Thanks to these new manifestations of the Holy Spirit through the ecclesial movements and new communities.

There is a need however for a theological locus to situate these movements. What theological schemes should we build for them? Pastorally parish priests could face problems and difficulties, in as much as these movements have new features and sometimes do not fit to their pastoral programs. On the other hand leaders of movements find themselves uneasy in front of their parish priests and bishops if some directives, which sometimes are not in tune with the parochial or diocesan programs, come directly from the national or international secretariate and they need to coordinate these directives with the local church.

One could think only in terms of the binomials and polarity between the institutional church and the charismatic church, between Christology and pneumatology, between hierarchy and charisms, between the particular and universal church, between the apostles in the church and the prophets in the church, etc., and fail to see the creativity of the Holy Spirit. The formulation however purports a certain tension, even if it is healthy, between the two, which sometimes are considered polarizing dimensions in the church.

¹² cf. Bruno Forte, *The Church, Icon of the Trinity*, St. Pauls Publication, Manila, 1990, 49-51.

John Paul II, instead, on the occasion of Pentecost of 1998, the year dedicated to the Holy Spirit, underlined that the institutional and charismatic dimensions "are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because they contribute together to rendering present the mystery of Christ and his salvific work in the world."¹³ They contribute, although differently, to the life, renewal and sanctification of God's People.

The Pope refers, in his address, to the ecclesiological vision outlined by the Second Vatican Council. He said: "With the Second Vatican Council, the Comforter recently gave the Church, which according to the Fathers is the place "where the Spirit flourishes" (CCC n. 749), a renewed Pentecost, instilling a new and unforeseen dynamism."

"Whenever the spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Council during which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church rediscovered the charismatic dimension of one of her constitutive elements.

In fact, the dogmatic constitution of the Church, *Lumen gentium*, teaches in n. 4 that the Holy Spirit guides the Church . . . "and gives her a unity of fellowship and service. He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic," and n. 12 further specifies: "It is not only through the sacraments and Church ministries that the same Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the People of God and enriches it with virtues. Allotting his gifts 'to everyone according as he wills' (1 Cor. 12:11). He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By

¹³ John Paul II, Address to half a million members of ecclesial movements from around the world gathered in St. Peter's Square, May 30, 1999. "L'Osservatore Romano", n. 22, 3 June 1998.

these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices advantageous for the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (1 Cor. 12:7)."

From its origins and then unceasingly throughout the centuries, the Church has always experienced that she is generated and built up, at the same time and in providential synergy, by what the Council calls "hierarchical gifts", constituting the institutional dimension of the Church, and by what the Council defines as the "charismatic gifts", constituting its charismatic dimension. Both dimensions are in answer to the promise that the risen Lord made to the apostles before ascending to heaven, as the guarantee of the effectiveness of their mission in the world: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt. 28:19-20).¹⁴

Therefore it is the same Holy Spirit which is the origin and dispenser of both hierarchical gifts and charismatic gifts. "There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries distributes his different gift for the welfare of the Church" (cf. 1 Cor 12:1-11).

Among these gifts stands out the grace given to the Apostles. To their authority, the Spirit himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms (cf. 1 Cor 14). Giving the body unity through himself and through his power and through the internal cohesion of its members, this same Spirit produces and urges love among the believers." (LG, n. 7)¹⁵

¹⁴ Piero Ceda, *The Charisms and Co-Essentiality*. Talk given to the participants of "Speyer 1999 Meeting: Towards Communion among Lay Movements and new Ecclesial Realities", June 7-8 1999, Speyer, Germany.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

The institutional aspect of the church, which ultimately is concretized in and by Holy Orders, ultimately also come from the Holy Spirit. In fact, those who are normally ordained to the sacred orders, first of all experienced a call from the Holy Spirit and the church founded through the Pentecost, only affirms and confirms it. Now, if Sacred orders, the hierarchical gifts, come from the same Holy spirit, the same source of charismatic gifts and expresses itself in history through ecclesial movements, pastorally, the ordained minister would immediately find a unifying instinct if not a nostalgia towards them, finding in them the imprint of the same Holy Spirit that he received sacramentally in ordination. In the same way, members of new ecclesial movements and communities have to be instinctively one with their pastors because the hierarchy is also coming from the Holy Spirit.

Both, the hierarchy and the movements are the tangible expression of the gift, *par excellence*, which the risen Jesus pours over the Church so that she may continue his same mission: the gift of the Holy Spirit. Hierarchical and charismatic gifts are gifts of the Holy Spirit-Gift.

Through the first, the Holy Spirit objectively guarantees the presence of Jesus who gives himself to the Church, through the Word and Sacraments, generating and nourishing her as his spouse, other himself (cf. Eph. 5:25). We can cite the Eucharist as only one example of Jesus' self-giving to the Church in all its objective reality, which is also its culminating point.¹⁶

Through the charismatic gifts, on the other hand, the same Spirit opens the subjectivity of believers - that is, their minds and hearts, their entire existence - so that they become capable of receiving, of penetrating and of bringing to full effectiveness of life and holiness the objective gift of Christ which they receive

¹⁶ cfr. Piero Coda, *loc. cit.*

from the Word of God and the Sacraments, announced and celebrated by the ordained ministers. They are normally given to a single person, but in such a way that they can "be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons," to the advantage of the entire Church.¹⁷

The objective charism and the subjective charism are therefore co-essential in identity and in the mission of the Church. They express and realize the spousal rapport that subsists between Christ and the Church. Christ continues to give himself in the Spirit to the Church his Bride through the Word and the Sacraments. And the Church, Bride of Christ, formed by the charismatic gifts she receives from the same Holy Spirit, gathers, generates and increases within herself the Christ given to her through the Word and Sacraments, by living the new commandment of mutual love and by loving all brothers and sisters.¹⁸

If there is a difference in the way in which the objective charism and the subjective charism are given by the same Holy Spirit to the Church, it consists in the fact that, in the first case, this gift is objectively guaranteed by Christ's faithfulness to the Church (for example, Jesus in the Eucharist becomes present independently of the subjective holiness of the minister). Whereas in the second case, the Holy Spirit is received and accepted only when whoever is called to receive the subjective charism and to live it, conforms his or her life to Jesus the one mediator for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church. The objective and subjective charisms, therefore, are essentially in relationship with one another.¹⁹ One cannot be without the other.

¹⁷ *Christifideles Laid*, 24.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

Conclusion

To make the church through the family, more "church" based on the Trinity by living a spirituality of communion and make the family a school of communion.

"To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings" "We need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up."²⁰

"In the historic period of transition in which we are living, we are faced with a demanding mission: to make of the Church the place where the mystery of divine love is lived and the school where it is taught. How will this be possible without the rediscovery of an authentic spirituality of communion? We must first of all perceive with the eyes of our hearts the Trinitarian mystery present within us, so that we may then be able to discern it in the faces of others. Our brother or sister in faith is to be considered as "one who is a part of us" in the mysterious unity of the Mystical Body. Only by "making room" for my brothers and sisters, in order to see the positive in them, is it possible to grasp how much each of them is a gift for me."²¹ Lived in this way, the spirituality of unity and communion . . . will not fail to bear prolific fruits of renewal for all believers."²²

²⁰ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. 43.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² John Paul II to the participants in the meeting of Bishops friends of the Focolare Movement, Feb. 14, 2001, no. 3.

What would be its dynamics? We have said in the beginning that "If others have intensified their revolution aimed at the triumph of evil, if they have demonstrated that they are ready to die for their ideas, do we not feel that the hour has arrived to risk everything for the triumph of good, for universal brotherhood and communion so that we will become more a family where God is the Father and all people are brothers and sisters. Is there somebody who died for this, yes, it is Jesus. We must aim at bringing him back on earth, through ourselves, being another Christ, another incarnate Love, Holiness, Perfection as He is.

We must resist the temptation of "continual movement which often leads to restlessness, with the risk of "doing for the sake of doing". We must try to emphasize the priority of "being" over "acting"; trying "to be" before trying "to do". In this regard we should recall how Jesus reproved Martha: "You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful" (Lk 10:41-42).²³

Eminent personalities in the Church agree that perfection consists in never stopping to grow, because whoever does not go forward, goes backwards. Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, Jesus said. Perfection consists in always growing in charity. St. Francis de Sales says: The man who makes no gain loses... The man who does not climb upwards goes down to the ladder. The man who does not vanquish is vanquished in this battle.

The Pope stressed that there are challenges and problems that face us in this new millennium. But, "we are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: I am with you!" Christ is present when there are two

²³ *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 15.

or three are gathered in His name, in His will, i.e., when two or three are living the new commandment of loving one another, in other words if we live mutual charity.

"By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35). If we have truly contemplated the face of Christ, the exhortations of John Paul II, our pastoral planning will necessarily be inspired by the "new commandment" which he gave us: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34).²⁴

"I will be with you until the end of time," Jesus promised us. "When two or three are gathered in my name I am in their midst." What does this mean? It means that when two or three are gathered in the reality of the person and the words Jesus, especially his new commandment of mutual charity, He is in our midst! We become a living cell of the mystical body. The family becomes a *domus ecclesia*, a domestic living church. We have therefore to multiply these cells of communion of mutual charity where Christ is present.

This is what we should hoped, longed and build during the International gathering of families in Manila on January 2003. To become a single family of God, to become more "church" to become a real family of God. May this gathering, through the suggested spiritual and ecclesial itinerary will give abundant graces not only to the individual families but also the family movements, the church, and humanity as a whole.

²⁴ Ibid., 42.

The Way We Vote

ROLANDO DE LA ROSA, OP

How do we, Filipinos, vote? This question requires a consideration of the broad spectrum of the Filipino electorate. There are, among the Filipino voters, the highly educated, the illiterate, the political animal, the fanatic supporter, the indifferent voter, the youth, the women, the aged, the powerful, the powerless, the vote buyer, the vote seller, the flying voters, the conscientious voter, the opportunistic voters, etc. For sure, they do not vote in the same way. Nevertheless, we have to assume that, regardless of age, ideological orientation, creed, or economic status, the way Filipinos vote can be described in more or less accurate generalizations.

One generalization is that the Filipino voter is *personality oriented*, not issue or performance oriented. This is often taken as a defect. Filipinos go for personalities that appeal to them; they seldom look for platforms of government, or performance. But, according to Miguel de Unamuno, in the realm of politics all people are generally more personalistic than issue or idea oriented; adherence to a person is the more common trend than adherence to ideas or principles. For him, neither ideas nor sentiments govern the world, but leaders with their ideas, sentiments and acts.

Unamuno was actually referring to one of our common proclivities. We tend to anthropomorphize. We are more convinced of the soundness of an idea if it is incarnated in a person. Personalism in politics means that we do not divorce the idea from the person; that we choose someone who lives the principles and beliefs he professes; we choose someone who is true to his promises. Personalism in politics is an expression of our innate desire for integrity, honesty, and credibility in public service.

If this were so, why are many government offices occupied by people who lack integrity, honesty and credibility? Why do we continue to put in office people whose intent is not public service but the promotion of their personal interest?

Perhaps, this is because our brand of personalism in politics is a twisted result of a flawed democratic process. An election is a fixture of democracy, but as many historians show, democracy was bestowed on us before we were ready for it. Our elections are hardly an exercise of sovereignty. The government that is born out of such election seldom represents the people's will. Indeed, it is a government by consent, but not of the governed. The people are denied the power and authority, and sovereignty resides beyond their grasp.

Let us examine the roots of such a twisted personalism.

I. Caciquismo

Our colonial system of government was basically a system of indirect rule. The Spaniards relied on native allies to subjugate the *indios*. As found in many surveys of the colonial period, there were no more than 5,000 Spaniards in the Philippines in any given time during the Spanish regime. Also, there was linguistic diversity and geographical divisiveness among the *indios*. The Spaniards wisely thought that the best way to subjugate the native population was to look for native allies who can work within a system of

indirect rule. The Spaniards built the framework of government, the *indios* would fit into it, but the latter's participation would be circumscribed by one fixed principle: the safeguarding of Spanish interest.

With this arrangement, the cumbersome duties of administration, like tribute collection and law enforcement, were reduced into local haggles between the native population and the *indio* intermediaries. This system of indirect rule was called *caciquismo* by the Spaniards.

Originally, *caciquismo* meant an oligarchical system of politics in pre-conquest America run by a diffused and heterogeneous native elite who wielded local power for unification purposes. The term is derived from *cacique*, a word used in *Hispanola* (now Haiti) to indicate a ruler or a chief.

In the post-conquest and colonial times, the Spaniards appropriated the terms *cacique* and *caciquismo*, though with a different shade of meaning. *Caciquismo* became the system of ruling the great masses of natives through the *caciques*, intermediate functionaries who obtained their position due to their membership in the native aristocracy and family connections.

Later, *cacique* acquired the meaning of political boss or local tyrant. In the 19th century, *cacique* referred to men of rural power and new wealth, who, quite often, were land owners who rose to prominence because of their education and family connections. They were also sometimes called *patrones*, *principales*, *padrinos*, or *sehoritos*. Since agrarian and rural conditions remained dominant well into the 19th century, the *caciques* became a vital force in subsequent history.

Furthermore, the monoculture that agriculture fostered discouraged the rise of other classes of comparable power and prestige to challenge the *cacique*. Urban commerce existed during the

colonial period but the mercantile class occupied a subordinate social position. Land was the traditional symbol of success and status. The landless merchants, whose wealth was gained from the exchange of goods were considered inferior. In local politics, the *caciques* did their best to exclude the inferior class from government.

In the Philippine political scene, the local *caciques* wielded extensive power over their regions, more extensive than those of the national leaders. The *cacique* was the lord and chief of his territory, he governs the life and destiny of his inhabitants. He was the leader who had total or near-total political, economic and social control of a geographic area. He had in his power the potential use of physical violence to make his wishes become the law of his territory and was acknowledged and implicitly legitimized as the only leader of his realm by outside higher political leaders. It must be remembered that, oftentimes *the only Spaniard in a barrio or in a locality was the parish priest.*

Strong *caciques* could even block the Spaniards from meddling in local affairs. The Spaniards had to pretend ignorance of the existence of a legal underworld, where private justice were meted out by the *caciques* without their blessings.

History has a way of perpetuating itself; history is the past in the present. Our political system is so soaked with *caciquismo* that, even after the colonial period, our government leaders are most often of the *cacique* mold. And, although more than a century has passed since the Spanish colonial period, very little has changed in the way local and national politicians perform their roles once elected to public office. They still act like *caciques*. Sadly, they also appear as such in the minds of the electorate. With few exceptions, Filipino voters cast their precious votes for candidates whom they perceive as *caciques*.

At its best, *caciquismo* had these characteristics:

1. Possession of strong local power that includes decision-making.
2. Protection of the citizens from outside exploiters.
3. Performance of political brokerage.
4. Enforcement of local and national legislation.
5. Possession of coercive powers.

But more often than not, what local and national politicians manifest is *caciquismo* at its worst:

1. Power exercised in a local setting removed from intervention and close scrutiny.
2. The exercise of power by individuals who are often ignorant of public issues, subservient to the oligarchy and unprincipled in dealing with those beneath them.
3. Unbridled self-interest extending to family and party welfare, often resulting in shady deals and questionable activities.
4. Cruelty to non-party members, and indifference to public criticisms.
5. Nepotism which favors relatives and henchmen in local authority roles.

Personalism in politics is good in itself. But in the Philippine setting, personalism is another name for *caciquismo*. No wonder, government continues to be the haven of modern-day *caciques*. The worse thing is, even if we claim sovereignty and independence from colonial rulers, these modern-day *caciques* still perform the role they played during the colonial period. They often act as mediators for new colonizers: the rich industrialized countries, the multinationals, or the new oligarchy.

II. An Instance of Caciquismo in late 19th - Century Batangas

Let us look at one historical instance which demonstrates the fact that very little will ever change in our elections. Glenn May's masterful article on the municipal elections in Batangas shows that *caciquismo* has forever imprinted itself in Philippine elections. Whether we like it or not, the *caciques* will remain the ever-present element in Philippine elections: either as candidates or power-brokers.

According to May, municipal elections in the late nineteenth-century-Philippines was one civic ritual meticulously followed. Its form and content were detailed in a long series of laws, decrees, and circulars, designed to promote the selection of suitable candidates, dignify the proceedings, and legitimize the assumption and tenure of office of the selected candidate. The Spanish government considered these elections crucial.

As mentioned earlier, the Spanish system of government was a system of indirect rule. Spaniards relied on native allies. The Spaniards built the framework of government, native intermediaries fitted into it. Foremost among the indigenous intermediaries was the *gobernadorcillo*, the ranking municipal official who was selected by a complicated process that began with the election. Before 1876, this office was hereditary. In 1876, however, hereditary succession was abolished in favor of election for a minimum term of three years, by chosen members of the municipality. During his term, the *gobernadorcillo* enjoyed exemption from tribute and forced labor. If he served more than ten years, he retained these privileges for life.

The central authorities took the ritual seriously. For, at the faintest suspicion of any electoral anomaly, the governor general's staff immediately initiated an investigation, and swift punishment were meted out at once to the guilty.

The election was basically ecclesiastical in form and content. As Glenn May describes it, it is almost akin to a church service, and took place with the greatest decorum and with an almost sepulchral silence. But when he examined the municipal elections in the province of Batangas between 1887 and 1894, he found out that the Filipinos *persistently failed to perceive the event in the way that the lawmakers evidently wanted them to perceive it.*

For Filipinos, and for some of the Spaniards who participated as well, the election process was seen as a struggle for various types of power, both symbolic and real. In other words, in the municipal elections in late nineteenth-century Batangas, ritual and reality were almost completely at cross purposes. The ritual, as formulated, concerned the right to serve; for Filipinos, the actual election was a contest for power.

What is more revealing is Glenn May's discovery that in many municipal elections in the late 19th-century Batangas, leading contenders for office were generally *men of no social status or political influence*, whose main qualification was the fact that they were sponsored by leading *caciques* or the parish priest in their municipality. These candidates, once elected, were expected to follow orders. In other words, in many municipal elections, *caciques* operated behind the scene in order to have their surrogates elected. Or to put the matter another way, if the *caciques* in municipalities played a role in the elections, they mostly did this not as voters or candidates, but as power brokers.

Many factions compete for the *caciques'* blessing and support. These factions could have various motives for seizing public office. Such motives could be economic, religious, or even revolutionary in nature.

The wooing and the arm-twisting tactics of the factions presented the *caciques* with an obvious dilemma. In a real sense,

they were men caught in the middle. In order to cope (and also, perhaps, to gain the maximum financial benefit), they developed a clever tactic of their own: an early form of ticket splitting. Many *caciques* committed themselves to vote for the candidate of more than one faction - a commitment which, because of the peculiarities of the electoral procedure, they could honor, since they were required to cast a vote for both their first and second choice in the balloting for the top municipal post.

Such then was the reality that lay behind the electoral ritual in the late nineteenth-century Philippines. It was a reality that bore little resemblance to the ideal envisaged and intended by the Spanish rulers. Procedures that were introduced to enlist suitable servants of the Crown became instead the means by which *caciques* pursued their own interest. In some towns, the objectives were economic. In others, political objectives of a sort appeared to be at stake. In all of them, electoral illegalities and a wide range of dubious practices flourished, because failure in electoral contests was to be avoided at all costs. Defeat meant not only to be deprived of the potential benefits of office, but also to be subjected to the harassment that would be meted out by a successful opposing faction.

It was a reality too that bore little resemblance to the picture of municipal elections that has been painted in many history books. Perhaps the greatest curiosity about political power in the late nineteenth-century Philippine communities may have been that it resided neither in the electorate - who could be, and generally were, bribed, cajoled, threatened, and otherwise influenced - nor even in the elected - who may have been surrogates - but rather in *caciques* and other groups who often took no official part in municipal political life. The municipal election was, in effect a marionette play, where the puppets on the stage performed according to a script and the men behind the scene pulled the strings.

With the arrival of a new colonial power at the end of the century, the electorate would be expanded; political campaigning would be sanctioned; a new system of electoral supervision would be introduced. Yet while the American rulers found it a simple task to transform the rituals, the reality of politics proved to be far more resistant to change. Under Spanish rule, the *caciques* of Philippine communities had learned NOT HOW TO SERVE GOVERNMENT BUT HOW TO USE IT FOR THEIR OWN INTEREST. The holding of office was seen to be not an end in itself, but rather a means to the end of achieving one's purposes, whether personal, familial, or factional. To change such deeply ingrained notions about elections and government would require a good deal more than the introduction of democratic ideals.

III. Democracy, Filipino style

Another generalization about Filipino voters is that they are lovers of democracy. Election is our way of exercising our democratic rights. But how do Filipinos understand democracy? While we boast of being one of the most democratic countries in Asia, we pale in comparison to less democratic, but highly industrialized and progressive countries in the region. Is democracy an obstacle to progress?

Ideally, democracy signals the shift from treating people as objects to treating them as persons, i.e. the move from slavery to freedom, from dependency to interdependency, from isolation to inclusiveness. In short, democracy exhibits the Enlightenment belief in the human being is capable of judging, choosing, and acting and that he or she does not need to be taken care of by the gods, nor his destiny be determined by fate.

Democracy, then, *is an act of faith*: about human capacities and above all about human development. It treats the world as ever renewing and treats us, young or old, as ever renewable.

But, do Filipinos understand democracy in this way? Or, has it become only a form of political organization, even a blind ritualism? Have we become cynics who reduce democracy to arrangements? Many observers of the political scene in the Philippines believe that *democracy in the Philippines seems to have succeeded unto death.*

As lived, democracy is a mix of self-determination and manipulation, of legal structures, informal arrangements, private desires and public policies. There is not just one type of democracy to which Filipinos vow allegiance. No matter how ideal these types are, these are all prone to corruption. Some of these more prominent types are:

A. *Democracy of Agreements*

For many Filipinos, democracy is understood in terms of a "social contract." Government becomes legitimate because of the assent of a majority of its citizens and the implicit consent of the rest.

In a democracy of agreements, we are connected by the contracts we make. We may freely choose to connect and disconnect with each other, and we need not give reasons for our choices. We make and break agreements, quarrel over their terms, re-negotiate them, etc. It is the government's job to provide the rules of fair play.

The culture heroes of a democracy of agreements are the lawyers and the judges who are keepers of the public morality. In this type of democracy, then, we freely mix morality and legality. We turn to lawyers and judges even for questions of morality. The courts become the ultimate adjudicators of right and wrong. But since the judgments rendered by courts are often understandable only to lawyers, the public is excluded from a more in-depth understanding of the way conflicts are resolved, both at the personal

or government level. So, even if there is a semblance of agreement, more often than not, public consent is made out of ignorance. Publicly, therefore, people in a democracy of agreement talk neither with, nor to, but past each other. Privately, pluralist anarchy becomes the rule.

B. *A Democracy of Community*

A democracy of community flourishes in a culture where family ties are paramount. In such a democracy, it is likely that people would consider it normal for someone to recommend his son or daughter or neighbor for a job. Furthermore, since all persons are, by nature, embedded in circles of family and friends, they are supposed to have similar resources and concerns. Above all, a person is understood to have many memberships with many different kinds of groupings and relationships, and to play many different roles like being a father, a friend, a worker, a citizen. Government is like an intersecting "networks" of relationships.

In a democracy of community, the leaders (whether political, religious, academic, ideological) are the heroes of community. Recourse to lawyers and law courts is the exception rather than the rule, and they are likely to be asked to mediate rather than adjudicate. Agreements are informal and personal but no less binding. The language of a democracy of community is rich with familial, historic and traditional references. Sustaining the democracy of community is a "narrative" that tells how community evolved from hierarchy to equality, from authority to consensus. Finally, in a democracy of community, the highest virtue is loyalty.

But just like a democracy of agreements, so a democracy of community is *corrupted by the "perfection" of its virtues*. The EDSA phenomenon has manifested this quite plainly. The power of the EDSA narrative has led to its reification. It has changed from a dramatic interpretation of experience into a theory of reality

which claims objective truth. For some people, therefore, the EDSA phenomenon has almost become the normal expression of Philippine democracy. Democracy becomes intertwined with familial and religious values. Loyalty to the EDSA spirit has become a gauge for determining which democratic movement is valid or authentic. Those who participated in the EDSA phenomenon feel that they "belong". Therefore, it also gives them automatic access to government leadership, once election is held. The electorate becomes divided into those who belong, and those who do not. Election, then becomes at best, a contest between exclusive communities. Ultimately, community solidarity itself becomes artificial and superficial.

C. *Participatory Democracy*

For many Filipinos, democracy means participation. As in the thinking of John Dewey, participation is conceived as a substantive and *not just as a procedural ideal*. A democracy of participation presupposes that everyone has the capacity to participate. Participation also implies that government is accessible to the participant. Because all of this must be learned, politics is wedded to schooling. Dewey writes that human beings are capable of intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished. He further writes that "to say that democracy is only a form of government is like saying a home is a more or less geometrical arrangement of bricks and mortar; that a church is a building with pews, pulpit, and spire. It is true; they certainly are so. But it is also false; they are so infinitely more." In a democracy of participation, democracy is a way of life, a form of moral and spiritual association.

But like the two previous types, the democracy of participation also entails its own corruption. It can easily lead to doing for the sake of doing itself and becomes merely opportunistic. A familiar picture emerges: a politics of superficial alliances gathered around

a collection of separate "causes" like the current array of *coalitions, civil society groups, protest groups, political party conglomerates, business assemblies, people's advocacy groups, women advocacy, cultural minority congresses, consultative assemblies, etc.* With all these groups wanting to be heard and to participate, the proper functioning of government becomes paralyzed. "Protest" becomes a way of life. Factionalism sets in, and democracy often becomes an excuse for inaction. In the interplay of large numbers of participants, the common good vanishes in a melange, a stew. Intention and action become unintelligible.

A democracy of participation can, therefore, paradoxically, also result in -passivity. To choose to do something presupposes the attractiveness of what is chosen. If this is not the case, then it is permissible to refuse to participate. Indeed, it may even be morally necessary to refuse to participate as a "protest." The superficiality of alliances now exacts its price. The thing chosen - say a political candidate who "speaks" to enough of the participants to get elected - simply doesn't seem worth the effort. Unprincipled compromise turns politics into a game. We hear the complaint that there is no "real choice." Repeated over and over again, the experience of withdrawal becomes a social habit.

D. *Existential Democracy*

Existential democracy highlights the supreme value of *choice*. Choice which is random, individual, romantic, even wild, becomes the paradigmatic act of a free person in a free society. The assertion of personal choice becomes a politics in itself. The social environment encourages the choices of the unruly subject and these become intelligible, if at all, only as a type of minimal reciprocity. In an existential democracy, I "do my thing" and you "do your thing."

However, existential democracy is easily corrupted. Absolutely free subjects can hardly be counted upon to solve social problems or to surmount national crises. Paradoxically, the insistence on choice as the absolute value turn people to inflexible authority figures, as "experts," "gurus" and "charismatic" leaders. Existential democracy, in other words, sets the stage and even legitimizes military take-over, or authoritarian, even despotic rule.

As authoritarian leaders reappear, the fumbling efforts of existential democracy encourage a dismay at politics. Choosing for the sake of choosing itself becomes deliberately irresponsible.

Conclusion

The Filipinos' idea of democracy is shaped by history. In our desire to shake away the vestiges of colonial regimes, we thought of a democracy of agreements centered on the free contracting agent. Establishing a sense of belonging where geography and socio-economic status had isolated people from others, a democracy of community focused on the values of family and relationships. Searching out the needs of a society trapped in undue impositions from government leaders and politicians, a democracy of participation re-asserted social cooperation. And against a sense of too much bureaucracy, a democracy of choice reintroduced subjectivity to society.

We have seen, however, how all these types of democracy have been corrupted "by the perfection of their virtues." In other words, no one type of democracy can be considered ideal for Filipinos. The common feature of democracy is confidence in the political and moral power of persons. However, this confidence remains only a worthy sentiment until it has a content which is agreed upon and defended by the nation as a whole. Lacking content, democracy deteriorates into a mere slogan, or a legitimization of a counter-movement which, oftentimes, develops toward

anarchy, authoritarianism, neo-fascism, fundamentalism, ultra-nationalism, or worse, the rule of the *caciques*, the elite oligarchy and their surrogates.

Cases & Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE IN A DIOCESE

Five former Sisters - two were perpetually professed from the N.N. Congregation - arrived here in our diocese five years ago to establish a new congregation. Apparently, they had reasons for their breaking up with their Congregation and they told our Bishop about it when they arrived. They came with a Franciscan priest who was supposed to be the founder of this new group. The good bishop accepted them and put them in a place that was donated by a benefactor. They were supposed to develop the place. Now, with the help of benefactors and friends, they have built a chapel, a convent and a separate kitchen and dining room.

The new bishop has asked me to process their papers since they are asking for juridical recognition from the Church. They gave me a copy of their Constitutions and By-laws, their profiles, their activities etc.

Questions:

- 1. What is the process for them to have juridical personality in the diocese?*
- 2. Since they continue to call themselves "Sisters" and they are in fact being called "Sisters" by the people, can we consider this group a Congregation already? Or did they loose their identity as Sisters when they broke up with their main Congregation?*
- 3. I believe they should first petition to become a pious association. ..*

Could you, please, enlighten me on the case, particularly on the process to follow for a new religious institute to get juridical personality in the Church?

With the scarce data supplied on the background, facts, motives, etc., about the five "Sisters" who arrived in your Diocese, I consider myself unable to give a definitive pronouncement on their present personal status, particularly of the two perpetually professed Sisters. Anyway, I offer my personal opinion on the case of this new group, adding some notes on what you are asking for, namely, the steps to be followed in the process for a new religious group to acquire juridical personality in the Church, which is in fact the process of establishment of a new religious institute in a diocese.

First, my opinion on the case, answering briefly to your questions:

- 1. What is the process for them to have juridical personality in the diocese?*

The five so-called Sisters plus the Franciscan priest should start from scratch as a new group or association being born in your

diocese. In fact, as you said, the five sisters arrived "with a Franciscan priest who was supposed to be the founder of this *new* group." One factor is in their favor: If they recognize him (the Franciscan priest) as their founder, they have already the "foundation" which is previous to their formal establishment as a new religious institute. On the other hand, they seem to have drafted already some by-laws or "constitutional" norms describing the master lines of the new institute or society they intend to form. These fundamental norms or statutes are to describe the nature, purpose, "mission/vision", main means to attain the aims, etc. of the new association, which will be governed by them once they are approved by the competent authority. The process for the new group to have juridical personality in the archdiocese must follow the ordinary typical process, which I describe below. Try to see what is applicable to them.

2. Since they continue to call themselves "Sisters" and they are in fact being called "Sisters" by the people, can we consider this group a Congregation already? Or did they loose their identity as Sisters when they broke up with their main Congregation?

I find difficult to understand this. That the people call them "Sisters" is understandable because they most probably do not know anything about their past. But the fact that they still consider themselves "Sisters" puzzles me. You said that "they had reasons for their breaking up with their Congregation." My understanding is that they are completely separated from their previous Congregation, their identity as Sisters having been by now totally lost, and their vows finished - for **the** temporarily professed - and **dispensed - for the two perpetually professed.** (Although you do not say anything, I suspect that they wear **still** the habit of the previous Congregation - something totally illegal and unfair for the Congregation. I know cases where the "superior" of the group

even accepts the profession of new candidates into the group, when she does not have authority to accept public vows in the name of the Church!).

Logically, for the same reason, we cannot consider this group a Congregation already, before their formal erection or establishment as such, done by the diocesan bishop - upon the final approval of their statutes - done through a decree that grants them juridical personality. Until then, the most they may be, as a group, is a "pious association."

3. I believe they should first petition to become a pious association...

Definitively, they should first work to become a pious association and then petition to first be formally recognized as a private association. In fact, upon the initial acceptance of the group in the diocese by the Bishop, and after a time to test themselves (and being tested by the diocese), perhaps the time has arrived for them to apply for juridical recognition, something that can be done even upon the initiative of the bishop himself. They would become first a *private* association, before acquiring public personality, being then eventually ready to be formally erected or established as a religious institute of diocesan right.

The ordinary canonical process for recognition of a public religious association in a diocese, a process that typically marks the birth in the diocese of a new institute of consecrated life of diocesan right - done by the diocesan bishop - is the following:

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE IN A DIOCESE

From the start let us clarify that we are not referring here to the simple installation or acceptance of a religious community

of an existing Congregation (either of Pontifical or diocesan right) by a diocesan bishop into his territory. This is in fact a very common event, since a good number of bishops request the presence of some religious communities into their dioceses either to run schools or to collaborate in the diocesan plan of apostolate.

The question is rather about the canonical establishment of a NEW institute of consecrated life, whether religious or secular, in a diocese. Such establishment or formal recognition, which grants it juridical personality in the Church, is ordinarily the last stage of a long process that takes several steps. What are these steps and by whom shall be taken?

Let us develop this topic into three points, first, by distinguishing between the "foundation" and the "establishment" of a religious institute; second, by pointing out the effects and the authority that erects or grants the canonical establishment of an institute; and third, by analyzing the steps leading a group or association to the acquisition of public juridical personality in the Church.

1. Foundation before Establishment

The first thing we have to do is to distinguish between the *Foundation* of an institute of consecrated life and its *Establishment* precisely as society or institute. "Foundation" and "establishment" are two different things that many people mistake. The latter, that is, the establishment, is an official act of the competent ecclesiastical authority (diocesan bishop or Apostolic See) by which an institute or society starts having life in the Church, while the foundation is a private act of a man or a woman - the founder or foundress - who upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has started a "movement" that will eventually crystallize in a society or institute.

Normally, then, the founder and the establishing ecclesiastical authority are two different persons. (Obviously, in some particular instances, it may happen that both the founder and the establishing ecclesiastical authority be the same person, although the acts of *founding* and *establishing* are two different acts. Thus the same Bishop who establishes an institute may happen to be also its *founder*. In such a case, as founder, he is a *private* person; as the authority that establishes the institute, he is a *public* person).

The founder or foundress is often the author of the first by-laws or constitutional rules that describe the structural nucleus, the characteristics, and the master lines of the institute, that is, its nature, purpose, main means, structures, etc.

Only through canonical establishment a society or institute starts having life in the Church. Previous to such establishment, founders/foundresses are usually surrounded by their "children" who follow and imitate them in a particular life-style, which is a concrete way of incarnating the Gospel. But this is still the previous phase to the ecclesial birth of a religious institute, which will be born at the end of a process exclusively through the *decree* of erection or canonical establishment.

2. Canonical Erection or Establishment

Establishing canonically a society or an institute of consecrated life is an act eminently ecclesial. That is why it belongs to the hierarchy of the Church. In particular, it takes place through a *formal decree* issued by the competent ecclesiastical authority.

What is the nature of such decree and what are its effects? This decree is a singular administrative decree, which the Code of canon law defines as "*an administrative act issued by a competent executive authority, whereby in accordance with the norms of law a decision is given or a provision made for a*

particular case" (c. 48). The Code further states that decrees are to be issued *"in writing"* (c. 51). The decree required for the establishment of a religious institute is, in addition, *a formal* decree - this is opposed to the generic decree, and law normally calls it *special* decree.

Concerning its effects, by this decree life is given to a new institute within the ambit of the Church. Concretely, through it, the institute is guaranteed the capacity (a) to acquire evangelical perfection; (b) for the utility of the Church; (c) it is granted to the institute the juridical personality in the Church; and (d) Superiors are capacitated to receive the vows in the name of the Church, so that they are public vows.

Such establishment *through formal decree* is necessary for the existence of a new institute in the Church. Such canonical establishment is required by law *for validity*.

Who is the authority that can issue such a formal decree? The legislation of the Church concerning the erection of a religious institute states that *"provided the Apostolic See has been consulted, diocesan bishops can, by formal decree, establish institutes of consecrated life in their own territories"* (canon 579).

Two things should be noted here: First, that canon law considers equivalent to diocesan Bishops the following: territorial Prelates, territorial Abbots, Apostolic Vicars, Apostolic Prefects and Apostolic Administrators of permanently established Apostolic Administrations (cf cc. 381 §2, 368). [Being the list specific, General and Episcopal Vicars cannot establish a religious institute, unless they receive a specific mandate from their Bishop]. Second, **that the text of the canon** does not say that *only* diocesan bishops can establish a religious institute. In fact, their competence in this case is not exclusive, since also the Apostolic See enjoys such faculty. Canon 589 affirms directly that the Apostolic See can

establish an institute of consecrated life: "*An institute of consecrated life is of pontifical right if it has been established by the Apostolic See, or approved by it by means of a formal decree.*" Henceforth, institutes can be established by either or both the diocesan Bishop or/and the Apostolic See.

What about the clause "provided the Apostolic See has been consulted" (c. 579)? What is the purpose of this *previous* consultation to the Apostolic See? Such consultation is a sort of *nihil obstat* - as the previous Code in canon 492 foresaw it - that may prevent, for instance, the repetition of names or denominations already approved; that the goal's definition be too vague or even illusory; that the constitutions be badly written; etc. That is why such consultation to the Apostolic See is no mere formality but requires the production of statutes and other relevant documents. The appropriate Roman Congregation will examine statutes, prayer manuals, other writings, the works and the history of the group, etc. As late as 1981, it was requiring that the group consist of 25-30 members before granting the *nihil obstat*. The present Code nothing says on this regard, except the general norm that "an aggregate of persons must be made up of at least three persons" (c.115 §2).

Is this previous consultation needed *for validity*? The answer to this canonical question is not uniform among canon lawyers, depending on their different reading of canon 579. Some speak of the necessity to consult the Holy See, "which obviously is required for the validity of the act"; others, without doubting about the importance of such consultation, opine that the canon does not say expressly that the act of establishment is null if the Apostolic See is not previously consulted. "Obviously"- they say - "the Holy See can *annul* a canonical establishment effected by a diocesan Bishop without previously having consulted her, or reprimand the Bishop, but the establishment would be valid." Anyway, the

required consultation remains and it is not our purpose here to go to the bottom of this debatable question.

3. Acquisition of Juridical Personality

The final approval or establishment of a religious institute of diocesan right comes at the last stage in the development of the institute, being ordinarily preceded by numerous contacts with the concerned bishop.

The group in question will have had an independent existence for some time before that request is made. It will have started as a voluntary group ("pious association") within the diocese, coming together to test the validity of their life-style and the viability of the project. A first approval by the diocesan bishop may have been given *viva voce*. From there it may have progressed to become first a *private* association (cf. canon 321), and then, due to its growth, a *public* association with approved statutes (cf. canon 312). Only when it is ready to progress to that last stage and before its formal establishment as a religious institute of diocesan right does the consultation to the Holy See take place.

Thus it is the act of canonical erection or establishment through a formal decree, and in that particular moment, when the institute acquires its *public ecclesiastical juridical personality*, with the rights and obligations mentioned in cc. 114-123. A new religious institute is born and the Church is enriched with this gift of the Spirit.

According to canon 114 groups or entities can be established as juridical persons in two ways: (a) by virtue of the law itself (e.g. seminaries, public associations, parishes, religious institutes) and (b) by virtue of a decree of the competent ecclesiastical authority (e.g. private associations). In the former case, juridical

personality is bestowed as soon as the entity in question has been lawfully established by the competent authority.

The same canon also says that *"the competent ecclesiastical authority is not to confer juridical personality except on those aggregates of persons or of things which aim at a genuinely useful purpose and which, all things considered, have the means which are foreseen to be sufficient to achieve the purpose in view"* (§2). Actually, whenever an already existing entity seeks juridical personality, the competent authority must investigate the purpose of such a body. According to the law, one at least of three purposes is required to warrant such a grant, either, works of piety (e.g. the promotion, of prayer, worship, etc.); works of the apostolate (e.g. teaching, nursing, etc.); or works of charity (e.g. feeding the poor, helping the underprivileged and the oppressed, etc.). The works concerned may be of the strictly spiritual order or may belong to the sphere of what some may see as the purely temporal minded. In this regard, there should never be overlooked the voluntary and often arduous contribution of the Church to the temporal and social endeavors worldwide.

Having examined the sufficiency of the body's goal, the competent authority must make a prudent judgment concerning juridical personality. In particular, it must be satisfied that the entity has sufficient resources to achieve its purpose. If there is no real expectation that this can be sustained in a reasonable fashion, the competent authority ought not to grant juridical personality.

In conclusion, the canonical erection or formal establishment of a new religious institute in a diocese is the last stage of a process, which takes typically the following steps:

- (1) The group exists for sometime in the diocese (normally with implicit or explicit knowledge by the bishop), its members working together on a particular project and with a particular life-style, in the process of organizing themselves;

(2) A first informal approval as a group - still as a "pious association" - by the diocesan bishop may be given *viva voce*;

(3) Request is made to the concerned bishop for formal recognition.

(4) The group becomes a *private* association, governed by its own statutes;

(5) Before becoming a religious institute of diocesan right consultation is made to the Apostolic See;

(6) The group grows into a *public* association with approved statutes and with juridical personality upon its canonical erection or establishment as a religious institute by the diocesan bishop.

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW

Homilies for July-August 2002

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

July 7, 2002

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

(Readings: Zech 9:9-10/Rom 8:9, 11-13/Mt 11:25-30)

Nothing is more obvious than what Jesus said about people getting tired from carrying heavy loads. This situation is so general that one is almost tempted to define man as a rational animal carrying a heavy load. You hardly, if ever, can find a man or woman who is free from any kind of baggage. What is even more dismaying is that one starts to carry it early in life and then on until one's last moments.

What loads are people forced to shoulder? Some are of physical nature: a polio deforming the tender frame of a beloved child; a cancer devouring the strength of a wife or parent; a hypertensive stroke paralyzing speech or limbs of a friend or

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

relative; grinding poverty reducing a family to economic prostration; back breaking jobs that expose bodies to the inclemencies of weather.

Some burdens are of a moral nature yet quite as heavy, if not more: death of a loved one; infidelity of a husband or wife; betrayal by a friend or business partner; oppression or evil plots of an enemy. Burdens lay heavily not only upon individuals but also on communities, societies, races and nations. They may be self-inflicted or imposed from outside. They can be of economic, political, ethnic or racial, geographical or religious nature. These can last for several generations or centuries.

How do people react to burdens laid on them? Not very differently from animals, from beasts of burden. Horses, for example, may resist or even raise their front hoofs at you if you try placing a load on them. Carabaos uncomplainingly accept their pieces of burden. But donkeys collapse to the ground on all fours to avoid loads.

Similarly, people react in different ways towards problems. Some just collapse like donkeys because of them. Either they cannot cope or are just plain lazy. Others take them passively like carabaos, without show of rejection or acceptance. Others react violently or threateningly like horses with hoofs in the air.

The ancient Israelites resented domination by foreign powers. They thought of opposing force by force. They asked God to give them a mighty king who would rout their enemies and restore their lost freedom. They were willing to go to war provided they have a fearless king to lead them.

Zechariah, first reading chapter 9, predicted that God would give them a king who will surely liberate them from their oppressors. This king would even wipe out all wars, so that nations along with Israel can enjoy perfect peace. He would gain mastery

and dominion over all, paradoxically, by the power of his humility and meekness. In fact, he will arrive triumphant and victorious, not in a war chariot but riding on a donkey.

Was Israel convinced and reassured? Would hostile and arrogant nations submit to this king's rule? Would people unburden themselves of their loads before this king? Paul, in the second reading, Rom. chapter 8, affirms that whomever the Spirit of Christ takes possession of, that one is assured of rising above all his/her problems, including death, which is the greatest problem of all.

In the third reading, Mathew 11, Jesus reaffirms the doctrine of the prophet Zechariah. "Come to me," the Lord says, "who am gentle and humble of heart, all of you that are tired from carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take upon yourselves my burden and my load, because compared to those that you are carrying at present, they are easy and light. In fact, my burden will lighten your burden, and my load will reduce your load." You ask how can that be?

In a service during a Sabbath at the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus cited briefly a passage from Isaiah regarding his mission to this world. It said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor." (Luke 4:18). But the full citation of that passage also says, "... to heal the brokenhearted... to comfort all who mourn; to place on those who mourn a diadem instead of ashes; to give them... a gentle mantle instead of a listless spirit." So, this is what Jesus was appointed to do for you, to place a royal diadem on your head, to spread a glorious mantle on your shoulders. Diadem and mantle indeed carry some weight. But they are Jesus' burden and load intended for you, to comfort, to enliven your spirit, to give gladness to your hearts, to invest you with the dignity and rights of children of God (cfr. Isaiah 61:1-3).

July 14, 2002

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

(Readings: Is 55:10-11/Rom 8:18-23/Mt 13:1-13)

To teach in parables is a methodology that proves effective, both for ancient and modern peoples. It was the favorite method of Jesus Christ, the teacher of mankind. While he clearly used it for pedagogical reasons, that is, to make difficult things easier to understand, yet he employed it also as a punitive means.

Hence, when his disciples asked him why he taught the public in parables, Jesus answered: "So that seeing, they will not see; hearing, they will not understand." Because of their wrong conduct and dispositions, they had deserved to be punished that way.

The parable of the sower or the planter, which you first heard from the first reading (Mt 13), is meant also for our ears. Hopefully, may it serve not to punish but to enlighten us. That will depend, of course, on our actual conduct and dispositions.

Normally, biblical parables serve to clarify difficult matters for us. Their procedure is essentially by way of examples, of comparisons. Religious themes are by nature, difficult to understand and accepted because they exceed our natural capacities. Hence, religious teachers resort to examples and comparisons employing things that are more familiar to us. This is the whole matter about speaking in parables.

The value, efficacy and need for us of God's Word are not immediately apparent. Material objects have more attraction for us, and our time and efforts are spent on acquiring them. And yet, this fact is indisputable: that we cannot live without God's Word.

The first reading (Isaiah 55) is an attempt to draw our attention to and elicit our acceptance of the value, efficacy and our need of God's Word. The means Isaiah employs is a parable: about God's Word being like the rain. Just as the rain or melting snow coming from heaven cannot but induce crops and foods to grow in the plain, so is God's Word. It cannot fail to do what God had planned for it; it will do everything that he sent it to do.

However, comparisons with material objects, in this case, rain or melting snow, have their limitations. The rain may fail to come, or it comes like a deluge, then no matter how much or how well we planted, we don't get a harvest. But God's Word cannot fail. It is impossible for it to fail as it is impossible for God to go wrong.

Similarly, in the third reading (Mt 13), God is compared to a planter, and his Word to a seed. The seed has innate power to grow and fructify. So is God's Word; it has the power within itself to be fruitful, to produce results. Therefore, when nothing happens after the seeds have been planted, the blame must be laid not on the seed but on the conditions of the soil, as the parable here correctly explains. Of course, it is possible, that the seeds may be barren or unproductive, but not so is God's Word. Here we meet once more the limitations of a parable, beyond which we ought not to stretch comparisons.

Finally, in the second reading (Rom 8), we encounter a stupendous parable. Paul compares the whole creation and the whole community of believers to a woman undergoing the pain of childbirth. Why? He points to the observable and undeniable fact that every creature, inanimate and animate, irrational and rational, sinners and saints - all are condemned like slaves to decay, corruption, disappearance, futility and chaos.

Hence, Paul says that like a woman groaning in pain waiting to deliver her baby, we all are groaning within ourselves, waiting for God to make us clearly his sons and daughters and to set our whole beings free - free from slavery to decay, and free to enjoy the liberty of children of God.

This indeed was a powerful parable from the pen of Paul. Powerful also were the parables of Isaiah, of Jesus. All three parables were intended to make the religious themes of God's Word and of the destiny of God's creation easier for us to understand and their message readier for our acceptance.

July 21, 2002

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

(Readings: Wis 12:13, 16-19/Rom 8:26-27/Mt 13:24-43 or 24-30)

One of the many things we find difficult to understand and accept is God's standard of justice. What is really his position regarding justice? If God is just, then he should punish evil and reward good. Is that not the elemental idea about justice?

If so, why is it that evil men are having the best time of their life and the good men are left with life's rotten part? We could frame the question more personally. Why is it that my good friends, Mr. Bully, Mr. Clever, and Mr. Cheat enjoy rising fortunes, extravagant lifestyles, adulation and envy of the crowds? While poor me, I who am conscious of no wrongdoing, can hardly make both ends meet?

Your observation and mine is correct. Your indignation and mine is shared by millions of Filipinos who lament the level of violence, injustice, corruption, lawlessness, heartlessness existing in our society. The perpetrators of these seem untouchable or

untraceable, while the innocent public suffer the consequences of their misdeed.

No, we are not exaggerating. These are the hard facts of life nowadays. And we ask, why do these things happen or are allowed to happen? We have a ready and simple solution for them: punish the wrongdoers and reward the good! If men and those in authority are unable to apply this standard of justice, then we look up to God for quick justice. Unfortunately, God remains silent, we see no action. We get confused, then we become impatient, finally, we ask what is God's standard of justice?

This question is as old as the good men Job in the Old Testament and as new as the good woman in Mindanao who asked, on the occasion of El Nino last year, "Is God punishing us because the rains have not fallen for a long, long time?" The implication is obvious in the good woman's question as it was in the anguished interrogation of Job, namely, why punish me if I have not done any wrong?

For sure, God punishes the wrong and rewards the good, and men's standard of justice should conform to this. But God has a further standard that eludes us, hence we get confused: his providence! We do not know exactly how it works. We would like God to act as we think he should, but that cannot be. For example, Jesus tells us, somewhere in the gospel, not to jump into conclusion regarding those Galileans who were slashed to death by order of Pilate, saying that they were greater sinners than the rest of the Galileans. Actually, they came to Jerusalem to worship in the temple. (Luke 13:2).

The first reading (Wis 12) cautions us not to measure God by our own standards when it says of him, "No one can question what you have done. All things are under your care, and there is no other god to whom you must justify your decisions." For

the author of this book, the reason why God's decisions are unassailable is his infinite power. What is man to question God if he delays punishing the evil and rewarding the good? Besides, in today's gospel, God is said to have ordered, "Let the bad weeds and the good weeds grow together until harvest time." Can God be accused of weakness? According to the first reading, God shows his strength and power even when he delays punishment; he does so to give the sinner a chance to repent. After all, God is the Father of both good men and bad men.

Finally, we have in the second reading, a parabolic statement which is as surprising as it is consoling. Last Sunday, we heard Paul employ a stupendous parable describing how the entire creation was moaning and groaning before God, pleading to be freed of the crushing weight of limitations, decay and death. This Sunday, Paul says (in Romans 8) that the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts is also pleading with God for us in groans that words cannot express.

With all creation moaning and groaning, with the Holy Spirit adding his own groanings to those of ours, how can God refuse to listen and to act? But, of course, in the manner and time his providence will decide. Brothers and sisters, do we have now a better understanding of God's standard of justice? It is the problem we raised at the beginning of this homily. Perhaps, we can conclude it now by repeating, with peace of mind, the first two verses of the responsorial psalm, "You, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you. Hearken, O Lord, to our prayer and attend to the sound of our pleading."

July 28, 2002

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

(Readings: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12/Rom 8:28-30/Mt 13:44-52)

It is not only today that you have heard about King Solomon who was considered the wisest man in his time. You are not also ignorant of the story of how well King Solomon solved a very difficult case, which originated the famous phrase Solomonic justice or wisdom. The story was about a baby being claimed noisily by two mothers. The case was brought before King Solomon. He ordered a sword to be produced, and the baby to be cut into two pieces, and each be given to the quarreling mothers.

You surely must know the story's ending. King Solomon never meant to harm the baby, but only to discover who the real mother was between the two claimants. This, he found out from the different behaviors of the two women: one pleaded for the child to be spared its life and simply be given to the other woman; while the other one insisted on the baby being cut into two pieces so that none of them will have advantage over the other.

Where and how did King Solomon get his fine quality of discernment to make that wise decision? You have the answer in today's first reading (1 King 3). God asked Solomon in a dream, "What would you like me to give to you?" So well pleased with his son and successor of King David, God was giving him virtually a blank check on which Solomon had just to write the amount he wanted.

If the offer of God was generous and unexpected, Solomon's response was also generous and unexpected. Had the offer been given to us, we would have asked the usual things: long life, great wealth, extensive fame, and protection from enemies. Solomon

did not ask for any of those things. He begged for wisdom to treat people fairly, and for discernment to know the difference between good and evil. Because of that, God gave Solomon the things he asked for and also the things he did not ask, in abundant measure.

It goes without saying that we stand in much need of discernment and should ask God for this, although he does not appear to us in dreams. However, in the third reading (Mat 13), God does talk to us about an offer of his that requires a wise discernment on our part. Namely, a discernment that enables us to know the difference, not only between good and evil but also between the good and the better. In our everyday life, we are confronted frequently with choices that need our immediate decision.

Firstly, there are choices between good and evil. For example, between stealing or remaining honest, between getting drunk or staying sober, between committing immorality or keeping chaste. Secondly, there are instances of choices between the good and the better or even the best. The third reading deals with these cases when it says that the Kingdom of heaven is like one who discovered gold in a field then sets off immediately to sell all his possessions in order to buy that field.

Again, to be able to make the right choice between good and evil, or a choice of what is better or best, we need discernment, that fine quality of wisdom, which is obtained, not so much through knowledge and experience as through prayer.

Today, and actually everyday of our life, God is asking each of us what we want him to give to us. We hope, we all will answer in the manner of King Solomon that we need godly wisdom to choose only the good and never the evil, nay also to choose the best among the good. Then God will give us, not only the

wisdom we directly ask for, but also the other things we do not explicitly mention but which God knows we truly need.

The second reading (Rom 8) gives us the ground why God acted the way he did for Solomon and will act similarly for anyone who imitates King Solomon in the matter of choices. Paul puts it this way: God has choices also; he chooses one man over another. The one he chooses, he calls apart to become like his Son Jesus. The one he calls, he endows with favors and shares his glory with him. Hence, we say that God works good for those whom he has called. The beautiful thing about this is that we, Christians, rightly believe that God has called all of us, that is, has chosen us and will work out all things for our good.

August 4, 2002

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

(Readings: Is 55:1-3/Rom 8:35, 37-39/Mt 14:13-21)

What will happen if today all the supermarkets in Metro Manila declare an open house and announce to the public that they can come in and take all the items they like for free? What excited crowds will quickly form around them! What eager search for those items they value most! What shrieks of delight as they come out carrying home their prized acquisitions. In no time, those stores will be empty of their stocks.

However this will never happen. Nobody gets anything for free because no store sells anything for free. Declaring open house by supermarkets or receiving expensive things from them is just a dream, an impossible dream. Yet, this is just what God is saying to us in the first reading (Is 55) of today's Mass.

Need I repeat the words to that effect, "Come, you that have no money - receive grain and eat! Come, drink wine and milk

without paying and without cost!" You hesitate to believe that God is inviting you to help yourself with anything like in his big store. You say that what Isaiah 55 talks about is just a dream; that God speaks in metaphors and does not really mean it.

Of course, you are right and wrong there. God speaks in metaphors indeed; but he means seriously what those metaphors stand for. Water, grain, wine and milk - these are essentials of life, at least, for the ancient people of the bible. Neither were they free commodities; people had to pay for them. But God offers for free the **THING** that water, grain, wine and milk stand for. "Come to me and you will have **LIFE**," God says in Isaiah 55. All you have to do is to come to him, listen to him, and do what he tells you to do.

Additionally, the third reading (Mt 14) emphasizes the generosity of God in his concern for the needs of peoples. They got hungry after listening to instructions and receiving cures the entire three days they spent with Jesus. The apostles suggested to him to disperse the crowds so that they can **BUY** food in the nearby towns. What Jesus did was to feed the 5,000 men and as many women and children for free and to their full satisfaction.

Mother Church brought together these two readings, Isaiah 55 and Matthew 14, because they signify a yet third instance of God's limitless generosity shown concretely in the gift of the Holy Eucharist. In this sacrament, you are offered life eternal and God himself, for free at no cost to yourself. The only condition is that you should be free from mortal sins. Yet, of those who fulfill this condition, how many actually get to receive Holy Communion?

At consecration time during Mass, the priest repeats these words of Jesus, "Take this all of you and eat it, for this is my body." Jesus says, "All of you!" not "Some of you" nor even "As many as possible" but "All of you"! How many actually take

this bread of everlasting life? How about the others who form the majority? If he were alive today, Isaiah would be asking them in God's name, "Are they not thirsty that they do not come to the water? Are they not hungry that they keep away from receiving bread? Have they no wish for everlasting life that they don't come to me to eat well without paying and to delight in rich fare without cost?" Perhaps, it is because they are not free from mortal sins, the only condition to receive worthily this bread of eternal life. If so, we have the sacrament of Holy Confession which will free them from mortal sins.

Finally, in the second reading (Rom 8) we hear Paul firmly declaring that nothing in this world can ever separate him from Christ. He spoke of his life in this world, where talking about possibilities, anything could happen in our relationship with Christ. Yet, Paul was firm in stating that nothing whatsoever in this world, whether good or bad, can separate him from Christ. His self-assurance stems from his having met Jesus Christ, his having come to him, his having surrendered himself to his Lord, and from that time on, there was no more parting of ways. This all happened during Paul's life in this world. Now that he is with Christ in heaven, there is absolutely no way that he could be separated from him. Why? Jesus once said, "I give those whom I know and follow me eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of my Father's hand. The Father and I are one." (Jn 10:28-30)

Paul makes this rhetorical question, "Who can separate me from the love of Christ? Trial, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword?" And he gives the answer himself, "Nothing, no creature will be able to separate me from the love of God." Can we speak like Paul? Can we make a statement that nothing will ever separate US from the love of Christ?

August 11, 2002

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

(Readings: 1 Kgs 19:9, 11-13/Heb 11:1-2, 8-19/Lk 12:32-48)

All three readings of today's Mass bring before our eyes three great personalities of ancient times: Prophet Elijah, Simon Peter, and Paul, also called Saul. All three were religious leaders in their time. Today's readings disclose the risks and anxieties inherent to their leadership positions, to any leadership position for that matter.

The three readings merit our close attention because they give us a useful lesson on leadership training and the behavior of leaders. You may say that's fine for those who aspire to become leaders but not for you who are contented just to follow what leaders say.

To answer your reservation, it will help to distinguish between leaders of the church and leaders in the church. Leaders of the church are such few in numbers as Elijah, Simon Peter, Paul, the popes and bishops. But all of you can be and are called to be leaders in the church. With humbler categories and positions, perhaps, but still true leaders.

To whom if not to all Christians were the following words of Christ addressed, "You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth"? Mother Church gains or suffers in the measure her children accept with courage or reject on grounds of false humility the leadership roles being placed on them.

But going back to the Big Three above, let us see where, in their leadership role, have they somehow shown their feet of clay so that we will not be surprised if we sometimes feel like running away from our responsibilities.

Elijah was famous for defending the honor of God among his countrymen. But when they reacted to his sermons with ridicule, persecutions and assassination attempts, he fled his country and in a moment of desperation, asked God to take away his life.

Simon Peter was famous for his impetuosity and outspokenness that sometimes compromise him. Like, declaring he would remain by his Master's side, even though everybody else abandon him. Yet, an accusing word from a simple woman was enough to unnerve him, and for three times, he denied having known Jesus to save his skin. The particular episode of today's gospel shows Peter now walking on the water towards Jesus, now sinking in the water crying out for help.

Paul was famous for his eloquent and vehement "apologia" before his countrymen that Jesus is the Messiah, long promised to the Hebrews. But when they persisted on rejecting Jesus and on threatening Paul, out of dismay, he expressed a death wish that is surprising in a courageous man like him. On deeper analysis, however, it was a death wish wrung out of a compassionate heart that seeks the salvation of his compatriots at whatever cost.

Surely, we all must have experienced instances of dismay and disappointment over those on whom we spend time and energy to assure their temporal and spiritual welfare. This is the risk and the repayment, I believe, of leadership roles we undertake or are laid upon our shoulders.

We would be superior beings to Elijah, Peter and Paul if we do not experience what the three experienced in their lives. The remedy and the solution to all such problems are not different from those that God had given to the famous three - an unshakable faith in Jesus and after taking hold of His outstretched hand a fearless courage to carry on.

"Jesus, save me!" Like Peter's, this should be the prayer on our lips in time of distress and danger.

August 18, 2002

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

(Readings: Is 56:1, 6-7/Rom 11:13-15, 29-32/Mt 15:21-28)

The three readings of today's Mass should lead us to be grateful to God for the gift of faith. This gratitude should be expressed, not only through sincere words of thanks, but also through an intense desire of developing the gift of faith.

The Canaanite woman was praised for her great faith in God, something that most of her own people, non-Jewish that is, did not possess. We, on our part, should consider ourselves fortunate for possessing the gift of faith, which not all our contemporaries duly appreciate.

The lack of faith in many may be due to their refusal to believe when God comes knocking at the door of their hearts. They think that their reason should not accept what it cannot see or understand. Or, the absence of faith may be due to one's carelessness in allowing the light of faith to die by starvation, so to speak. They care only for things that their senses and worldly desires are leading them.

Such people lacking in faith, live as if God did not exist for them nor in this world. They do not care to seek God's forgiveness for their sins because they don't accept the idea of sin. They have no sense of sin. Nor do they aim for a blessed and eternal life after death because it is faith alone that gives assurance that such life exists and is being offered to us by a merciful God.

As darkness is the opposite of light, so is the person without faith, the opposite of the person with faith. But the unbeliever

would not even accept the statement; he/she even thinks himself/herself superior to the believer.

The holy bible makes no sense to the unbeliever nor for that matter, the three bible readings of today's Mass, which show the priceless value of faith. The readings nourish and confirm our faith by giving us a glimpse of the secret workings and providence of God in regards to our salvation.

Take for example, Paul's statement in the second reading that God locked up both Gentiles and Jews in rebelliousness and disobedience, so that He may show mercy to Gentiles and Jews by calling them to the obedience of faith.

That sounds paradoxical but it is the plain truth. God has allowed His creatures to stumble in proudly refusing His guidance, so that in His own time, He can raise them up and lead them to salvation.

The prophet Isaiah in the first reading, predicted the entry of the Gentiles into the fold of the chosen people; where bound in common faith, all nations and races will worship the one true God. Isaiah's prediction and Paul's vision are admirably foreshadowed by the action of the Canaanite woman in today's gospel reading.

Her beginning faith in Jesus was sorely tried by the silent treatment He gave her. But He did this, precisely to stir up the fervor of her faith. He seemingly distanced himself from her, so that she would draw more closely to him. Her persistence and humility finally got the upperhand, and Jesus had to acknowledge and praise this Gentile, non-Jewish lady, "O woman, how great is your faith!" In reward thereof, Jesus added, "Your wish is granted."

Brothers and sisters, faith is your priceless gift from God. Be grateful for it. Express your gratitude by developing and strengthening your faith through perseverance in good works and humility in prayer.

August 25, 2002

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle A

(Readings: Is 22:15, 19-23/Rom 11:33-36/Mt 16:13-20)

We dutifully come to Church on Sundays to unite ourselves with Christ and our fellow-Christians in worshipping God as a group, as a community, as a family. We also do so to hear God our Father speak to us, to listen to his message, to reflect on His very words. Today we have three readings to reflect on. What message is God trying to send us?

In the first reading (Is 22), we hear of a disgraceful Shebna being replaced at God's command by Eliakim in the management of the kingdom of Judah. Eliakim would be the highest authority in the land after the king. His power and office are described in a truly Hebrew manner: holding the keys of power, what he opens no one will shut, and what he shuts no one will open.

In the third reading (Mt 16), we hear Jesus constituting Peter as the highest authority after Him of His Church, and telling Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

Just as Eliakim, the new manager of the royal household of Judah **had** his successors, so also Peter the new holder on earth of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These successors were all the past popes up to the present one, John Paul II.

The question may be asked, "Why did God have to appoint human managers for the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of heaven? Was it not better if God had ruled directly both Israel and His Church?" The second reading of today's Mass (Rom 11) gives the answer to that question: "How great are God's riches! How deep are his wisdom and knowledge! Who can explain his decisions? Who can understand His ways?"

So, if God chose to have human managers to run the affairs of his kingdom on earth, who are we to question his decisions? We can further add that based on the first reading, human managers were appointed by God to act as fathers to the people. Now, a father shows his children what they may or may not do to attain their happiness.

Therefore, by God's will the Pope is a father to us. That is why we call him Holy Father, "*Santo Papa*". Hence, when he exercises his office and authority to teach us what is allowable and what is prohibited in matters of faith and morals, we should respect and obey his authority.

A practical case comes to mind: the controversy on the use of contraceptive methods and condoms. The current reasoning goes that the adoption of any method for family planning rests ultimately on the decision of the individual persons in accordance with their conscience. That is fine, but it should be, in accordance with their enlightened conscience.

One should not act from a false, or wrong, or darkened conscience. Nowadays, everybody seems to justify his/her action, even questionable actions, by appealing to conscience. "My conscience is clear, my conscience doesn't accuse me," etc. This seems to be the broken record, the ready excuse, the convenient scapegoat of private and public individuals nowadays. They charge everything to conscience.

For Catholics, an enlightened conscience is one that is in accord with true knowledge gained by study or experience, one that is in accord with the teaching of the Church, natural law and Holy Scriptures.

In conclusion, this is the message God is sending through today's three readings: that He cares personally for each of us, although he has appointed human managers to guides us on our way to his heavenly kingdom. God has truly shared his authority with some of his creatures for shepherding us his flock and for educating us, his children.

The holders of authority should exercise it in a fatherly way and those under authority should respect it with childlike obedience and trust. For authority in the Church is a ministry of love and service. After all Jesus, to whom all authority was given in heaven, came not to be served but to serve.