

**CANON LAW AT THE SERVICE  
OF THE FAMILY**

*Romulo Vergara, JCD*

**THE PRIEST: PASTOR AND LEADER  
OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY**

*Congregation for the Clergy*

**THE "COLEGIO DE SANTO TOMAS",  
FORERUNNER OF THE  
UST CENTRAL SEMINARY**

*Fidel Villarroel, OP*

**PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY -  
ADDENDA-CORRIGENDA, 2002**

*Charles Bransom, Jr.*

**SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM**

*Javier Gonzalez, OP*



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# **BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS**

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<b>EDITOR</b>	<b>FR. VICENTE CAJILIG, OP.</b>
<b>ASSOCIATE EDITOR</b>	<b>FR. HONORATO CASTIGADOR, O.P.</b>
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<b>PUBLICATION ASSISTANTS</b>	<b>ANGELITA R. GUINTO ARNOLD S. MANALASTAS</b>
<b>COVER DESIGN</b>	<b>REYMOND RODRIGUEZ</b>

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## **Beyond the *Fourth World Meeting of Families***

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VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Few days after the closing of the Fourth World Meeting of Families (January 22-26, 2003), one TV channel played some encounters that took place in said international meeting. What was featured one day was the portion of Sons and Daughters Congress with 1,000 participants. In that event a mother of ten children and forty grandchildren was the guest. She is eighty years old. With her are one daughter and the husband.

In the portion where an old lady was asked what did she teach her children while they were growing up, she happily answered, "I taught them to love and to support one another." The 1,000 young people clapped their hands with awe and wonder. This is to say that marriage can work and is still could work.

One point that was also emphasized by the said couple was their choice - one should work and the other must stay at home. Their child was asked whether she would like their mother to work and she responded with a loud sounding "No". When asked why, she explained: "I like her to be at home." The mother confessed that she and her husband make decision for the good

of their children. She admitted that financially it is difficult, but she said, "God is good" she could manage.

One reason she decided to stay at home is to be able to watch her children very well especially when viewing TV. Children just imitate what they see and she is there to regulate her children's TV viewing. In her young age she used to see program like "Sesame Street", but now there are various programs to choose from.

We are not to judge the Tightness and wrongness of her viewpoint but we have to respect her choice and admit that she feels at ease with her decision to choose the well being of the children first before economic advantage should she work outside home.

The Fourth World Meeting of Families finished, all parents whether those who had the opportunity to attend, or those who did not, would be working over the steps they have to launch on during the time of the said post world meeting. The things that will take place after the gathering are hard to guess; but that the congress, with talks of parents, lay leaders, ecclesiastic and young people as resource person becomes a catalyst of re-thinking in managing families understood as school of communions, a domestic church, where the young souls are nourished, nurtured and formed. They should work out in the defense of life and family. This task is not only for Catholic or Christians, but of all races and nations that recognize the importance of a natural setting in the development of persons. This does not however exclude or prejudice children who are reared by single parents, though with extreme difficulties, ascertained to do the best they can to help their siblings grow in values that will be useful for a life worth living.

## **Canon Law at the Service of the Family**

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**ROMULO VERGARA, JCD**

Human societies across time have seen the Family as a key element in the preservation of the society. Clarifying the relationship between the family and the surrounding society is a task that has been addressed in nearly all legal systems. Church law acknowledges this human reality and uses it as a point of departure for theological reflection.

This presentation will discuss how the revised law deals with the family. First by going through a brief and cursory examination of some of the conciliar statements on the family which establishes the necessary context for our consideration of the canons on the family. Then drawing up some list of the more significant innovations in the revised code that will provide some positive guidance which will assist pastors and people to uphold the sanctity of marriage and the family. And lastly, as regards the observation on the serious lacuna in present legislation on the family, the question of how far canon law could translate into legal formulae and clear-out prescriptions the recent teaching of the Church on the importance of the family.

## 1. Conciliar Statements on the Family.

The Second Vatican Council issued important statements about the family and its role in the Church. *Lumen Gentium*, for example, describes the family as the "domestic church" in which the parents have their own distinct vocation in which they are consecrated by a special sacrament as witnesses of the faith to one another and to their children, for whom they are "the first heralds of faith."<sup>1</sup> This teaching is taken up in other conciliar documents and discussed most fully in *Gaudium et Spes*.<sup>2</sup> The Decree of the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* provides a useful synthesis of all this, including a summary of the rights and duties that arise in family life:<sup>3</sup>

Christian couples are, for each other, for their children and for their relatives, cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith... To give clear proof in their lives of the indissolubility and holiness of the marriage bond; to assert with vigor the right and duty of parents and guardians to give their children a Christian upbringing; to defend the dignity and legitimate autonomy of the family; this has always been the duty of married persons: today, however, it has become the most important aspect of their apostolate. They and all the faithful therefore, should collaborate with men of good will in seeing that these rights are perfectly safeguarded in civil legislation (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11).

<sup>1</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Nos. 11, 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, Nos. 47-52: "The dignity of Marriage and the Family".

<sup>3</sup> Clarence Gallagher, "Marriage and the Family in the Revised Code," in *Studia Canonica*, 17 (1983), p.. 149.

In the sixteen documents issuing forth from the Council, an emphasis is discernible wherein the family, the "domestic church"; especially through the sacramental mission of the parents, becomes the chief instrument in the transmission of the faith and in value formation.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Council a number of official documents from Rome have dealt with the family, and finally, in December of 1981, Pope John Paul II issued his Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, which he describes as a series of reflection based on the 1980 synod of Bishops, at which the central theme had been about the role of the Christian family in the world of today. He writes:

At the close of their assembly, the Synod Fathers presented me with a long list of proposals in which they had gathered the fruits of their reflections, which had matured over the intense days of work, and they asked me unanimously to be a spokesman before humanity of the Church's lively care for the family and to give suitable indications for renewed pastoral effort in this fundamental sector of the life of man and of the Church (FC, 2).<sup>5</sup>

The Pope discussed the rights and duties of parents and he provides a list of family rights that need to be protected. Moreover, Part IV of the exhortation discussed the pastoral care that should be provided for the family and even 'the setting up of definite structures in the law of the Church. The Pope is, however, primarily concerned with the spiritual renewal of family life, and

<sup>4</sup> W. Tobin, "The Rights and obligation of Parents with Reference to the Religious Formation of their Children," in *Ius Populi Dei*, Rome PUG, 1972, vol. 3, 268.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, Exhortation, *Familiaris Cdnsortio*, No. 2.



just how much of this can and should be catered for by legislation is a matter for discussion.<sup>6</sup>

Another document worth noting is the *Charter of rights of the Family*, presented to the Holy See on October 22, 1983 which is an important source and bases for canonical legislation. It is part of the Papal instruction to "study and to bring out every aspect of its rich content," in reference to the reflection of the 1980 Synod of Bishop's proposals on the family.

## **2. Canons which deals with Family.**

There is no formal treatment as such in the revised code on the family. The then Secretary of the Commission for the revision of the Code, Archbishop Rosalio-Lara, explained that "such formal treatment would not really be in harmony with the character of the code; nor in fact, was there a place for it in the systematic structure of the new code. However, he continued, that in almost every book of the revised Code there were canons that dealt, directly or indirectly, with the family."<sup>7</sup>

Central to the treatment of the revised code on the family is to be found in canon 226 which reminds married people of their responsibilities:

§1. Those who are married are bound by the special obligation, in accordance with their own vocation, to strive for the building up of the people of God through their marriage and family.

<sup>6</sup> C. Gallagher, *loc. Cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> Rosalio Castillio-Lara, "De iure familiae in schemate C.I.C." in *Commwnticationis*, 12 (1980), 225-233.

More than merely giving juridical expression to this important canon, the inclusion of this new norm within the revised code determines how the parental role is to be determined in the church legal system. This is made clear in the canonical mandate concerning the education of the child in the catholic religion in book III and the sanctifying office of parents in book IV.

## **2.1. The Education of the Child in the Catholic Religion.**

This right arises from the fact that the baptized person is obliged to live the Christian life and should grow in appreciation of the gift of faith and knowledge of the salvation that has been received. The right to Christian education which, in Book III of the Code, will be related to a specifically Catholic one, has priority over other aspects of human formation.<sup>8</sup>

Because children have this right to education, parents who are their first and foremost educators, possess the corresponding duty to educate them:

c. 226, §2 - Because they have life to their children, parents have a most serious obligation and enjoy the right to educate them; therefore Christian parents are especially to care for the Christian education of their children according to the teaching handed on by the Church.

This right and duty is specified in different areas, and in various stages of the child's development and growth in Christian life:

c. 1136 - Parents have the most serious duty and the primary right to do all in their power to see to the physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing of their children.

<sup>8</sup> F.R. McManus, "Baptism", in J.A. Coriden, T.J. Green, and D.E. Helmschel (eds.), *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, (1985), p. 151.

c. 774, §2 - Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation.

The statement of John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* is echoed in c. 793:

§ 1. Parents as well as those who take their place are obliged and enjoy the right to educate their offspring; Catholic parents also have the duty and right to select those means and institutions through which they can provide more suitably for the catholic education of their children according to local circumstances.

§2. Parents also have the right to make use of those aids to be furnished by civil society which they need in order to obtain Catholic education for their children.

On the basis of the natural law then, parents have the obligation and right to educate their children. Canons 798 and 796, point out that schools are of principal assistance to parents, however, the parents have to send their children to Catholic schools.

## **2.2. The sanctifying office of Parents.**

Christian parents hold a sanctifying mission to lead a Christian conjugal life and see to the Christian education of their children. In this regard canon 835, § 4 reiterates the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, directly connecting the holiness of the "domestic church" with the mission of education:

The rest of the Christian faithful by active participation in celebration of the liturgy especially in the Eucharist in their own way also have their own part in the office of sancti-

fication; parents share in the office of sanctification in a particular way by leading a conjugal life in the Christian spirit and by seeing to Christian education of their children.

The concrete elements in this parental participation in the office of sanctification are specified in the canons on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. But they are clearest of all in the treatment of matrimony.

### **a. Baptism**

The sanctifying office of parents within the revised norms on the sacrament of baptism is a prominent one, reflecting the increased emphasis given their role in canon 867:

Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth; as soon as possible after birth or even before the parents are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be properly prepared for it.

As concerns their educational function, however, the critical statute is canon 863, §1, 2. It states:

[for the licit baptism of an infant it is necessary that:] there be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in catholic religion; if such hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be put off according to the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reason.

This section of the canon calls for some assessment to be made to the sufficiency of the guarantees concerning the rearing of the children in the catholic faith; there is to be a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in catholic religion. The

law is not positing the need for an intensive scrutiny prior to baptism or the necessity of any extraordinary or solemn promise of catholic education on the part of the parents. It is in fact for parents to begin the religious initiation of the child, to teach it to love Christ as a close friend and to form its conscience.<sup>9</sup>

The canons on baptism guarantee the right of the parents to express through the liturgy of baptism their faith in God's presence and action in the life of the child. At the same time, the law acknowledges that the Church must make the sacrament available, while ensuring that baptism adequately celebrates and expresses the fact that God acts through the Christian family. Finally, the revised code provides that a child as an infant has a right to the proper celebration of the sacrament. This includes adequate preparation of the parents, community participation, and post baptismal catechesis; once again, this is a task belonging chiefly and primarily to the family.<sup>10</sup>

## **b. Confirmation**

Canon 890 ascribes to the parents the instructional role with regard to the sacrament of Confirmation. Although the responsibility of pastors has been expanded, it nevertheless remains secondary to that of parents, who as guardians of their children's catholic formation, are charged to oversee their full initiation into the Church's sacramental life."<sup>11</sup>

There is no question that the canons uphold the right that all the baptized have to be confirmed. What is more, the law clearly states that ordinarily it is the responsibility and concern

<sup>9</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction "*Pastoralis Actio*," AAS 72 (1980), n. 32.

<sup>10</sup> F. Buckley, "The rights to the Sacraments of Initiation," *CLSA Proceedings* 40, n. 65.

<sup>11</sup> F. McManus, p. 639.

of Christian parents to form their children and prepare them for the fruitful reception of this sacrament of initiation. With baptism, the child has the right to a proper celebration of the sacrament of confirmation.

### **c. Eucharist and Penance**

The sanctifying responsibility of parents in preparing their children for the reception of the Eucharist and of penance is expressed in c. 914:

It is the responsibility, in the first place, of parents and those who take the place of parents as well as of the pastor to see that children who have reached the use of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacrament of confession.

The canon stipulates that the duty of preparing and bringing children to the Eucharist belongs to the parents before all others. Even pastors, although charged in this and other canons with serious obligations in this regard, are subordinate to parents in providing eucharistic catechesis to children and in judging their readiness to receive communion.

It devolves upon the parents, as those principally commissioned to oversee their children's adequate catechetical and spiritual preparation, to decide what constitutes "sufficient knowledge" mandated in canon 913. At the same time, the use of the phrase "sufficient knowledge" indicates that the thoughtful preparation of children requires something more than just intellectual preparation. It also involves formative experiences in faith such as are fostered by the children's active participation in the Eucharist even before their own reception of communion.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> J. Huels, "Book IV. The Sanctifying Office of the Church: The Most Holy Eucharist (cc. 897-958)," *CLSA commentary*, 652.

Canon 914 ordains that children may be admitted to the Eucharist once they have made a sacramental confession. The inclusion of the phrase "having made their sacramental confession" suggests there should also be some preparation for the sacrament of penance before first communion so that those children who require or want to share in the sacrament can make use of it. Therefore parents, as the primary religious formators of their children charged with effecting their sacramental preparation, need to provide not only eucharistic catechesis but instruction on the sacrament of penance as well. It also bestows on the parents' comparable rights of priority in determining the children's readiness for the sacrament of penance.<sup>13</sup>

#### **d. Matrimony**

Special attention should be given to canon 1063, since it indicates the pastoral care that is to be shown to those who are about to get married, as well as those already married, and to the family itself. The canon even provides guidance about the sort of pastoral care that should be provided by the priest and by the community;

c. 1063 - Pastors of souls are obliged to ensure that their own Church community provides for Christ's faithful the assistance by which the married state is preserved in its character and develops in perfection. This assistance is given principally;

1. by preaching, catechesis, etc.;
2. by personal preparation for entering marriage;
3. fruitful celebration of marriage liturgy;

<sup>13</sup> J. Provost, "The reception of First Penance," *The Jurist* 47 (1987) 294-340.

4. by the help given to those who have entered marriage, etc.

Cardinal Felici, in his role as Prefect of the *Signatura Apostolica*, gave a report to the 1980 Synod in which he tried to show what the Church's Supreme tribunal was able to do for the defense of the family.<sup>14</sup> In his view the *Signatura*, by its constant vigilance over church Tribunals, contributes to the defense of family life in the Church by preventing marriages from rashly being declared null. It also contributes to the defense of the family in another way by permitting members of the faithful who have manifestly contracted an invalid marriage to obtain a declaration of nullity as soon as possible and exercise their right duly to set up their family. He pointed out that this was frequently done by administrative declarations of nullity in cases where the nullity is clear but all the juridical formalities cannot be fulfilled. Finally, the *Signatura Apostolica* urges individual conferences to set up suitable tribunals, to foster regional ones, and urges that in handling cases useless delays should not be contrived.<sup>15</sup> Indeed it is a very important service to family life in the Church the one that is provided by the Tribunals. Although there are still many dioceses in our country where there are no tribunals or where the tribunal structure is far from satisfactory in the way it functions or fails to function yet the last few years there were many who started it and are functioning well.

Likewise, Archbishop Castillo-Lara also indirectly pointed out that many of the laws on procedure have some reference to family life. He thinks this is particularly true in the canons that

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Communicationes*, 12 (1980) pp. 215ff. A translation was published in the *Canon Law Society Newsletter*, No. 49, June 1, 1981, pp. 15-30.

<sup>15</sup> *communicationes*, 12 (1980), p. 217.



deal with matrimonial cases, and he draws attention to four aspects of this. First of all, the extension of competence to the forum where the petitioner has a domicile (c.1673); secondly, the possibility of allowing a single judge in certain circumstances (c. 1425); thirdly, the permission to accord probative force to declarations by parties themselves (c. 1536); and lastly, the revised legislation concerning the obligatory appeal in canon 1682. In actual fact, these canons do not directly deal with the family as such, but in the sense that they can do much to speed up ecclesiastical trials, and therefore declarations of nullity, they can have an important effect on the families concerned.<sup>16</sup>

### **3. Is there a need to reconsider the present legislation in view of the recent teaching of the Church on the importance of the family?**

The above mentioned list of the more significant innovations in the revised code that will provide some positive guidance which will assist pastors and people to uphold the sanctity of marriage and the family is the *ius familiae* that is embodied in the present code. The listing was reviewed in order for us canon lawyers to evaluate and to suggest in the light of the present emphasis of the Philippine Church on the Family.

It is regrettable that in many of the pastoral programs on the Family of the different dioceses, there is no mention of *ius familiae* as presented in our present legislation and if ever there is it is in the appendix. There are mixed reactions to this position of how far can we translate into legal formulae the teachings of the Church on the Family.

There are many who think that legislation on the family is insufficient. Some consider it regrettable that while the family

<sup>16</sup> R. Castillo-Lara, *Communicationes*, 12 (1980) 225-233.

is the primary society, founded on a sacrament, and the "*ecclesia domestica*" which and through which man's whole regeneration in grace is developed, yet there seems to be nothing in the Code which describes the precise nature of the Christian family.

What are **the perceived Lacunae**.

3.1. There are no canons which indicate clearly the gifts of grace within the family to which the sacrament of matrimony gives rise. Nor is there any statement of specific mission of the family as such within the people of God. This is thought to be a serious lacuna in the revised legislation.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the Church there is a growing interest and activity in the evaluation of marriage as a vocation to holiness, and recent years have witnessed the growth of groups developing a conjugal and family spirituality (like the Couples for Christ).

3.2. Why, therefore, could a number of canons not have been drafted to provide support for this pastoral development? Even the canons in the new code concerning the parent's rights and duties with regard to the education of their children appear to some writers to provide little guidance to deal with serious problems that are constantly arising in this area.<sup>18</sup>

3.3. Then there are the problems about the education of the children when parents belong to different religions. Would it not have been possible to devise directives which would have helped families to face up to these difficulties and resolve them satisfactorily.

These writers acknowledge that it was easy to draw up family norms that would have universal validity in the church, given the

<sup>17</sup> C. Gallagher, *Studia Canonica*, 17 (1983), p. 166.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, 167.

great variety of cultural situations that there are. However, it is thought that the family of baptized Catholics, founded as it is on the further sacrament of matrimony, should have enough in common for all the faithful to permit the promulgation of some norms which would have been universally helpful and acceptable. Family life, is after all, the vocation and ministry to which the Lord has called the vast majority of the People of God.<sup>19</sup>

The revised Code provides some positive guidance which will assist pastors and people to uphold the sanctity of marriage and the family. Yet it could have been hoped that the recent teaching of the Church on the importance of the family would have found more practical expression in the Church's legislation. Attention has already been drawn to the chapter in the revised Code entitled: *"Pastoral care and the prerequisites for the celebration of marriage"* (Chap I. Title VII, Book IV- cans. 1063-1072). But this is directed primarily at preparing couples for marriage.

3.4. Couldn't more have been said about the *effects* of the sacrament of matrimony in so far as this concerns the family as such? These are sort of questions being raised by writers who want canon law to determine clearly the duties and the rights of the Catholic family and the service that the family can effectively contribute within the Church as an active agent of evangelization and growth in accordance with the teaching of the Council and the Popes.<sup>20</sup>

The Pontifical Council for the Family, set up by Pope John Paul II in May 1981 made an important observation that the revised Code contained no formal treatment of the family. The

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 167.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 168.

Council, while acknowledging that the Code should contain only those elements which are of juridical importance, thought that there should have been more formal treatment of the family in the new Code. The Council proposed a number of additions to the already existing canons, additions expressed almost entirely in words taken from the documents of Vatican II. However, the proposed additions were not accepted by the Plenary Commission in October 1981.<sup>21</sup>

There are different views how the treatment of the family in the present legislate could be done. Juan Ignacio Arrieta proposes that in light of the *Familiaris Consortio* and *The Pope's 1994 Letter to the Families*, the present legislation needs to be reconsidered to take into account the deeper understanding which there now is of the sacramentality of marriage and the family and the juridical consequences flowing from it. Particular aspects to be addressed are: the family considered as primordial society in the Church; the Family considered as "domestic Church"; the constitutive power in the Church of the "*ius connubii*."<sup>22</sup>

Mosignor E. Capellini, proposed that there should be a special chapter on the family in Book II, *Del Populo Dei*, immediately after the section, *De obligationibus et iuribus christifidelium laicorum*. The first part of this chapter would have dealt with the traditional rights and duties of the family, but the second part would deal in a practical manner with the family as an institution - *ecclesia domestica* - which has a specific part to play in the exercise of the Church's triple task of teaching, governing and sanctifying. He was of the opinion that such

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 168-169.

<sup>22</sup> J.I. Arrieta, La Posizione Giuridica de Famiglia nell Ordinamento Canonico, in *Ius Ecclesiae* VII 2/95, pp. 551-560.

legislation would positively promote the pastoral action that is being advocated by the Church.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, in consideration of the conciliar documents and especially Pope John Paul's Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio* which are authoritative statements on the primary role that the family must play within the Christian community. This is beyond doubt important teaching that should be incorporated in the Code of Canon Law. The law must not attempt to usurp the role of catechetics and moral theology. Canon Law can, of course, provide useful guidance on the relative seriousness of various Christian duties. It can be a useful instrument in the pastoral renewal within the Church, setting up structures to promote such renewal. But canon law should not attempt the impossible task of trying to translate into legal formulae and clear-out prescriptions the whole of the Gospel message, though, of course, it can and does provide a clear expression of the Christian moral tradition in certain areas. So perhaps it would have been quite unnecessary and even unwise to try to have incorporated *Familiaris Consortio* into the revised Code.<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

The legislation of the Church must respond to the situation of today. Indeed the role of the family is such an important entity, a domestic Church where the graces of God is channeled. Cognizant of importance of this entity in the Church, does the present legislation really serves an instrument in the service of the Family or does it serve as an active agent of evangelization and growth in the local Church. May this review give us a better appreciation and a founded hope in our common desire for canon law's relevance in our concrete pastoral situation.

<sup>23</sup> C. Gallagher, 168.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

# **The Priest: Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community**

## **CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY**

This "Instruction", addressed to all Parish Priests and their brother collaborators involved in the "cura animarum", is being relayed to them through the kind offices of their Bishops. The document must be seen in the context of a deep reflection and study, which has been ongoing for a number of years on this topic.

With the publication of the *Directories* on the ministry and life of Priests and that of the Permanent Deacons, along with that of the Interdicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, and the Circular Letter, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community*, we find the resonance of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Lumen Gentium*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the *Code of Canon Law*. in an uninterrupted expression of the Magisterium.

The document follows the same track as the great missionary impetus of the *Due in altum*, which necessarily leads to the indispensable task of the evangelization of the Third Christian Millennium. For this reason, mindful also of the many recommen-

dations produced by a worldwide consultation on this matter, it has appeared appropriate to seize this opportunity to present a doctrinal section with elements which will provoke a reflection on those fundamental theological values which impel towards missionary activity and which are sometimes somewhat obfuscated.

The relationship between the ecclesiblogical-pneumatic dimension, which touches directly upon priestly ministry, and that ecclesiopolgical dimension, which helps in understanding the significance of specific function, has been highlighted.

This "Instruction" has the underlying purpose of directing particular affection towards those priests who carry out their precious office as Parish Priests and who, through beset by many (challenges, are always in the midst of their people. The delicate and valuable office they hold, provides the opportunity to offer greater clarity with regard to the essential and vital difference which exists between the common priesthood and the ordained priesthood. This, in turn, gives rise to a proper understanding of priestly identity and the essential sacramental dimension of the ordained minister.

As it has been the intent to follow the line indicated by the Holy Father in his Allocution to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation, which is particularly rich in its practicality, it appears helpful to addend it here:

*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 *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 re-presentation. 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 dabo 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 dabo 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.

(ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Friday 23 November 2001)

## Part I

### The Common Priesthood of the Faithful and The Ordained Priesthood

#### *1. Lift up you eyes (John 4, 35)*

1. "I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest" (John 4,35). These words of Our Lord well illustrate the immense horizon of the incarnate Word's mission of love. "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (John 3,17). His entire earthly life, which was completely consonant with the Father's salvific will, is a constant manifestation of that divine will which desires the salvation of mankind and that all come to that salvation eternally willed by the Father. He has bequeathed this historical mission to the Church and consigned it in a special way to her ordained ministers. "Great indeed is the mystery of which we have been made ministers. A mystery of love without limit, for "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (*Jn* 13.1)<sup>1</sup>.

The priestly ministers of Jesus Christ, invested with the character and grace of the Sacrament of Orders, and constituted witnesses and ministers of divine mercy, voluntarily undertake to serve all in the Church. In whatever social, cultural or historical circumstances, including contemporary society, heavily marked as it is by an ethos of secularism and consumerism which erode the meaning of Christianity for many of the faithful, the Lord's ministers should always be mindful of the victory that overcomes the world: our faith" (1 John 5,4). Indeed, contemporary society

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2001 (25 March 2001).  
n. 1.

affords an opportunity to recall the conquering power of faith and of love in Christ, and to be mindful that, notwithstanding difficulties and even a certain diffidence, the Christian faithful - as well as many non-believers - greatly appreciate, and depend on, the pastoral availability of priests. They expect to find that the priest is a man of God, just as St Augustine says: "Our knowledge is Christ and our wisdom is also Christ. He gives us faith with regard to temporal realities and it is He who reveals eternal realities to us."<sup>2</sup> We live in an era of new evangelization and should therefore go and search out those who await the opportunity of encountering Christ.

2. In differing degrees, Christ transmitted, his own quality of Pastor of Souls to Bishops and Priests through the Sacrament of Orders so as to render them capable of acting in his name and of -representing his *potestas capitis* in the Church. "The profound unity of this new people does not mean that there are not different and complementary tasks in its life. Those whose task it is to renew *in persona Christi* what Jesus did at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice, "the source and summit of the entire Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), are linked in a special way to first Apostles. The sacramental character which distinguishes them by virtue of their reception of Holy Orders ensures that their presence and ministry are unique, indispensable and irreplaceable."<sup>3</sup> The presence of an ordained minister is an essential condition for the Church's life and not merely for her effective organization.

<sup>2</sup> SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, 13,19, 24: NBA 4, p. 555.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2000 (23 March 2000), n. 5.

3. *Due in altum!*\* Every Christian who experiences the light of faith in his soul and desires to walk at the pace set by the Supreme Pontiff must try to translate into deeds this urgent and decisively missionary call. The Pastors of the Church, whose sense of the supernatural allows for the possibility of discerning the ways in which God desires to guide His people, must especially understand this same call and implement it zealously and readily. "*Due in ahum!* The Lord invites us to put out into the deep, with trust in his word. Let us learn from the Jubilee experience and persevere in the task of bearing witness to the Gospel with the enthusiasm that contemplating the face of Christ engenders in us!"<sup>5</sup>

4. It is important to recall how the Holy Father understands the fundamental goals set out by him at the end of the Great Jubilee of 2000, and offered to the particular Churches for concrete realization. Inviting all the local Churches to undertake this task, the Pope pointed to the need to profit from the grace received, "by putting it into practice in resolutions and guidelines for action."<sup>6</sup>

This grace touches upon the Church's mission of evangelization which requires personal sanctity on the part of both her pastors and faithful, a fervent apostolic sense concordant with their specific states of life which imbues their responsibilities and duties, and an awareness that the eternal salvation of many depends on faithfully manifesting Christ both in word and in deed. Hence, there emerges an urgent need to give greater impulse to

<sup>4</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), n. 15: AAS 93 (2001), p. 276.

<sup>5</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2001 (25 March 2001), n. 2.

<sup>6</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001) n. 3: I.e., p. 267.

the priestly ministry in the local Churches, especially in parishes. Such should be based on an authentic understanding of the ministry and life of priests.

We priests "have been consecrated in the Church for this specific ministry. We are called in various ways, to contribute, wherever Providence puts us, to the *formation of the community* of God's People. *Our task* ...is to tend the flock God entrusted to us, not by constraint but willingly, not as domineering over those in our charge, but by setting them an example (cf. 1 Pt 5: 2-3). (...) This is our way of holiness, which leads us to our ultimate meeting with the "supreme shepherd" in whose hands is the "crown of glory" (1 Pt 5: 4). This is our mission at the service of the Christian people."<sup>7</sup>

## ***2. Central Elements of the Ministry and Life of Priests<sup>8</sup>***

### ***a) Priestly identity***

5. Priestly identity has to be seen in the context of the divine salvific will since it is a fruit of the sacramental action of the Holy Spirit, a sharing in the saving work of Christ, and completely oriented to the service of that work in the Church as it unfolds in history. Priestly identity is three dimensional: pneumatological, Christological and ecclesiological. This primordial theological structure of the mystery of the priest, who is a minister of salvation, can never be overlooked if he is adequately to understand the meaning of his pastoral ministry in the concrete

<sup>7</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Homily on the occasion of the Jubilee for Priests (18 May 2000), n. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Christian Community* (19 March 1999).



circumstances of the parish.<sup>9</sup> He is the servant of Christ. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, the priest becomes the servant of mankind. His very being, ontologically assimilated to Christ, constitutes the foundation of being ordained for the service of the community. Total commitment to Christ, aptly effected and witnessed through celibacy, places the priest at the service of all. The marvellous gift of celibacy<sup>10</sup> is clarified by, and draws inspiration from, assimilation to the nuptial gift of the crucified and risen Son of God to a redeemed and renewed mankind.

The very life and work of the priest - his consecrated person and his ministry - are inseparable theological realities. Their object is service in promoting the Church's mission<sup>11</sup> which is the eternal salvation of all mankind. The reason for the existence of the priesthood is to be found and discovered in the mystery of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and the People of God journeying through history, which has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation.<sup>12</sup> "The ecclesial community has absolute need of the ministerial priesthood so as to have Christ, Head and Shepherd, present in her midst."<sup>13</sup>

6. The baptismal or *common priesthood* of Christians, which is a genuine participation in the priesthood of Christ, is an essential

<sup>9</sup> In this sense, it is important to reflect on what John Paul II calls "a minister of Jesus Christ the Head and Pastor of the Church", Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), pp. 695-696.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n. 59: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 70: I.e., pp. 778-782.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n. 48.

<sup>13</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Clergy (23 November 2001): AAS 94 (2002), pp. 214-215.

property of the New People of God<sup>14</sup> "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people..." (*IPet* 2,9); [He] has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (*Aps* 1,6); [Thou] hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God (*Aps* 5,10) ... they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him" (*Aps* 20,6). These passages recall Exodus and transfer what was said of the Old Israel to the New Israel: "You shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*Ex* 19, 5-6). They also recall Deuteronomy: For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth (*Dt* 7,6).

"While the common priesthood is a consequence of the fact that the Christian people has been chosen by God as bridge with mankind and involves every believer who has been inserted into this people, the ministerial priesthood is the fruit of being chosen, it is the fruit of a specific vocation: "[Jesus] called his disciples, and chose from them twelve" (*Lk* 6, 13-16). By virtue of the ministerial priesthood, the faithful are made aware of their common priesthood and actualize it (cf. *Eph* 4, 11-12); the priest constantly reminds them that they are the People of God and prepares them to "offer spiritual sacrifices" (cf. *IPet* 2,5), through which Christ himself make of us and eternal offering to the Father (cf. *i Pet* 3,18). Without the presence of Christ, represented by

<sup>14</sup> Cf. CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLICAE, III, 16, 3: SC 329, p. 147; SAINT AMBROSE, *De mysteriis*, 6, 29-30: SC 25 bis.p.173; SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*.III, 63, 3: SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* nn. 10-11; Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 2; CIC, can. 204.

the priest, who is the spiritual leader of the community, this would not fully be an ecclesial communion."<sup>15</sup>

In this priestly people, the Lord instituted a *priestly ministry* to which some are called so that they might serve the faithful in pastoral charity through the *potestas sacra*. The common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood differ from each other not only in grade but also in essence.<sup>16</sup> The difference between the two priesthoods is, therefore, not simply one of greater or lesser participation in the priesthood of Christ, but one of essentially different ways of participating in that priesthood. The common priesthood of the faithful is based on baptismal character which is the spiritual seal of their having been claimed for Christ. It "enables and commits Christians to serve God by a vital participation in the sacred liturgy of the Church and to exercise their baptismal priesthood by the witness of holy lives and practical charity."<sup>17</sup>

The ministerial priesthood, on the other hand, is based on the sacramental character received in the Sacrament of Orders

<sup>15</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Clergy (23 November 2001), I.e., p. 215.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n. 10; Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n.2; PIUS XII, Encyclical letter *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947): AAS 39 (1947), p. 555; Allocution *Magnificate Dominum*: AAS 46 (1954), p. 669; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Interdicasterial instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997), Theological Principles n.1; AAS 89 (1997), pp. 860-861.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1273.

which configures the priest to Christ so as to enable him to act in the person of Christ, the Head, and to exercise the *potestas sacra* to offer Sacrifice and forgive sins.<sup>18</sup> A new and specific mission is sacramentally conferred on those of the baptized who have received the grace of the ministerial priesthood: to embody Christ's triple office - prophetic, cultic and regal - as Head and Shepherd of the Church in the midst of the people of God.<sup>19</sup> In exercising their specific functions, they act *in persona Christi Capitis*, and consequently, in the same way, they act *in nomine Ecclesiae*.<sup>20</sup>

7. "Our sacramental priesthood, therefore, is both 'hierarchical' and 'ministerial'. It is a particular 'ministerium', that is a 'service', with regard to the community of the faithful. It does not, however, derive from that community nor from its 'call' or 'delegation'. Rather, the ministry is a gift for the community which comes from Christ himself and from the fullness of his priesthood (...) Conscious of this reality, we understand how our priesthood is 'hierarchical', that is, how it is connected with the power to form and govern a priestly people (cf. *ivi*), and how, precisely because of this, it is also 'ministerial'. We exercise an

<sup>18</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session XXIII, *Doctrina de sacramento Ordinis* (15 July 1563); *DS* 1763-1778; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nn. 2; 13; Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 15; *Missale Romanum* Institutio generalis, nn. 4,5 and 60; *Pontifical Roman Rite of Ordination*, nn. 131 and 123; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nn. 1366-1372, 1544-1553, 1562-1568, 1581-1587.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), nn. 13-15: I.e., pp. 677-681.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 33; Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, nn. 10, 28, 37; Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* nn. 2, 6, 12. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), nn. 6-12; SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 22, 4.

office through which Christ himself incessantly 'serves' the Father in the work of our salvation. Our entire priestly life is, and ought to be, deeply imbued by this service if we wish adequately to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice 'in persona Christi'.<sup>21</sup>

In recent times, the Church has experienced problems of "priestly identity", deriving sometimes from an unclear theological understanding of the two ways of participating in the priesthood of Christ. In some areas, these difficulties have progressed to the point of losing that profound ecclesiological balance which is proper to the perennial and authentic Magisterium.

At the present time, however, circumstances are such that it is possible to overcome the danger of "clericalizing" the laity and of "secularizing"<sup>22</sup> the clergy.

The generous commitment of the laity in the areas of worship, transmission of "the faith and pastoral collaboration, in the face of shortages of priests, has tempted some sacred ministers and laity to go beyond that which is permitted by the Church and by their own ontological sacramental capacities. This results

<sup>21</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1979 *Novo incipiente* (8 April 1979), n. 4: AAS 71 (1979), p. 399.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), n. 23: AAS 81 (1989), p. 431; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Interdicasterial instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997), Theological Principles n.4, I.e., p. 860-861; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Priest and The Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community* (19 March 1999), p.36.

in a theoretical and practical under estimation of the specific mission of the laity to sanctify the structures of society from within.

This same crisis of identity has also brought about the "secularization" of some sacred ministers by the obfuscation of their absolutely indispensable specific role in ecclesial communion.

8. In the Church, the priest, *alter Christus*, is the minister of the essential salvific actions.<sup>23</sup> Acting in *persona Christi Capitis*, he is the fount of life and vitality in the Church and in his parish by virtue of his sacrificial power to confect the Body and Blood of the Redeemer, his authority to proclaim the Gospel, and his power to conquer the evil of sin through sacramental forgiveness. The priest himself is not the source of this spiritual life. Rather, it comes from Him who distributes it to all the people of God. The priest, anointed by the Holy Spirit, is the servant who enters the sacramental sanctuary: Jesus Christ Crucified (cf. *John* 19, 31-37) and Risen, from whom salvation comes.

With Mary, Mother of the Eternal High Priest, the priest is aware that, with her, he is "an instrument of salvific communication between God and man", albeit in a different way: the Blessed Virgin through the Incarnation, the priest through the power of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.<sup>24</sup> The relationship between priests and the Blessed Virgin Mary is based not only on a need for protection and assistance but more so on an awareness of an objective fact: "the presence of Our Lady", that

<sup>23</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, *Catechesis at the General Audience of 7 October 1964: Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 2 (1964), p. 958.

"operative presence with which the Church lives the mystery of Christ."<sup>25</sup>

9. As a participant in the directive action of Christ, the Head and Shepherd of his Body,<sup>26</sup> the priest, at the pastoral level, is specifically empowered to be a "man of communion"<sup>27</sup>, government and of service to all. He is charged with promoting and maintaining unity between the members and the Head, and between the members. By his vocation, he unites and serves this double dimension of Christ's pastoral function (cf. Mt 20,28; Mark 10, 45; Lk 22, 27). For its development, the Church's life requires energies which can only be supplied by this ministry of communion, government and service. It requires priests who are totally assimilated to Christ whose vocation originates in full appropriation of Christ. It requires priests who, "in" and "with" Christ, live all the virtues manifested by Christ the Shepherd, and who are motivated by, and draw inspiration from, assimilation with the nuptial offering of the Crucified and Risen Son of God to a redeemed and renewed mankind. It requires priests who wish to be sources of unity and of fraternal offering of self to all - especially the most needy. It requires men who, recognizing that their priestly identity derives from the Good Shepherd<sup>28</sup>, internally live that image and externally manifest it in a manner immediately recognizable to all.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), nn. 11, 32, 50, 56: AAS 66 (1974), pp. 123, 144, 159, 162.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 21: I.e., p. 689.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.f.* 18: I.e., p. 684; cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n. 46.

The priest renders Christ, Head of the Church, present through the ministry of the Word which is a sharing in his prophetic office.<sup>30</sup> *In persona et nomine Christi*, the priest is minister of the evangelizing word which calls all to conversion and holiness. His is minister of the word of worship which praises God's greatness and gives thanks for His mercy. He is minister of the word of the sacraments which are the effective source of grace. In these multiple ways, the priest, with the power of the Holy Spirit, prolongs the teaching of Christ in His Church.

#### b). *Unity of Life*

10. Because of the ministry entrusted to priests, which in itself is a holy, sacramental configuration to Jesus Christ, priests have a further reason to strive for holiness.<sup>31</sup> This does not mean that the holiness to which the priest is called is in any way subjectively greater than that to which all the faithful are called in virtue of Baptism. While holiness takes different forms<sup>32</sup>, holiness is always the same.<sup>33</sup> The priest, however, is motivated to strive for holiness for a different reason: so as to be worthy of that new grace which has marked him so that he can represent the person of Christ, Head and Shepherd, and thereby become

<sup>30</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 26, i.e., p 698; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), nn. 45-47.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 12; CIC, can. 276, § 1.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part 1, chapter 3.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n. 41.



a living instrument in the work of salvation.<sup>34</sup> In fulfilling his ministry, consequently, he who is "sacerdos in aeternum" must strive to follow the example of the Lord in all things by uniting himself with Him "in discovering the Father's will, and in the gift of himself to his flock."<sup>35</sup> *Unity of life*<sup>36</sup>, or *interior unity*<sup>37</sup> between the spiritual life and ministerial activity, is founded on love for the divine will and pastoral charity. Growth in this unity of life, founded on pastoral charity,<sup>38</sup> is promoted by a solid prayer life so much so that the priest becomes, at one and the same time, a witness to charity and a master of the spiritual life.

11. The Church's history is redolent with splendid models of truly radical pastoral self-sacrifice. These include a great number of holy priests who have reached sanctity through generous and indefatigable dedication to the care of souls, commitment to asceticism and a profound spiritual life, among them the Cure of Ars, patron of parish priests. These pastors, consumed by the love of Christ and its attendant pastoral charity, are a lived expression of the Gospel.

Some currents in contemporary culture regard interior virtue, mortification and spirituality as forms of introspection, alienation, or of egoism which are incapable of understanding the problems of the world and of people. In some instance, this has led to a multifarious image of the priest: it ranges from the sociologist to the therapist, from the politician to the manager. It has even

<sup>34</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 12; *CIC*, can. 276, § 1.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, (25 March 1992), n. 72: I.e., p. 786.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

led to the idea of the "retired" priest. In this context, it has to be recalled that the priest is a full-time bearer of an ontological consecration. His basic identity has to be sought in the character which has been conferred on him by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and from which pastoral grace derives. The priest, therefore, must always know what he has to do, precisely as a priest. As St John Bosco says, the priest is a priest at the altar; he is a priest in the confessional; he is a priest in the school; he is priest on the street; indeed, he is a priest everywhere. In certain contemporary situations, some priests are led to believe that their ministry is peripheral to life, whereas, in reality, it is at the very centre of life since it has the capacity to enlighten, reconcile and renew all things.

It can happen that some priests, having begun their ministry full of enthusiasm and ideals, experience disaffection, disillusionment, or even failure. There are multiple reasons for this phenomenon: deficient formation, lack of fraternity in diocesan presbyterates, personal isolation, or lack of support from the Bishop<sup>39</sup> and the community, personal problems, health, bitterness at not being able to find responses or solution to problems, diffidence with regard to the ascetical life, abandonment of the spiritual life or even lack of faith.

<sup>39</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 16: "His [the Bishop's] priests, who assume a part of his duties and concerns, and who are ceaselessly devoted to their work, should be the objects of his particular affection. He should regard them as sons and friends. He should always be ready to listen to them and cultivate an atmosphere of easy familiarity with them, thus facilitating the pastoral work of the entire diocese. A bishop should be solicitous for the welfare - spiritual, intellectual, and material - of his priests, so that they may live holy and pious lives, and exercise a faithful and fruitful ministry."

Indeed, a dynamic ministry that is not based on a solid priestly spirituality quickly become an empty activity devoid of any prophetic character. Clearly, the disintegration of the priest's internal unity results, in the first place, from the decline of his pastoral charity, which amounts to a decline in "that vigilant love for the mystery that he bears within his heart for the good of the Church and of mankind."<sup>40</sup>

Spending time in intimate conversation with, and adoration of, the Good Shepherd, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, is a pastoral priority far superior to any other. Every priest, who is a leader of his community, should attend to this priority so as to ensure that he does not become spiritually barren, nor transformed into a dry channel no longer capable of offering anything to anyone.

Spirituality is, without doubt, the most important pastoral concern. Any pastoral initiative, missionary programme, or effort at evangelization that eschews the primacy of spirituality and divine worship is doomed to failure.

*c). The specific journey to holiness*

12. The ministerial priesthood, to the extent that.it conforms to the life and priestly work of Christ, introduces a new dimension to the spiritual life of those who receive this most precious gift. It is a spiritual life based on participation in the *gratia capitalis* of Christ in His Church, which matures through ministerial service to the Church: it is a holiness in ministry and through ministry.

<sup>40</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, (25 March 1992), n. 72: I.e., p. 787.

13. Deepening "awareness that one is a minister of Jesus Christ"<sup>41</sup> is, therefore, of vital importance for the spiritual life of the priest and for the effectiveness of his very ministry. Ministerial relationship with Jesus Christ "gives rise to, and requires in the priest, the further bond which comes from his 'intention', that is, from a conscious and free choice to do in his ministerial activities what the Church intends to do."<sup>42</sup> The phrase "to do in his ministerial activities what the Church intends to do" is enlightening for the spiritual life of all sacred ministers and invites them to a greater appreciation of personal instrumentality in the service of Christ and the Church, and to give that expression concrete expression through their ministerial activity. "Intention", in this sense, necessarily implies a relationship with the actions of Christ in, and through, the Church. It also implies obedience to His will, fidelity to His commands, and docility to His actions: the sacred ministry is the instrument through which Christ and His Body, the Church, operate.

This is a permanent personal disposition: "This bond tends by its very nature to become as extensive and profound as possible, affecting one's way of thinking, feeling and life itself: in other words, creating a series of moral and spiritual 'dispositions' which correspond to the ministerial actions performed by the priest."<sup>43</sup>

Priestly spirituality requires a climate of proximity to the Lord Jesus Christ, of friendship and personal encounter with Him, of 'shared' ministerial mission, of love for and service to, His Person in the 'person' of His Body and Spouse which is the

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 25: I.e., p. 695.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Church. To live the Church and give oneself to her ministerial service implies a profound love for the Lord Jesus Christ. "This pastoral charity flows especially from the eucharistic sacrifice. This sacrifice is therefore the centre and root of the whole life of the priest, so that the priestly soul strives to make its own what is enacted on the altar. But this cannot be achieved except through priests themselves penetrating more intimately through prayer into the mystery of Christ."<sup>44</sup>

In penetrating that mystery, the Blessed Virgin Mary, united with the Redeemer, comes to our assistance because "when we celebrate the Holy Mass, the Mother of the Son of God is in our midst and introduces us to the mystery of His redemptive sacrifice. Thus, she is the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from this sacrifice to the Church and to all the faithful."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, "Mary was associated with the priestly sacrifice of Christ in a singular way by sharing His will' to save the world through the Cross. She was the first and perfect spiritual participant in His oblation as *Sacerdos et Hostia*. As such, she can obtain and give to those who share ministerially in the priesthood of her Son, the grace to respond all the more to the demands of the spiritual sacrifice which the priesthood demands: in particular she can obtain and give the grace of faith, hope and perseverance in the face of trials which stimulate a more generous participation in the redemptive sacrifice."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 14.

<sup>45</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Introduction to the Mass celebrated on the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Czestochowa, "L'Osservatore Romano", 26 August 2001.

<sup>46</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 30 June 1993, *Mary is the Mother of the Eternal High Priest*, L'Osservatore Romano, 30 June-1 July 1993.

For the priest, the Eucharist must occupy "the truly central place both in his ministry and in his spiritual life,"<sup>47</sup> because all of the Church's spiritual good derives from the Eucharist, which *per se* is the source and summit of all evangelization.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the importance of proper preparation before offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of its daily celebration<sup>49</sup>, of thanksgiving and of the visit to the Blessed Sacrament during the course of the day.

14. In addition to daily celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the priest prays the Liturgy of the Hours, an obligation he freely undertook *sub grave*. The priest intensifies his love for the divine Shepherd and makes him present to the faithful from the immolation of Christ on the altar to the celebration of the Divine Office with the entire Church. The priest has received the privilege of "of speaking to God in the name of all", indeed of becoming almost "the mouth of the Church."<sup>50</sup> In the Divine Office he supplies what is lacking in the praise of Christ and, as an accredited ambassador, his intercession for the salvation of the world is numbered among the most effective."

*d.) Fidelity of the priest to ecclesiastical discipline*

15. An "awareness of being of being a minister" implies an awareness of the organic action of the Body of Christ In order

<sup>47</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis*, (25 March 1992), n. 26: I.e., p. 699.

<sup>48</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, n.13; *CIC*, cann. 904 and 909.

<sup>50</sup> SAINT BERNARDINE OF SIENNA, *Sermo XX: Opera Omnia*, Venetiis 1591, p. 132.

<sup>51</sup> BLESSED COLUMBA MARMION, *Le Christ idéal du prêtre*, cap. 14: Maredsous 1951.

to make progress, the life and mission of the Church requires order, rules and laws governing conduct - in short, a disciplinary regime. Prejudice against ecclesiastical discipline has to be overcome, beginning with the very expression itself. Fear of citing ecclesiastical discipline or requiring the fulfillment of its demands must also be overcome. When the norms of ecclesiastical discipline are observed, tensions are avoided which otherwise would compromise the unitary pastoral effectiveness which the Church needs so as to fulfill her mission of evangelization. A mature appropriation of one's own ministerial responsibilities takes it for granted that the Church "organized as a social and visible structure...must also have norms: in order that its hierarchical and organic structure be visible, in order that the exercise of the functions divinely entrusted to it, especially that of sacred power and of the administration of the sacraments, may be adequately organized."<sup>52</sup>

Consciousness of being a minister of Jesus Christ, and of His Mystical Body, also implies fidelity the Church's will as concretely expressed in the norms of law.<sup>53</sup> The objective of the Church's legislation is the greater perfection of the Christian life so as better to accomplish her saving mission. That legislation should therefore be observed with sincerity and good will.

Among the various aspects of ecclesiastical discipline, docility to the Church's liturgical laws and dispositions, that is to say, fidelity to the norms which organize divine worship in accordance the will of the Eternal High Priest and of his Mystical Body, merits special importance. The Sacred Liturgy is an exercise

<sup>52</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges* (25 January 1983): AAS 75, II (1983), p. XIII.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

of the priesthood of Jesus Christ,<sup>54</sup> a sacred action *par excellence*, "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed...[and]the fount from which all her power flows."<sup>55</sup> In this area, consequently, the priest should be even more aware of being a minister and of his obligations to act in accordance with the commitments he freely and solemnly undertook before God and the Church. "Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See, and, as laws may determine, on the bishop...No other person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy of his own accord."<sup>56</sup> Arbitrariness, subjective expressions, improvisations, disobedience in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist patently contradict the essence of the Holy Eucharist, which is the sacrifice of Christ. The same is true of the celebration of the other sacraments, especially of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance through which those who are penitent and intend to amend their lives have their sins forgiven and are reconciled with the Church.<sup>57</sup>

Likewise, priests should be careful to promote an authentic and conscious participation of the laity in the Sacred Liturgy, since the Church promotes such participation.<sup>58</sup> There are functions within the Sacred Liturgy which can be exercised by the faithful who have not received the Sacrament of Orders. Other functions, however, are proper and absolutely exclusive to ordained min-

<sup>54</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 959.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 23.



isters.<sup>59</sup> Respect for the different states of life, and for their complementary nature in the Church's mission, requires that all confusion in this matter be carefully avoided.

*e). The priest in ecclesial communion*

16. In order to serve the Church, which is an organically structured community of the faithful invested with the same baptismal dignity and a diversity of charisms and functions, it is necessary to know and love her as she is willed by Jesus Christ, her founder, and not as passing philosophies or different ideologies would fashion her. The ministerial function of service to the community, which is based on configuration with Christ, demands a knowledge of, and respect for, the specific role of the lay faithful, and the encouragement of every possible means of having all assume their proper responsibilities. The priest is at the service of the community. He is also sustained by his community. He needs the specific contribution of the laity not only for the organization and administration of the community, but also for faith and charity: a certain osmosis exists between the faith of the priest and that of the other faithful. Christian families and fervent communities have often assisted their priests in times of

<sup>59</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Interdicasterial instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mystero* (15 August 1997), Theological Principles n.3; Practical Provisions art. 6 and 8: I.e., pp. 859, 869, 870-872; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Reply (11 July 1992): AAS 86 (1994), pp 541-542.

crisis. It is, likewise, highly important for the priest to know, esteem and respect the nature of following Christ in the consecrated life, which is a precious treasure of the Church and a witness to the work of the Holy Spirit in her.

To the extent that priests are living signs and servants of ecclesial communion they become part of the living unity of the Church in time, that is, of Sacred Tradition of which the Magisterium is the custodian and guarantor. Reference to Tradition invests the ministry of priests with a solid basis and an objectivity of testimony to the Truth, which came in Christ and was revealed in history. Such helps to avoid a prurience with regard to novelty which injures communion and evacuates the depth and credibility of the priestly ministry.

The parish priest is called to be a patient builder of communion between his own parish and the local Church, and the universal Church. He should be a model of adherence to the perennial Magisterium of the Church and to its discipline.

*f). Sense of the universal in the particular*

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

spiritual life."<sup>60</sup> This is an important point which should be clearly understood in a manner which takes account of how "membership in and dedication to a particular Church does not limit the activity and life of priests to that Church: a restriction of this sort is not possible, given the very nature both of the particular Church and of the priestly ministry."<sup>61</sup>

The concept of incardination, as modified by the Second Vatican Council and subsequently assumed into the Code of Canon Law<sup>62</sup>, overcomes the danger of too tightly restricting the ministry of priests not only in geographical terms, but especially in psychological and even theological terms. Belonging to one particular Church and to the pastoral service of her internal communion, which are ecclesiological elements which also essentially incorporate the life and activity of priests and lends them a specific structure consisting of determined pastoral objectives, goals, personal commitments to specific tasks, pastoral encounters and shared interests. In order to know and love a particular Church

<sup>60</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 31: I.e., p.708. "The Church of Christ, - as *Communio*is Notio of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (28 May 1992) \_n. 7 notes - is the universal Church, (...) which is present and active amid the particular characteristics and the diversity of persons, groups, times and places. Among these manifold particular expressions of the saving presence of the one Church of Christ, there are to be found, from the times of the Apostles on, those entities which are in themselves *Churches*, because, although they are particular, the universal Church becomes present in them with all its essential elements. They are therefore constituted "after the model of the universal Church", and each of them is "a portion of the People of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy" (MS 85 [1993]), p. 842.

<sup>61</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 32: I.e., p. 709.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 28; Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 10; *CIC*, cann. 265-272.

more effectively, better understand membership of, and dedication to her, serve her to the point of giving one's own life so as to be sanctified through her, sacred ministers must always be aware that the universal Church" is a reality which is ontologically and temporally prior to every particular Church."<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the universal Church is not the sum total of all particular Churches. The particular Churches, in and with the universal Church, must be open to the reality of a true communion of persons, charisms, and spiritual traditions which transcends geographical, psychological or intellectual boundaries.<sup>64</sup> It should be perfectly clear to priests that the Church is one. Universality or catholicity should always pervade the particular. A profound, genuine and vital bond of communion with the See of Peter is the guarantee and necessary condition for this. Acceptance, diffusion, and conscientious application of papal documents, and of other documents published by the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, are its concrete expression.

Up to now we have given consideration to the life and work of all priests. Our reflection must now concentrate on those who have been specifically constituted as parish priests.

<sup>63</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communio notio* to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on certain aspects of the Church considered as communion (28 May 1992), n. 9: I.e., p. 843.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n.23.

## Part II

### The Parish and the Office of Parish Priest

#### *The Parish and the Office of Parish Priest*

18. The more important ecclesiological aspects of the theologico-canonical idea of parish were considered by the Second Vatican Council in the light of Tradition, Catholic doctrine, and the ecclesiology of communion. They were subsequently given canonical form in the Code of Canon Law. Post-conciliar papal teaching, implicitly or explicitly, developed them from various perspectives but always in reference to the ordained priesthood. A resume of the main doctrinal, theological and canonical issues arising from this material will be useful especially in working out a more effective response to the pastoral challenges facing the parochial ministry of priests at the dawn of the third millennium.

By analogy, much of what is said in relation to the pastoral leadership given by parish priests also applies to priests who assist in parishes, as well as to those appointed to specific pastoral duties such as chaplains in prisons, hospitals, universities and schools and to those charged with the care of migrants and tourists etc.

A parish is a specific community of the *christifideles*, established on a stable basis within a particular Church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a parish priest as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the entire life of the parish, as well as the significance of its apostolic commitments to society, have to be understood and lived in terms

<sup>65</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 30; CIC, can. 515, § 1.

of an organic communion between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood; of fraternal and dynamic collaboration between pastors and faithful, with absolute respect for the rights, duties and functions of both, and mutual recognition of their respective proper competence and responsibility. The parish priest, "in close communion with his Bishop and with his faithful... should avoid introducing into his pastoral ministry all forms of authoritarianism and forms of democratic administration which are alien to the profound reality of the ministry."<sup>66</sup> In this regard, the interdicasterial Instruction *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, approved *in forma specificata* by the Supreme Pontiff, remains in full force. Its integral application assures that correct ecclesial praxis which is fundamental for the very life of the Church.

The intrinsic bond with the diocesan community and the Bishop, and his hierarchical communion with the Successor of Peter, ensure the parochial community's membership of the universal Church. The parochial community is therefore a *pars dioecesis*<sup>67</sup> animated by the same spirit of communion, an ordered baptismal co-responsibility, a common liturgical life centered on the celebration of the Holy Eucharist,<sup>68</sup> and a common missionary spirit shared by that community. Indeed, every parish "is founded on a theological reality, because it is a *Eucharistic community*(9A).

<sup>66</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word Minister of the Sacraments, and Leader of the Community* (19 March 1999), p. 36; cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. CIC can. 374 § 1.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 42; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2179; JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (31 May 1998), nn. 34-36; AAS 90 (1998), pp. 733-736; Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), n. 35, i.e., p. 290.

This means that the parish is a community properly suited for celebrating the Eucharist, the living source for its upbuilding and the sacramental bond of its being in full communion with the whole Church. Such suitableness is rooted in the fact that the parish is a *community of faith* and an *organic community*, that is, constituted by the ordained ministers and other Christians, in which the pastor - who represents the diocesan bishop - is the hierarchical bond with the entire particular Church."<sup>69</sup>

Thus, the parish, which is like a diocesan cell, should give "an outstanding example of community apostolate, for it gathers into a unity all the human diversity that are found there and inserts them into the universality of the Church."<sup>70</sup> The *communitas christifidelium* is a the fundamental element of the parish. In a certain sense, the term underlines the dynamic relationship between those persons who, under the indispensable leadership of a proper pastor, are its constituents. As a general rule, such are all the faithful in a given territory, or some of the faithful in the case of personal parishes which have been constituted on the basis of rite, language, nationality or for other specific purposes.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), n. 26: I.e., p. 438; cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL OF THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the Sacred Ministry of priests *Ecclesia de Mysterio* (15 August 1997), "Practical Provisions", article 4: I.e., p. 866.

<sup>70</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 10.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *CIC* can. 518.

19. Another basic element for the idea of parish is that of the *cura pastoralis* or *cura animarum* which is proper to the office of parish priest and principally expressed by preaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, and in the pastoral government of the community.<sup>72</sup> In the parish, which is the normal context for pastoral care, "the parish priest is the proper shepherd of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of that community under the authority of the diocesan bishop with whom he has been called to share in the ministry of Christ so that, in the service of that community, he may discharge the duties of teaching, sanctifying and governing, with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and the assistance of the lay members of the faithful and in accordance with the norms of law."<sup>73</sup> The concept of parish priest is redolent of great theological significance while permitting a Bishop to establish other forms of the *cura animarum* in accordance with the norms of law.

It recent times, it has become necessary to adapt pastoral care in the parishes to various circumstances such as shortages of priests in some areas, overpopulated urban parishes, depleted rural parishes, or parishes with reduced numbers of the faithful. Such has required the introduction of certain innovations in the universal law of the Church concerning the pastoral care of parishes. Needless to say, these innovations do not involve any innovations at the level of principle. Among such initiatives is the possibility of entrusting the pastoral care of souls, in one or more parishes, *in solidum* to several priests, on the condition that

<sup>72</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session XXIV (11 November 1563), can. 18; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 30: "Parish Priests are in a special sense collaborators with the bishop. They are given, in a specific section of the diocese, and under the authority of the bishop, the care of souls as their particular shepherd."

<sup>73</sup> *CIC*, can. 519.



only one will act as moderator, directing the common pastoral activity of all, and personally assuming responsibility for it before the Bishop.<sup>74</sup> On the basis of a multiple title, a single parochial office and the single pastoral care of a parish can be entrusted to several priests who participate in the office entrusted to them in an identical manner, and whose direction is personally undertaken by a brother priest who acts as moderator. Entrusting the pastoral care of a parish *in solidum* can prove useful in resolving difficulties arising in those dioceses in which reduced numbers of priests are obliged to distribute their time among several ministerial activities. It can also prove a useful way of promoting pastoral coresponsibility among priests and, in a special way, for promoting the custom of the common life among priests which should always be encouraged.<sup>75</sup>

It cannot, however, be prudently overlooked that pastoral care *in solidum*, which can only be given to priests alone, can give rise to certain difficulties. It is natural for the faithful to identify with their own parish priest. The continuing rotation of priests among themselves can be confusing or misunderstood in the parish. The great value of the spiritual paternity of the parish priest in his parish is clearly evident. The role of sacramental "*pater familias*" played by the parish priest, and its consequent ties, is pastorally effective.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 517 § 1.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 30; Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 8; *CIC* cann. 280; 550 § 2; CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory on the ministry and life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n. 29.

In cases where pastoral necessity require such, a diocesan Bishop may entrust several parishes to the pastoral care of one priest on a temporary basis.<sup>76</sup>

Where circumstances require it, and as a provisional measure,<sup>77</sup> a parish may be entrusted to an administrator.<sup>78</sup> It should be recalled, however, that the office of parish priest, which is essentially pastoral, requires fullness and stability.<sup>79</sup> The parish priest must be an icon of the presence of the historical Christ. The demands of configuration to Christ underline the importance of this commitment.

20. The mission of pastor in a parish, which implies the full care of souls, absolutely requires the exercise of priestly orders.<sup>80</sup> Hence, in addition to ecclesial communion,<sup>81</sup> canon law explicitly stipulates that only a man constituted in the sacred order of the presbyterate can be validly nominated to the office of parish priest.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT, Session XXI (16 July 1562), can. 5; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, *Nota Explicitiva*, published with the agreement of the Congregation for the Clergy, on those cases in which the pastoral care of more than one parish can be entrusted to one priest (13 November 1997): *Communicationes* 30 (1998), pp. 28-32.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 526 § 1.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, can. 539.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, cann. 151, 539-540.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. THIRD LATERAN COUNCIL (anno 1179), can. 3; SECOND COUNCIL OF LYONS (anno 1274), constitution 13; *CIC*, can. 150.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 149, § 1.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, can. 521 § 1. Paragraph 2 of the same canon lists some of the principal personal qualities required in candidates for appointment to the parochial ministry: sound doctrine, moral integrity, zeal for souls and other virtues. Such candidates should have the qualities required by the general law of the Church in relation to clerics (cf. cann. 273-279) as well as those set out in particular law (those most necessary in a given particular Church).

With regard to the parish priest's duty to proclaim the word of God and to preach authentic Catholic doctrine, canon 528 explicitly, mentions the homily and catechetical instruction; initiatives to promote the spirit of the Gospel in every ambit of life; the Catholic education of children and young people; as well as efforts involving the correct collaboration of the laity to ensure that the Gospel message reaches those who have abandoned the practise of the faith and those who do not profess the true faith,<sup>83</sup> so that they might come to conversion through the grace of God. Clearly, the parish priest is not obliged personally to fulfill all of these duties. Rather, he is obliged to ensure that they are discharged in his parish in an opportune manner and in conformity with the doctrine and discipline of the Church. Such are realized as circumstances permit and subject to his personal responsibility. Some of the obligations incumbent on the parish priest must always be discharged exclusively by an ordained minister, as in the case of preaching during the celebration of the Holy Mass.<sup>84</sup> "Although he may be overshadowed by the eloquence of the non-ordained faithful, this does erase the fact that he sacramentally represents Christ, Head and Shepherd, and the fact that the effectiveness of his preaching derives from this reality."<sup>85</sup> Other

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, can. 528 § 1.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Interdicasterial instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mystero* (15 August 1997), Practical Provisions, article 3, I.e., p. 864.

<sup>85</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary meeting of the Congregation for Clergy (23 November 2001): I.e., p. 216.

functions of the parish priest, such as catechesis, can be habitually carried out by the laity who have been properly trained doctrinally and who integrally live the Christian life. In such instances, the parish priest is obliged to maintain personal contact with these people. Blessed John XXIII wrote "it is most important that the clergy are at all times faithful in their duty of teaching. 'In this respect, it is useful to hold and insist - as St. Pius X says - that priests are bound more gravely to no other office, nor more strictly to any other obligation.'"<sup>86</sup>

As is clear, the parish priest is bound by effective pastoral charity not only to encourage all of his collaborators but also to be vigilant in their regard. In some countries in which there are faithful who belong to diverse language groups, where no personal parish has been erected<sup>87</sup> nor adequate arrangements made for them, the territorial parish priest is the proper parish priest for such members of the faithful.<sup>88</sup> He is obliged to provide for their particular needs, especially in matters pertaining to their specific cultural sensibilities.

21. Concerning the ordinary means of sanctification, canon 528 stipulates that the parish priest is to give particular care to ensure that the Most Holy Eucharist is the centre of the parochial community and that the faithful come to the fullness of Christian life by a conscious and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy, by the celebration of the sacraments, by the practise of prayer and by good works.

<sup>86</sup> BLESSED JOHN XXIII, Encyclical letter *Sacerdotii Nostri primordia*, on the centenary of the blessed death of the Cure d'Ars (1 August 1959), part iii: AAS 51 (1959), p. 572.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 518.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, cann. 519, 529 § 1.

It is notable that the Code makes specific mention of frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Penance. This would indicate that the parish priest, in establishing the times for Masses and confessions in his parish, would take into consideration those times which are convenient for the majority of the faithful, while bearing in mind also the need to facilitate those who have difficulty in easily attending the celebration of the sacraments. The parish priest should devote special attention to individual confession, understood in the spirit and form established by the Church.<sup>89</sup> He should be mindful that confession must precede first Holy Communion.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, the individual confessions of the faithful, for pastoral reasons and for the convenience of the faithful, may also be received during the celebration of the Holy Mass.<sup>91</sup>

Care should be taken to ensure respect "for the sensibilities of the penitent concerning the manner in which he wishes to confess, either face to face, or from behind a grill."<sup>92</sup> The confessor may also have pastoral reasons for preferring the use a confessional equipped with a grill.<sup>93</sup>

The practise of visiting the Blessed Sacrament should be strongly encouraged. To this end, churches should be kept open

<sup>89</sup> Cf. the "Propositiones" on the parts relating to sacramental sign and form of celebration in JOHN PAUL II's Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (2 December 1984), nn. 31 III; 32: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 260-264; 267.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. CIC, can 914.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, in *Notitiae* 37 (2001), pp. 259-260.

<sup>92</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the members of the Apostolic Penitentiary (27 March 1993): AAS 86 (1994), p. 78.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 964 § 3; JOHN PAUL II, motu proprio *Misericordia Dei* (7 April 2002), 9b PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Reply circa can. 964 § 2 (7 July 1998): AAS 90 (1998), p.711.

for as long as possible, and their opening times fixed and established. Many parish priests promote the laudable practise of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament through solemn exposition and can attest to its fruits in the vitality of their parishes.

The Blessed Sacrament is to be lovingly reserved in a tabernacle "which is the spiritual heart of every religious and parochial community"<sup>94</sup> "Without the cult of the Eucharist, as with a beating heart, a parish becomes arid"<sup>95</sup> "If you wish the faithful to pray willingly and piously - as Pius XII reminded the clergy of Rome - set an example for them by praying in your churches before them. A priest on his knees before the tabernacle, with a proper disposition and in deep recollection is a model of edification for the people, a reminder of, and an invitation to, prayerful emulation."<sup>96</sup>

22. Canon 529 elaborates the principal duties which are required for the fulfillment of the pastoral office of parish priest and outlines the ministerial characteristics expected of a parish priest. As the priest proper to the parish, he should make every effort to know the faithful entrusted to his care and avoid the danger of any form of functionalism. A parish priest is not a functionary fulfilling a role or providing services to those who request them. Rather, he exercises his ministry in an integral way as a man of God, seeking out the faithful, visiting their families, sharing in their needs and in their joys. He corrects with prudence, he cares for the aged, the weak, the abandoned, the sick, and

<sup>94</sup> PAUL VI, Encyclical letter *Mysterium fidei* (3 September 1965): *MS 57* (1965), p. 772.

<sup>95</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the participants of the Plenary meeting of the Congregation for the Clergy (23 November 2001): *I.e.*, p. 215.

<sup>96</sup> BLESSED JOHN XXIII, Encyclical letter *Sacerdotii Nostri primordia* on the centenary of the death of the Cure d'Ars (1 August 1959), part II: *I.e.*, p. 562.

the dying. He devotes particular care to the poor and the afflicted. He strives for the conversion of sinners and those in error. He encourages all in the fulfillment of the duties of their states of life and promotes the Christian life among families.<sup>97</sup>

Promotion of the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy remains a constant pastoral priority and a sign of the vitality of any Christian community.

Another important duty entrusted to the parish priest is the promotion of the proper role of the laity in the Church's mission, which is that of quickening and perfecting the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel, thereby giving witness to Christ through the exercise of secular tasks.<sup>98</sup>

The parish priest is obliged to collaborate with his Bishop and with the other priests of the diocese so as to ensure that the faithful who participate in the parochial community become aware that they are also members of the diocese and of the universal Church.<sup>99</sup> The increasing mobility of contemporary society makes it all the more necessary that the parish does not become introspective. Rather, it should welcome the faithful of other parishes and avoid discouraging its own parishioners from participating in the life of other parishes, rectories or chaplaincies.

The parish priest is particularly bound zealously to promote, sustain and follow vocations to the priesthood.<sup>100</sup> Personal example, given by visibly owning his priestly identity,<sup>101</sup> living

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 529 § 1.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, can. 225.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *CIC*, 529 § 2.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 233 § 1; JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 41: I.e., p. 727.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia* (31 January 1994), n.66.

consistently with it, together with devotion to individual confession, spiritual direction of young people, and catechesis on the ordained ministry are indispensable to any pastoral promotion of priestly vocations. "It has always been a special duty of the priestly ministry to sow the seeds of life totally consecrated to God and to promote love of virginity."<sup>102</sup>

The Code attributes the following duties specifically to parish priests:<sup>103</sup> administer the Sacrament of Baptism and that of Confirmation to those in danger of death in accordance with canon 883, 3<sup>104</sup>; administer Viaticum and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, without prejudice to the provisions of canon 1003, §§2 and 3<sup>105</sup>; impart the Apostolic Blessing; assist at and bless marriages; celebrate funerals; bless the Baptismal font in Eastertide; lead processions and impart solemn blessings outside of the church; solemnly celebrate the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist on Sundays and on the feasts of precept.

Rather than duties or rights given exclusively to the parish priest, these functions are entrusted to him in a special way in virtue of his particular responsibility as parish priest. They should consequently be discharged personally, in so far as possible, or at least overseen by the parish priest.

<sup>102</sup> SAINT AMBROSE, *De virginitate*, 5, 36: *PL* 16, p. 286.

<sup>103</sup> *CIC*, can. 530.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, can 883, 3°. "The following have the faculty of administering confirmation by the law itself...3° with regard to danger of death, the parish priest or indeed any priest."

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, can. 1003, § 2: "All priests to whom the care of souls has been committed have the duty and the right to administer the anointing of the sick to all the faithful committed to their pastoral office; for a reasonable cause any other priest can administer this sacrament with at least the presumed consent of the aforementioned priest." § 3° "Every priest is allowed to carry the sacred oil with him so that he can administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in case of necessity."



23. In those areas experiencing shortages of priests it can happen, as is already the case in some places, that the Bishop, after prudent consideration, may entrust a certain *collaboration* "ad tempus" in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish, in the canonically approved manner, to a person or persons who have not been invested with priestly character.<sup>106</sup> In such cases, however, the original properties of diversity and complementarity of the charisms and functions of ordained ministers and the lay faithful must be carefully observed and respected since these are proper to the Church and are willed by God for its organization. Extraordinary situations exist which justify such collaboration. Such collaboration, however, may not lawfully supersede the specific nature of the sacred ministry and the lay state.

In her desire to clarify terminology that might occasion confusion, the Church exclusively reserves certain expressions connoting "potestas capitis" to priests - "pastor", "chaplain", "director", "co-ordinator" and other equivalents.<sup>107</sup>

In its title dedicated to the rights and duties of the lay faithful, the Code distinguishes between those competencies or functions which properly belong to all the lay faithful by right or duty, and those deriving from collaboration with the pastoral ministry. These latter are a *capacitas* or *habilitas* whose exercise depends on being called by the Church's lawful pastors.<sup>108</sup> Thus, they are in no sense, "rights."

24. The foregoing has already been clarified by John Paul II in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laid:*

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, can. 517 § 2.

<sup>107</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Clergy (23 November 2001): I.e., p. 214.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *CIC*, cann. 228, 229, §§ 1 and 3; 230.

"The Church's mission of salvation in the world is realized not only by the ministers in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders but also by all the lay faithful; indeed, because of their Baptismal state and their specific vocation, in the measure proper to each person, the lay faithful participate in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ.

The Pastors, therefore, ought to acknowledge and foster the ministries, offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their *foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation*, and indeed, for a good many of them, *in the Sacrament of Matrimony*. When necessity in the Church requires it, the Pastors, according to the established norms of universal law, can entrust to the lay faithful, *ad tempus*, certain offices and roles, connected with their pastoral ministry which do not require the character of Orders. This same document recalls the basic principles underlying this collaboration and sets the limits for it: the exercise of such tasks does not make Pastors of the lay faithful: in fact, a person is not a minister simply in performing a task, but through sacramental ordination. Only the Sacrament of Orders gives the ordained minister a particular participation in the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head, and in his Eternal Priesthood. Supplying certain tasks by the laity takes its legitimacy, formally and immediately, from the official deputation given by the Pastors to the laity, as well as from its concrete exercise under the guidance of ecclesiastical authority(23).<sup>109</sup>

In those cases where a collaboration with the ordained ministry has been entrusted to the non-ordained faithful, a priest must necessarily be appointed as moderator and vested with the

<sup>109</sup> Cf. also *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 2; Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 1563.

power and duties of a parish priest, personally to direct pastoral care.<sup>110</sup>

Clearly, the office of parish priest exercised by a priest who has been designated to direct pastoral activity - i.e. one invested with the faculties of a parish priest - and exercise those functions which are exclusively priestly differs completely from the subsidiary collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the other functions of the office.<sup>111</sup> A non-ordained male religious, a female religious, a lay person may exercise administrative functions, as well as that of promoting spiritual formation. They may not, however, exercise functions which belong fully to the care of souls since such requires priestly character. They may, nevertheless, *supply for the ordained minister in those liturgical functions which are consonant with their canonical condition*" and enumerated in canon 230 § 3: "exercise the ministry of the word, preside over liturgical prayers, confer Baptism, and distribute Holy Communion

<sup>110</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 517 § 2; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 911.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priests *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15 August 1997), "Theological Principles" and "Practical Provisions": i.e., pp. 856-875: CIC, can. 517 § 2.

in accordance with the prescriptions of law."<sup>112</sup> Even Deacons, who cannot be equated with other members of the faithful, cannot exercise the full *cura animarum*.<sup>m</sup>

It is always advisable for the diocesan Bishop to verify every case of necessity with the utmost prudence and pastoral foresight. He should establish criteria to determine the suitability of those called to this form of collaboration and clearly define the functions to be given to each of them in accordance with the circumstances of each respective parish. In the absence of a specific and clear assignment of functions, the priest moderator will determine in the matter. The exceptional and provisional nature of such arrangements require the promotion of an awareness of the absolute need for priestly vocations in these parish communities. The seeds of such vocations should be encouraged in them, community and personal prayer for vocations should be promoted and well as prayers for the sanctification of priests.

In order to ensure that priestly vocations may flourish more easily in the community, it is important that an authentic love for the Church should imbue it. A profound esteem and strong enthusiasm for Bride of Christ, who collaborates with the Holy Spirit in work of salvation, should always be promoted and encouraged.

<sup>112</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Instruction on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priests *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15 August 1997), Practical Provisions, articles 6; 8: I.e., pp. 869; 870-872.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *CIC* can. 150: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1554; 1570.

Every effort, therefore, has to be made to keep alive in the hearts of the faithful that joy and holy pride deriving from membership of the Church which is so palpably evident in the first letter of St. Peter and in the Apocalypse (cf. 1 Pet 3,14; Ap 2, 13.17; 7, 9; 14, 1ff; 19, 6; 22, 14). Without this joy and pride, at a psychological level, it becomes difficult to conserve and develop the life of faith. It is not surprising, at least at the level of psychology, that in some contexts priestly vocations fail to germinate or come to maturity.

"It would be a fatal error to despair in the face of present difficulties and adopt an attitude which, *de facto*, would prepare a Church of the future which would be almost bereft of priests. Measures adopted in this light to counter present shortages of priests, notwithstanding the good intentions motivating them, would, in fact, be seriously prejudicial for the ecclesial community."<sup>114</sup>

25. "Where permanent deacons participate in the pastoral care of parishes which, because of a shortage of priests, do not have the immediate benefit of a parish priest, they should have precedence over the non-ordained faithful."<sup>115</sup> In virtue of Sacred Orders, "the deacon is teacher in so far as he preaches and bears witness to the word of God; he sanctifies when he administers the Sacrament of Baptism, the Holy Eucharist and the sacramentals, he participates at the Holy Eucharist as "a minister of the Blood", and conserves and distributes the Blessed Eucharist; he is a guide

<sup>114</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary meeting of the Congregation for the Clergy (23 November 2001): I.e., p. 216.

<sup>115</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the ministry and life of permanent deacons *Diaconatus Originem* (22 February 1998), n. 41: AAS 90 (1998), p. 901.

in as much as he animates the community or a section of ecclesial life."<sup>116</sup>

Deacons who are candidates for ordination to the priesthood should be especially welcome when they offer their pastoral services in a parish. In agreement with the seminary authorities, the parish priest should be a guide and a teacher, conscious that a sincere and total self offering to Christ on the part of a candidate for the priesthood, can depend on his own coherent witness to priestly identity, and to the missionary generosity of his service and love for the parish.

26. Like the diocesan pastoral council,<sup>117</sup> the provisions of law foresee the constitution of a pastoral council at parochial level, should such be considered opportune by the Bishop, having heard his council of priests.<sup>118</sup> The basic task of such a council is to serve, at institutional level, the orderly collaboration of the faithful in the development of pastoral activity which is proper to priests.<sup>119</sup> The pastoral council is thus a *consultative* organ in which the faithful, expressing their baptismal responsibility, can assist the parish priest, who presides at the council,<sup>120</sup> by offering

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 22: I.e., p. 889.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 27; CIC can. 511-514.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *CIC*, can. 561 § 1.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, can. 536 § 1.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, can. 536 § 1.

their advice on pastoral matters.<sup>121</sup> "The lay faithful ought to be ever more convinced of the special meaning that their commitment to the apostolate takes on in their parish"; hence it is necessary to have "a more convinced, extensive and decided appreciation for "Parish Pastoral Councils."<sup>122</sup> There are clear reasons for such: In the present circumstances the lay faithful have the ability to do very much and, therefore, ought to do very much towards the growth of an authentic ecclesial communion in their parishes in order to reawaken missionary zeal towards nonbelievers and believers themselves who have abandoned the faith or grown lax in the Christian life.<sup>123</sup>

"All of the faithful have the right, sometimes even the duty, to make their opinions known on matters concerning the good of the Church. This can happen through institutions which have been established to facilitate that purpose: [...]the pastoral council can be a most useful aid...providing proposals and suggestions on missionary, catechetical and apostolic initiatives [...] as well as on the promotion of doctrinal formation and the sacramental life of the faithful; on the assistance to be given to the pastoral work of priests in various social and territorial situations; on how

<sup>121</sup> CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES, CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL TEXTS, Instruction . on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priests *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (15 August 1997), Practical Provisions, art. 5: I.e., pp. 867-868.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (30 December 1988), n. 27; I.e., p. 441.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

better to influence public opinion etc."<sup>124</sup> The pastoral council is to be seen in relation to the context of the relationship of mutual service that exists between a parish priest and his faithful. It would therefore be senseless to consider the pastoral council as an organ replacing the parish priest in his government of the parish, or as one which, on the basis of a majority vote, materially constrains the parish priest in his direction of the parish.

In accordance with the norms of law on just and honest administration, organs which have been established to consider economic questions in a parish, may not constrain the pastoral role of the parish priest, who is the legal representative and administrator of the goods of the parish.<sup>125</sup>

#### ***4. Positive contemporary challenges for the pastoral ministry in parishes***

27. Since, at the outset of the new millennium, the entire Church has been invited to strive for "a renewed commitment to the Christian life", founded on an awareness of the risen Christ's presence amongst us,"<sup>126</sup> we must see the consequences of that invitation for pastoral care in parishes.

This does not require the invention of new pastoral programmes, since the Christian programme, revolving around Christ, is always one of knowing, loving and imitating Him, of living the life of the Trinity in Him, and of transforming history with Him by bringing it to completion: This is a programme which

<sup>124</sup> SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Circular Letter *Omnes christifideles* (25 January 1973), nn. 4; 9.

\* Cf. *CIC, cann. 532 and 1279, §1.*

<sup>126</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), n. 29: I.e., pp. 285-286.



does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication.<sup>127</sup>

In the immense and demanding pastoral horizons of today: It is *in the local churches* that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified - goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources - which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture."<sup>128</sup> Such are the horizons of "an exciting work of pastoral revitalization - a work involving all of us."<sup>129</sup>

The most important and basic pastoral challenge facing the priest in the parish is to bring the faithful to a consistent spiritual life based on the principles of Christian doctrine as lived and taught by the Saints. Pastoral planning must give priority to this essential aspect of all pastoral action. Today, more than ever, prayer, the sacramental life, meditation, silent adoration, talking heart to heart with the Lord, daily exercise of the virtues which make us more like Him, must be rediscovered, since such are far more productive than any discussion, and ultimately the necessary condition for all effective discussion.

*Novo Millennio ineunte* sets seven pastoral priorities: holiness, prayer, the Sunday celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Penance, the primacy of grace, and listening to and proclaiming the Word.<sup>130</sup> These priorities became particu-

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*

larly clear from the experience of the Great Jubilee. Not only do they offer parish priests but, all priests engaged in the *cura animarum*, the content and substance of the pastoral questions on which they should carefully meditate. They also provide a synthesis of the spirit with which the renewal of pastoral work should be approached.

*Novo millennio ineunte* also emphasizes another "important area in which there has to be commitment and planning on the part of the universal Church and the particular Churches: *the domain of communion (koinonia)*, which embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church and implies the promotion of a spirituality 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." Moreover, it also specifies that before making practical plans, we need *to promote a spirituality of communion*, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up."

A truly pastoral promotion of the holiness of our parish communities implies an authentic pedagogy on prayer, a renewed, persuasive and effective catechesis on the importance of the Sunday and daily celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist, on community and personal adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, on the frequent and individual practice of the Sacrament of Penance, on spiritual direction, on marian devotion, on the imitation of the Saints, as well as on a renewed apostolic commitment to live the daily duties of the community and of individuals, proper pastoral care of the family, and on a consistent political and social engagement.

This pastoral renewal will not be possible unless inspired, sustained and activated by priests imbued by this same spirit. "The faithful draw great encouragement from the example and witness of the priest. They can rediscover the parish as a "school" of prayer in which encounter with Jesus Christ is not merely expressed in implorations for assistance but also in acts of thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, prayerful listening, ardour of affection, to the point of a truly loving him."<sup>131</sup> "It is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (cf. *Jn* 15:5). It is prayer which roots us in this truth. It constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration? We then share the experience of the disciples in the Gospel story of the miraculous catch of fish: "We have toiled all night and caught nothing" (*Lk* 5:5). This is the moment of faith, of prayer, of conversation with God\* in order to open our hearts to the tide of grace and allow the word of Christ to pass through us in all its power: *Due in altum!*"<sup>132</sup>

A good laity is scarcely possible without truly holy priests. Without them everything is dead -just as it is almost impossible to have a blossoming of vocations without Christian families which are domestic churches. It is therefore erroneous to emphasize the laity if this entails overlooking the ordained ministry. Such error ends by penalizing the laity and frustrating the entire mission of the Church.

<sup>131</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Parish Priests and Clergy of Rome (1 March 2001 ),-n. 3; cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), n. 33: I.e., p. 289.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*n. 38: I.e., p. 293..

28. The rediscovery in our communities of the universal call to holiness should be the basis for all pastoral planning and orient that same planning. The soul of every apostolate depends on divine intimacy, on placing nothing before the love of Christ, in seeking the greater glory of God in all things, in living the Christocentric dynamism of the marian "*totus tuus*". *Training in holiness* "places pastoral planning under the sign of holiness"<sup>133</sup> and constitutes the primary pastoral challenge of contemporary times. In the holy Church, all of the faithful are called to holiness.

Teaching all, and recalling indefatigably, that holiness is the goal of Christian life is essential to the *pedagogy of holiness*. "*All in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or cared for by it, are called to holiness, according to the Apostle's saying: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 Thes 4,3; cf. Eph 1,3).*"<sup>134</sup> *This is the first element to be pedagogically developed in ecclesial catechesis, so that an awareness for the need for personal sanctification becomes a common conviction.*

Proclamation of the universality of the call to holiness requires that the Christian life is understood as a *following of Christ*, or of being conformed to Christ. This conformation to Christ is the very substance of sanctification and is the specific goal of all Christian life. In order to accomplish this objective, all Christians need the Church's assistance, since she is both *mater et magistra*. The *pedagogy of holiness* is a goal which is as attractive as it is challenging for all those in the Church who hold responsibilities of government and formation.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 31: **I.e. p. 287.**

<sup>134</sup> **SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL**, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n. 39.

29. A zealous, missionary commitment to evangelization is a priority of singular importance for the Church and, consequently, for the pastoral care of the parish.<sup>135</sup> "Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a "Christian society" which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. Today we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of "globalization" and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures."<sup>136</sup>

In contemporary society, which is marked by cultural, religious and ethnic pluralism, relativism, indifferentism, irenicism, and syncretism, it appears that some Christians have become accustomed to a form of "Christianity" lacking any real reference to Christ and his Church. In these circumstances, the pastoral mission is reduced to social concerns which are envisaged in exclusively anthropological terms, often based on a vague appeal to pacificism, universalism or to a loose reference to "values".

The evangelization of the contemporary world can only happen with the rediscovery of the personal, social and cultural

<sup>135</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 14; JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (20 October 1984): "hence the need to rediscover the parish's specific function as a community of faith and charity, which is the reason for its existence and its most essential characteristic. That means making evangelization the axis of all pastoral activity since it is an urgent, preeminent and important demand. It is thus that purely horizontal outlook of mere social presence is avoided, and it is thus that the Church's sacramental nature is reinforced" (AAS 77 [1984] pp. 307-308).

<sup>136</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* (6 January 2001), n. 40: I.e., p. 294.

identity of Christians. That implies, above all else, the rediscovery of Jesus Christ, incarnate Word, and sole Saviour of mankind.<sup>137</sup> This basic conviction sets free that missionary commitment which should especially characterize every priest, and through him, every parish or community entrusted to his pastoral care. "We hold that it is impossible even to imagine one pastoral method which is applicable to, or can be adapted to, all circumstances. Before us, this was axiomatic in the teaching of Gregory Nazianzanus. A single pastoral method is excluded. In order to edify all in charity, it is necessary to vary the modes in which the hearts of faithful can be touched, but not doctrine. Pastoral care, therefore, requires an adaptation of modes but excludes any adaptation of doctrine."<sup>138</sup>

The parish priest will always ensure that the various associations, movements or groups present in the parish will make their specific contribution to the missionary endeavour of the parish. "Another important aspect of communion is *the promotion of forms of association*, whether of the more traditional kind or the newer ecclesial movements, which continue to give the Church a vitality that is God's gift and a true "springtime of the Spirit". Associations and movements in the Church, both at universal and local level, must always operate in complete ecclesial harmony and obey the directives of their lawful Pastors."<sup>139</sup> Every form of exclusivism or introspection among specific groups should be avoided in the parochial structure because its missionary character rests on the certainty, which should be shared by all, that "Jesus

<sup>137</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Jesus* (6 August 2000): AAS 92 (2000), pp. 742-765.

<sup>138</sup> SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, *Regula pastoralis*, Introduction to part three.

<sup>139</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* 6 January 2001, n. 46: I.e., p. 299.

Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute. Jesus Christ is the Word of God made man for the salvation of mankind."<sup>140</sup>

The Church relies on the daily fidelity of her priests to the pastoral ministry as they attend to their indispensable mission in the parishes entrusted to their care.

For parish priests and other priests who serve various communities, certainly, there is no shortage of pastoral difficulties, or spiritual or physical exhaustion caused by overwork or a lack of that balance which recommends healthy periods of spiritual renewal and physical rest. What disappointments, it has to be stated, are experienced when the winds of secularism often choke the seeds sown with such noble daily effort.

A largely secularized culture which seeks to isolate the priest within its own conceptual categories and strip him of his fundamental mystical-sacramental dimension, is largely responsible for this phenomenon. From this, several forms of discouragement can derive which lead to isolation, forms of depressive fatalism, and scattered activism. Such, however, does not take from the fact that the vast majority of the Church's priests, supported by the solicitude of their Bishops, face the difficulties of the present historical conjuncture positively, and succeed in joyfully living their generous pastoral commitment and their priestly identity to the full.

Internal dangers to the priestly ministry also exist: bureaucracy, functionalism, democratization, planning which is more

<sup>140</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000),-n. 15: I.e., p. 756.

managerial than pastoral. Unfortunately, in some circumstances, priests can be overwhelmed by structures which overpower them and are not always necessary, or which induce negative psycho-physical consequences detrimental for the spiritual life and for the very ministry itself.

The Bishop is obliged carefully to invigilate such situations since he is, above all else, a father to his closest and most precious collaborators. It is both urgent and necessary to ensure unity among all ecclesial forces so as to respond effectively to the attacks currently being made on priests and their ministry.

30. In view of the current circumstances of the Church's life, the demands of new evangelization, and in consideration of the response which priests are called to make, the Congregation for the Clergy offers this present document as an aid for, an encouragement to, and a stimulus for, the ministry of priests entrusted with the pastoral care of souls in parishes. Indeed, the Church's most immediate contact with people normally happens in the context of the parish. Our thoughts and considerations, therefore, are directed towards the priest *qua* parish priest. He represents the presence of Jesus Christ as head of his Mystical Body, the Good Shepherd who tends every single member of the flock. In this document, we have sought to highlight the mystery and sacramental nature of that ministry.

In the light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, this document should be seen as a continuity of the *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, the Interdicasterial Instruction *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, and the Circular Letter *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community*.



It is only possible to live the daily ministry by means of personal holiness which should always be based on the supernatural power of the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance.

"The Eucharist is the point from which everything else comes forth and to which it all returns. (...) Through the centuries, countless priests have found in the Eucharist the consolation promised by Jesus on the evening of the Last Supper, the secret to overcoming their solitude, the strength to bear their sufferings, the nourishment to make a new beginning after every discouragement, and the inner energy to bolster their decision to remain faithful."<sup>141</sup>

Progress in the spiritual life and in permanent formation<sup>142</sup> can be greatly assisted by that fraternity among priests which is not merely one of simply being able to live together under the same roof, but one which" involves communion of prayer, shared objectives, pastoral cooperation, and reciprocal friendship between priests and their Bishop. Such is also helpful in overcoming the trials and difficulties which are experienced in the exercise of the Sacred Ministry. Every priest not only needs the ministerial assistance of his own brethren but also needs them precisely because they are his brethren.

Among other measures, a house could be set aside in the diocese for all priests who, from time to time, need to retire to a place suitable for recollection and prayer so as to renew contact with those means which are indispensable for their personal holiness.

<sup>141</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Utter to Priests on Holy Thursday 2000 (23 March 2000), nn. 10,14.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota ecclesia* (31 January 1994), cap. iii.

In the spirit of the Cenacle, where the Apostles gathered in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Acts 1, 14), to her we entrust these pages which have been written with affection and gratitude for all priests who exercise the *cura animarum* throughout the world. May all who are engaged in the pastoral care of souls experience the maternal assistance of the Queen of Apostles and live in profound communion with her. The ministerial priesthood "has a stupendous and penetrating dimension in the closeness of the Mother of Christ [to priests]"<sup>143</sup> *It is a source of great consolation to know that "the Mother of the Redeemer who introduces us to the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son, is always close to us. Ad Iesum per Mariam: let this be the daily objective of our spiritual and pastoral life."*<sup>144</sup>

*The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II approved this present Instruction and ordered its publication.*

*Rome, at the offices of the Congregation for the Clergy, 4 August 2002, liturgical memorial of St. John Mary Vianney, Cure d'Ars, patron of parish priests.*

**DARIO Card. CASTRILLON HOYOS**

*Prefect*

**CSABA TERNYAK**

*Titular Archbishop of Eminenziana*

*Secretary*

<sup>143</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Letter to priests on Holy Thursday 1979 *Novo incipiente* (8 April 1979), n. 11, I.e., p. 416.

<sup>144</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Clergy (23 November 2001): I.e., p. 217.

*Parish Priest's Prayer to Mary Most Holy*

O Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen,  
Mother of the Church, a priestly people (1 Pet 2,9),  
Mother of priests, ministers of your Son:  
accept the humble offering of myself,  
so that in my pastoral mission  
the infinite mercy of Eternal High Priest  
may be proclaimed:  
O "Mother of Mercy".

You who shared the "priestly obedience"  
(Heb 10, 5-7; Lk 1, 38),  
of your Son,  
and who prepared for him a worthy receptacle  
by the anointing of the Holy Spirit,  
keep my priestly life in the ineffable mystery  
of your divine maternity,  
"Holy Mother of God".

Grant me strength in the dark hours of this life,  
support me in the exertions of my ministry  
entrust me to Jesus,  
so that, in communion with you,  
I may fulfill the ministry with fidelity and love,  
O Mother of the Eternal Priest  
"Queen of Apostles and Help of Priests."<sup>145</sup>

Make me faithful to the flock  
entrusted to me by the Good Shepherd,  
You silently accompanied Jesus  
on his mission to proclaim  
the Gospel to the poor.

<sup>145</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n

May I always guide it  
with patience, sweetness  
firmness and love,  
caring for the sick,  
the weak, the poor and sinners,  
O "Mother, Help of the Christian People".

I consecrate and entrust myself to you, Mary,  
who shared in the work of redemption  
at the Cross of your Son,  
you who "are inseparably linked to the work of salvation."<sup>141</sup>

Grant that in the exercise of my ministry  
I may always be aware of the "stupendous and penetrating  
dimension of your maternal presence"<sup>147</sup>  
in every moment of my life,  
in prayer, and action,  
in joy and sorrow, in weariness and in rest,  
O "Mother of Trust".

Grant, Holy Mother, that in the celebration of the Mass,  
source and centre of the priestly ministry,  
that I may live my closeness to Jesus  
in your maternal closeness to Him,  
so that as "we celebrate the Holy Mass you will be present  
with us"  
and introduce us to the redemptive mystery of your divine  
Son's offering<sup>148</sup>

<sup>146</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,  
n. 103.

<sup>147</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Letter to priests on Holy Thursday 1979 *Novo incipiente*  
(8 April 1979), n. 11, I.e., p. 416.

<sup>148</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Plenary meeting of the Congregation for  
the Clergy (23 November 2001): I.e., p. 217.

"O Mediatrix of all grace flowing from this sacrifice to the Church and to all the faithful"<sup>149</sup>  
O "Mother of Our Saviour".

O Mary: I earnestly desire to place my person  
and my desire for holiness  
under your maternal protection and inspiration  
so that you may bring me to that "conformation with Christ,  
Head and Shepherd"  
which is necessary for the ministry of every parish priest

Make me aware  
that "you are always close to priests"  
in your mission of servant  
of the One Mediator, Jesus Christ  
O "Mother of Priests"  
"Benefactress and Mediatrix"<sup>130</sup>  
of all graces.

Amen.

\* \* \*

### *Act of Love of the Cure d'Ars, St John Mary Vianney*

I love You, O my God and my sole desire is to love You until  
the last breath of my life.

<sup>149</sup> JOHN PAUL II, on the occasion of the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Czestochowa. "L'Osservatore Romano", 26 August 2001.

<sup>150</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, n. 62.

I love You, O infinitely lovable God and I prefer to die loving You than live one instant without loving You.

I love You, O my God, and I do not desire anything but heaven so as to have the joy of loving You perfectly.

I love You, O my God, and I fear hell, because there will not be the sweet consolation of loving You.

O my God, if my tongue cannot say in every moment that I love You, I want my heart to say it in every beat. Allow me the grace to suffer loving You, to love you suffering and one day to die loving You and feeling that I love You. And as I approach my end, I beg you to increase and perfect my love of You.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

### **The "Colegio De Santo Tomas", Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary FIDEL VILLARROEL, OP**

The Interdiocesan Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas has just started the one-year long celebrations of its Diamond Jubilee, for it was established in 1927. The celebration has given occasion for many people to ask questions about the date of its foundation, whether it started in said year or whether a seminary existed before and in what sense. This article intends to provide some answers to those questions.

We might well begin by underlying that in the proper and strict sense of the term, as used by the Church, a *seminary* is a kind of college conceived and ordered by the Council of Trent (1545-1562) to be established in *every diocese* for the training of candidates for the parochial clergy. Such college, the Council explained, "will become a permanently fruitful seed-bed (*seminarium*, in Latin) of ministers of God." Technically, therefore, a seminary is intended to be a diocesan institution for the formation of clerics and not of lay professionals.

There is no doubt that in the four hundred years of existence of the University of Santo Tomas many clerics were trained by

it in the ecclesiastical sciences, and that a certain number of them actually lived as interns in the "Colegio de Santo Tomas", which, since 1645, co-existed with the University. One clear example of this is the nationalist priest Fr. Jose Burgos who was *colegial* of that Colegio for several years, received the sacred orders in those years and graduated nine times from the university. The aim of this study is to examine the nature and mission of that "colegio" before it was converted into a "seminary". And the roots of this history will take us to the very beginnings.

## 1. The Founder's idea

The *Foundation Act* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas was signed on April 28, 1611 by the executors of the last will of the Dominican Archbishop of Manila Miguel de Benavides. It is well known that, one year before his death, which occurred in 1605, Benavides left 2.000 pesos and his personal library for the foundation of a college or a seminary. To be accurate, he did that, not by way of testament, but as a donation "inter vivos". He died before the foundation of the college or seminary was carried to effect, and by the time it was done, other donors had contributed substantial sums of money for that purpose. However, it has been a constant and uncontested tradition to consider the Archbishop as the university's founder.

In the Foundation Act of 1611, one of the two Dominican executors of the archbishop's last will, Fr. Bernardo de Santa Catalina (the other, Fr. Domingo de Nieva, having died) "declared that what His Excellency committed to us was that the residue of his goods should be spent in aid for the foundation and endowment of a *seminary-college*, in which the religious of said convent [of Santo Domingo] will teach the sciences of Arts [i.e. Philosophy] and Theology to the religious novices and to all those



willing to take advantage of them, and to the sons of this City and Islands."<sup>1</sup>

It may be interesting to note here that the original document of the Foundation Act carries, at the back of the first page, in the handwriting of the notary public who drafted the text, Juan Ulan, the equivalent of a title that reads: "1611 afios. Fundacion del *Colegio-Seminario* de la advocation de Nuestra Senora del Rosario" (Year 1611. Foundation of the *Seminary-College* under the advocacy of Our Lady of the Rosary). Curiously enough, the word *seminario* is seen crossed out, obviously done in a later date, perhaps in 1619, when classes actually started in the Colegio, or perhaps even later during a litigation between Dominicans and Jesuits over the right of precedence claimed between their respective Colegio de Santo Tomas and Colegio de San Jose. In that litigation the Dominicans argued that San Jose was a *colegio-seminario* while the Colegio de Santo Tomas was a *colegio formal*.

Be that as it may, a careful reading of the Foundation Act gives out these particular and meaningful facts: Throughout the whole document the word *colegio* occurs 32 times, while the words *seminario* or *colegio-seminario* only 3 times.<sup>2</sup> This induces to think that even though the signers of the Act intended to accept some students who aspired to the priesthood, the institution was not considered a seminary in the strict Tridentine meaning of the term.

<sup>1</sup> *Escritura de Fundacion*, dated April 28, 1611. Original ms. in AUST, *Libros* 48. fols. 10-19; published in JUAN SANCHEZ, O.P., *Sinopsis Historica Documentada de la Univefsidad de Santo Tomas de Manila*, Manila 1928, Appendix A, (see p. 176).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

One year later, 1612, the Dominican provincial chapter accepted the foundation as a religious house of the Holy Rosary Province. The paragraph of acceptance reads: "We accept in this city of Manila the *College* of Our Lady of the Rosary which is being constructed by our religious with various alms of the faithful for the education of *secular clerics* in the sciences and in religion."<sup>3</sup> In the following Chapters of 1616 and 1617, Fr. Lorenzo Porras and Fr. Antonio Gutierrez respectively are assigned to the *College* of Santo Tomas (and of Our Lady of the Rosary) as rectors, even though the building had not been completed. And when it was completed and classes started in 1619, Fr. Baltasar Fort was appointed by the chapter of that year as Rector of the College of Santo Tomas. And from that year on, all subsequent appointees are called *Rectors* of the *College* of *Santo Tomas*, with no reference to its being a seminary.<sup>4</sup>

So classes started in that year 1619 with the Rector granting scholarships to twelve *colegiales*, sons of Spaniards. Statutes were written for the college, the text of which unfortunately are not extant today. But speaking about those statutes in a letter to the King, dated in 1649, the then college Rector Fr. Martin Real de Santa Cruz says that "they are the same statutes currently followed in all the *colegios formados* (formal colleges) in Spain."<sup>5</sup> Those statutes, he adds, speak about the seal of the College, the uniform of the *colegiales* (green mantle and red *beca* (sash), and about

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the Provincial Chapter held in Manila in 1612 (*Acta Capitulum Provincialium Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum*, (ACP), Manila 1878, vol. I, p. 76).

<sup>4</sup> See *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, corresponding years, section of "Assignationes".

<sup>5</sup> *Memorial al Rey de España dirigido por el Rector de la Universidad, Fr. Martin Real de Santa Cruz, 1649*, printed in A. SANTAMARIA, O.P., *Documentos Historicos de la Universidad de Santo Tomas de Manila*, Manila 1937, p. 46.

the oath to be made by the *colegiales* upon admission. All these references seem to be adaptations to the "Colegios Mayores" of Spain (that is, boarding centers for university students), totally different from the Tridentine seminaries.

## 2. In the 18th Century

Through the 18th century the changes observed in the Colegio de Santo Tomas are relatively few. New statutes for the internship were written in 1700, which were revised in 1741.<sup>6</sup> Reading through the text, there never is a reference to the Colegio being a seminary as a whole or part of it, even though it is certain that some students were following careers of Theology of Canon Law for the priesthood. This contrasts with the nature of two seminaries being founded in Manila in the early decades of that century exclusively for the formation of priests. One was the Seminary of San Clemente founded in 1706 by a French priest called Abbe Sidotti with the blessing of the Archbishop of Manila Msgr. Diego Camacho. It was intended for the formation of clerics, not only from the Philippines but also from the neighboring countries of Asia. Its *Reglamento* calls it *Colegio Seminario* de San Clemente. Although students unfit for the clerical life were not totally excluded, the *Reglamento* states that its "main and only purpose" was "the conversion of the non-Christians in the

<sup>6</sup> Title of the 1700 Statutes: *Estatutos antiguos del Colegio de Santo Tomas de Aquino de esta Ciudad de Manila declarados en el Capitulo Provincial Intermedio del afxo 1700*.— Title of the revised Statutes of 1741: *Estatutos que se deben observar para el buen gobierno de este Colegio de Santo Tomas de Manila. Ano de 1741*. The originals of both are extant in the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas (AUST), *Libros* 30- . Note that in both the word Colegio is used, not that of Seminary.

mountains of these Islands and in the entire Orient, and to form ministers of God truly evangelic and apostolic."<sup>7</sup>

San Clemente Seminary was suppressed and demolished by orders of the King of Spain for having been built without royal authorization, in accordance with the *Patronato de Indias*. And immediately a new seminary was built in the same site, this time with royal approval, and was called *Colegio Seminario de San Felipe* in honor of the Apostle St. Philip, patron saint of King Philip V. It had the same mission of its defunct predecessor, that is, the formation of candidates for the priesthood. The lectures on Philosophy were imparted at the seminary itself, but the students had to be enrolled in the University of Santo Tomas if they wanted to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In that way, the Seminary of San Felipe continued in existence for at least the next four decades, and through all those years the relatively few graduates coming from San Felipe were denominated in the university registry books as "colegiales del *Seminario de San Felipe*", distinguished from the "colegiales de Santo Tomas" and the "colegiales de Letran."<sup>8</sup>

In 1783 a new diocesan Seminary was established in Manila by Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina, which fulfilled all the requirements of the Council of Trent and has continued as a conciliar Seminary of San Carlos of Manila until today.

<sup>7</sup> *Reglamento del Colegio Seminario de San Clemente* (1706), in PEDRO RUBIO MERINO, *Don Diego Camacho y Avila, Arzobispo de Manila y de Guadalajara de Mexico (1695-1712)*, Sevilla 1958, pp. 500-521.

<sup>8</sup> About the Seminary of San Felipe, see JUAN FRANCISCO DE SAN ANTONIO, O. F. M., *Cronicas de la Prvincia de San Gregorio Magno*, Sampaloc, 1738 (English translation and edition by the Philippine Historical Conservation Society, Manila 4977, pp. 191-193).- About the academic degrees of the students of the Seminary of San Felipe granted by the University of Santo Tomas, see AUST, *Libro de Asientos de Grados*, years 1725 to 1759.

At an unknown date the Colegio de Santo Tomas opened an inscription book for all its intern students. Every collegial was entered in this official record on the day he received the *beca* or scholarship and swore to abide by the statutes of the college. The second book of the series, ("New Book for the Inscription of the Colegiales") began in 1759 and it is extant in the university archives.<sup>9</sup> A patient perusal of the accepted interns during the second half of the 18th century (1759-1799) reveals several interesting facts. In the first place, the institution is never referred to as a seminary; secondly, the colegiales inscribed in those years amounted to 238; thirdly, the boarders are a mixture of grown-up theologians and canonists with little "p̄rvulos" (little kids), like the brothers Jose and Pedro Ruano (inscribed in 1762), who did not swear the statutes for being "parvulos", or like Buenaventura Reyna (1768) who did not take the same oath because he was only eight years old. His father withdrew him from the college because he was only a child, and the kid learnt only "how to read and the Christian doctrine".<sup>10</sup> Fourthly, some boarders surely entered the College with the idea of becoming priests or opted for that profession after entering.

Some statistics drawn from the *Libro Nuevo* may enlighten the subject. Of the total of 238 interns inscribed between 1759 and 1799, only 24 are noted in later annotations to have received the priestly ordination during or at the end of their studies. Six colegiales are said to have joined the Dominican Order and were ordained priests, plus two who entered the Order of St. John of God. This makes 32 clerics in a total of 238 colegiales in a period of 40 years. Finally, the Colegio had no other rector than the Rector of the University.

<sup>9</sup> *Libro Nuevo de Asientos de los Colegiales de este Colegio de Santo Tomds de Manila que empieza en Mayo de 1759* (Ms. AUST, Libras 11).

<sup>10</sup> *Libro Nuevo*, year 1768."

Following the list of *colegiales* in the following century, the chronological order of inscriptions was changed for an order by careers. Thus in 1832 the 62 interns are classified as *colegiales* (scholars, becarios) and *capistas* or *famulos* who paid for their studies by doing services in the colegio as sacristans, porters, etc. Of the number of 47 *colegiales*, 14 followed courses in Theology and Canon Law; 13 were "philosophers"; and 20 were "grammarians". Of the number of 15 *capistas*, 7 followed Theology and Canon Law, and 8 were "philosophers". There are no annotations in the book indicating how many aspired to the priesthood.

### **3. The generation of Father Burgos. The 19th century**

The second half of the 19th century brought about significant changes in Philippine history, both civil and ecclesiastical, which ended in the revolutionary movement of the end of the century. The Filipino clergy may be said to have taken the lead in that change with the arrival of a generation of young clerics who, by their intellectual training and their vision, started the movement of the secularization of the parishes. The names of Pedro Pelaez, Jose Burgos, Mariano Sevilla and others come to mind, and some of them were *colegiales* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas and graduates of the Thomasian faculties. But this is outside of *Dur* story.

In that historical period there were five diocesan or conciliar seminaries in the Philippines, patterned after the norms of the Council of Trent. They were the seminaries of San Carlos of Manila (founded in 1773), of San Carlos of Cebu (1783), of the Holy Rosary of Caceres (Naga) (1783), of the Immaculate Conception of Nueva Segovia (Vigan) (1821), and of San Vicente Ferrer of Jaro (1866). These seminaries admitted only candidates

for the priesthood. It was not until the last decades of the 19th century that they opened a department for *extern* students who pursued course of humanities leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

In the city of Manila the educational centers that served as boarding houses for students preparing themselves for the priesthood were four: the diocesan Seminary of San Carlos, the Colegio de Santo Tomas, the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the Colegio de San Jose. In the 19th century the Colegio de San Jose was a pre-university college run by the secular clergy ever since the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines in 1768. San Carlos Seminary was different from the others in that it was exclusive for clerical students, while the other three accepted students for any career and profession.

For clarification of the above, let us go inside the Colegio de Santo Tomas in the years when the famous nationalist priest Fr. Jose Burgos was intern. Earlier he had been an intern in the Colegio de San Juan de Letran. Burgos entered Letran in 1847 at the age of ten and stayed there as an intern for thirteen years. The college was under the administration of a Dominican Father, who was appointed with the title of "President" by every Provincial Chapter. He was helped by a lay brother, as procurator, and, living with them was another Dominican priest who acted as Vicar of the Provincial for the neighboring Beaterio de Santa Catalina." The boarders did not receive lectures in Philosophy and Theology there but at the University of Santo Tomas. As a boarding college Letran was the biggest in town in the year 1863, having more than two hundred interns. But of this number only

" The three were: Fr. Ramon Rodriguez, President, Bro. Julian Velazquez, Procurator, and Fr Ceferino Gonzalez, Vicar of Santa Catalina (future Archbishop of Toledo and Cardinal) (ACP, 1863, III, p. 317).

thirty are known to be pursuing studies leading to the priesthood, namely: 3 deacons, 5 subdeacons, 8 in Minor Orders, and 12 Tonsured clerics, plus two resident ordained priests. It was as a boarder of Letran that Burgos received from the Archbishop of Manila the Minor Orders in 1858 and the subdeaconate in 1859. And in 1860 he transferred to the Colegio de Santo Tomas. Evidently Letran was only a seminary in a broad sense of the term, not in the Tridentine sense.<sup>12</sup>

In the Colegio de Santo Tomas, Burgos was an intern student from 1860 to 1864. Needless to say, the University was the only center of higher education in the Philippines, in which academic degrees were granted. The total student population in 1861 included extern students, students from Letran and San Jose, and of course, the interns of the Colegio de Santo Tomas. The latter were only 57 young men mixed with little boys, of whom some were *colegiales* or scholars and the others *capistas* or *famulos*; and only a fraction of them were aspirants to the priesthood, Burgos among them.

Let us cast a closer look into that group of 57 boarders. As students, they were grouped in the *Libro Nuevo* by the courses they pursued at the University. Those following the careers of Theology, Canon Law, Civil Law and Spanish (or Patriotic) Law were *Facultativos Mayores*, and the register book calls them *Tedlogos*, *Canonistas*, *Legistas*, *Moralistas* and *Patrioticos*. Philosophy students were referred to as *Facultativos Menores* and they were subdivided into *Fisicos*, *Logicos* and *Metafisicos*. And there was a third group: the *Gramdticos*, listed as *Quintistas*, *Cuartistas* and *Minimistas*, that is, those taking courses in the fifth,

<sup>12</sup> For further information on Burgos in Letran, see FIDEL VILLARROEL, O.P., *Fr. Jose Burgos, University Student*, Manila 1971. chapter 3, "Letranite", pp. 4-9.



fourth or lower years of the career of humanities or secondary education. The predominance of the university students proper over the grammarians can be seen from the breakdown of these general groups during the years of Fr. Burgos:

		<u>1860</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1862</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1864</u>	
Facultativos	May	ores	20	21	29	27	26
Facultativos	Menores	19	22	13	11	10	
Gramaticos		18	12	14	13	10	
		57	55	56	51	46	

A more interesting clarification for our study may be obtained from the distinction between clerics and lay interns. The *Libro Nuevo* does not classify them in that way, but precisely during the period of Burgos' stay there, the register offers enough marginal notes to enable us to establish a fairly accurate number of resident clerics. Included among those boarders qualified as clerics in marginal notes are Burgos himself, Ambrosio and Faustino Villafranca, Mariano Sevilla, Cosme Abaya, Pedro Ventura and other outstanding priest of the Philippine revolutionary period. Here are the approximate figures:

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1862</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1864</u>
Deacons	4	2	2		1 3
Subdeacons	3	—		1 2	—
Minorists	—	2		1 3	3
Tonsured	6	6	5		1 2
	13	10	9	7	8

Comparing this list with the previous one, the proportion of the clerics to the non-clerics is one cleric for six non-clerics. This proportion and the fact that deacons in their twenty years of age were living together with eight-year-old kids, sufficiently show that the college could not be considered a true conciliar seminary by the Church.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. Archbishop Nozaleda's Plan for a Seminary in UST

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a noticeable decline in the number of students of the Colegio de Santo Tomas aspiring to the priestly profession. Whereto did the successors of Burgos, Sevilla, Villafranca, Abaya go? Did they go perhaps to the diocesan Seminary of San Carlos? The fact is that in the school year 1884-1885, the Colegio had 48 interns (*colegiales* and *capistas*), and only one of them is listed as taking up Theology, among four who were taking Civil Law and 43 boys following courses of Humanities or Secondary Education. And the lone theologian is not described as a cleric.<sup>14</sup> Such unexplained disappearance of clerical students is reflected also in another fact, which is that in 1892 a new *Reglamento del Colegio de Santo Tomas* was written, in which there is not the slightest reference to intern students aspiring to the priesthood.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the explanation of this fact may be, in 1894 the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Bernardino Nozaleda, last-archbishop of the Spanish period, who once had been Vice-Rector of the University, started discussing with the Santo Tomas

<sup>13</sup> More on Fr. Burgos and other contemporaries in the Colegio de Santo Tomas, in F.VILLARROEL, *op.xit*, ch. 9, "Collegian of Santo Tomas", pp. 34-45.

<sup>14</sup> *Libro Nuevo*, School Year 1884-1885. That was the last year of entries in the registration book of interns.

<sup>15</sup> A copy of this *Reglamento* is in AUST, *Libros* 233, n. fols. 321-328.

authorities possible ways for his seminarians of San Carlos Seminary to receive academic degrees, and even to enjoy the privileges of scholarship for which the Colegio de Santo Tomas had been founded. Consequently, in the same year he proposed two plans for the establishment of some kind of relationship between San Carlos and the University. The first plan dealt with the studies of the seminarians in the faculties of Theology, Canon Law and Philosophy at the university toward obtaining degrees; the second had to do with the priestly formation some seminarians should receive as interns in the Colegio de Santo Tomas, more or less gratuitously.<sup>16</sup>

Apparently, it was in response to the proposals of the Archbishop that the Council of the Colegio, in a session held on August 22, 1894, approved some *Bases* intended to maintain and foment the studies of Theology in the University. Here are the bases:

"1. Those seminarians of the [San Carlos] Seminary will be accepted who, with the permission of the Archbishop, will pursue the careers of Theology and Canon Law.

2. In order to facilitate such courses to the students of the Conciliar Seminary, the Rector of Santo Tomas, authorized by the [Dominican] Corporation, binds himself to the following:

a) To take (he and the Council Fathers, after hearing the opinion of the Archbishop) all necessary means to avoid the contact of the seminarians with the other students (of the internship), so that the religious education of the seminarians may not be impaired.

<sup>16</sup> The two plans in Nozaleda's handwriting are in AUST, *Libros* 233, nos. 18-20.

b) To exempt the seminarians, as far as the Dominican Order is concerned, from the imposition of any matriculation fees for those studies.

c) To exempt them also from personal dues for the final examinations, as far as the Order is concerned, and as long as the economic situation of the College will not deteriorate.

d) To give priority to the seminarians, all other things being equal, and with the previous judgment of the Archbishop, in enjoying the *becas* of the interns which the Order may prescribe now or in the future for the promotion of vocations to the ecclesiastical state.

e) To educate those students favored with the scholarship with the care accustomed in all seminaries, and in the way the Colegio de Santo Tomas has educated from the beginning, with so much praise from the Manila archbishops, and with great advancement of the clergy, and adopting the interior rules and regulations the Dominican Order may consider to be the best.

O To see to it that the Colegio de Santo Tomas, saving the nature of its foundation, fulfills the role (*haga las veces*) of a Major Seminary for all seminarians who desire to follow the so-called long career at the university, be they interns of Santo Tomas or seminarians of San Carlos, and to prefer them, all other things being equal, for the gratuitous titles and other benefices the university may grant in the future".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. SANTAMARIA, *Estudios Historicos*, Manila 1938, pp. 64-65, quoting *Libra de Consejos del Colegio*, fol. 74, which cannot be located in the UST Archives today.

These *Bases* seemed to have remained in the realm of a proposal. The next thing we know regarding this matter is that at a meeting of the Council of the Colegio, held on June 21, 1900, the council approved the admission of seminarians of San Carlos provisionally as boarders, paying a boarding fee of 25 pesos monthly each seminarian.<sup>18</sup> But again we are not sure whether this offer was carried to effect.

## **5. 1905. Proposal for a Central Seminary - Archbishop Harty and Rector R. Velazquez**

Five years later, Nozaleda's successor, Archbishop Jeremias J. Harty, the first American Prelate of Manila, initiated contacts with the other Philippine bishops about the possible foundation of a grand *Central Seminary* in Manila. And even before the bishops came to take action on the proposal, Msgr. Harty wrote a beautiful letter to the Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Raimundo Velazquez, encouraging him to open an *internado* for young aspirants to the priesthood coming *from all the dioceses* of the Philippines.

In reaction to this letter, the Santo Tomas College Council, holding a meeting on July 4, 1905, approved a draft of *Bases* for the plan to be presented to the Philippine Hierarchy. And the Rector himself undertook to send them to the bishops with an accompanying letter, in which, after quoting the pertinent words of Archbishop Harty, he wrote:

"Encouraged by such beautiful words, I have the honor and satisfaction of conveying to the knowledge of your Excellency that the Dominican Corporation, in its desire to be useful today,

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. SANTAMARIA, *op. cit.*, p. 66, quoting *Libro de Consejos*, fol. 100.

as in the past, in whatever it may in the field of education, even at the cost of sacrifices, has decided to transform the old *Colegiatura* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas into an *Internado* for those young aspirants to the *priesthood* who would like to follow the courses of Theology and Canon Law at the University and to obtain degrees in any of them.

The *Bases* under which this internship will be opened are the following:

1. The young aspirants who will enter in it must have finished their studies of Secondary Education, so that, on entering, they may be matriculated at least in the Preparatory Courses of said faculties.

2. They will live in the college as true seminarians, under the immediate inspection and direction of a [Dominican] Director and a Vice-Director and to live in conformity with the Norms and Regulations that will be issued in agreement with the Archbishop, and they will be submitted to his approval.

3. Preferential and essential aims of these Rules will be, by all means emanating from the Church and as Christian prudence dictates, to attend with exquisite and constant care to the formation of the moral character of the priests, to the development and perfection of their intellectual capacity by means of an orderly and progressive study of the ecclesiastical sciences according to the teachings of His Holiness Leo XIII, and to provide for the reasonable demands of a perfect and balanced physical organization, so that they (the candidates) may work fruitfully in the vineyard of the Lord.

4. The intern students of Santo Tomas will not go out on vacations without the explicit authorization given in writing by the bishops of their respective dioceses; and in that case, the latter will designate the person who will be responsible for them, who will respond about their conduct during all the time they will be away from the college.

5. The interns of Santo Tomas will wear the clerical garb proper of a Seminary, unless the bishops, for special reasons, will determine otherwise. The privileged interns who enjoy scholarship will wear the *beca* Qf the colegio over the clerical garb.

6. The boarding fee of the interns will be 200 Pesos annually (this is by indication of the Archbishop) for their residence and food. All other expenses in dress, shoes, laundry, entrance fee, examination fees, etc., will be defrayed by the student.

7. Some students will be accepted gratuitously. In order to foster vocations to the priesthood and to give easy access to study and to high ecclesiastical degrees to the young of good disposition who are unable to pay for their career, the Dominican Order grants to the Lord Bishops or Diocesan Prelates one free scholarship for every five interns [of their respective diocese].

8. Students admitted gratuitously will not pay for their boarding, matriculation fees, academic diplomas. Even their books will be paid for by the college. Everything will be gratis except the dress, the shoes and the laundry.

9. The same privileges will be given, in full or partially, to students for whom (without being scholars) they will be solicited by the bishops on account of their poverty.

10. The places for grantees (*agraciados*) will be filled with by the young students designated by the respective bishops. Such students will enjoy their places during the entire career as long as the balance between the grantees and the paying students is not altered.

11. A grantee intern will loose his grant and will be expelled from the college for any of the following reasons:

a) when, because of his misconduct, his expulsion becomes necessary or convenient for the good of the college in the judgment of the Rector of the University with his Council of Discipline;

b) when, because of his lack of interest, according to the reports of the professors, he is conditionally failed in two subjects in the ordinary examinations, or definitely failed in one subject in the extraordinary examinations.

c) When by his intellectual incapacity his grant becomes useless, when it is proved, in the judgment of the Rector with the Council of Discipline.

12. In any of the above cases, the Rector of the University will inform the Prelate of the diocese to which the expelled student belongs so that the bishop will provide for filling the grant with a worthier student.

13. At the end of every school year, the university Rector will send to the Bishops, together with the academic grades, a confidential report about the moral conduct, character, industriousness and aptitudes of every student they have in the college. Aside from this report, the Bishops may ask for further information they judge convenient, and they



will be provided with such information as complete as it is possible".<sup>19</sup>

With these provisions, it can be said that the old and historic *colegiatura* of Santo Tomas was, in principle if not in practice, transformed into a *seminary*, with characteristics of an interdiocesan seminary. But it still lacked the formal approval by the Hierarchy and by the Holy See.

Something, however, was actually considered by the Holy See at this early stage of the creation of a seminary. For it is known that His Holiness Pope St. Pius X, through his Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, in a communication to the Prior Provincial of the Philippine Dominicans, Fr. Santiago Paya, gave some important instructions and concessions to the University of Santo Tomas regarding the intellectual and moral training of candidates for the priesthood. These concessions are set in the following points:

"1. In order for the students sent by the suffragan Bishops to earn academic degrees in Theology and Canon Law, not only they must frequent the scholastic courses at the University of Santo Tomas of Manila, under penalty of inability to obtain such degrees, but also they must live completely separated from lay persons as intern students of the same university, in the way and with the discipline proper to a true seminary exclusive for clerics. The students of the diocese of Manila may reside either in the University or in the diocesan seminary of Manila, as per judgment of the Archbishop, but attending classes at the university in order to be canonically eligible for obtaining academic degrees.

*Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

2. The pension to be paid by each intern cleric will be determined by the Rector in understanding with the most reverend bishops.

3. It is absolutely forbidden to intern clerics to spend the long or short vacations outside of the university. The dispensations will be rare and to be granted with sufficient cause and with previous license of the respective Ordinaries.

4. To expel intern clerics for lack of intellectual capacity or for moral reasons or for unworthiness is left to the conscience and prudence of the Rector with his council, who must inform the respective Ordinaries, indicating the reasons for the expulsion done or to be done.

5. The inscription of the intern clerics of the university and their studies and annual examinations or at the end of the school year and the lower degrees will be totally free of charge. Only for the degrees of Licentiate and Doctor shall the students contribute the fees established or to be established, save the faculty of the Rector and his council to dispense totally or partially the fees of Licentiate and Doctor in consideration of special motives for which the student is deemed worthy of a benign consideration".<sup>20</sup>

To our knowledge, this is the first document issued by the Holy See concerning the priestly formation given at the Colegio de Santo Tomas. Which means that we are now before a transcendental change of the nature of the three centuries old college. Yet for the real transformation to take place, a formal act of the competent local and Roman authorities was needed.

<sup>20</sup> This Vatican document is published in J. SANCHEZ, O.P., *Sinopsis Historica Documentada de la Universidad de Santo Tomas de Manila*, Manila, 1928, pp. 143-145; also in A. SANTAMARIA, *Estudios Historicos*. pp. 68-69.

## 6. The Provincial Council of 1907

At the local level, a Provincial Council of the Philippines was held in Manila in 1907, in which the matter of a seminary was discussed. That Council is called "Provincial" in the ecclesiastical sense, but it was national in a geographical dimension. In those times, the entire Philippine Archipelago formed *one ecclesiastical province* made up of a metropolitan or archiepiscopal See, that is Manila, and four suffragan dioceses, namely, Cebu, Nueva Segovia (Vigan), Caceres (Naga) and Jaro (Iloilo). Their five Prelates were *ex officio* Fathers of the Council. Many other ecclesiastics attended the council as theologians and advisers, among whom were three Dominicans, Fr. Raimundo Velazquez, Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Manuel Alonso and Fr. Jose Ruiz. The Council created a commission on seminaries composed of the rectors of the five conciliar seminaries plus the UST Rector.

The Council recommended the establishment of an Interdiocesan Seminary, which was formulated both in a preliminary session and in one of the final decrees. The discussion of the preliminary session was recorded in these terms:

"In the Seventh Private Congregation of the Reverend Bishops, which took place on December 19 [1907], at eleven in the morning, it was dealt with the creation of a Provincial Seminary, and the arguments adduced for and against were seriously considered, and the following points were approved by unanimous consent of the synodal Fathers:

1. A *Provincial Seminary* should be established in the city of Manila, in which the most outstanding students of the diocesan seminaries for their piety and intellectual capacity may receive a more specialized training in the ecclesiastical disciplines.

2. A period of five years is given after the erection of such seminary for the Bishops to comply with the obligation of sending philosophy and theology students to the Provincial Seminary."<sup>21</sup>

In the decrees of the Council, the approved plan was mandated almost in the same terms. It is further established that

"since the Synod eagerly desires that the Provincial Seminary be erected in the City of Manila, with the consent of the Metropolitan, the rights over it pertaining to the Ordinary should take into consideration the interest of the College of Bishops."<sup>22</sup>

There is no mention in the council's decrees about the means to establish such Provincial Seminary or about its location. Not the slightest reference to its establishment in the University of Santo Tomas. Years passed, and it looks as if the plan, so seriously conceived, was shelved, for it was not revived until 1926.

## **7. Interdiocesan Seminary. 1927-1928**

Meanwhile, what happened to the Colegio de Santo Tomas during those nineteen years? Strangely enough, the Dominican historians of the early 20th century fail to inform us about the on-goings in that college. There are clear signs, however, that the *internado* continued to fulfill the traditional function of providing lodging for a majority of lay students and a minority of aspirants for the priesthood, and that the only novelty was that most of the clerics actually came from the various conciliar seminaries of **the** country.

<sup>21</sup> *Acta et Decreta Concilii Provincialis Manilensis in Urbe Manilana celebrati anno Domini MDCCCCVII*, Roma 1910, pp. LXVII-LXVIII.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Decrees, Tit. VII, c. II, p. 299.

In 1912 Bishop Juan Gorordo of Cebu, writing to the Rector of the University of Santo Tomas Fr. Jose Noval, expressed his satisfaction at the fact that his seminarians in Santo Tomas had just been ordained priests, "the fruits of the good seeds cast in their souls by the Dominican professors". At the same time, he said he was planning to send to Santo Tomas another seminarian who had already started studies of theology in the Seminary of San Carlos of Cebu."<sup>23</sup>

For his part, Bishop Giuseppe Petrelli of Lipa wrote to the same Rector Fr. Noval soliciting the admission of Leoncio Aranda as a *lay capista* in the Colegio de Santo Tomas, even though this student was an ex-seminarian, a young man of good character and conduct and proficient in his studies, who, however, "does not feel inclined for the ecclesiastical state and would like to follow another career in that university."<sup>24</sup>

As in the case of the above-mentioned seminarian from San Carlos, so also this lay student was accepted as a boarder<sup>25</sup>, something that would not have been permitted in a formal seminary.

But the presence of lay students notwithstanding, the Colegio de Santo Tomas began to be referred to as a *seminary* even in important, though unofficial, documents. For instance, the Dominican who was assigned to direct the institution from 1908 to

<sup>23</sup> Letter of Bishop Gorordo to the Rector of the University, Cebu, June 7, 1912 (AUST, Box *Miscellanea, 1900-1920*, IV (formerly *Atados*, 130).

<sup>24</sup> Letter of Bishop Giuseppe Petrelli to Fr.Noval, Lipa, June 16, 1911 (AUST, *ibid.*).

<sup>25</sup> In fact, Leoncio Aranda pursued three careers in the University and obtained three degrees: Bachelor of Arts in 1912; Licentiate in Philosophy and Letters in 1914; and Licentiate in Civil Law in 1916 (AUST, *Diligencias de Grados*, corresponding years).

1926, Fr. Francisco Cubenas (+1928), is always called *Director Seminarii* (Director of the Seminary) in the yearly *Catalogus*, the catalogue of the friars of the Province of the Holy Rosary.<sup>26</sup> Fr. Cubenas was succeeded in his post for one year (1927) by Fr. Juan Ylla who is also referred to as *Director of the Seminary*<sup>27</sup>, a title that occasionally was given to the rectors of the Seminary even after it was established as a Central Interdiocesan Seminary.<sup>28</sup>

In 1925 the Papal Delegate to the Philippines, His Excellency Guglielmo Piani, started discussing with the Dominican authorities the feasibility of establishing once and for all "an interdiocesan seminary in the University of Santo Tomas". Such a proposal must have been sent to Rome because it was examined by the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries Cardinal Bisletti, who proposed the plan to the Vicar General of the Dominican Order.<sup>29</sup> For their part, the Bishops of the Philippines, in their annual assembly of January 18-20 of 1926 also recommended to have the seminarians totally separated from lay students.<sup>30</sup> And in

<sup>26</sup> *Catalogus Fratrum ac Sororum Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum Ordinis Praedicatorum*, published yearly in Manila since the middle of the 19th century. See years 1910 to 1917. Also in the official *Acta* of the Dominican Provincial Chapter of 1922, Fr. Cubenas received his appointment as "Director of the Seminary" (ACP, 1922, "Assignationes").

<sup>27</sup> See *The Thomasian Yearbook* 1927, which publishes a photograph of a group of seminarians with Fr. Juan Ylla in the center, and with this caption: "Seminario Central de Santo Tomas con su P. Director".

<sup>28</sup> Fr. Juan Ylla, Rector of the Central Seminary from 1933 to 1956, was still called 'Director' in the yearly Dominican *Catalogus* of 1937 to 1940, and in the annual book of the seminary *The Benavides* of 1940 and 1941. Therefore, the word "Director" should be used with care as an argument for or against the character of the college-seminary.

<sup>29</sup> See APSR, *Adas de Consejos ae Provincia*, Tomo 12, fol. 274v, session of November 16, 1925; (AUST, mf, *Rollo* 16).

<sup>30</sup> See the editorial article "Seminario Central de Santo Tomas", in *Boletin Eclesidstico de Filipinos*, V, 50 (Julio 1927), p. 391.

reaction to all this exchange of correspondence between the Holy See, the Central Dominican Curia and the Bishops of the Philippines, the Council of the Dominican Holy Rosary Province, meeting in special session on January 20, 1926, approved to destine the old university building of Intramuros as a Central Seminary of the Philippines "until a new edifice is constructed in Sulucan or in any other place of the choice of the Bishops".<sup>31</sup>

The final decision to create a seminary, and one of interdiocesan character, belonged to the Holy See. With letter of April 27, 1927, the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities gave instructions to the Apostolic Delegate in the Philippines, Msgr. Piani, to see to it that the Central Seminary were opened for the school year 1927-1928 and that it should be provided with Statutes (*Normae*).<sup>32</sup>

Finally, on November 27, 1928, the same Sacred Congregation issued a Decree erecting the Interdiocesan Seminary for the entire Philippines attached to the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, under the direction of the Dominican authorities of the same university.

"The Sacred Congregation", the Decree *Quod jam provide* reads, "declares established and by Apostolic Authority constituted in the University of Santo Tomas an *Interdiocesan Seminary* for all the dioceses of the Philippines, with all the legitimate rights of a college, to which at least six students noted for their piety and intellectual capacity must be sent from every diocese in order for them

<sup>31</sup> APSR, *Adas de Consejos de Provincia*, Tomo 12, fol. 276V, session of January 20, 1926 (AUST, mf., *Rollo* 16).

<sup>32</sup> See article "Seminario Central" (*supra*, footnote 30), pp. 390-391; A. SANTAMARIA, *Estudios Historicos*, pp. 69-70.

to obtain a wider and more exquisite education. The Seminary will be under the direction of the Dominican Fathers in accordance with the laws emanating from the canons of the Church, from particular statutes, and from the constitutions of this Sacred Congregation. Given at Rome, from the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, this day, November 27, 1928. (Sgd.) Cajetan Card. Bisletti, Prefect.-Ernestus Ruffini, Secretary."<sup>33</sup>

This decree marks the formal foundation of the seminary, although it was already functioning for one year with the blessing and by the mandate of the Holy See. But the materiality of the building of Intramuros seemed totally inadequate for its purpose. And so as early as April 28, 1928, the Dominican Provincial Council approved a project for the construction of a seminary building, and at the same time residence of the Dominican professors of the University, in Sulucan, by the side of the Main Building inaugurated in 1927. Meanwhile, a new Director of the Seminary was appointed in the person of Fr. Julio Vicente, who held the office for five years. On November 13, 1932, the cornerstone of the new building in Sulucan was laid down, and on December 26, 1933 the building of the Seminary and of the Fathers' Residence was solemnly inaugurated and occupied. On the same day, a new rector was appointed, Fr. Juan Ylla, who held the office for the long period of 23 years, until 1956.<sup>34</sup>

The history of the Interdiocesan Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas begins here, and it has to wait for some other historian to write it.

<sup>33</sup> Published in *Boletin Eclesidstico de Filipinos*, VII, 71 (April 1919), pp. 236-238.

<sup>34</sup> Fr. Ylla was appointed by the Provincial Council of November 9, 1933 (APSR, *Adas de Consejos de Provincia*, Tomo 13, fol. 85v) (AUST, mf, Rollo 16).



## BY WAY OF SUMMARY

### Milestones on the road from the "Colegio de Santo Tomas" to the "UST Central Seminary"

- 1611-1894. The Colegio de Santo Tomas always admitted as interns some students who pursued the ecclesiastical courses leading to the priesthood.
1894. Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda proposes to the UST authorities the admission of some seminarians of his diocesan seminarians in San Carlos Seminary as scholars of the Colegio de Santo Tomas.
1894. The Council of the Colegio de Santo Tomas approves the *Bases* for the admission of seminarians coming from the Seminary of Manila.
1900. The Colegio admits some outside seminarians as boarders.
1905. Archbishop Jeremias J. Harty of Manila proposes to the Philippine Hierarchy the idea of a grand *Central Seminary* in Santo Tomas for seminarians from all the dioceses of the country. The University drafts the *Bases* for such seminary.
1907. The *First Provincial* [national] *Council of Manila* issues a decree for the creation of a *Provincial* [national] *Seminary* for the whole ecclesiastical province (i.e. the Philippines Islands), without specifying the place.
- 1907-1925. The Colegio de Santo Tomas admits seminarians from various dioceses as boarding students living together with the lay *colegiales*, under the authority of a *Director* of the Colegio.

1926. The Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines Msgr. Guglielmo Piani initiates contacts with the Dominicans about the feasibility of a Central Seminary attached to the University of Santo Tomas.
1926. January 18-20. Annual Meeting of the Philippine Bishops. The bishops revive the idea of a Provincial (national) Seminary. At the same time, they propose to the university authorities to have the seminary established in its premises. The Dominican Council accepts to take charge of the seminary.
1927. April 26. The Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, after consulting with the Vicar General of the Dominican Order, urged the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Piani to have the Seminary opened for the school year 1927-1928..  
  
July 18. Classes started for the ecclesiastical faculties with some delay to give time for the Bishops to send their seminarians. Orders were issued for the writing of Statutes or Norms.
1928. November 27. Decree *Quod jam provide* of the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities erecting the *Interdiocesan Seminary of Santo Tomas* for the entire, Philippines.

# **Gustavo Gutierrez in the Philippines\***

**LITO ZULUETA**

There was a time when the mere mention of Gustavo Gutierrez's name would send an electric current of tension in a Church that was evenly split between those who insisted on a political reading of the Gospel and those who insisted on the quietism of the old theology. His name, in fact, so achieved a certain degree of notoriety that at the height of Ronald Reagan's campaign against the "evil empire" (the Soviet Union and the world communist movement), his name frequently appeared at the top of the list of enemies of American democracy along with those of other theologians such as Jon Sobrino, Leonardo Boff, Segundo Galilea and Jose Comblin.

It was no joke to be on that list: it was the era of the Latin American dictators and anti-communist death squads. Archbishop Oscar Romero and the Jesuits of El Salvador were killed by any of those nondescript squads that had ties with the American low-intensity conflict strategists. It didn't help ease the worries of his

\* This story was taken from the Lifestyle section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer Newspaper. (URL: [http://www.inq7.net/lif/2002/dec/02/text/lif\\_8-l-p.htm](http://www.inq7.net/lif/2002/dec/02/text/lif_8-l-p.htm))

friends that the Vatican seemed pred to adopt the Washington view and was quick to condemn any theological approach that would, rightly or wrongly, marry the Gospel with political activism. It was simply a bad time to be a theologian.

But Peruvian Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez, O.P., who is in the Philippines to attend a meeting of Asia-Pacific Dominicans and to give religious conferences, would be the first to say that he has no choice but to be a theologian in good and bad times. The man, after all, was the one who first called on the need for "doing theology." It was a revolutionary call because, first, it situated the Gospel message in the here and now, with all of its dire social implications, and second, it democratized the proclamation of the Gospel to involve the poor. Henceforth, theology would be a matter of orthopraxis - of preaching as reaffirmed and reinforced by practice. It didn't take a metaphysician to note the danger posed by such a teaching to the social-and geopolitical-order.

Perhaps because he was right in the midst of "doing theology," Father Gutierrez never expected the uproar that greeted his 1971 book, the celebrated "A Theology of Liberation." The book caused a tectonic shift in the way Christians all over the world practiced their faith.

In addressing the Gospel to the poor and their situation, Father Gutierrez put Christ squarely against the social structures that perpetuate poverty. "Poverty is an act of love and liberation," he wrote. "It has a redemptive value. If the ultimate cause of human exploitation and alienation is selfishness, the deepest reason for voluntary poverty is love of neighbor."

The book caused rifts in the biblical sense; it divided churches, families, nations and governments. Its impact was revolutionary. It spawned a host of political readings of the Gospel, including unabashedly Marxist approaches that advocated the violent overthrow of the system.

The epiphanic impact of the book obscured the fact that Father Gutierrez had been "doing theology" for a long time, with none of the drama and flourish associated with firebrands. A religious journalist found this out after meeting the priest: "I discovered that Gustavo is not a theologian who made himself overnight."

He couldn't have become overnight the liberation theologian that we know him now because he had been "doing theology" - through his scholarship, his counseling of the bishops of Latin America (especially in their important social documents, particularly the Medellin episcopal communiqué, that declared the preferential option for the poor as "a constitutive dimension" of the Gospel in the modern world), and ministry for the poor.

It often surprises many that Father Gutierrez's educational background had really prepared him for pastoral work in the secular sphere. He has a diploma in medicine from the University of San Marcos in Lima and a master's degree in psychology from Louvain. In a meeting with church workers at the University of Santo Tomas last Saturday, he expressed a little dismay at how casually he had been pigeonholed a Marxist for his political theology. Citing his training in psychology, he remarked, "I know Freud better than I know Marx, but no one has called me Freudian."

Of course, his apostolate with and for the poor has made his theology one of flesh and blood. "Liberation theology is a pastoral question," he pointed out at UST. "How do you tell the poor, 'God loves you'? The question is larger than the possibilities for an answer."

In providing for an answer, Father Gutierrez believes that Christians must make a historical commitment to the poor. He explained that to be committed to the poor means to speak in

the language of the prophet because "prophecy starts from history." "We cannot separate the poor from God because we believe in one God who is present in history," he said. "History is the space and time of our meeting with God."

In the final analysis, poverty is death, according to Gutierrez. "It is an early and unjust death," he said, adding that the great Dominican Bartolome de la Casas, in condemning the Spanish conquistadors for abusing the Indians, referred to social oppression as a form of death: "The Indians are dying before their time."

Although work for the poor can be frustrating, Father Gutierrez cautions against anger and violence. "Those who work for the poor are also persons of hope," he said. He added that it would be wrong to reduce the poor to a condition of suffering and anger. "The life of the poor is complex. We must avoid looking at the life of the poor as one of only suffering. It is also filled with joy and moments of hope."

Gutierrez also cautioned against romanticizing the poor. The poor themselves, he explained, must take the preferential option for the poor because "many poor are not in solidarity with the other poor."

In the same way, it would be wrong for church workers to be like the poor themselves. "We don't imitate poverty," Gutierrez said. "We fight against it. For me to imitate the poor will require a lobotomy."

"We must be committed to the poor because they are considered insignificant," he stressed. "But we cannot be insignificant ourselves. Archbishop Romero was committed to the poor because they were insignificant. But he was eating the right proteins to do the proper intellectual work. The Jesuits of El Salvador-they were not insignificant." He added to the laughter of the audience: "There are no insignificant Jesuits in the world!"

His theology has more than once brought him in conflict with the guardians of orthodoxy in the Vatican, but Father Gutierrez does not relish a clash with the Pope and the magisterium. He seems to take comfort in the fact that the Vatican, despite its nearly blanket condemnation of "liberation theologies" in 1982's "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation," seemed to have taken a more constructive stance in the later "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation."

Gutierrez added that after the second "Instruction" was issued, the Pope wrote a letter to the bishops of Brazil in which he admitted that in some instances, liberation theology might be "necessary and useful."

More recently, Father Gutierrez said he had seen the Pope meeting the envoy of Haiti, the poorest country in Latin America, and declaring, "Poverty is a scandal and it is our sacred duty to eliminate it."

"This Pope certainly puts accent on the causes of poverty," Father Gutierrez said. "This Pope certainly tells us not only to help the poor but go against the social structures [that perpetuate poverty]."

The fact that Father Gutierrez has taken in stride the attacks against him surprised many in the UST forum. But he said that to be committed to the poor also means to cultivate spiritual poverty - "to be a spiritual child." Perhaps this explains his decision to join late in life (he's now 74) the Dominican Order. Although he had long been a Dominican tertiary, he joined the order in 2000 and after a year as a novice, made his simple vows last year. "It can be said therefore that as a Dominican, he is a young man," quipped Fr. Fausto Gomez, O.P., dean of the UST Ecclesiastical Faculty of Sacred Theology.

The decision to become a religious is not surprising. Gutierrez's mentors during his European education at Louvain and Lyons were Dominicans - the great Yves Congar, the legendary Marie Dominique Chenu, and the controversial Edward Schillebeeckx. When Gutierrez made his Dominican profession, Schillebeeckx sent a very warm congratulatory note.

Not surprisingly, the doctrinal guardians of the Vatican once considered Gutierrez's mentors suspect. Congar was labeled a heretic for advocating ecumenism in a world that had yet to see a glimpse of the Second Vatican Council. Chenu was denounced a traitor for applying Thomism to modern categories. And Schillebeeckx was accused of denying Jesus' divinity since he emphasized Christ's historicity.

But time has rehabilitated these Dominican "apostates." Before he died in 1990, Chenu was widely considered a saint. Before he died in 1995, Congar received the Cardinal's hat from Pope John Paul II. As for Schillebeeckx, he has been hailed to the Vatican to face the inquisition several times, but he has never been condemned. His emphasis on the historicity and humanity of Christ has steadily become the new theological orthodoxy.

There will always be disagreements, Father Gutierrez admits. "But we are not looking for a recompense for our theology. We are here to clarify points. I am willing to clarify. The Holy Spirit also needs to be clarified. Doing theology is one way for me to express my love for the Church."



## **Philippine Episcopology - Addenda-Corrigenda, 2002**

**CHARLES BRANSOM, JR.**

The following list updates entries in the "Philippine Episcopology" previously published in the *Boletin* 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. 140 **Teodulfo Domingo y Sabugal** - died 3 June 2002.

N. 151 **Cornelius de Wit, M.H.M.** - died 8 March 2002 at Iloilo City.

N. 163 **Felix Zafra y Sanchez** - died 4 August 2002.

N. 184 **Celso N. Guevarra** - died 13 August 2002 at Quezon City.

N. 185 **Philip Francis Smith, O.M.I.** - died 30 September 2002 at Cotabato City.

N. 216 **Salvador Q. Quizon** - resigned as Auxiliary of Lipa 6 April 2002.

- N. 224 **Leoncio Lat y Leviste** - died 6 November 2002.
- N. 236 **Raul Jose Q. Martires** - resigned 16 March 2002.
- N. 242 **Emilio Z. Marquez** - Coadjutor Bishop of Lucena 4 May 2002.
- N. 256 **Romulo Tolentino de la Cruz** - succeeded to San Jose de Antique 16 March 2002.
- N. 262 **Antonio Racelis Ranola** - Apostolic Administrator of Gumaca, sede vacante, 25 June 2002.
- N. 276 **Pedro D. Arigo** - Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Princesa 27 March 2002.
- N. 277 **Jose Paala Salazar, O.P.** - Bishop-Prelate of Batanes 6 February 2002; Titular Bishop of Hippo Diarrhytus and Auxiliary of Butuan 23 November 2002.
- N. 282 **Arturo Mandin Bastes, S.V.D.** - Coadjutor Bishop of Sorsogon 25 July 2002.
- N. 290 **Guillermo Vega Afable** - Coadjutor Bishop of Digos 24 April 2002.
- N. 300. 2002, 31 May, at San Jose, Cathedral
- Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Warlito I. Cajandig, Titular Bishop of Ausafa, and by Msgr. Vicente C. Manuel, Titular Bishop of Albulae, consecrated Msgr. **Antonio Pepito Palang, S.V.D.**, Titular Bishop of Thuburbo minor, Vicar Apostolic of San Jose in Mindoro, born at Concepcion (Cebu) 13 June 1946; SVD 29 June 1965; priest 8 July 1972; named 1 March 2002.
- N. 301. 2002, 19 June, at Calapan, Cathedral

Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Guadencio Borbon Resales, Archbishop of Lipa and by Msgr. Warlito I. Cajandig, Titular Bishop of Ausafa consecrated Msgr. **Buenaventura Malayo Famadico**, Titular Bishop of Urusi and Auxiliary of Lipa, born at Banton (Romblon) 13 July 1956; priest 25 October 1983; named 6 April 2002.

N, 302. 2002, 11 July, at Puerto Princesa, Cathedral

Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Francisco C. San Diego, Bishop of San Pablo and by Msgr. Pedro D. Arigo, Titular Bishop of Mactaris consecrated Msgr. **Edgardo Sarabia Juanich**, Titular Bishop of Ausuaga, first Vicar Apostolic of Taytay, born at Taytay 29 April 1952; priest 11 July 1976; named 13 May 2002.

## Cases & Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

### SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

*May lay persons confer baptism? Should fetuses be baptized? What is the right time for the administration of baptism? Why baptize newborn infants? Shouldn't they be allowed to grow up and choose baptism for themselves? Can children be denied baptism? Should children born of non-Christian parents be baptized? Can baptism be conferred in private houses or hospitals? Sponsors: What for and how many? What are the qualifications to become a sponsor? Can non-Catholics be accepted as sponsors? What are the requirements for an adult to be admitted to baptism? What are the ways of administering baptism? What is the meaning of the symbols used in the celebration of baptism? What is the ordinary proof of baptism and what to do whenever the proof of baptism cannot be ascertained through official records? What are the Churches in the Philippines that administer valid baptism?*

# # \*

Baptismal celebrations are usually joyful events. Parents, sponsors, relatives and friends join the child they themselves bring to the church for baptism and become witnesses of an inner transformation in the child, who through the sacrament of baptism becomes a new creature. Together in a festive gathering around the baby they celebrate the gift of life, and in particular the Fatherhood of God. For on every Christian baptism, like what happened on Jesus' baptism, the Spirit is received, and the Father's voice from heaven saying "You are my beloved child, with you I am well pleased" is heard.

These realities are expressed in the liturgical celebration of baptism, whose meaning recovers its original clarity when the symbols used during that celebration are rightly understood.

The norms gathered in cc. 849-878 of the Code of Canon Law regarding the Sacrament of Baptism provide an authoritative answer to most of the questions above formulated.

### *May lay persons confer baptism?*

Yes, non-ordained members of the Church, like catechists, nurses, doctors and any other lay person, may be deputed by the local ordinary as ministers of baptism. In case of necessity, however, when the ordinary minister (bishop, priest or deacon) is absent or impeded; indeed in case of imminent danger of death, no deputation is necessary and any person may (and ought to) lawfully confer baptism. Right intention is the only requirement (Ritual of Baptism; c. 861).

### *Should fetuses be baptized?*

The fetus in the womb of the mother is a human being. Hence in case of a premature delivery and danger of death for the child,

it should be baptized. If one doubts whether the fetus is alive or not, the baptism should be administered conditionally. The approved way of doing it should be taught to midwives, doctors, nurses and even to the parents themselves.

### ***What is the right time for the administration of baptism?***

Normally, baptism should be conferred within the first weeks after the birth of the child. On this regard, the Ritual of Baptism establishes the following criteria: first, the health of the child, who in danger of death should be baptized without delay. Then, the health of the mother, who as much as possible should be present at the baptism. Finally, the pastoral needs: a sufficient time should be allocated to prepare parents and godparents, and to arrange everything for a worthy celebration of baptism. Concerning the day of the week, though baptism may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that normally it be celebrated on a Sunday or, if possible, on the vigil of Easter.

### ***Why baptize newborn infants? Shouldn 't they be allowed to grow up and choose baptism for themselves?***

The stand of the Church is that little children should be baptized. The Church in fact from the first centuries baptized not only adults but also children. Origen (185-254) and St. Augustine (354-430) considered baptism of little children a tradition received from the Apostles.

Some people object that "baptizing infants is a restriction on their freedom, since it means to impose on them future religious obligations that they may perhaps later reject. And, consequently, baptism should be delayed until the candidate's personality has sufficiently matured."

What to say to those objections? First of all, that such an attitude is simply an illusion: there is no such thing as pure human freedom, immune from being influenced in any way. Even on the natural level parents make choices for their child that are essential for its life and for its orientation towards true values. Consequently, as the Sacred Congregation for the Faith said on October 20, 1980, a so-called 'neutral' attitude on the part of the family with regard to the child's religious life would in fact be a negative choice that would deprive the child of an essential good.

Second, that certain sociological criteria are inadequate for settling strictly religious matters. A child born of Christian parents comes into the world, like every son of Adam, in a state of spiritual disorder in relation to the historical state to which mankind had been raised. This original disorder can be removed by the sacrament of regeneration (Baptism), upon the initiative of those responsible for the human and spiritual life of the child (parents, pastors). If instead of intervening at once, they wait without a reason, they are guilty of a serious omission. After all, "the child is baptized in the faith of the Church, not in its own," St. Thomas explains. God is the one that has absolute initiative in the work of salvation.

Besides, how can the family be called the domestic Church if the children in the family are not baptized? Salvation begins by our being chosen by God and initiated into a faith-community. Infant baptism reminds us that God chooses us and saves us long before we choose him. Religion starts not with what we do for God, but with what God does for us. The meaning of baptism vanishes when it is not longer considered as a grace, when faith is felt to be a burden more than a gift.

### ***Can children be denied baptism?***

Baptism is not to be denied to children as a sanction or punishment for parents. The children's baptism is not a reward for the behavior of the parents. The only element to consider is the good of the children. Hence, even if parents live a tepid Christian life or if they do not live a Christian life at all, their children must be baptized, provided that, inasmuch as possible, the catholic education of these children is assured. When parents are not yet ready for the celebration of baptism, pastors may be guided to determine a longer interval between birth and baptism.

### ***Should children born of non-Christian parents be baptized?***

Although it could be validly done, the Church usually does not admit a child to baptism without its parents' consent (at least of one of them) and a serious assurance that after baptism it will be given a catholic upbringing. However "in case of danger of death the child may be baptized even if the parents are opposed to it" (c. 868, §2).

### ***Can baptism be conferred in private houses or hospitals?***

The mind of the Church on the proper place for the administration of baptism is that, apart from a case of necessity or from some other pressing pastoral reason, baptism is not to be conferred in private houses or in hospitals, but in a church or an oratory. As a rule and unless a just reason suggests otherwise, adults are to be baptized in their proper parish church, and infants in the proper parish church of the parents (cf. c. 857 §1).



### ***Sponsors: What for and how many?***

**In** so far as possible, a person being baptized is to be assigned a sponsor. In the case of an adult baptism, the sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian initiation. In the case of an infant baptism, the role is, together with the parents, to present the child for baptism, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in baptism (c. 872).

How many sponsors? The law of the Church says: "One sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex." (can. 873) The reason why the Church admits only one godparent for each baptized, or at the most one godfather and one godmother, is wise: to better ensure the initiation of the baptized in Christian life and the instruction on the religious truths. When responsibility rests on several persons it is very likely that none of them will take it seriously, thinking that the others will carry it out!

### ***What are the qualifications to become a sponsor?***

Five qualifications are required by the Church to undertake the office of sponsor (godparent) at baptism, namely,

a) being appointed by the candidate for baptism (if adult) or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister. To be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;

b) being not less than sixteen years of age. This is the general rule, but exceptions can be made for a just reason;

c) being a catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;

- d) laboring not under a canonical penalty:
- e) being neither the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.

***Can non-Catholics be accepted as sponsors?***

Non-Catholics cannot be accepted as sponsors since they do not fulfill some of the above conditions. The Church, however, allows a baptized person who belong to a non-Catholic ecclesial community be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the baptism.

***What are the requirements for an adult to be admitted to baptism?***

Some conditions are established by the Church's law in relation to the validity of the sacrament of baptism conferred to adults: "To be admitted to baptism, an adult must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, must be adequately instructed in the truths of the faith and in the duties of a Christian, and tested in the Christian life over the course of the catechumenate. The person must moreover be urged to have sorrow for personal sins" (c.865). Certainly the intention or desire to receive baptism is a necessary requirement: if it is lacking, the baptismal character is not conferred on the adult.

***What are the ways of administering baptism?***

Baptism may be conferred either by immersion or by pouring of water. Both are suitable symbols of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

## ***What is the meaning of the symbols used in the celebration of baptism?***

The symbols used during the celebration of baptism (water, oil, lighted candle, white garment...) express the newness of life as well as the depth of the spiritual transformation brought about at baptism. The main symbols (and their meaning) are the following:

- a. *The signing on the forehead:* The child is claimed for Christ by the sign of the cross on its forehead. Parents and godparents join the celebrant in blessing the child.
- b. *The laying of hands:* Christian life is always exposed to the temptations of the devil; help and strength from God is needed. "May you have strength in the power of Christ our Savior," the minister says while laying his hands on the child.
- c. *The immersion or pouring of water:* From the start, water was used at baptism because of its cleansing value. Baptism brings about not the cleansing of the body but of the soul; it is a bath that cleanses from sin, a "bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit."
- d. *The anointing with chrism:* As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so He now anoints the child with chrism of salvation. At baptism the Spirit takes possession of the believer and incorporates him/her into the body of the Church.
- e. *The clothing with white garment:* Since the child has become a new creation, this white garment means the outward sign of his Christian dignity into everlasting life.
- f. *The lighted candle:* Darkness specifies the domain of Satan as one of evil and ungodliness. The product of light, on

the other hand, is all that is good, just and true. It is God who "has called us from darkness to his marvelous light" (1 Pt 2:9). The priest hands over a lighted candle to the parents and godparents of the child, while telling them: "Receive this light of Christ. Your child has been enlightened by Christ. He (she) is to walk always as child of the light. Help him (her) keep the faith just received alive." The standard of conduct is hereby determined. Parents and godparents assume a great responsibility.

***What is the ordinary proof of baptism and what to do whenever the proof of baptism cannot be ascertained through official records?***

The ordinary proof of baptism is the one established by the baptismal certificate, as transcribed from the baptismal register, signed by the priest in charge of the records and, if possible, duly authenticated through the parish seal. Such certificate meets all the requirements of a public ecclesiastical document.

Whenever the baptismal certificate cannot be obtained, an Affidavit or sworn statement will suffice: "To prove that baptism has been conferred, if there is no conflict of interest, it is sufficient to have either one unexceptionable witness or, if the baptism was conferred upon an adult, the sworn testimony of the baptized person" (c. 876).

***What are the Churches in the Philippines that administer valid baptism?***

The following Churches in the Philippines administer a valid baptism:

- Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP).

- Philippine Episcopal Church (PEC).
- United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP).
- Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF).
- United Methodist Church in the Philippines (UMCP).
- Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC).
- Presbyterian Church.
- Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

The baptism administered by these Churches is to be considered valid and is not to be repeated even conditionally. The official baptismal certificate should be enough proof of its validity. As for other Churches or religious groups in the Philippines, each case is to be examined individually (Testera, E, *Canon Law Digest of the Philippine Catholic Church*, Manila: UST, 1995, 34).

### ***Baptism: A New Birth***

Referring to the marvelous effects of baptism, St. Fulbert of Chartres wrote in the year 1007: "We know with certainty that sinners in the first birth, we are purified in the second; slaves in the first, we are free through the second; earthly in the first, we are heavenly through the second; carnal through the fault of the first birth, we become spiritual through the grace of the second one; through the former, sons of wrath, through the latter, sons of grace. Let anyone, therefore, who offends the dignity of baptism know that he offends God himself." (PL 141, 199)

A new birth is indeed accomplished through baptism; a new birth in water and the Spirit. "You are now a new creature," the priest says addressing to the newly baptized.

But it is only by the right understanding of the celebration of baptism that the expressions calling baptism "the Gateway of Heaven," "the sacrament of spiritual regeneration," or "the means of full incorporation into the Church" recover their original clarity.

## **Homilies for May-June 2003\***

**MARIO BALTAZAR, OP**

**May 4, 2003**

**Third Sunday of Easter**

**Cycle B**

(Readings: Acts 3: 13-15, 17-19/1 Jn 2: 1-5/Lk 24: 35-48)

Sunday after Sunday by means of three bible readings, Mother Church sends us messages that cover essentially the same topic: crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is no surprise because Jesus himself harps on the same theme to prepare his disciples to become witnesses to the whole world of those events by means of their preaching and holy lives. During the remaining forty days before his ascension, Jesus practically did nothing except to reassure his disciples that he has really risen from death according to Scriptures.

What other purpose do you think Mother Church can have in repeating the same theme Sunday after Sunday except to make

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

us all witnesses today of those same truths by our preaching and holy lives? It is no exaggeration to say that just as Jesus sent his disciples to the whole world to preach the Good News of his crucifixion, death and resurrection, so Holy Mother Church is sending us to witness to all men/women the same Good News. There is an urgency for this kind of task in our times if the evils of ignorance of God, of sinful behavior and disorientation of life have to be combated.

In the first reading (Acts 3), Peter gives us a pattern on how to witness by means of preaching. Incidentally the burden of preaching was not shouldered by the apostles alone. We have instances in early church history attested by the New Testament of simple Christians, including women, who were doing that. Peter's preaching was normative for all preachers, and as long as that norm was kept, no confusion followed.

This was how Peter preached: he first showed his audience how their behavior fell short or even went contrary to the good behavior other people exhibited in regards to the person of Jesus. Whatever excesses his audience committed against Jesus, he blames it on their ignorance or hasty judgment. Then he exhorts them to repent and lead good lives henceforward. Peter's trademark in preaching was to combine a message of hope and an appeal for conversion.

But this witnessing through preaching must be supported and authenticated by the good life of the preacher, as the second reading (1 John 3) asserts. Otherwise, our preaching will be hollow and ineffectual. I can even say that the good life of a Christian is itself already a powerful sermon for it bears witness to the good news that Jesus has been appointed by the Father as the means of pardoning and destroying our sins, as John says in his letter.

Finally, the third reading (Luke 24) should suffice to help us overcome any remaining hesitation of taking up this duty of witnessing for the Lord Jesus by means of preaching and good lives. We are bemused, if not amused, at the hesitation of the first disciples of Jesus to believe in his resurrection, despite the clear evidence of the fact. Jesus had to eat a piece of cooked fish to persuade them that he was not a ghost they took him to be.

It took a couple of hours or less for them to get over their hesitations and doubts, and some more days of preparation before taking up the difficult task of witnessing worldwide in favor of the risen Lord. I hope it will not take us a lifetime to overcome our hesitations and put our hands into the tasks, greater than which I cannot think of any other. For by preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we acknowledge and help others to acknowledge that what God has done for Jesus in sending him to die for our redemption and then in raising him up glorious and blessed in the power of the Holy Spirit, he did symbolically and effectively also for mankind. In Jesus, God reveals his nature and his plan that he is a God of love who reconciles men/women to himself, who will raise up those who died with Christ and like Christ, who will lead them to participate in the glorious and blessed life of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**May 11, 2003**

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

**Cycle B**

(Readings: Acts 4: 8-12/1 Jn 3: 1-2/Jn 10: 11-18)

Much importance is being placed on personality development and self-improvement and professional growth. There is much to praise about this modern interest aside from the real need for it. But a correct definition of self, a true appraisal of one's identity



is a pre-requisite to any work in developing the personality. For the lack of proper knowledge or the exaggeration of who we are would lead to aberrations in developing the personality. Needless to say, personality distortions have evil consequences, not only for the individuals concerned, but also for the larger entities of families, associations, societies and nations.

Hence, the three readings of today's Mass are important because they help in defining the true identity of anyone and everyone. With their disclosures of who we really are, we shall not so much as lend credence to characterization like "I am Aquarius, are you Libra, is she Scorpio?" It is amazing how people can be serious about this.

How much more uplifting for self-identification statements like this one from the second reading (1 John 3), "We are now God's children although it is not yet clear what we shall become. When Christ appears we shall be like him." Or this other statement from the third reading (John 10), "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." Or this other statement from the first reading (Acts 4), "Apart from Jesus, there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved."

So, who are we? What are we? What is our self-identity? According to the three readings, we are children of God, we are the sheep of Christ, we are the people saved by Jesus. Such is the identification card issued to us by our heavenly Father. By it, people can know who we are. More importantly, we know who we are. Is it not embarrassing not to know who we are? Thanks to scriptures, we are spared of that embarrassment.

However, we should not let our self-knowledge to erode or get blurred. Rather, we should act on that knowledge so that our true self-identity will be re-inforced and not be substituted

for another, otherwise you will go back to calling yourself Aquarius, Libra or Scorpio.

So, after John told us we are now God's children, he also wrote we should keep ourselves pure and sinless, just as Christ is pure and sinless. At this point I would like to propose a concrete way of re-inforcing our self-identity as God's children, so that what Jesus had said of his sheep knowing him as he knows them may be fully realized.

My proposal is that we improve our quality of worship of God. It is worship of God that defines our being Christians: you are truly a Christian if you worship God; you cannot be truly a Christian if you do not worship God, or you worship something apart from God. And you are a fine Christian if the quality of worship is fine. Christian worship can take many forms both on individual and corporate basis. The corporate worship which we call the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, has precedence over the rest and possesses an excellence we do not find in others.

In the celebration of the Eucharist, you find a wealth of grace-filled actions: it is sacrament, it is sacrifice, it is memorial, it is thanksgiving, it is prayer and intercession, it is the presence of Jesus, it is communion in his body and blood. The Holy Mass is both the action of Christ and of the Church, an action in which all the faithful take part according to the ministry and order of each.

What then is the Holy Mass? It is the Last Supper, the Good Friday, the Easter Sunday put together again in which all of us take active part along with Jesus whom we watch, we listen to, we pray and make intercessions with, we pledge and commit ourselves for, we receive in communion. The celebration of Holy Mass, any celebration of it for that matter in whichever time and place, is a privileged moment when the church, us her children,

discovers and experiences her true identity as the living sign of God's salvific rule which was proclaimed and promised in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**May 18, 2003**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**Cycle B**

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

Last Sunday the bible readings help us discover our self-identity as "children of God." This Sunday the bible readings will help us understand the implications of being "children of God." Let us start with the third reading (John 15). It comprises the first half of what is called the discourse of Jesus on the true vine and its branches. In it our Lord uses a language and an image that are familiar to us. His purpose in doing so is to bring home to our minds the following points: (1) the relationship between God and us; (2) the commonality of life between God and us; (3) God's life is the source of our power for good works. The image of the vine and its branches suggests that Christian life is essentially ordained for action - for producing fruits, i.e. good works.

Summarizing now, we can rightly and truly say we are "children of God" as John stated in last Sunday's reading because of the existing intimate relationship between the Lord, and us, because of the shared life we enjoy with him, and because we draw all power to do good from this shared life.

We would like to stress, at this point, that our shared life with God (for which reason we call him Father and he calls us his children) is much more intimate, more unitive and continuing than the shared life we have with either our natural fathers or mothers. Though we are children of our natural fathers and

mothers, strictly we have separate and independent existence from them.

This separateness and independence of existence may come later with respect to our mothers in whose wombs we live and exist for about nine months, and from whom we draw life, breath and nourishment through the umbilical cord. Once you cut that cord (as is done when you were born), you assume a separate existence.

You cannot do that with respect to God. You cannot continue your existence as a Christian, not to say as a human being physically, if you cut yourself away from God. You would become a dead branch, useless and unfruitful, fit only to be thrown away into the fire, as the Lord says in the third reading.

Now, how do you know a true Christian from a fake? How do you know you are not faking your Christianity, thus fooling only yourself but not God? The first reading has an answer for the first question, and the second reading for the second.

Paul was regarded with suspicion by the Christians of Jerusalem when he went there to visit and get acquainted with them. St. Barnabas had to act as his guarantor by informing them how God spoke to Paul, and how he courageously preached the gospel at Damascus to the point of risking his life. At this, the Christians of Jerusalem gave their hand of friendship to Paul.

So, risking one's life on behalf of God and brethren, is one proof of being a true Christian. Hence, John writes in the second reading, "Christ gave his life for us, so we too ought to give our lives for our brethren." Yet, visionary and mystical as John is, he is not contented with mere good disposition. "Our love, he writes, should not be just words and talk, it must be true love, which shows itself in action."

The simplest offer of help to a needy brother is, for John, a concrete and tangible proof of true Christianity than all the promises and pledges one can make of giving his life for his brethren, if the occasion arises. This, however, seldom or never happens. So, again John's words.

**May 25, 2003**

**Sixth Sunday of Easter**

**Cycle B**

(Readings: Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48/1 Jn 4: 7-10/Jn 15: 9-17)

In today's first reading, Peter wants to share with us a great discovery he had made which gave him immense joy. It is the realization that God does not play favorite with anyone on the basis of race, social status and cultural endowments. God accepts and embraces ANYONE who fears him and does what is right. Every other consideration is of no account to God.

The discovery of this truth caused immense joy to Peter. For it means that gaining acceptance from God is within the reach of most everyone. It is so different from trying to gain acceptance from the society of men, where color of the skin, wealth, sophistication and elitist background have so much weight and hard to attain besides.

So, to fear God and to do what is right is the simple requirement to gain God's acceptance and favor. Unfortunately, many do not pay attention to this simple requirement but prefer to gain acceptance from society by means of those nearly unattainable conditions just mentioned. The sad result of this is that they gain neither God's acceptance whom they ignored, nor society's recognition whom they cannot satisfy.

In today's second reading, John also has a discovery to share with us, viz. that love is God, or better still, that God is love. He wants to correct a widespread error that has worsened in our times. Heaven knows how we have given to the word LOVE all the meanings and connotations except the correct ones. John is putting a brake to all our nonsense and exaggerations. He tells us that love comes from God, that it is sacred, active, and fruitful. That, in fact, God is love; he is not and has nothing to do which is not love or is contrary to it.

If we do not understand that, it is not the fault of the discovered truth. It is our own fault because with our biases, we have given to this most abused word LOVE all the wrong meanings that have mangled its face beyond recognition. John wants to restore love to its pristine meaning, to trace it back to its original fount. He concludes by saying whoever loves, in the sense he understands the word, is a child of God and knows God.

Finally, Jesus himself, in the third reading, wants something about himself which we should discover. He says that he loves us as the Father loves him. But both Father and Son wants us to love them in return. And they want us to remain in their love. Such is Jesus' love for us that he no longer likes to call us his servants, which we are in truth, but his friends. We understand how love for a friend differs from love for a servant. Jesus wants us to know the intensity of his love for us.

However, so that we do not become vain or presumptuous because of these disclosures, Jesus reminds us in this same reading, "You did not choose me; I chose you!" If ever we became the object of his love, it is not because he first found us lovable, but that our lovableness began to start after he chose us. Then, to close every avenue to human pride and self-importance, Jesus concludes by saying, "This is what I command you: love one another, just as I have loved you."

**June 1, 2003**

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

**Gospel Readings**

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

One detail in the Ascension story narrated by today's 1st reading has called my attention. It says that the apostles had their eyes fixed at the sky even after Jesus had disappeared from the view when a cloud carried him into heaven. Wherefore, two angels told them, "Men of Galilee, why are you just standing there looking at the sky?"

If this was a reprimand, a good-natured angelic scolding, you cannot blame the apostles. They have seen their beloved master ascending into heaven in all the splendor of majesty and power. How many times have we ourselves not halted in our steps or put aside what we are doing to watch the splendor and beauty of the clear sky at sunrise or sunset.

So that was not really a reprimand. The apostles were just being reminded by those good angels that there is a time for wonderment and celebration and there is a time for hard work and snapping out of one's reveries and start pulling up their sleeves, especially that Jesus had given them the tough assignment to make disciples of all nations.

If the angels were to talk to us Christians of today, perhaps they will reprimand us for spending more time looking earthwards than heavenwards. The mystery and the feast of the Ascension is a call for us to look both ways, to heaven and to earth with equal interest and intensity, giving each field their proper attention and value.

To qualify more carefully so that there will be no misunderstanding. When we speak of somebody spending more time looking at the sky (at heaven) or looking to the ground (our world), I am not talking about quantitative time, like 23 hours for heaven and 1 hour for earth or the other way around. We are referring more to qualitative time, so that regardless of the number of minutes and hours, the things you are doing for God or for men must be done correctly and well.

It is not right to be schizophrenic about our duties to God and to our neighbors, so that we think we are led to make this unrealistic and unchristian choice: all for God or all for neighbor; everything for the sake of heaven or everything for the sake of our world. In fact, God created both our neighbor and our world. And it is written "If anyone says, I love God but hates his brother (1 John 4:20) he is a liar." Also, it is written, "God looked at everything he made, and he found it very good" (Gen 1:31).

There is then no intrinsically evil in either men or in the world. Why can we not devote time and effort in them. If there is evil it is the product of men, which is a greater reason why we should pay more time and attention in eliminating evil from our world. It is our Christian duty to restore the world to that state where God can find it very good once again. To the extent, therefore, of our power and ability, which after, all are God-given gifts to us, we must resolve the problem and put an end to the scandal of exclusion or marginalization of the masses from the economic and social benefits of the nation (Lenten message of Pope John Paul II). The widening and stubborn imbalance of socio-economic benefits and privileges, enjoyed by the few and untasted by the many, is a shame to humankind, opposed to God's will and repugnant to the concept of Christian brotherhood. God created the world for every man because every man is his child.



Accordingly, the celebration of the mystery of Ascension of Jesus into heaven marks the victory of the Lord over sin, death and the evil forces of greed, lust for power, shameful exploitation of the defenseless children of God. It is the vindication by the heavenly Father of his Son who gave up his life for the transformation of the world to hasten the arrival of his Father's Kingdom upon the hearts and in the lives of all men.

The Ascension is also a call and a challenge for us, Christians of today, to follow in Jesus' footsteps and continue his mission of doing good everywhere and everytime and for everyone. If we are found dutiful and persevering in this task, the same power of God who raised his Son and took him to heaven, will also vindicate us and bring us to our reward in heaven, as Paul assures in his letter of today's feast.

**June 8, 2003**

**Pentecost**

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

After listening to the Pentecost story narrated in the 1st reading (Act 2), has it not occurred to you to ask yourselves this question, "Why not to us also?" How nice if the Holy Spirit comes down to us gathered now for prayer. Deep in our heart, there would be some wishing such coming down of the Spirit to take place again on all the present Christian communities. Why not a repetition of Pentecost on the 3rd millenium?

Then, hopefully, many problems that affect our present Christian communities could be solved: such as the scant unity of hearts, minds and efforts among Christians for revealing God's presence and his loving plan to the world; the little enthusiasm and sincerity we notice in our praying assemblies; the tiny

perseverance we put into our search for God in order to establish personal lives of communication with him amidst the hustle and bustle of life.

But then, I realized that such a wish - for a phenomenal descent of the Holy Spirit like that which occurred to the early Church is not necessary, not proper. Firstly because, on the basis of the 3 readings today, the Holy Spirit has been present in the Church since the Pentecost event, and will forever be present in her. So why wish for him to descend when he already is with the Church? What John the Baptist told his contemporaries about Jesus being present to them without them recognizing him, can also be told to us. That the Holy Spirit is present among us, without our recognizing him.

Secondly, we also have assertive kind of attitude towards God, perhaps unconsciously cultivated and kept, but showing up at times. We expect God to make things happen the way we want and not the way He wants. We are like spoiled children who think their plans and actions are always better than those of their parents.

So when things go wrong for us, like our business going bad, losing our jobs and not finding others, our health becoming worse, our ambitions checked by oppositions, our loved ones getting into problems, our friends and relatives dying prematurely, we can hardly repress this question to rise from our hearts, "Why does God allow this to happen?"

Let us not wish, therefore, a spectacular Pentecost to happen today or soon for us also. Even if the sudden onrush of a strong wind and the appearance of tongues of fire and the ability to talk in foreign languages, should they occur once more, are impressive experiences and wonderful signs. What we should wish for and do, is to carry out Paul's exhortation in today's 2nd reading.

Accordingly, let us find out and discover for ourselves, let's identify and recognize the gift or gifts the Holy Spirit has endowed each one of us for the service of fellow-Christians and fellow-beings. It is impossible to believe that we have not received from the Holy Spirit any assignment to perform and the ability to carry out that assignment. It would seem that we have not received the Holy Spirit himself at all. This is not true if we had been baptized sacramentally. In fact, it is by the loving service we give to others that the presence in us of the Holy Spirit is greatly shown.

So, in order not to think the unthinkable or not to believe the unbelievable, let us just say that each of us has received an assigned task to perform. The Holy Spirit is a silent achiever. His powerful presence is shown by the service we render to others. We cannot even say "Jesus is God" if the Holy Spirit does not help us to say it for our good and the good of others.

Paul, further says that the Holy Spirit is to Christians what the soul is to various parts and organs of the body. Thanks to the soul (always a silent, invisible, active principle), each part of the body performs the task assigned to it. Thus, the parts and the whole body itself get benefited. Similarly, thanks to the Holy Spirit (always the silent, invisible, active mover), each Christian performs the assigned task for his/her own good and the good of the whole church and the whole society, of which they are members.

Our gospel reading says that Jesus entered the room where the disciples had locked themselves in for fear of the Jews. He wanted to bring them peace by giving them the Holy Spirit. Have we not also been locking ourselves inside our small world for fear of getting involved in the task of transforming our communities; fear of commitment on necessary changes in society; fear

of disturbing our contented and comfortable life-style so as to help our distressed neighbors? May the Holy Spirit enter the barred doors of our hearts to bring us peace and to say, "As Jesus has sent me, so I send you. Go out and change the world; create a civilization of justice, love, unity and peace."

**May 15, 2003**

**Trinity Sunday**

**Cycle B**

(Readings: Dt 4:32-34, 39-40/Rom 8:14-17/Mt 28:16-20)

In quick succession, we have been celebrating this Easter season important and great mysteries of our Christian faith. Accordingly, Mother Church has been offering for our reflection rather lengthy bible readings to accompany our celebration of Resurrection Sunday, the six or seven Sundays of Easter, Ascension Sunday, and Pentecost Sunday.

Now that we are celebrating Trinity Sunday, the apex, the crown, the climax of all Christian mysteries, we should expect to hear lengthier bible readings, if we go by mathematics and logic. Surprisingly, however, we have very short bible readings. Only four verses for each reading. Here mathematics and logic failed. Better still, they have no place in this greatest of Christian dogma. Why is the Church so sparing in words, so short in instruction in today's celebration?

I think the reason is Mother Church is sending us a signal. She seems to be saying that in the face of the greatest of all mysteries, adoration and contemplation are more proper than speech and words. In keeping with this apparent signal Mother Church is sending us, my homily shall also be sparing and brief. I will just enumerate the points raised by the three bible readings. These in turn, can serve as starting lines for your personal prayer and reflection to get going and running.

Firstly, God tells us something very personal about himself, which we would never be able to guess or know unless he took the initiative of disclosing it to us. He is telling us his name by which we can address him, we get to know something about himself. Unlike people's names which usually do not have special meanings but serve only to stand for the persons signified, biblical names do carry special significance and tell something about what persons are and do. Now, God's name in today's reading is Yahweh, which may be translated, "I am who I am" or "I will be as I will be," which translation is still shrouded in mystery. The English language lamely renders the name Yahweh as Lord.

Secondly, here God tells us his personal and outstanding trait and quality. He is above all compassionate, tender, merciful, slow to anger, ready always to forgive all sin.

Thirdly, each divine person in the Blessed Trinity is characterized in his most outstanding trait. The Father, for instance, is love; he is loving and lovable; he is the origin of all love and what approximates to it. The Son is grace; he is a gift, "*grasya*"; he is the source of whatever graciousness or gracefulness we discover in creation. The Holy Spirit is fellowship; he is the union between the Father and the Son; he unites creatures to God; he creates unity among creatures.

Having remarked that much about the Blessed Trinity, we have to acknowledge we can never say enough about it. The Blessed Trinity will always remain for us a mystery, the greatest of mysteries, which calls more for our adoration and praise in faith than for speech or discussion. Needless to say, a practical way of showing our faith and adoration of this divine mystery is to execute the sign of the cross and accompany it with the usual words in a careful, meaningful and conscious manner.

**May 22, 2003**

**Corpus Christi**

**Cycle B**

(Readings: Ex 24:3-8/Heb 9:11-15/Mk 14:12-16, 22-26)

The selection by Mother Church of the bible readings for today's feast of *Corpus Christi* is very instructive. She has chosen three bible readings that are so far apart from each other, not only in time but also in the book itself of the holy bible.

If you open a bible, you will notice that Exodus (first reading) is found among its first pages; that Mark's gospel (third reading) is in the middle; and Hebrews (second reading) is located towards the end. It is as if Mother Church wants to gather all peoples from the past, from the present, and from the future and from one corner of the globe to the other so as to lead them before the Lord to contemplate, worship and partake of the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist i.e. the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

There is a common strand of terms that runs across the three bible readings, tying them together despite their diversity of composition in time, in origin, in place. These terms are as follows: covenant, blood, sacrificial life, or better, life offered in sacrifice. Let us discern briefly each of these terms because they shed light in what the feast of *Corpus Christi* is all about and why we celebrate it at all.

Exodus mentions the old covenant. Jesus in the gospel of Mark speaks about the new covenant. The letter to the Hebrews compares the two, saying that the latter is far more excellent and loftier as heaven is loftier than the earth.

But what is covenant in the first place? It is a holy contract, a sacred agreement by which God and men, with respective rights and duties, bind themselves together in a stable and enduring

manner, thus they belong and pertain to each other truly. To use a familiar expression which the bible also uses, covenant is a marriage between God and mankind.

Now, as the bible sees it and oriental tradition has it, a covenant has to be ratified and sealed by pouring blood, which is obtained by means of a sacrifice. Hence, Moses, according to the book of Exodus, ordered some animals to be sacrificed, whose blood thereupon he sprinkled upon the people and the altar representing God, as parties to the old covenant. Similarly Jesus, according to the gospel of Mark, speaks of his blood for the new covenant, which was poured out through his sacrifice of self at the cross.

One more thing we need to understand, is that for the Israelites (and Jesus was an Israelite in his human origin) life is present in the blood. There is life in the blood. We are familiar, are we not, of the expression life-blood. When we hear of blood transfusion, do we not associate the giving of blood to the giving of life? So when Jesus, the Last Supper, tells us, "This is the cup of my blood, take it and drink from it," he is actually giving us life - his life.

The New Covenant, the Blood of Jesus that ratified it, the Life-content in that blood, all these three are essential elements in Mark's story of the Last Supper. The Last Supper anticipated and necessitated the exercise of Christ's priesthood by which he sacrificed himself on the cross. We cannot think of a Last Supper without the Sacrifice of the Cross. We cannot explain satisfactorily the sacrifice of the cross if the Last Supper did not take place. Both call for each other to clarify the why and the wherefore of each other.

But one thing comes out surely from this. Jesus gave his Body and Blood to Christians so that they may preserve and

maintain their shared-life from him, just as humans must eat and drink to measure and maintain their life. Thanks to the exercise of Christ's priesthood on earth, through the ministry of human priests, his Body and Blood are made available to Christians till the end of time. In fact, the letter to the Hebrews (2nd Reading) speaks of Jesus still exercising his priesthood in the eternal abode of heaven. However, what concrete way this is done, we do not know. Some Christians limit their reception of the Eucharist to very few times or to just two events in their whole life - their first communion day and then their last dying day. They certainly go against the intention of Jesus, who exercises this priesthood continuously and eternally, just so that men might have his life and have it abundantly. They also go against the intention and spirit of holy mother church, who aside from instituting the feast of *Corpus Christi* so that we may honor and worship God in this sacrament, prescribes and commands that Christians should receive communion, at least once, during Easter time.

**May 29, 2003**

**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B**

(Readings: Wis 1: 13-15; 2: 23-24/2 Cor 8: 7, 9, 13-15/Neh 5: 21-43)

Today's bible readings carry a message of hope and perseverance which are the twin virtues that should characterize all those who dream of building a better future for themselves, their children and especially for the country whose manifold problems seem to defy solutions.

The problems are enough to discourage and intimidate the leadership of every public office and department, of government rank and file, who are duty bound to lead the rest of the people. I do not envy those who are in leadership positions. I have sympathy for them. Those who aspire just the same to become



leaders are either not fully conscious of the perils and frustrations of leading peoples, or are die-hard optimists who will try and try again.

Our country, be it riddled with problems as it may, our nation, be it ungovernable as they say, does not approximate however (observing due proportion) the case of the woman in the gospel who suffered severe bleeding for twelve years or of the moribund girl a dozen years old. Though extremely serious were both cases, neither the woman nor the girl's father despaired of ever getting the cure they desired.

Death was staring at the face of each of them. In fact, death had already claimed the life of the little girl. Yet, the glimmer of hope never faded for both because, as the first reading (Wisdom 1) stated, death is not the invention of God. When God created man, he intended for him a life of eternal bliss in his company.

So it was that Jesus, in having solved both cases of the bleeding woman and the dead child, signified to mankind that he is the victor of death and the devil, who after all is the real inventor and father of death. The two miracles are mission statements, so to speak, of Jesus Christ that he is to reckon as the unbeatable contender where life and true happiness are placed at stake by anything or anybody that would restrict or destroy them.

The Philippines in a sense is also hemorrhaging - in its strength, its potentials, its resources, its skilled and talented population through an unstoppable emigration of its adult youth in search of work and better future. The Philippines in a sense is also moribund - in the sclerosis of its huge bureaucracy, in the unchanging and languorous habits of many of its people although situations have changed, in the breakdown of public morals.

Jesus is not around to do the healing, nor is it necessary to require his physical presence. When he performed the two gospel miracles, he wanted his apostles to be present and witness them, so that in their own time, they too would heal the sick and resurrect the dead. By his manner of acting, Jesus is directing an implicit appeal and a clear challenge to the country's officialdom to take charge and get serious of their responsibilities. They must show the way, and the people must willingly follow, so that together, we all march towards the goal of full recovery and spanking life of all Filipinos.

But to be able to do so, leaders and followers alike, we need those two virtues mentioned at the beginning of this homily: the virtues of hope and perseverance. We must conjure in the eyes of our hearts a vision, a dream for our country and church, and pursue that vision, put muscle and flesh into that dream with the tenacity and devotion of a lover.

As the second reading (2 Cor 8) puts it, "You are so rich in all you have: in faith, speech, and knowledge, in your eagerness to help and in your love for us. And so we want you to be generous also in this service of love." Governance, ministry, bureaucracy, if they are anything at all, is a service of love. They all boil down to that.