

**MARY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH
IN THE YEAR OF THE ROSARY**

John Paul II

**ROSARY OFFERS CHRISTIAN RESPONSE
TO PROBLEM OF SUFFERING**

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**LUMINOUS MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY
IN TIME OF WAR**

Vicente Cajilig, OP

**OPERATIONAL DIRECTIVES ON NATURAL
FAMILY PLANNING (NFP) SERVICES THE
MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND LIFE OF THE
ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA**

Jaime Card. Sin, DD



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

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e-mail: eccpubli@ustcc.ust.edu.ph

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Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary in Time of War

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Since the release of His Holiness John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, many Catholic publishing houses have published new rosary guides with the luminous mysteries.

The Mysteries of Light highlight five significant moments from Jesus' infancy and hidden life in Nazareth to his public life, with the presence of Mary in the background.

Let us consider the mysteries at time of war.

First Luminous Mystery-The Baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan:

"And a voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" *Matthew 3:17*

When there is war, what happens? There are killings. Lives are wasted. Fear reigns. Chaos is inevitable. There are physical, psychological, moral and spiritual traumas. There is famine. The future is uncertain. And there are no real victors. Even the victors turn losers.

If such is the case, as it is the case at press time where this reflection is written, one wonders what possible realization presents to people praying these mysteries: In baptism we are made sons and daughters of God - children of God. But even those who keep other faith persuasions claim too, to be children of God. In Christ's baptism, the Father recognizes Jesus as "his beloved son." But by way of extension, the Father recognizes all who believe in Him as his children. We cannot but consider solidarity with all: victorious or not victorious.

Second Luminous Mystery-The Miracle at Cana, Christ Manifested:

"Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him." *John 2:11*

The event in Cana was a celebration. What happens when there is a celebration? There is joy. There is sharing. The best food is served. The guests wear the best clothes. In celebration, there is strengthening of relationship.

Nobody in the world today could truly celebrate. For there is war. There is enmity. • There is hatred. And people question the morality of war. They voice out, "No to War". While proponents of war list countries in favor of war, they do not mention the countries against war. And certainly those against war are 100% more than those who favor. Christ today cannot come to Cana. He cannot celebrate. He cannot manifest his glory. For the situation of war will never welcome celebration.

Third Luminous Mystery-The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God:

"Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: 'This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'" *Mark 1:15*

What comes after life on earth? What will happen to those who have died in war? After life on earth, comes glory. Or after life on earth comes condemnation. In death, the body will return to dust. But the spirit will transcend temporal existence. For those destined to glory, there will be liberation from temporal suffering. Those who are destined to the kingdom will see God face to face.

As war continues, there will always be a continuing threat to the kingdom of God that starts here on earth. There will always be threat to the children of the kingdom. In war, there is no light. War is threat to light. As war is a grave threat to life. Therefore at this moment, there is a repetition for a call for repentance. And all are invited to believe in the gospel of life.

Fourth Luminous Mystery-The Transfiguration of Jesus:

"And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light." *Matthew 17:2*

What is the difference between the events of war compared with transfiguration? In war, there is ugliness. Even the lights that come from the bomb explosions are morally ugly. In the phenomenon of transfiguration, there is a manifestation of glory. In war there is starvation. In transfiguration, there is satisfaction. In transfiguration, there is abundance of light. In transfiguration, there is the new figure of Christ - clad in glory.

Transfiguration bespeaks of fuller life. Even the three disciples were contented of what they see. They voice out, "It's good to be here." In war there is weariness. Transfiguration gives a message to weary soldiers of both warring factions. Transfiguration brings hope to the victims of war.

Fifth Luminous Mystery-The Institution of the Holy Eucharist:

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave *it to* them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.'" *Matthew 26:26*

How can the Eucharist be relevant amidst war? The Eucharist re-dramatizes the passion of Jesus. The phenomenon of war forces us to be more penitential. The whole world kneels at prayer. People of different persuasions light candles, undergo mortification and fasting: all dare to persuade leaders to stop war. The Eucharist brings the suffering memories of Jesus but points to the joy of resurrection.

All faithful are called to be in solidarity with the victims of war when we hope for and recall the grace flowing from the Eucharist. For the Eucharist announces new life. The Eucharist is our true wealth: *tanging yaman*. The brokenness of humanity, of all sons and daughters of the Kingdom who are one in sadness, who are vicariously in solidarity even with and in death, could rise up and see the new light of Easter.

Mary and the Mission of the Church in the Year of the Rosary*

JOHN PAUL II

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. From the beginning, I wished to place my pontificate under Mary's special protection. Further, I have often asked the entire community of believers to relive the experience of the Upper Room, where the disciples "*devoted themselves to prayer, together with ... Mary, the Mother of Jesus*" (Acts 1,14). Already in my first Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, I wrote that only in an atmosphere of fervent prayer are we able "to receive the Holy Spirit coming upon us and thus become Christ's witnesses 'to the ends of the earth', like those who went forth from the Upper Room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost" (n. 22).

The Church becomes more conscious that she is "mother" as Mary is. As I pointed out in the Bull *Incarnationis mysterium*, on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Church is "the cradle in which Mary places Jesus and entrusts him to

* Message of His Holiness John Paul II for the World Mission Sunday 2003.

the adoration and contemplation of all peoples" (n. 11). The Church intends to continue on this spiritual and missionary path, accompanied by the Blessed Virgin, Star of the New evangelization, radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps (cf. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 58).

Mary and the mission of the Church in the Year of the Rosary

2. Last October, when I entered the 25th year of my Petrine ministry, I announced a special Year, almost as a spiritual continuation of the Jubilee Year, to be dedicated to the rediscovery of the prayer of the Rosary, so dear to Christian tradition. It is a year to be lived under the gaze of the One who, in accord with God's mysterious plan, with her "yes", made possible humanity's salvation and who continues from Heaven to protect those who turn to her, especially during the difficult moments of their lives.

I would like the *Year of the Rosary* to be a favourable occasion for believers on all the continents to deepen the meaning of their Christian vocation. At the school of the Blessed Virgin and following her example, every community will be better able to have its own "contemplative" and "missionary" activity emerge.

If the World Mission Sunday, which takes place right at the end of the special Marian year, is well prepared, it will give a more generous thrust to this commitment of the ecclesial community. Confident recourse to Mary, with the daily recitation of the Rosary and the meditation of the mysteries of the life of Christ, will emphasize that the Church's mission must be sustained first of all by prayer. The attitude of "listening", which is prompted by praying the Rosary, brings the faithful close to Mary, who "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2,19). Frequent meditation on the Word of God forms us to live "in

living communion with Jesus through - we might say - the heart of his Mother" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 2).

*A more contemplative Church:
the face of Christ contemplated*

3. *Cum Maria contemplemur Christi vultum!* These words often come to mind: contemplate the "face" of Christ with Mary. When we speak of the "face" of Christ, we refer to his human likeness in which the eternal glory of the Father's only Son shines out (cf. Jn 1,14): "The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 21). Contemplating the face of Christ leads to a deeper, interior familiarity with his mystery. Contemplating Jesus with the eyes of faith impels one to penetrate the mystery of the Trinitarian God. Jesus says: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14, 9). With the Rosary we advance on this mystical journey "in union with, and at the school of, his Most Holy Mother" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 3). Indeed, Mary makes herself our teacher and our guide. Under the action of the Holy Spirit, she helps us acquire that "serene boldness" which enables believers to pass on to others their experience of Jesus and the hope that motivates them (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, n. 24).

Let us always look to Mary, an unequalled model. All the words of the Gospel find an extraordinary echo in her soul. Mary is the contemplative "memory" of the Church, who lives with the desire to be deeply united with her Bridegroom, in order to have an ever greater impact on our society. How do we react to the great problems, the innocent suffering, the injustices perpetrated with arrogant insolence? At the docile school of Mary, who is our Mother, believers learn to recognize in the apparent "silence of God" the Word who resounds in the silence for our salvation.

*A holier Church: the face of Christ
imitated and loved*

4. Through baptism all believers are called to holiness. In the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, the Second Vatican Council stresses that the universal vocation to holiness consists in the call of all to the perfection of charity.

Holiness and mission are inseparable aspects of the vocation of every baptized person. The commitment to become more holy is closely linked to that of spreading the message of salvation. In *Redemptoris missio* I recalled, "Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission" (n. 90). In contemplating the mysteries of the Rosary, the believer is encouraged to follow Christ and to share his life so that he can say with St Paul: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*" (Gal 2, 20).

If all the mysteries of the Rosary constitute an important school of holiness and evangelization, the *mysteries of light* bring into relief special aspects of our Gospel "*sequela*". The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan recalls that the baptized are chosen to become "sons in the Son" (Eph 1, 5; cf. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22). At the wedding feast of Cana, Mary invites the servants to listen obediently to the Word of the Lord: "*Do whatever he tells you*" (Jn 2, 5). The proclamation of the Kingdom and the invitation to conversion are a clear mandate to everyone to pursue the path of holiness. In the Transfiguration of Jesus, the baptized person experiences the joy that awaits him. In meditating upon the institution of the Eucharist, he returns often to the Upper Room, where the divine Master left his disciples his most precious treasure: himself in the Sacrament of the altar.

In a certain sense it is the words that the Blessed Virgin pronounces at Cana that form the Marian background for all the mysteries of light. Indeed, the proclamation of the Kingdom at

hand, the call to conversion and mercy, the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and the institution of the Eucharist find a special echo in Mary's heart. Mary keeps her eyes fixed on Christ, treasures his every word and shows us how to be genuine disciples of her Son.

*A more missionary Church:
the Face of Christ proclaimed*

5. At no other time has the Church had so many possibilities of proclaiming Jesus, thanks to the development of the means of social communication. For this reason, the Church today is called to make the Face of her Bridegroom shine forth with her more radiant holiness. In this far from easy effort, she knows she is sustained by Mary. From Mary she "learns" to be a "virgin", totally dedicated to her Spouse, Jesus Christ, and a "mother" of many children whom she brings forth to eternal life.

Under the watchful gaze of her Mother, the ecclesial community flourishes like a family revived by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit, and, accepting the challenges of the new evangelization, contemplates the merciful face of Jesus in the brothers and sisters, especially the poor and needy, in those far from the faith and the Gospel. In particular, the Church is not afraid to cry to the world that Christ is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn 14, 6). She is not afraid to proclaim joyfully that "good news, which has as its heart and its whole content the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the one Saviour of the world" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 20).

It is necessary to prepare capable and holy evangelizers. The fervour of the apostles must not be allowed to weaken, especially in regard to the mission *ad gentes*. The Rosary, if it is fully rediscovered and appreciated, is an ordinary yet fruitful pedagogical and spiritual tool to form the People of God to work in the vast field of apostolic action.

A precise mandate

6. The task of missionary animation must continue to be a serious, consistent duty of every baptized person and of every ecclesial community. The Pontifical Missionary Societies, of course, have a specific and particular role and I thank them for generously carrying it out.

I would like to suggest to all of you that you intensify your praying of the Rosary, privately and in community, to obtain from the Lord those graces that the Church and humanity especially need. I invite everyone to do this: children, adults, young and old, families, parishes and religious communities.

Among the many intentions, I would not wish to forget that of peace. War and injustice have their origins in the "divided" heart. "Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ - and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary - learns the secret of peace and makes it his life's project" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 40). If the Rosary keeps pace with the speed of our lives, it can become a privileged instrument for building peace in the hearts of persons, in families and among peoples. With Mary, we can obtain everything from her Son Jesus. Supported by Mary, we will not hesitate to devote ourselves generously to taking the proclamation of the Good News to the ends of the earth.

With these sentiments, I cordially bless all of you.

From the Vatican, 12 January 2003, Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Rosary Offers Christian Response to Problem of Suffering*

JOHN PAUL II

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I meet you with great joy, as I do every year, at the end of this celebration dedicated especially to you, dear sick people.

My first greeting is for you, the primary participants of today's World Day of the Sick. I greet all who are close to you, relatives, friends and volunteers, and the members of the Italian National Union for Transporting the Sick to Shrines (UNITALSI). I greet the Cardinal Vicar, and the bishops and priests present, the men and women religious and those who in various ways place themselves at the service of the sick and the suffering.

I also greet the members of the "Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi" (the Roman Work for Pilgrimages to Lourdes), and those who take part in the national theological-pastoral convention held in Rome on the theme: *"the Pilgrimage, Path of Peace"*. This

"Address of John Paul II to Sick Persons on the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, Tuesday, 11 February 2003.

reminds me of the Holy Land. I express the hope and the prayer that as soon as possible those places sanctified by Christ's presence may recover a stable peace that will allow the return of the groups of pilgrims.

2. Today we celebrate the 11th World Day of the Sick, placed *under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin Mary*. In a little while, the hymns and prayers will take us in spirit to Lourdes, a place blessed by God and dear to you. At the same time, we join the faithful who have thronged the National Shrine in *Washington*, also dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin, where this year the principal celebrations of the World Day of the Sick take place.

As we look to the revered image of Our Lady of Lourdes, our eyes are drawn to the *Rosary* that hangs from her joined hands. The Virgin in prayer seems to want *to renew her invitation* to young Bernadette *to recite the Rosary confidently*. With great joy we accept this exhortation on the World Day of the Sick, an important date in the Year of the Rosary! Today Lourdes, Rome and Washington form a providential "crossroads" in a concerted invocation to the God of life that he instill confidence, comfort and hope in those who are suffering all over the world.

3. Dear sick people, *the Rosary offers the Christian response to the problem of suffering*, drawing it from the Easter mystery of Christ. Those who pray follow, with Mary, the whole itinerary of life and faith, an itinerary that has as an integral part human suffering, that in Christ becomes divine - human suffering, the saving Passion.

In the sorrowful mysteries we contemplate Christ who takes upon himself, we can say, all the "sickness" of the human person and of the human race. As the Lamb of God, he not only bears the burden of their consequences, but of their profound cause,

that is, not just *the evils*, but the *radical evil of sin*. His struggle is not superficial but radical; his cure is not palliative but definitive.

The power through which Christ overcame the dominion of evil and healed the human person is his *confident abandonment* in an attitude of filial submission to the Father's will. This same attitude operates in us, thanks to the Holy Spirit, when, in the experience of sickness, we travel with Mary the way of the sorrowful mysteries.

4. Dear Brothers and Sisters, the heart of the Virgin Mary that was pierced by the sword teaches us to "learn Christ", to be conformed to him and to pray to him (cf. Apostolic Letter *On the Most Holy Rosary*, nn. 13-16). She guides us to proclaim his love (cf. *ibid.*, n. 17); those who carry the cross with Jesus also offer an eloquent witness to those who are unable to believe or to hope.

In this year, troubled by such great anxiety for the future of humanity, I wished the prayer of the Rosary to have as specific intentions the cause of *peace* and of the *family* (*ibid.*, nn. 6; 40-42).

Dear sick brothers and sisters, you are "on the front line" to intercede for these two great designs. May your life, marked by trial, instill in everyone that hope and serenity which can only be experienced in meeting Christ. Let us entrust this hope and all our special intentions to Mary Immaculate, Health of the Sick.

To you who are here, and to your loved ones, I affectionately impart my Apostolic Blessing.

The Holy Father gave his blessing from his study window to the candlelight procession in St Peter's Square

I warmly thank you for this candlelight procession. Let us remember all the sick across the world. Let us join Our Lady of Lourdes and the sick people who are in Lourdes. Let us also join those in Washington, where this year the World Day of the Sick is being celebrated.

Conclusions of the Pastoral Theological Congress

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY

(Fourth World Meeting of Families Manila, 24 January 2003)

Gathered in Manila to celebrate the Fourth World Meeting of Families, we, the participants the Pastoral Theological Congress preceding the Meeting, first salute our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, the Pope of the Family, who presided over the previous Meetings in Rome and de Janeiro.

He has sent another world leader in the struggle for the family, Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, as his personal Legate to this World Meeting.

We celebrate the Christian family as "Good News for the Third Millennium", but where can we find "good news" in the early years of this new Millennium? Confronted by threats of terrorism, war, famine and economic uncertainty, many people live in fear. This fear is often felt in families, but it is here, within the family itself, that we can find the "good news" of a love overcomes fear and brings hope to the world.

We affirm that the Christian family itself is a great bearer of the Good News of Jesus Christ this Millennium. It is truly an agent of Evangelization (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 52). Moreover, more than just simply an object of the Church's pastoral care, the Christian family is also one of the Church's *most effective* agents of Evangelization (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 46).

The hope of Christ can offer a vision for the future as it shines through the family in specific areas.

1. *Good news for life*

As the sanctuary of life, the family says "yes" to life. Every person and every family through which life passes (cf. *Ecclesia in Asia*, 46) are simply stewards of life and have the responsibility to protect and promote it from the beginning to the end. In the family those lives are threatened find comfort, security and loving care. Thus families are witnesses of and missionaries of love and life (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 54).

Once again, we affirm the inalienable right to life of all human beings. We call on all politicians to defend human life from its beginning at conception until natural death. We call on legislators in particular to respond positively to the recent *Note* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith on their responsibilities as Christians and citizens. *Anti-life practices such as abortion, embryo experimentation, cloning and euthanasia cannot be tolerated in any free pro-family society.*

2. *Good news for society*

A just society depends on the well-being of its basic community, its vital living cell, the family. However, grave ethical and social problems afflict many families today. Our major concerns are:

- families divided and weakened when members are forced to emigrate for work;
- the plague of divorce;
- the promotion of same sex 'marriages', undermining the family based on marriage between a man and a woman;
- widespread "de facto" unions;
- an anti-family feminist ideology;
- negative effects of globalization, particularly in developing countries;
- drug and alcohol abuse;
- the spread of AIDS and the resurgence of other diseases.

The vision of a pro-family society challenges families themselves to take the initiative, to struggle for social policies and legislation that promote and protect the rights of the family, a just distribution of resources and support for the most vulnerable and helpless.

3. *Good news for the poor*

We affirm our solidarity with poor families. So often it is poor families who reveal the incredible resilience and energies of the family facing challenges (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 43).

Educating to responsible parenthood, with the support of adequate economic and legislative measures, makes an effective contribution to the flight against poverty, which too often is demeaning. We firmly reject the practice of population control, whether exercised by international, government or private agencies. Poor families bear the brunt of population programs and policies, which absorb vast sums of money in promoting abortion, sterilization and contraception.

We call on governments to focus on concrete policies that favour poor families in terms of health, education, agrarian reform, employment and housing.

We propose as an *authentic alternative to a birth control that does not correspond to the about man and woman the natural regulation of fertility*, which not only helps couples space births in a morally sound and healthy way, but brings husband and wife together in mutual sharing and equality.

4. *Good news for youth*

Children and young people have come together to celebrate and deepen their faith in a Sons Daughters Congress, running parallel to this Theological-Pastoral Congress. With joy we recognize their vital role as integral members of our families and active members of the Church.

We reaffirm the rights and dignity of all children. They should never be neglected and abandoned on the streets. They should be protected, especially when threatened by exploitation through prostitution, pornography, child-labor, drug trafficking, homosexual adoption and immoral "sex education". A new threat to children is posed by the misuse of the Internet, when this intrudes into family life and undermines the rights and duties of parents.

Children are the "crown of marriage", the real wealth of humanity. The natural place for their education is the family. It is here, in the community of life and love, that they are formed as members of Christ's Church. It is here that, honoring and loving their parents, they can enrich the lives of all members of the wider family.

5. *Good news for the world*

Bearing the good news of Jesus Christ, the Christian family reaches out to all peoples. It is the place "where the truth of the Gospel is the rule of life and the gift which family members to the wider community" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 46).

The family carries out its mission in many different cultures around the earth, but the future humanity always passes through the family. Therefore, we call for more creative strategies for Evangelization, especially amidst rapid cultural changes. We underline the need to respect cultures of indigenous peoples whose family values often prepare the way for the word of God. Each domestic church is a citadel of faith, not only in secularized societies, but also in countries where Christians still suffer for their faith. We express our solidarity with persecuted families where religious freedom is ignored or violated by violence and discrimination.

The family is called to be a community of peace. We express our solidarity with families in nations and regions that are threatened by war, where families face the prospect of becoming innocent victims of conflict.

6. *Good news for the Church*

As the smallest Christian community, the "domestic church" is the living cell of the whole Church, offering a vision for Evangelization and spiritual growth within the Church.

We call on all responsible for pastoral planning to make the family their priority, to shape the pastoral vision and plan of each diocese and parish around the family. The family emerges, not merely as a passive subject of Evangelization and care, but as *an active subject, indeed an agent*, in the mission of Christ in his Church.

The family needs to recover the sense of being a "mystery". A deeper spirituality of the family is derived from the Word of God and the Holy Eucharist. Nourished by the Word, families are drawn into the Paschal Mystery of Christ's sacrifice and banquet. Here the self-giving love of Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Church, motivates nuptial and family love.

We recognize and welcome the role played by the new religious movements, characterized their commitment to the family. Ablaze with the power of the Holy Spirit, with their distinctive spiritualities, the movements can show us how to evangelize in and through the family.

The Catholic family reaches out to other Christians and members of other religions. The unity of the family can inspire the ecumenical journey of Christian unity and inter-religious dialogue. *We affirm the need for more practical cooperation between Christians and people of good will to meet challenges faced by all families.* We have been honored by the presence of representatives of other Churches and ecclesial communions who took part in this World Meeting, sharing with us the same vision of the Christian family as the bearer of good news.

Finally we thank the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, for his leadership and encouragement. We thank the Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Jaime Sin, who has welcomed everyone here, and Pontifical Council for the Family and the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines for organizing this World Meeting.

By living in unity and through self-giving love, Christian families reflect God, the Most Holy Trinity. It was in a family that the Son took flesh in our world, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Contemplating this mystery, we confidently entrust all our families to the gentle protection of Mary, Queen of the Family and Saint Joseph her spouse. We pray that the Good News of Christ, which Christian families spread by witness and word, may drive away fear and bring hope to this world.

Operational Directives on Natural Family Planning (NFP) Services the Ministry of Family and Life of the Archdiocese of Manila

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

Circular No. 2002-52

Introduction

The issues surrounding family planning and reproductive health continue to draw the attention of concerned Catholic faithful in the Archdiocese of Manila, especially since the national government is currently engaged in initiatives towards cooperation with churches and organizations teaching natural family planning (NFP).

Recent data show that artificial and permanent methods of avoiding pregnancy have made an impact on our psyche and way of life. Very few married couples apply the principles and methods of NFP. Hence this situation of high prevalence of contraceptive use, sterilizations and abortions in the country which is regarded as a shining beacon of Christianity in Asia.

Despite the distressing outlook, a great many Filipino couples desire a lifestyle based on a positive view of their sexuality and procreative responsibility. NFP which agrees with these couples' own values, would have been chosen where there is a supportive and nurturing environment.

Doctrinal Basis

Responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their (parents') functions; human intellect discovers in the power of giving life biological laws which are part of the human person. (It) means that necessary dominion which reason and will must exercise over (the tendencies of instinct or passion). (It is) the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect to the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even an indeterminate period, a new birth. (It) also and above all, implies a more profound relationship to the objective moral order established by God... The responsible exercise of parenthood implies... that husband and wife recognize fully their own duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards society, in correct hierarchy of values.

*God has wisely disposed natural laws and rhythms of fecundity which themselves cause a separation of births... (The) Church, calling men back to the observance of the norms of the natural law, as interpreted by her constant doctrine, teaches that **each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life.***

*That teaching is founded on the inseparable connection willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative between the two meanings of the conjugal act, **the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.** Indeed by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting*

husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and woman.

Humanae Vitae 10-12

Catholic Response

The Church, faithful to her teachings, should call on the responsibility of all concerned to help present the notion of responsible parenthood as contained in Gaudium et Spes, Humane Vitae and Familiaris Consortio. In this sense, a broader, more decisive and more systematic effort should be taken to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected and applied.

Section 2, Article 29

Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

Recognition, Appreciation and Acceptance of One's Fertility

The practice of NFP to recognize, appreciate and accept one's fertility touches a very intimate aspect in the life of a couple, their marital relationship and awareness of their combined fertility. It is not just a method to achieve or postpone pregnancy. It implies a specific lifestyle and ethical behavior which requires spousal responsibility and is based on an unconditional respect for the dignity and sexuality of the person in God's plan, the true nature of marriage and the fundamental value of life.

We affirm Church understanding of NFP as a couple's way of deciding responsibly the best time to have a child, provided the reasons are justified and the means are moral and based on the observation of fertility signs.

Natural Family planning (NFP) Methods

Since the 1930's when the rhythm method was introduced, rapid changes in scientific research on a women's fertility have paved the way for modern, scientific, safe, effective and moral methods of NFP. Fertility based methods are the Basal Body Temperature, the Billings Ovulation and the Sympto-thermal Methods.

These methods using physical indicators of fertility have been thoroughly tested and are used by couples in many countries in the world over. The Lactational Amenorrhea Method, while not fertility-based, is also regarded as a NFP method and used for postponing pregnancy by breastfeeding mothers in the sixth months *postpartum*.

NFP methods go a step beyond biology, relying instead on spousal relationship and decision-making. Spouses learn to regard their fertility on a couple basis. Thus the NFP trademark *of being one of modern science's healthiest achievements*. (International Natural Family Planning Directory, National Conference of Catholic Bishops 2000, Washington D.C.)

We concur with the "World Health Organization's definition of NFP as *an educational process of determining the fertile and infertile periods of a woman by observing physiologic signs... of the menstrual cycle so that intercourse may be timed to avoid or achieve pregnancy*. This would, therefore, exclude any method that purportedly assigns a woman's specific and infertile days on any means other than the primary body signs of the woman herself.

Guidelines

In view of the benefits of NFP on the couple's health and well-being and in the achievement of sexual mastery, we set these guidelines:

1. That NFP be part of marriage preparation courses in parishes, as well as a regular service program of parishes and Catholic hospitals, for employees of schools and those of other institutions.
2. That only NFP be made available to couples and instructors knowledgeable in all modern NFP methods and proficient in teaching at least one. Instructors must follow the NFP service guidelines.
3. That those who will handle the Responsible Catholic Parenthood Program, or any of its aspects, be given training and periodic update on doctrinal, relational, biological, and technological elements of NFP.
4. That the program approved by His eminence be implemented by the parish priest and the Parish Pastoral Council and supervised by the Family and Life Ministry, or the Health Care Ministry in coordination with the Family and Life Ministry.
5. That sustained financial support be provided by the parish priest and the Parish Pastoral Council. This support may be given or augmented by individuals, government or non-government organizations only if the intention and values of such benefactor-agencies are not in conflict with the values and principles of the Family and Life Ministry.
6. This NFP program is a Catholic Program for responsible parenthood, not for population control.
 - We are open to network with NFP government or non-government organizations, other Church-based or non-church-based agencies provided they agree with existing NFP definition and service guidelines;

- For networking an accreditation from the Ministry on Family and Life of the Archdiocese of Manila is necessary;
- Our clergy, seminarians and other pastoral workers must be provided formation on NFP philosophy and service guidelines to prepare them for their pastoral ministry for couples. (*The Pontifical Council on the Family: Directives on the Formation of Seminarians concerning problems related to Marriage and the Family, 1995*)

With these statements formulated by family life workers and NFP service-providers, we hope that with the blessings of God and the guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Manila will help the family realize its role of being "Good News" for the Third Millennium.

Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

*The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having received the opinion of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has decided that it would be appropriate to publish the present **Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life**. This Note is directed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church and, in a particular way, to Catholic politicians and all lay members of the faithful called to participate in the political life of democratic societies.*

I. A constant teaching

1. The commitment of Christians in the world has found a variety of expressions in the course of the past 2000 years. One such expression has been Christian involvement in political life: Christians, as one Early Church writer stated, "play their full role as citizens".¹ Among the saints, the Church venerates many men and women who served God through their generous commitment to politics and government. Among these, Saint Thomas

¹ *Letter to Diognetus*, 5,5; Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2240.

More, who was proclaimed Patron of Statesmen and Politicians, gave witness by his martyrdom to "the inalienable dignity of the human conscience".² Though subjected to various forms of psychological pressure, Saint Thomas More refused to compromise, never forsaking the "constant fidelity to legitimate authority and institutions" which distinguished him; he taught by his life and his death that "man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality".³

It is commendable that in today's democratic societies, in a climate of true freedom, everyone is made a participant in directing the body politic.⁴ Such societies call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good.⁵ The life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone, "albeit in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks, and responsibilities".⁶

² John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Proclaiming Saint Thomas More Patron of Statesmen and Politicians*, 1: AAS 93 (2001), 76.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 31; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1915.

⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75.

⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles laici*, 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472. The present doctrinal *Note* refers to the involvement in political life of lay members of the faithful. The Bishops of the Church have the right and the duty to set out the moral principles relating to the social order; "Nevertheless active participation in political parties is reserved to the lay faithful" (*ibid.*, 60). Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests* (March 31, 1994), 33.

By fulfilling their civic duties, "guided by a Christian conscience",⁷ in conformity with its values, the lay faithful exercise their proper task of infusing the temporal order with Christian values, all the while respecting the nature and rightful autonomy of that order,⁸ and cooperating with other citizens according to their particular competence and responsibility.⁹ The consequence of this fundamental teaching of the Second Vatican Council is that "the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in 'public life', that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good".¹⁰ This would include the promotion and defense of goods such as public order and peace, freedom and equality, respect for human life and for the environment, justice and solidarity.

The present *Note* does not seek to set out the entire teaching of the Church on this matter, which is summarized in its essentials in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but intends only to recall some principles proper to the Christian conscience, which inspire the social and political involvement of Catholics in democratic

⁷ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 76.

⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 36.

⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 7; Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 36; Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 31 and 43.

¹⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 42.

societies." The emergence of ambiguities or questionable positions in recent times, often because of the pressure of world events, has made it necessary to clarify some important elements of Church teaching in this area.

//. Central points in the current cultural and political debate

2. Civil society today is undergoing a complex cultural process as the end of an era brings with it a time of uncertainty in the face of something new. The great strides made in our time give evidence of humanity's progress in attaining conditions of life which are more in keeping with human dignity. The growth in the sense of responsibility towards countries still on the path of development is without doubt an important sign, illustrative of a greater sensitivity to the common good. At the same time, however, one cannot close one's eyes to the real dangers which certain tendencies in society are promoting through legislation, nor can one ignore the effects this will have on future generations.

A kind of cultural relativism exists today, evident in the conceptualization and defense of an ethical pluralism, which

" In the last two centuries, the Papal Magisterium has spoken on the principal questions regarding the social and political order. Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Diuturnum* *Mud*: ASS 14 (1881-1882), 4 ff; Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*: ASS 18 (1885-1886), 162ff; Encyclical Letter *Libertas prcestantissimum*: ASS 20 (1887-1888), 593ff; Encyclical Letter *Rerum novarum*: ASS 23 (1890-1891), 643ff; Benedict XV, Encyclical Letter *Pacem Dei munus pulcherrimum*: AAS 12 (1920), 209ff; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo anno*: AAS 23 (1931), 190ff; Encyclical Letter *Mil brennender Sorge*: AAS 29 (1937), 145-167.; Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 29 (1937), 78ff; Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Summi Pontificatus*: AAS 31 (1939), 423ff; *Radiomessaggi natalizi 1941-1944*; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), 401-464; Encyclical Letter *Pacem in terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 257-304; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*: AAS 59 (1967), 257-299; Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens*: AAS 63 (1971), 401-441.

sanctions the decadence and disintegration of reason and the principles of the natural moral law. Furthermore, it is not unusual to hear the opinion expressed in the public sphere that such ethical pluralism is the very condition for democracy.¹² As a result, citizens claim complete autonomy with regard to their moral choices, and lawmakers maintain that they are respecting this freedom of choice by enacting laws which ignore the principles of natural ethics and yield to ephemeral cultural and moral trends,¹³ as if every possible outlook on life were of equal value. At the same time, the value of tolerance is disingenuously invoked when a large number of citizens, Catholics among them, are asked not to base their contribution to society and political life - through the legitimate means available to everyone in a democracy - on their particular understanding of the human person and the common good. The history of the twentieth century demonstrates that those citizens were right who recognized the falsehood of relativism, and with it, the notion that there is no moral law rooted in the nature of the human person, which must govern our understanding of man, the common good and the state.

3. Such relativism, of course, has nothing to do with the legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose among the various political opinions that are compatible with faith and the natural moral law, and to select, according to their own criteria, what best corresponds to the needs of the common good. Political freedom is not - and cannot be - based upon the relativistic idea that all conceptions of the human person's good have the same

¹² Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, 46: AAS 83 (1991); Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, 101: AAS 85 (1993), 1212-1213; *Discourse to the Italian Parliament*, 5: *L'Osservatore Romano* (November 15, 2002).

¹³ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, 22: AAS 87 (1995), 425-426.

value and truth, but rather, on the fact that politics are concerned with very concrete realizations of the true human and social good in given historical, geographic, economic, technological and cultural contexts. From the specificity of the task at hand and the variety of circumstances, a plurality of morally acceptable policies and solutions arises. It is not the Church's task to set forth specific political solutions - and even less to propose a single solution as the acceptable one - to temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church's right and duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or the moral law.¹⁴ If Christians must "recognize the legitimacy of differing points of view about the organization of worldly affairs",¹⁵ they are also called to reject, as injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism. Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are the underpinning of life in society.

On the level of concrete political action, there can generally be a plurality of political parties in which Catholics may exercise - especially through legislative assemblies - their right and duty to contribute to the public life of their country.¹⁶ This arises because of the contingent nature of certain choices regarding the ordering of society, the variety of strategies available for accomplishing or guaranteeing the same fundamental value, the possibility of different interpretations of the basic principles of political theory, and the technical complexity of many political

¹⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 76.

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75.

¹⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 43 and 75.

problems. It should not be confused, however, with an ambiguous pluralism in the choice of moral principles or essential values. The legitimate plurality of temporal options is at the origin of the commitment of Catholics to politics and relates directly to Christian moral and social teaching. It is in the light of this teaching that lay Catholics must assess their participation in political life so as to be sure that it is marked by a coherent responsibility for temporal reality.

The Church recognizes that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in political choices, it succeeds only to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human *person*.¹⁷ Catholic involvement in political life cannot compromise on this principle, for otherwise the witness of the Christian faith in the world, as well as the unity and interior coherence of the faithful, would be non-existent. The democratic structures on which the modern state is based would be quite fragile were its foundation not the centrality of the human person. It is respect for the person that makes democratic participation possible. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the protection of "the rights of the person is, indeed, a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration".¹⁸

4. The complex array of today's problems branches out from here, including some never faced by past generations. Scientific progress has resulted in advances that are unsettling for the consciences of men and women and call for solutions that respect ethical principles in a coherent and fundamental way. At the same time, legislative proposals are put forward which, heedless of the

¹⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 25.

¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 73.

consequences for the existence and future of human beings with regard to the formation of culture and social behavior, attack the very inviolability of human life. Catholics, in this difficult situation, have the right and the duty to recall society to a deeper understanding of human life and to the responsibility of everyone in this regard. John Paul II, continuing the constant teaching of the Church, has reiterated many times that those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a "*grave and clear obligation to oppose* " any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them.¹⁹ As John Paul II has taught in his Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* regarding the situation in which it is not possible to overturn or completely repeal a law allowing abortion which is already in force or coming up for a vote, "an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at *limiting the harm* done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality".²⁰

In this context, it must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual, law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good. Nor can a Catholic think of delegating his Christian responsibility to others; rather, the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives him this task, so that the truth about man and the world might be proclaimed and put into action.

¹⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, 73

²⁰ *Ibid.*

When political activity comes up against moral principles that do not admit of exception, compromise or derogation, the Catholic commitment becomes more evident and laden with responsibility. In the face of *fundamental and inalienable ethical demands*, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person. This is the case with laws concerning abortion and euthanasia (not to be confused with the decision to forgo *extraordinary treatments*, which is morally legitimate). Such laws must defend the basic right to life from conception to natural death. In the same way, it is necessary to recall the duty to respect and protect the rights of the *human embryo*. Analogously, the *family* needs to be safeguarded and promoted, based on monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, and protected in its unity and stability in the face of modern laws on divorce: in no way can other forms of cohabitation be placed on the same level as marriage, nor can they receive legal recognition as such. The same is true for the freedom of parents regarding the *education* of their children; it is an inalienable right recognized also by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In the same way, one must consider *society's protection of minors* and freedom from *modern forms of slavery* (drug abuse and prostitution, for example). In addition, there is the right to *religious freedom* and the development of an *economy* that is at the service of the human person and of the common good, with respect for social justice, the principles of human solidarity and subsidiarity, according to which "the rights of all individuals, families, and organizations and their practical implementation must be acknowledged".²¹ Finally, the question of *peace* must be mentioned. Certain pacifistic and ideological visions tend at times to secularize the

²¹ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75.

value of peace, while, in other cases, there is the problem of summary ethical judgments which forget the complexity of the issues involved. Peace is always "the work of justice and the effect of charity".²² It demands the absolute and radical rejection of violence and terrorism and requires a constant and vigilant commitment on the part of all political leaders.

///. Principles of Catholic doctrine on the autonomy of the temporal order and on pluralism.

5. While a plurality of methodologies reflective of different sensibilities and cultures can be legitimate in approaching such questions, no Catholic can appeal to the principle of pluralism or to the autonomy of lay involvement in political life to support policies affecting the common good which compromise or undermine fundamental ethical requirements. This is not a question of "confessional values" *per se*, because such ethical precepts are rooted in human nature itself and belong to the natural moral law. They do not require from those who defend them the profession of the Christian faith, although the Church's teaching confirms and defends them always and everywhere as part of her service to the truth about man and about the common good of civil society. Moreover, it cannot be denied that politics must refer to principles of absolute value precisely because these are at the service of the dignity of the human person and of true human progress.

6. The appeal often made to "*the rightful autonomy of the participation of lay Catholics*" in politics needs to be clarified. Promoting the common good of society, according to one's conscience, has nothing to do with "confessionalism" or religious

Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2304.

intolerance. For Catholic moral doctrine, the rightful autonomy of the political or civil sphere from that of religion and the Church - *but not from that of morality* - is a value that has been attained and recognized by the Catholic Church and belongs to inheritance of contemporary civilization.²³ John Paul II has warned many times of the dangers which follow from confusion between the religious and political spheres. "Extremely sensitive situations arise when a specifically religious norm becomes or tends to become the law of a state without due consideration for the distinction between the domains proper to religion and to political society. In practice, the identification of religious law with civil law can stifle religious freedom, even going so far as to restrict or deny other inalienable human rights".²⁴ All the faithful are well aware that specifically religious activities (such as the profession of faith, worship, administration of sacraments, theological doctrines, interchange between religious authorities and the members of religions) are outside the state's responsibility. The state must not interfere, nor in any way require or prohibit these activities, except when it is a question of public order. The recognition of civil and political rights, as well as the allocation of public services may not be made dependent upon citizens'-religious convictions or activities.

The right and duty of Catholics and all citizens to seek the truth with sincerity and to promote and defend, by legitimate means, moral truths concerning society, justice, freedom, respect for human life and the other rights of the person, is something quite different. The fact that some of these truths may also be taught by the Church does not lessen the political legitimacy or

²³ Cf. **Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes***, 76.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Message for the 1991 World Day of Peace: "If you want peace, respect the conscience of every person"*, 4: AAS 83 (1991), 414-415.

the rightful "autonomy" of the contribution of those citizens who are committed to them, irrespective of the role that reasoned inquiry or confirmation by the Christian faith may have played in recognizing such truths. Such "autonomy" refers first of all to the attitude of the person who respects the truths that derive from natural knowledge regarding man's life in society, even if such truths may also be taught by a specific religion, because truth is one. It would be a mistake to confuse the proper autonomy exercised by Catholics in political life with the claim of a principle that prescind from the moral and social teaching of the Church.

By its interventions in this area, the Church's Magisterium does not wish to exercise political power or eliminate the freedom of opinion of Catholics regarding contingent questions. Instead, it intends - as is its proper function - to instruct and illuminate the consciences of the faithful, particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good. The social doctrine of the Church is not an intrusion into the government of individual countries. It is a question of the lay Catholic's duty to be morally coherent, found within one's conscience, which is one and indivisible. "There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called 'spiritual life', with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called 'secular' life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social responsibilities, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted to the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. In fact, every area of the lay faithful's lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God, who desires that these very areas be the 'places in time' where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility - as, for example, skill and solidarity in work, love

and dedication in the family and the education of children, service to society and public life and the promotion of truth in the area of culture - are the occasions ordained by providence for a 'continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity' (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 4)".²⁵ Living and acting in conformity with one's own conscience on questions of politics is not slavish acceptance of positions alien to politics or some kind of confessionalism, but rather the way in which Christians offer their concrete contribution so that, through political life, society will become more just and more consistent with the dignity of the human person.

In democratic societies, all proposals are freely discussed and examined. Those who, on the basis of respect for individual conscience, would view the moral duty of Christians to act according to their conscience as something that disqualifies them from political life, denying the legitimacy of their political involvement following from their convictions about the common good, would be guilty of a form of intolerant *secularism*. Such a position would seek to deny not only any engagement of Christianity in public or political life, but even the possibility of natural ethics itself. Were this the case, the road would be open to moral anarchy, which would be anything but legitimate pluralism. The oppression of the weak by the strong would be the obvious consequence. The marginalization of Christianity, moreover, would not bode well for the future of society or for consensus among peoples; indeed, it would threaten the very spiritual and cultural foundations of civilization.²⁶

²⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 59.

²⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: L'Osservatore Romano* (January 11, 2002).

IV. Considerations regarding particular aspects

7. In recent years, there have been cases within some organizations founded on Catholic principles, in which support has been given to political forces or movements with positions contrary to the moral and social teaching of the Church on fundamental ethical questions. Such activities, in contradiction to basic principles of Christian conscience, are not compatible with membership in organizations or associations which define themselves as Catholic. Similarly, some Catholic periodicals in certain countries have expressed perspectives on political choices that have been ambiguous or incorrect, by misinterpreting the idea of the political autonomy enjoyed by Catholics and by not taking into consideration the principles mentioned above.

Faith in Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6), calls Christians to exert a greater effort in building a culture which, inspired by the Gospel, will reclaim the values and contents of the Catholic Tradition. The presentation of the fruits of the spiritual, intellectual and moral heritage of Catholicism in terms understandable to modern culture is a task of great urgency today, in order to avoid also a kind of Catholic cultural diaspora. Furthermore, the cultural achievements and mature experience of Catholics in political life in various countries, especially since the Second World War, do not permit any kind of 'inferiority complex' in comparison with political programs which recent history has revealed to be weak or totally ruinous. It is insufficient and reductive to think that the commitment of Catholics in society can be limited to a simple transformation of structures, because if at the basic level there is no culture capable of receiving, justifying and putting into practice positions deriving from faith and morals, the changes will always rest on a weak foundation.

Christian faith has never presumed to impose a rigid framework on social and political questions, conscious that the historical dimension requires men and women to live in imperfect situations, which are also susceptible to rapid change. For this reason, Christians must reject political positions and activities inspired by a Utopian perspective which, turning the tradition of Biblical faith into a kind of prophetic vision without God, makes ill use of religion by directing consciences towards a hope which is merely earthly and which empties or reinterprets the Christian striving towards eternal life.

At the same time, the Church teaches that authentic freedom does not exist without the truth. "Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery".²⁷ In a society in which truth is neither mentioned nor sought, every form of authentic exercise of freedom will be weakened, opening the way to libertine and individualistic distortions and undermining the protection of the good of the human person and of the entire society.

8. In this regard, it is helpful to recall a truth which today is often not perceived or formulated correctly in public opinion: the right to freedom of conscience and, in a special way, to religious freedom, taught in the Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* of the Second Vatican Council, is based on the ontological dignity of the human person and not on a non-existent equality among

John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 90: AAS 91 (1999), 75.

religions or cultural systems of human creation.²⁸ Reflecting on this question, Paul VI taught that "in no way does the Council base this right to religious freedom on the fact that all religions and all teachings, including those that are erroneous, would have more or less equal value; it is based rather on the dignity of the human person, which demands that he not be subjected to external limitations which tend to constrain the conscience in its search for the true religion or in adhering to it".²⁹ The teaching on freedom of conscience and on religious freedom does not therefore contradict the condemnation of indifferentism and religious relativism by Catholic doctrine;³⁰ on the contrary, it is fully in accord with it.

V. Conclusion

9. The principles contained in the present *Note* are intended to shed light on one of the most important aspects of the unity of Christian life: coherence between faith and life, Gospel and culture, as recalled by the Second Vatican Council. The Council

²⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*, 1: "This Sacred Council begins by professing that God himself has made known to the human race how men by serving him can be saved and reach the state of the blessed. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church". This does not lessen the sincere respect that the Church has for the various religious traditions, recognizing in them "elements of truth and goodness". See also, Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 16; Decree *Ad gentes*, 11; Declaration *Nostra aetate*, 2; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55: AAS 83 (1991), 302-304; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 2, 8, 21: AAS 92 (2000), 742-765.

²⁹ Paul VI, *Address to the Sacred College and to the Roman Prelature*: in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 14 (1976), 1088-1089.

³⁰ Cf. Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Quanta cura*: ASS 3 (1867), 162; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*: ASS 18 (1885), 170-171; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quas primas*: AAS 17 (1925), 604-605; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2108; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 22.

exhorted Christians "to fulfill their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfill these responsibilities according to the vocation of each... May Christians...be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God".³¹

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of November 21, 2002, approved the present Note, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 24, 2002, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

+ Joseph Card. RATZINGER
Prefect

+ Tarcisio BERTONE, S.D.B.
Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli
Secretary

³¹ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 43; see also John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 59.

Pastoral Care of Victims and Offenders: Handling Cases of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct by the Clergy

**CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON CLERGY**

Introduction

I. A Call to Repentance, Conversion, and Renewal

Par. I. In recent months, reports of sexual abuse and misconduct committed by some members of the clergy have shaken the Catholic Church worldwide, even in the Philippines. In the terminology of the Church, *clergy or cleric* refers to those who, by the reception of Holy Orders, have been mandated to perform public and official ministry within and in the name of the Church. They are the deacons, priests and bishops. Because of their role in the Church and society, any accusation of sexual misconduct involving the clergy causes deep scandal and pain. In parts of the United States of America and Europe, victims have been filing lawsuits against offenders, their dioceses and religious orders. With increasing media coverage of the crisis, more victims have come forward to expose cases of sexual abuse and misconduct by the clergy, some dating many years back. The victims

and their families now openly speak of their suffering. Some bishops have resigned, while some priests have begun serving prison terms. The Catholic faithful are shocked at what some of their pastors have done. Priests are hurting, shamed and confused. In the face of this grim scenario Pope John Paul II declared:

As priests, we are personally and profoundly afflicted by the sins of some of our brothers who have betrayed the grace of Ordination in succumbing even to the most grievous forms of the *mysterium iniquitatis* at work in the world. Grave scandal is caused, with the result that a dark shadow of suspicion is cast over all the other fine priests who perform their ministry with honesty and integrity often with heroic self-sacrifice. As the Church shows her concern for the victims and strives to respond in truth and justice to each of these painful situations, all of us-conscious of our human weakness, but trusting in the healing power of divine grace are called to embrace the '*mysterium Crucis*' and to commit ourselves more fully to the search for holiness. We must beg God in His Providence to prompt a whole-hearted reawakening of those ideals of self-giving to Christ which are the very foundation of the priestly ministry. (*Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday*, 2002, no.11)

Par.2. Last March 21, 2002, Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, addressed the question of sexual abuse and pedophilia in a press conference. He quoted from the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* where the Pope said:

In certain parts of Oceania, sexual abuse by some clergy and religious has caused great suffering and spiritual harm to the victims. It has been very damaging to the

life of the Church and has become an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel. The Synod Fathers condemned all sexual abuse and all forms of abuse of power, both within the Church and in society as a whole. Sexual abuse within the Church is a profound contradiction of the teaching and witness of Jesus Christ. The Synod Fathers wished to apologize unreservedly to the victims for the pain and disillusionment caused to them. The Church in Oceania is seeking open and just procedures to respond to complaints in this area, and is unequivocally committed to the compassionate and effective care for the victims, their families, the whole community and the offenders themselves.

Par.3. We rightly asked where the clergy might have gone wrong after years of preparation in the seminaries and of ongoing formation. For a number of years now the Episcopal Commission on the Clergy of the CBCP has been offering some programs to priests. The one designed for those involved in sexual abuse offers intensive renewal that includes treatment and spiritual guidance. This same commission has helped prepare this protocol similar to those developed by bishops' conferences of other countries; in order to provide pastoral guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual abuse and misconduct by the clergy in our Church in the Philippines.

Par.4. The problem of sexual abuse and misconduct by some members of the clergy is not new. In the past, confidentiality and therefore, secrecy have created the impression, of cover-up, toleration of abuse and lack of concern for victims. Such procedure could have enabled abusive behavior to be repeated. We acknowledge the shortcomings and mistakes in the way some cases have been handled. For the pain and sorrow such failures have caused, we apologize from the depths of our hearts. Through

this protocol, we desire to manifest our responsibility of shepherding Christ's flock, of caring for victims and of addressing the problems of the clergy.

Par.5. We humbly but courageously acknowledge the need to address openly the problem of sexual abuse and misconduct by the clergy. The entire Church needs to foster an atmosphere where silence, ignorance and minimization are overcome by understanding, Christian love, and mutual trust. We hope that this pastoral guide may be a step towards that direction for the Church in the Philippines. In faith we know that this moment is a call to repentance, renewal and conversion. We therefore face this crisis, bearing in mind the words of Pope John Paul II to the American Cardinals on April 23, 2002:

We must be confident that this time of trial will bring purification on the entire Catholic community, a purification that is urgently needed if the Church is to preach more effectively the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its liberating force. Now you must ensure that where sin increased, grace will all the more abound. So much pain, so much sorrow must lead to a holier priesthood, a holier episcopate and a holier Church.

Par.6. A holier clergy will come about if, in the midst of this crisis, we remember what we have been called and ordained for. Pastors were raised in the early Church "to care for the Church of God which he obtained with the blood of His own Son" (*Acts* 20:28). They were to be alert lest fierce wolves snatch away the flock (*Acts* 20:29-30). Exhorting his fellow presbyters, Peter said, "Tend the flock of God that is your charge not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (*Peter* 5:3). Bishops as "stewards of God" must be able to master

and control themselves (*Titus* 1:7-9). Caring for and tending the flock of Christ as stewards - this is the heart of the ministry and life of the pastors of the early Church. It cannot be otherwise today. Like Peter, they are entrusted by the Risen Lord to feed, to nourish and to tend I us sheep (*John* 21:1 5-19). Remembering this, we realize that abuse has no place in someone called to be a "caretaker" of the flock. We cannot fuse care and abuse! May the present crisis brought about by abusive actions of deacons, priests and bishops purify us to become the true "care-givers" we are meant to be. Through conversion and renewal, may the clergy be less unworthy of the trust of the faithful and of the Chief Shepherd. To fulfill this vision, our dioceses will adopt and implement the guidelines contained in this protocol.

II. Clarifying Concepts

Par.7. Some concepts need to be explained to aid in the understanding and implementation of this pastoral guide.¹ There are no rigid definitions of these concepts. We can only present descriptions that are generally accepted. They are discussed below.

Par. 8. **Pastoral or Ministerial Relationship.** The pastoral or ministerial relationship is one of trust that is primarily the responsibility of those in positions of leadership and authority to maintain. Whenever a person, in his capacity as a Church official or leader, begins a relationship with any person, a ministerial relationship is fostered. The clergy, due to their pastoral leadership, are in positions of power vis-a-vis the faithful who trustingly seek their counsel, support, or service. Such power is to be exercised only in loving service of others who entrust

¹ Some parts of this section rely on the brochure published by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. *Respecting the Boundaries* (2001).

themselves to the care of pastors. Non-ordained members of religious communities of men and women can also enter into a ministerial relationship.

Par.9. Immorality of Sexual Acts Outside Marriage. Sexual acts outside marriage and destructive of marriage are considered *immoral*. Included among them are lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape, homosexual activity, adultery, sexual harassment, bigamy, polygamy, incest, and concubinage (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2351-2391).

Par.10. When Sexual Acts Become Criminal. Criminal sexual acts violate laws stated in the Revised Penal Code and the Civil Code of the Philippines. These include, among others, rape, incest, sexual harassment, adultery, prostitution, child abuse and molestation. Each case has a corresponding criminal liability. (See *Appendix I*.)

Par I. Child Abuse:

A. Republic Act no. 7610, Article I, sec. 3, a, refers to *children* as persons below 18 years of age or those above 18 but are unable to care for themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation or discrimination because of their physical or mental disability. Sec. 3. b, further adds that *child abuse* refers to mistreatment of the child, whether habitual or not. This includes psychological and physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment.

B. Persons below 18 years of age are legally categorized as children, Sexual abuse of children are further classified into two:

Pedophilia is sexual abuse of pre-pubescent children aged 13 years old and below. (See *Appendix 2*.)

Ephebophilia is sexual abuse of pubescent males or females between 13 and 18 years of age.

Par.12. Sexual Misconduct arising in a Ministerial Relationship

Any time the clergy use the authority and influence of their ministerial office to engage in sexual activity with the faithful entrusted to their care, they are engaging in irresponsible and unethical acts. Sexual activity may take a variety of forms.

A. **Sexual Misconduct** is a general term that includes sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. In our Catholic faith, sexualized behavior is never acceptable in a cleric's relationship with a parishioner, employee, student, client in spiritual direction or counseling, or anyone who has sought the Church's ministry.

B. **Sexual Harassment** generally refers to unwanted sexualized conduct or language between *co-workers* in the church setting. Although difficult to define precisely, sexual harassment may include but is not limited to the following:

- Making unsolicited sexual advances and propositions,
- Using sexually degrading words to describe an individual or his/her body,
- Telling inappropriate or sexually related jokes,
- Retaliating against a co-worker who refuses sexual advances.
- Offering favors or employment benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations; favorably assigned duties or shifts, recommendations, £tc. in exchange for sexual favors.

C. **Sexual Exploitation** usually refers the sexual contact between a cleric and someone receiving pastoral care from the

church leader and may include a sexually suggestive verbal behavior. **Sexual abuse** generally refers to sexual contact between a cleric and a minor or "vulnerable adult" as defined by law, as well as suggestive verbal behavior.

Either sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can include physical contact from the Church leader such as:

- Sexual touch or other intrusive touching (i.e. tickling, wrestling or other physical contact) that causes uneasiness or discomfort in the one touched,
- An inappropriate gift (such as lingerie),
- A prolonged hug when a brief hug is customary behavior,
- Kissing on the lips when a kiss on the cheeks would be appropriate,
- Showing sexually suggestive objects of pornography,
- Sexual intercourse, anal or oral sex.

Sexual exploitation or sexual abuse can also include verbal behavior such as:

- Innuendo or sexual talk and text messaging,
- Suggestive comments,
- Tales of sexual exploits, experiences or conflicts,
- Making sexual propositions.

Par. 13. That some clients in ministry feel attracted to those in church leadership positions, or to feel flattered by his or her attention is not uncommon. This never excuses any form of sexual misconduct. Clergy who engage in any form of sexual misconduct are violating their vows, the ministerial relationship, misusing their authority and power, and are taking advantage of the vulnerability of those who sit seeking spiritual guidance.

Par. 14. Because of the respect and reverence with which people seek help from the Church's ministers, there is an

imbalance of power and, hence, for clients a vulnerability inherent in the ministerial relationship, even for consenting adult partners. This imbalance of power makes sexual behavior in a ministerial relationship unacceptable and unfair. It is the primary responsibility of the clergy to maintain appropriate emotional and sexual boundaries between them and those with whom they work or serve.

Par. 15. The case of a cleric fathering a child is not just an ordinary instance of sexual misconduct. It is first of all a serious violation of religious commitments and it also creates the moral and legal responsibility to support a child. The way of handling it has peculiar characteristics. This has been discussed in an earlier position paper of the Episcopal Commission on the Clergy presented to the CBCP (See *Appendix 3*) and will also be dealt with in this protocol.

Chapter One: Sexual Abuse by the Clergy

Par. 16. This protocol or pastoral guide is not a theological treatise on the priesthood. Nor is it a directory on the ministry and life of the clergy. It is an aid to healing and reconciliation and to the formulation of a just, effective and Christian response to allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct by the clergy. We recognize that religious orders can and should formulate guidelines in harmony, with the demands of consecrated life, their respective rules of life and the guidelines contained in this protocol. The first chapter of this protocol will deal mainly with sexual abuse, namely, sexual contact between a cleric in a position of ministerial authority and a minor or anyone vulnerable as defined by law. In many instances, sexual abuse can be criminal acts.

I. Sexual Abuse and Philippine Culture

Par. 17. In addition to an individual's upbringing, personality disorders and social maladjustment, some elements of our Filipino culture might contribute to situations of sexual abuse, especially by the clergy. We have identified a few positive cultural elements that could be misused.

A. It is acceptable in our culture for persons to *touch* one another. Touching can manifest caring and nurturing, but when boundaries are not clear, touch can lead to malice. Children and other vulnerable persons cannot always read. The "signals" that might indicate that touch has already become malicious. It is a phenomenon among abusers to send "mixed signals" that camouflage abusive touch.

B. Filipino culture, as a general rule, confers much *pqyer on adults and persons* in authority. Minors and subordinates are often seen as "possessions" of adults who could do pretty much what they please with them in the name of discipline and promoting their good. Before adults with authority, children and subordinates are often vulnerable, open and trusting. When placed in the wrong hands, this power can be a tool of abuse. Furthermore, there is a noticeable lack of consciousness of children's rights in Filipino culture and in the Church. The perspective of the child is very rarely considered. This lacuna can render many adults insensitive to children's emotions, shame, pain and needs.

C. *Family* is defined loosely and broadly in our culture to include many people other than biological relations. A cleric is usually a welcome member of the Filipino family. People tend to let all their defenses down before him. Abuse becomes more harmful to the victims when the offenders belong to the "family." Victims often experience sexual abuse by the clergy as exploi-

tation by a family member, not a stranger, thereby making it more painful. Families therefore feel victimized as well.

D. Our culture sees the clergy as *superhuman*, *possessing superpowers* and so with the Church that they represent. Culturally a cleric possesses power as (i) an adult, (ii) as an acknowledged moral and spiritual authority, and (iii) as a male. He gets more than what a regular Filipino male enjoys in terms of popularity and glory. Women are drawn to members of the clergy because among males, they resonate with some feminine features like the sense of mystery and spirituality. Children are drawn to them because they are associated with caring and nurturing. All these are "weapons of power" that can also harm powerfully when misused. But because the culture clouds over their humanity, some hide their true selves and lead double lives. This duplicity can be fertile ground for abuse.

E. The silence of *victims* is partly due to the "non-violent" experience of many cases of abuse. Most victims do not feel pain or violence during the moment of abuse. It is at a much later time, when one understands more fully the harmful effects that one begins to talk. When the abuser is from, the clergy, the culture tends to remain silent because accusing a "superhuman" can disturb the peace of society. Victims harbor a lurking fear that they would most likely be blamed for challenging the culture's superpowers.

We hope that the present crisis could also be an occasion for the purification and renewal of the culture of Filipinos and of our ecclesiastical culture.

II. Some Basic Principles

Par. 18. The clergy, called to care for the flock, will responsibly maintain the integrity of the pastoral/ministerial

relationship at all times. Sexual contact between them and those entrusted to their care is a violation of the pastoral/ministerial relationship, and is therefore never permissible.

Par. 19. We firmly believe that the vast majority of bishops, priests, and deacons are, by the grace of God, competent, ethical, balanced, and mature. However, when an unfortunate occasion of violation of the pastoral/ministerial relationship takes place, the victims must have recourse to proper authorities so that a process of evaluation can be initiated in a just and humane manner. For this reason, the CBCP is developing a comprehensive plan for responding to sexual abuse situations and help create an atmosphere of understanding through education that will help maintain the integrity of the pastoral/ministerial relationship, and prevent misuse of power and authority.

Par. 20. Complaints about abusive sexual acts by the clergy, including guests or residents from other dioceses, will be reported immediately to the appropriate ecclesiastical superior - the metropolitan or the local ordinary. Where a bishop is accused of sexual misconduct, the appropriate ecclesiastical superior is the Holy See.

Par. 21. In the event that a member of a religious order is accused of sexual misconduct, the matter should be referred to his provincial superior or his delegate. The said superior should inform the ordinary of the diocese where the said religious is ministering of such accusation and the course of action the religious community is undertaking.

Par. 22. The response to cases of sexual abuse by the clergy, must address the following:

- a. the pastoral care of the victim,
- b. the healing of the community,

- c. the assessment of the accused,
- d. the pastoral care of the offender.

Par. 23. All persons involved in the case at hand will be ministered to and cared for in a manner consistent with the Gospel values of dignity, compassion, understanding, and justice. When an accusation is made, the rights of the victims, the offenders and the community must be protected. Action will be taken promptly and decisively.

Par. 24. In cases involving priests or deacons, the diocesan bishop will entrust the preliminary inquiry to one or more of the following persons: the vicar general, the chancellor, and the chairman of the Commission on Clergy. As deemed necessary, other committees will be set up to implement and monitor the stages of the process. In the case of a bishop offender, the ecclesiastical superior will initiate the appropriate process.

Par. 25. The diocese will form a team of competent persons from the laity, religious and clergy, to advise and assist the bishop in assessing and addressing individual cases. The team may include a canon lawyer, a civil lawyer, a clinical psychologist, and other experts. This team will be maintained to review periodically the archdiocesan/diocesan policies on sexual abuse.

Par. 26. The CBCP and diocesan policies concerning sexual misconduct should be communicated to the members of the presbyterium and the faithful.

III. The Care and Protection of the Victims

Par. 27. The welfare of the victim/s is of paramount concern. Dioceses will reach out to them, demonstrating a commitment to their good and protection. The Church will offer healing and reconciliation in the form of counseling, spiritual direction, social service and sincere human interaction.

Par. 28. When the preliminary inquiry (cf. Par. 24) reveals the need for a fuller investigation this will be done swiftly to assure the victims that they will not be denied justice. A team preferably composed of a priest, a religious and a layperson, all with appropriate training and competence in dealing with victims will investigate the case with utmost care and prudence (cf. Par. 25). Swift and sincere action contributes to the healing of the victims' pain.

Par. 29. A professional guidance counselor must be at hand in the process of uncovering their ordeal during the inquiry in order to provide pastoral care whenever needed. The investigation process must not further victimize the victims by making them feel that they are the objects of investigation. Nor should they be blamed for the situation. Trained and competent personnel must be always on hand to ensure that the process be truly caring towards victims.

Par. 30. If a crime is involved, the diocese will cooperate with public authorities in the legal process governing sexual abuse. The diocese must provide lawyers for the victims if they could not secure any for themselves. If there are no lawsuits involved, the victims will still be provided with a good continuing care program to facilitate healing.

Par. 31. The offender should shoulder the expenses attendant to the victim's therapy. The diocese will assist financially in the healing process to be undergone by victims if the offender needs such assistance. The offender will be required to reimburse the diocese for all expenses incurred in handling the case.

Par. 32. A list of trained and competent counselors, sensitive to the issues of sexual abuse will be kept on file and made available to victims asking for therapy. It is recommended that the CBCP establish a committee on the national level to determine

the most appropriate pastoral response to victims. This committee in turn will train counselors and facilitators in dioceses and regions who can provide pastoral care to victims in their respective areas.

IV. Guidelines for Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse

Par. 33. Preliminary Inquiry

The preliminary inquiry will be conducted in the following manner:

- A. An accusation should be made in writing whenever possible and duly signed by the complainant. In cases involving minors, the parent/s or guardian/s should sign the complaint. Complaints should be sent to the Office of the Chancellor or to the appropriate ecclesiastical superior. Whenever a case is brought up confidentially and the complainant wishes to protect his/her reputation through confidentiality, such wish must be respected and the case will be handled with total confidentiality.
- B. One or more of the bishops' representatives - the vicar general, the chancellor, the chairperson of the Commission on Clergy, or whoever is appointed - will meet with the complainant, parent/s, or guardian/s on behalf of the diocese.
- C. The accused will be informed of the investigation being done. The bishop or the superior will discern if it is sound to temporarily relieve the accused of his duties during the investigation. In all cases, the precepts of ecclesiastical law must be carefully observed.
- D. The investigating team will prepare a preliminary report for the perusal of bishop or the superior.

- E. The accused may be required to undergo preliminary assessment with a person or facility specializing in the evaluation of sexual disorders and sexual abuse.
- F. The complainant may be offered assistance and undergo assessment with a person or facility specializing in the evaluation of sexual abuse.
- G. If the case involves criminal accusations, the accused may be advised to contact legal counsel distinct from the diocesan attorney, with the processes provided for in canon law being observed. Church officials may notify the appropriate government agency as stipulated by the law, notify every party who has the right to know, and direct local Church authorities to cooperate in the investigation of the case.
- H. The Director of the Diocesan Commission on Media and Communication will be notified so that spokespersons can be designated and be responsible for all communications to be released to the media.

Par. 34. Upon Completion of the Preliminary inquiry

When the preliminary inquiry is completed the investigating team will report their findings to the bishop or the superior.

A. *If there is some degree of truth in the accusation* the bishop or superior will place the accused on administrative leave and relieve him of ministerial duties. He will notify the cleric in writing that his local faculties to publicly exercise priestly ministry have been temporarily withdrawn, and that he may be asked to reside in a non-ministerial setting. He will require the individual to undergo assessment and rehabilitative treatment. During this time, he may appoint a co-responsible partner who can effectively supervise and monitor the individual's daily activities.

B. *If the accusation involves criminal activity* and there is a degree of truth in the accusation, the accused individual will be required to reside in a non-ministerial setting to protect the well being of the community. He will contact a selected treatment center within 24 hours. He will be assigned a trained co-responsible partner to assist him in defining and arranging day-to-day activities, including non-ministerial work, therapy, and living arrangements. He will consult a lawyer as soon as possible to determine what should be done in such a situation.

C. *If the sexual abuse is verified* the bishop or superior will consult with the diocesan lawyer and an authority in canon law regarding the civil and canonical aspects of the case. He may also consult with professionals and other persons involved in the case before making decisions. Once the evaluation, including diagnosis and prognosis, has been received, the bishop or superior will limit the ministry of the individual or even prohibit it, if warranted. In the case of sexual abuse of a minor, no ministry with minors or unsupervised contact with them will be allowed. In verified cases of criminal behavior by clerics, the bishop or superior will recommend that the Promoter of Justice begin a canonical process for dismissal from the clerical state.

Par.35. Every step of the process must be properly documented. Care should be ensured, to protect the confidentiality of such documentation. Canonical norms will be diligently observed in order to protect all parties involved, and demonstrate that the rights of the faithful, the victim and cleric are fully respected.

Par.36. Where the accusation has been established as false, the bishop or superior will express in writing his defense of and support for the accused cleric. Bringing the accuser to court can be considered an option. If the media have already reported the false accusation, the bishop or superior should ask those involved in the reporting to clear the name of the falsely accused.

CHAPTER TWO: HETEROSEXUAL AND HOMOSEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Par. 37. Sexual abuse has been presented so far as cases where victims are minors and vulnerable people as defined by law. A more common issue in the Philippines, however, is heterosexual and homosexual misconduct involving non-minors. Even if criminal liabilities are not always present, serious moral and pastoral problems are nevertheless posed.

Par. 38. Psychologists and moralists generally agree that a person's sexual identity has three dimensions: *gender identity*, sexual orientation and sexual intention. Gender identity is the sense of being masculine or feminine. In other words, while every person is born with a given sex (male or female), one learns one's gender (masculine or feminine). One's sex is a given fact while one's gender is a learned phenomenon. *Sexual orientation* refers to the sex of people that attract and provoke one's sexual arousal. An orientation is directed at persons whom one finds sexually attractive. *Sexual intention* refers to what a person actually wants to do with his/her sexual partner. This includes a wide variety of sexual behaviors. Sexual orientation, therefore, is *not* fundamentally a tendency towards *acts* of a sexual nature but a psychosexual attraction towards particular individual persons, whether of the same or the opposite sex. It is possible, even necessary, to distinguish sexual orientation from sexual activity arising from sexual intention. A sexual orientation does not, by necessity, lead to stereotyped sexual activity. A person's human and spiritual maturity can influence one's choice of sexual activity. The Catholic Tradition has been consistent in distinguishing sexual orientation from sexual activity. Thus some forms of sexual behavior may be immoral, without one's sexual orientation

per se being condemned as sinful. But it is also unacceptable to hold that one's sexual orientation justifies engaging in sexual activity to which the orientation seems to incline the person. Sexual acts are governed by criteria compatible with the faith and morals of the community, not just by one's sexual orientation. Thus a pastor's ministry and role within the Christian community and the very faith of that community must govern his sexual behavior, whether he is heterosexual or homosexual in orientation.

I. Clerical Sexual Misconduct in Heterosexual Relationships

Par.39. Sexual misconduct in heterosexual relationships of the clergy may include a variety of cases like fathering a child, cohabitation with a woman, adultery, sexual harassment, exploitation of women in ministerial settings, rape or coercion to engage in sex. Whatever type of misconduct we are dealing with, the pastoral care of the victims is a paramount concern. Par. 27-32 above will be conscientiously followed. Let us turn to some cases that merit special attention and treatment.

A. *Where a criminal case is involved*, Par. 18-26 on the basic principles, the care of victims and guidelines for responding to sexual abuse cases will be observed. If an accusation is proven false, the provisions of Par. 36 may be applied. If it has been proven that a criminal act had been committed and a warrant of arrest has been issued, the bishop or anybody sheltering the priest concerned must surrender him to the proper authorities. By failing to do so, the person keeping the accused can be charged for cuddling a criminal.

B. *Where "Priest-Fathers" are concerned*, with canons 1394 and 1395 and the basic principles and guidelines in Par. 18-36 observed, the following procedure is to be followed:

1. A cleric who has fathered a child assumes the moral responsibility of providing financial support to the child until he/she reaches adulthood. The mother of the child must receive moral and spiritual help, especially through counseling or spiritual direction.
2. The cleric must discern and decide whether to remain in the ministry or to leave, a) If he decides to persevere in the ministry, he will undergo a program of rehabilitation and renewal, separate from the woman totally, and fulfill his financial obligations to the child, coursing his support through a third party. The diocese is not to be held responsible for the financial support of the child, b) If he decides to leave the ministry in favor of forming a family with the woman and the child, the diocese will help him in the process of getting dispensed from priestly ministry and obligations.
3. A "priest-father" who has decided to remain in the ministry and has undergone the prescribed program of rehabilitation while maintaining total distance from the woman, may return to the ministry only after a careful evaluation of his progress has been done. At no moment is financial support for the child to be neglected.
4. Worth considering is the practice in some dioceses of the Philippines and other countries where a "priest-father" who returns to ministry can no longer be assigned as pastor of a parish. He can however be appointed as parochial vicar, or "attached" to a parish or ministry. This move can convey to both the faithful and the clergy that the diocese is seriously addressing the issue of a cleric who has fathered a child.
5. If a cleric fathers a second child, either with the mother of the first child or with another woman, he will be

dismissed from the ministry. Besides the added scandal that a second child brings, it may indicate an inability to lead a celibate life. More serious moral, legal and practical problems will be avoided if he leaves the ministry.

6. The proposals of the CBCP Commission on the Clergy regarding "priest-fathers" must be evaluated continually and adapted to each case that may arise in the dioceses.

C. *Where consensual relationships are concerned*, canon 1395 and policies approved by the CBCP can be applied.

1. The bishop or the appropriate ecclesiastical superior will admonish a cleric who keeps a habitual relationship with a woman as a consensual sexual partner. If he shows no signs of repentance, he may be suspended or even dismissed.
2. A cleric identified as "serial sexual offender" should be dismissed. For a cleric to be counted as one, it must be established that he has been sexually involved with at least three different women, even without fathering a single child. A cleric who has fathered two children also falls under this category.

II. CLERICAL SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Par. 40. Homosexuality is a complex phenomenon that is explained in various, even conflicting ways by different schools of thought. The Code of Canon Law has no specific prescription about it. The civil and criminal law of the Philippines says nothing about homosexuality *per se*. Since cases of sexual misconduct of some clerics in the context of homosexual relationships are also reported, they need to be addressed.

Par. 41. Where a criminal case is involved Par. 18-36 will be followed. The healing of the victims is a primary concern while the offender is being helped and his case handled.

Par. 42. When an accusation of homosexual activity is presented against a cleric, the following steps are to be taken:

1. A preliminary investigation will be conducted in accordance with Par. 33. The bishop or the appropriate ecclesiastical superior will discern if it is necessary to relieve the accused of his duties while the investigation is in process.
2. If the accusation is proven true, the cleric will be removed from his current ministry and will undergo evaluation and guidance from a qualified counselor or director. If the chances for rehabilitation are good, he will be encouraged and supported by the diocese to enter the Assisted Intense Renewal or similar recovery programs. Future reinstatement to the ministry will depend on his progress, the positive evaluation of his mentors and the recommendation of experts whom the bishop or superior may consult.
3. If after undergoing a recovery program the cleric falls into sexual misconduct again, he can be considered a "serial sexual offender." The bishop or superior may consider his dismissal from priestly ministry.
4. If the victim is less than twelve years old, the offender will be dismissed from priestly ministry.

Chapter Three: Ongoing Formation in Accountability

Par. 43. Learning from its own crisis, the Church will help create an environment in society and in Church that is safe for people, especially for the most vulnerable. Dioceses will embark on a program of education of children, families, layperson,

religious, educators, public authorities and clergy about our common responsibility in promoting such an environment. The clergy, in particular, will set standards of conduct appropriate for people in ministerial environments.

Par. 44. The ongoing human formation of the clergy is imperative. On account of cases of sexual abuse, such formation needs to help the clergy understand the dynamics of sexual abuse, especially in ministerial relationships, and help them to be vigilant. They are to be educated in the characteristics of coercive and exploitative sexual behavior as well as their roots. They must be able to confront the dangers of living double lives and maintaining potentially abusive relationships. They are to be helped to grow in the integrity demanded of stewards and "caretakers" of the flock. They are to learn how to care for themselves and for the flock, as its pastors.

Par. 45. Dioceses will strengthen their programs geared towards the growth of the clergy in the spiritual and pastoral life. Through various diocesan initiatives or regional or national programs, the clergy are to develop the spiritual and pastoral values expected of the ordained holiness, love, trustworthiness, an evangelical lifestyle and ability to live in and foster community Life, to name, but a few. A vibrant community among priests where they experience caring, affirmation and support is an important context for human, spiritual and pastoral growth.

Par. 46. Dioceses will ensure that the clergy develop their theological knowledge and competence through private study, professional programs, study leaves or sabbatical. Aside from enhancing their pastoral effectiveness, theological competence aids in lifting the human heart to spiritual realities and in clarifying one's identity and ministry as ordained.

Par. 47. Dioceses will initiate programs not only geared towards intervention in cases of sexual abuse but also towards the prevention of abuse in Church, families and society. The faithful and pastors are to be educated in ways of dealing positively and sensitively with victims and offenders alike. Education about the legal and canonical aspects of sexual abuse is important.

Par. 48. Dioceses will review the process of screening candidates to seminaries and to ordination to make them more effective in discerning the capacity of candidates to maintain responsible relationships.

Par. 49. Dioceses will set clear criteria for new assignments and transfer to other dioceses. In the case of transfer to another diocese, the sending bishop is under grave obligation to forward to the receiving bishop a truthful and complete account of the cleric's record, including reports of sexual misconduct. Anything in his background that might put to question his fitness for ministry must be frankly told to the receiving bishop.

Conclusion

Par. 50. We, bishops of the Philippines, propose this pastoral guide as a response to the pain, scandal and shame occasioned by cases of sexual abuse and misconduct by some of our very own brothers in the ordained ministry. We once more apologize to the victims, their families, the Christian faithful and the many good ministers for the wound inflicted by this crisis. We reach out to offenders among the clergy with a compassionate call to repentance and renewal. We invite the whole Church to pray for justice and love, healing and reconciliation, forgiveness and peace. We pray to Mary so she may teach us to love purely. We beg the Lord to have mercy on us all.

Par. 51. We will work to the best of our ability to care for the flock entrusted to us. Ever mindful of our own sinfulness and limitations, we rely on God's merciful love and on your kind support.

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

PASTORAL AND SOCIAL APOSTOLATE MINISTERS

In addition to the lay *LITURGICAL* ministers (Lectors, Readers, Acolytes, Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, Altar Servers, Psalmists, Commentators, Cantors, Choirs, Organists, Church Ushers/Usherettes, Collectors, Sacristans, Masters of Ceremonies...) and of lay *CATECHETICAL* ministers (Catechists, Lay Preachers, Theology Teachers, Mass Media Evangelizers, Lay Missionaries...), there are other lay ministers, involved in services and functions exercised in connection also with the life and mission of the Church, who have been described as *PASTORAL AND SOCIAL APOSTOLATE* ministers.

What are they? Is it possible to have a short description of their functions, task and spirituality?

* * #

There have been in recent times some attempts to elaborate a complete list of *lay* ministries, that is, those performed by the

non-ordained members of the People of God, in addition to the ordained ministries ("Holy Orders") of deaconate, priesthood and episcopate exercised by the clerics.

However, the diversity of such lay ministries in the Church - whether *instituted*, *recognized* or simply *de facto* existing - is so vast, that their re-groupings are far from being uniform. This is not surprising at all: first, because numberless are the charisms bestowed by the Spirit to His faithful; and second, because these ministries are a relatively new arena and in continuous growth. No wonder they are presently classified as "existing" "emerging" and "possible" (cf. O. Cruz, "Directory: Lay Ministries" in *Guide Documents*, 2000, pp. 99-103).

The most accepted way so far to group the existing lay ministries has been by following the areas of participation of the lay faithful in the three-fold office/function of the Church (sanctifying, teaching and governing). Accordingly, there would be three basic groups of ministries, namely,

(1) *Worship or Liturgical* ministries, which embrace mainly the celebration of the liturgy and the sacraments - Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage;

(2) *Word or Catechetical* ministries, which basically consist in the proclamation of the Good News as well as the continuous education in the faith of those already baptized; and

(3) *Pastoral and Social Action* ministries, which relate mainly with the realization of pastoral leadership, works of mercy and social apostolate.

The third group of ministries is very vast in scope; it goes from parish and community involvement to the complex arena of politics, sociology and economics, passing through fields such as human love, the family, and the relief of human suffering. In turn, their holders range from "pastoral leaders" (authorized even

to supply certain services "where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available"), to judges in ecclesiastical tribunals, leaders of apostolic movements, apostles in the family, in politics and media, etc., to charity and social apostolate ministers.

In an effort to answer to the question on what they are and to offer a short description of their functions, task and spirituality. I offer the following pages, without pretending at all being exhaustive in their listing and description.

PASTORAL LEADERS

By virtue of baptism, confirmation and, for many, matrimony, the lay people both have a right and are co-responsible with those who exercise ministerial priesthood to actively participate in the mission and community life of Church. Dioceses and parishes, as centers of renewal and communities of Christian communities, are the most familiar venues for the active involvement of people in Church-related activities.

Leaders of Public Prayer

Not all communities can have a Sunday Eucharist presided over by a bishop or priest. For some Catholics, this is an altogether new experience. Many years of daily and Sunday Mass have suddenly given way to less frequent or even infrequent celebrations led by a priest. The local community must continue to gather, nonetheless.

Although it can never be a fitted substitution for the Mass, however, the present law of the Church permits and encourages such gatherings of the assembly: *"If it is impossible to assist at a Eucharistic celebration, either because no sacred minister is available or for some other grave reason, the faithful are strongly recommended to take part in a liturgy of the Word, ... which is*

celebrated in accordance with the provisions laid down by the diocesan Bishop" (c.1248)

Some communities that gather for public prayer choose a liturgy not patterned necessarily on the Eucharistic celebration, such as the Liturgy of the Hours or the Liturgy of the Word. In others, the weekly liturgy is patterned after the Mass, that is, the Liturgy of the Word followed by the Rite of Communion using hosts consecrated at a previous Mass. The option depends on the community involved. In some dioceses, the bishops provide instruction on how lay-led worship services are to be conducted.

In the Philippines a *Rite for Sunday Worship without a Priest* has been approved by the bishops. In such cases suitable lay people can be temporarily assigned to preside over those liturgical prayers and distribute Holy Communion.

Parish Pastoral Administrators

In exceptional circumstances, due mainly to scarcity of priests, the pastoral care of a parish could be entrusted to an individual or to a group of persons who lack priestly orders, e.g. a deacon, a religious Sister or Brother, a catechist or a community of such individuals.

The norm states that *"If, because of a shortage of priests, the diocesan Bishop has judged that a deacon, or some other person who is not a priest, or a community of persons, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish, he is to appoint some priest who, with the powers and faculties of a parish priest, will direct the pastoral care"* (c 517 §2).

Pastoral care would mean providing at least minimal services so that the parish would not have to be closed. This includes all areas except the specific duties of an ordained priest (for which

some priest in the particular church must be assigned). Accordingly, lay people could be deputed to preside Sunday celebrations (cf. c.1248 §2), to proclaim the gospel and preach the word (cc. 758-759), to baptize (c. 861 §2), to assist at marriages (c. 1112), to preside at funeral services, etc.

The fact that persons who are non-ordained can function in such significant parish leadership roles depart from a recent legal tradition and is a significant step in the direction of providing continued pastoral service for the people of God as well as recognizing the role of religious and lay people in pastoral ministry by virtue of their baptismal consecration.

Extraordinary Ministers of Baptism

Baptism, being the gate to, and foundation of the other sacraments, must be accessible to all people. Hence, when an ordinary ordained minister is not available for the administration of the sacrament, any suitable lay person (e.g., catechists, nurses, doctors...) may be deputed by the local Ordinary as minister of baptism, although in case of necessity, no express deputation is needed: right intention is the only requirement.

The canonical provision reads: "If the ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or some other person deputed to this office by the local Ordinary, may lawfully confer baptism; indeed, in a case of necessity, any person who has the requisite intention may do so" (c. 861 §2). A simple rite is used for the purpose.

Assistants at Marriages

Where there are no priests or deacons, diocesan bishops can delegate lay persons to assist at marriages with prior approval of the respective Episcopal Conference and permission of the Apostolic See. In such cases "a suitable lay person is to be

selected, capable of giving instruction to those who are getting married, and fitted to conduct the marriage liturgy properly" (c. 1112).

Apart from possessing a specific delegation and using a Rite approved for the occasion, the lay person delegated to assist at a marriage will have to carefully fill up a formal document of the act performed, that is, of the celebration of marriage, with the signatures of the spouses, of the witnesses and of the assistant himself or herself. Likewise, he or she will see to it personally that all the necessary civil and ecclesiastical formalities are observed.

In the Philippines, except for a few cases, very little use of this prerogative has been made so far, due mainly to the reluctance of the local Bishops' Conference to act on this issue. The reasons alleged have been mainly cultural, such as the difficulty for the people to distinguish a marriage solemnized by a lay person from the civil marriages or those solemnized by other religious sects, the likely people's lowering esteem for the sacrament of marriage, the people's lack of preparation to accept them...

In the present law of the Church, when the one competent to assist at a marriage cannot be present or be approached, those who intend to enter a true marriage can validly and lawfully contract in the presence of witnesses only ... "provided it is prudently foreseen that this state of affairs will continue for a month" (c. 1116).

Presiders at Funeral Services

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines decided, in 1970, to allow lay persons to conduct funeral services at the home and at the cemetery, as the 'new' Ritual allowed them. They

also obtained from Rome in 1971 the confirmation of their decision to allow lay persons to preside over non-Eucharistic funeral services in church when necessary.

It goes without saying that in such cases suitable lay persons are to be selected, fitted to conduct the funeral services with propriety. Apart from familiarization with the Catholic Burial Ritual, they are to be provided an initial and thereafter on-going formation which should include, among others, the following points, mentioned in the Code of Canon Law:

- *Christian burial, a right.* Christian burial is a right of the faithful and a sign of their ecclesial communion; therefore "Christ's faithful who have died are to be given a Church funeral according to the norm of law" (c. 1176 §1).
- *Denial of funeral rites.* Under the existing laws, funeral rites are to be denied only to unworthy members of the Christian community. In particular, to those who are notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics; and to those manifest sinners whose burial cannot be granted without public scandal to the faithful (c. 1284). Such denial should be a rare occurrence, since it is an extreme penalty reserved to those who die without any sign of repentance.
- *Cremation, no longer forbidden.* "It still is the express desire of the Church that the venerable tradition and practice of burying the dead be observed when reasonable possible" (c. 1176 §3); however, cremation is no longer forbidden by the Church, unless it is chosen for reasons contrary to Christian life and tenets. Most Catholics who choose cremation are rather influenced by considerations of a purely political or private nature.
- *Burial of unbaptized children and of non-Catholics.* A Christian burial can be given to unbaptized children whose parents wished them to be baptized. Likewise, it can be

also given to persons baptized in other churches or ecclesial communities provided the local Ordinary approves it, there was no contrary wish on the part of the deceased, and a proper minister of the deceased is unavailable (c. 1183 §3).

Diocesan & Parish Councils' Members

One of the rights and duties of the lay faithful is to make known to their pastors their views on matters pertaining to the good of the Church (c. 212 §3). At the *diocesan* level, they may exercise that right and fulfill their obligation through participation in the different diocesan Councils (Pastoral, Finance...)- Likewise, at the *parish* level, through active involvement in the parochial organizations, especially the parish Pastoral Council which provides an even more immediate opportunity for the faithful to have their voices heard and to collaborate in the life and mission of the Church. Being members of these councils involves a serious responsibility towards the life of the diocese and/or parish.

The present law of the Church, on describing the functions and composition of these Councils, qualifies also the lay faithful to be members of them.

a. *Diocesan Pastoral Council.* The diocesan Pastoral Council is a planning body, whose function, under the direction of the bishop, is to make practical proposals relative to the pastoral activity of the diocese. It is composed of members of the clergy, of institutes of consecrated life and "specially" of lay people representing the various regions, social conditions, professions and apostolates of the diocese. The members, selected by the Bishop, are to be "outstanding in firm faith, high moral standards and prudence" (c. 512 §3).

b. *Diocesan Finance Council*. In order to assist the bishop in the discharge of his duties as comptroller and guardian of all ecclesiastical property, he must set up a Finance Council composed of at least three members of the Christian faithful truly skilled in financial affairs as well as in civil law, of outstanding integrity and capable of performing such task. The members of the Finance Council, who can either be male or female, are appointed by the Bishop for a five year term; but, having completed this term, they may be named to other five year terms (c. 492).

c. *Parish Pastoral Council*. The Parish Pastoral Council is a parochial structure formed by representative members of the parish who plan and promote pastoral action within the parish territory (c. 536). Pastoral planning and decision-making are done in this participatory structure. Requirements from the members are dedication to serve the Church, firm faith, high moral standards, and prudence. Expertise and competence in a secular field on the part of the members would be helpful. The membership and its manner of operation are determined by the Bishop.

d. *Parish Finance Council*. Each parish is to have a Finance Council to help the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish (c. 537). This consultative body is composed of members of the faithful selected in accordance with diocesan norms. There seems to be nothing against the law if some members of the Pastoral Council act concurrently as members of the Finance Council or as financial consultants, assuming they are qualified for the new task and that the extra-activity will not impair their work in the Pastoral Council

JUDGES IN ECCLESIASTICAL TRIBUNALS

Lay persons have traditionally been barred from sitting in ecclesiastical courts as judges based on the commonly accepted assumption that only those in holy orders were capable of the power of governance or jurisdiction. Today, lay persons may be admitted to cooperate or share in the exercise of the power of jurisdiction (c. 129 §2) and can therefore be involved in functions heretofore reserved to clerics, for instance, as judges in ecclesiastical tribunals.

In accordance with the present law of the Church, Bishops' Conferences can permit qualified lay persons - male or female - to be appointed judges on condition there exists a need for it and that only one is appointed to form a collegiate tribunal (c. 1421 §2). Concerning the qualifications, the law adds that they "are to be of good repute,, and possess a doctorate, or at least a licentiate, in canon law" (§3).

In the Philippines, the Episcopal Conference has extended this power of appointment to diocesan bishops (and those equivalent to them in law), who "may recommend lay persons to the Catholic Bishops' Conference to be appointed judges in the ecclesiastical courts, provided that they are Catholics of unimpaired reputation and have a doctorate, or at least a licentiate, in canon law" (CB, Prot., n.35/84). The licentiate requirement may be waived in special instances, especially in favor of experts in civil law and/or with experience in ecclesiastical tribunals.

Lay persons may likewise be *advocates* and *auditors* in the ecclesiastical tribunals as well as *promoters of justice*, *defenders of the bond*, and *notaries*.

CHARITY MINISTERS

Love is at the very heart of Christian life and is the characteristic mark of Christ's disciples (*"By this they will know that you are my disciples, that you love one another."*) Of the first Christians, it was said, "Look how they love each other!" Love is likewise the main proof of authentic faith (*"If someone says that he loves God and does not love his/her brethren is a liar."*)

Today's Christians have the same challenges that come from the faith in God-love and in Jesus Christ who passed through the world doing good. And like the apostles Peter and John, who in the name of Jesus of Nazareth made the paralyzed man at the temple gate walk, our Christian communities today have only the path of love to move with hope and dignity those paralyzed by oppression and selfishness: the poor, the aged, widows, captives, slaves, lepers, abandoned children, prisoners...

Such liberating love is claimed by the Church as her own mission and right. That is why mercy to the poor and the sick, and charitable works as well as works of mutual aid for the alleviation of all kinds of human needs, are held in special honor in the Church. In words of the Second Vatican Council, "Whenever men and women are to be found who are in want of food and drink, of clothing, housing, medicine, work, education, the means necessary for leading a truly human life, wherever there are men and women racked by misfortune or illness, people suffering exile or imprisonment, Christian charity should go in search of them, find them out, and comfort them with devoted care" (AA, 8).

Great is in fact the number of Christians who generously assume the ministry of charity, serving the Lord and gaining for Him those brethren who suffer, those who live in loneliness and abandonment, and those who experience the bitter taste of death.

They do it out of love, while convinced that "it is impossible that the Lord accept worship from those who do nothing for those who suffer" (H. Camara).

However, we Christians have often been accused of making more almsgiving than justice, and even of using our almsgiving as a drug to appease our conscience rather than as a real share of goods. The eventual truth of such accusation in some particular cases does not at all decrease the value and the Church's sincere admiration for the throng of persons and institutions truly committed to the ministry of charity. By making Christ's option for the poor their own, they give the term CARITAS a new meaning, beyond being the official church organization to promote and coordinate charity and social action.

Given the close connection - at times overlapping - between charity ministries and social action apostolates, a list of related ministries and organizations will be given below under the title 'Social Action Ministries'.

SOCIAL ACTION MINISTERS

The specific mission of the laity is to transform the world into a "kingdom of justice, love, and peace." In Second Vatican Council words, *"The lay faithful seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God."*

Pope Paul VI beautifully wrote, "Evangelization, specially in the wide and complex arena of politics, sociology and economics, as well as other fields such as human love, the family, the education of children, the practice of the various professions and the relief of human suffering... *are areas where the laity are called to build up the kingdom of God and to bring salvation in Jesus Christ.*" (EN, 70)

These texts make it clear that the primary area of apostolate of the laity is not confined to the liturgical sphere within the parish church, but it rather goes to the family and the social, economic, political, cultural, and educational spheres of life. These are indeed the main arenas for the laity to exercise their apostolate, since the Church can be present there only through them. It is in these areas where the real empowerment of the laity finds its proper place.

This mission is carried out either through personal individual commitment or through involvement in some recognized church social action organization. Hence the appeal, "the laity should highly esteem and support private or public works of charity and social assistance movements, including international schemes" (AA, 8).

Some existing and emerging ministries

The list of existing Social Action ministries in the Church - closely connected with those of charity - is fast growing. In the Philippines, some of those currently recognized ministers (understanding the term in a wide sense) in this field are the following:

- Ministers for Campus Ministry, Youth, Vocations, and the Family;
- Ministers for Livelihood, Scholarship and Health programs;
- Ministers for the Poor, for the Disabled, for the Sick, for the Aged, and for the Orphans;
- Ministers for Disasters/Emergency Situations, for Fund Raising, Legal Aid, etc.

Among the *emerging* Lay Social Action ministers, worth mentioning are:

- Ministers on Parish Church Temporalities;
- Ministers on Church Construction/Preservation of Cultural Patrimony;

- Ministers on Prisoners' Welfare;
- Ministers on Mass Media
- Ministers for Public Affairs (Worship, Evangelization, Ecumenism...);
- Ministers for Sectoral Apostolates (Women, Minorities, Overseas Workers, etc.).

Other possible social action ministries could be added to the list (cf. O. Cruz, "Directory: *Lay Ministries*," pp. 101-102), in line also with the 1996 Second Provincial Council of Manila (PCM II), which envisioned a good deal of merged old and new lay apostolates and ministries.

The Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas (LAIKO)

Apart from *Caritas* - the official church organization to promote and coordinate the charity and social action of the Church - and other well-known altruistic international organizations, in the Philippine sphere, it is worth mentioning the coordinating platform of the Council of the Laity of the Philippines, renamed in 1995 as the *Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas* (LAIKO).

LAIKO concentrates on the practice of basic Christian values in three critical areas of human life: the *Home* (renewing marriage and the family, protecting the youth and children and strengthening parenthood and the sanctity of human life), the *Poor* (uplifting the marginalized and powerless spirituality and materially), and the *Future* (promoting educational, electoral and ecological integrity).

Among the apostolates of LAIKO are also those aimed to the formation of lay people according to Gospel demands; to the service of God and fellowmen in the evangelization through the various works of Worship, Service and Instruction; to utilize mass media and other forms of modern means of social communications

as an effective instrument of the lay apostolate; and to participate actively in ecumenical activities for the promotion of Christian unity (cf. *LAIKO Vision-Mission-Purpose*).

The current lay organizations under the umbrella of LAIKO in the Philippines are the following:

Adoration Nocturna

Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon Community

Apostleship of Prayer - *Apostolado ng Panalangin*

Ascending Life

Barangay ng Virgen

Bukas Loob Sa Diyos Covenant Community

Catholic Charismatic Renewal

Catholic Initiative for Enlightened Movie Appreciation

Catholic Nurses' Guild

Catholic Physicians' Guild

Catholic Youth Organization

Catholic Women's League

Catholic Teachers' Guild

Christian Family Movement

Councils of the Laity

Couples for Christ

Cursillos de Cristiandad

Daughters of Mary Immaculate International

Family Renewal Movement

Holy Name Society

Federation of Transparochial Charismatic Communities

Knights of Columbus

Ladies of Charity

Marriage Encounter Foundation

Mother Butler Mission Guilds

Sangguniang Laiko

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The *Buklod ng Pag-Ibig* Community
The Mother Butler Guild
Teresian Association
Work of Mary-Focolare Movement
Youth Christian Workers
The Children of Mary Immaculate
Etc., etc.

Such a variety of lay ministers and ministries is simply a proof of "the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibilities and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances," as the Second Vatican Council (AA, n.1) prophetically stated.

The *theology* behind this development is beautiful indeed: Incorporated into Christ through baptism, every member of the Church, whether cleric or lay, man or woman, is entitled to take an active role in the mission of the Church: "For this reason they participate *in their own way* in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each *according to his or her particular condition*, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world" (c. 204). Obviously, there are technical distinctions here that have to be properly understood; but the thread is that all Christians, without exception, share the dignity of Christ and his mission of humble service to others.

This leads us again to a better understanding of the splendid nature of the Christian *laity*: "A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart" (1 Pe 2:9), empowered, by baptism and confirmation, to carry out the specific mission of transforming the world into a "kingdom of justice, love, and peace."

Homilies for July-August 2003*

MARIO BALTAZAR, OP

July 6, 2003

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Ez 2:2-5/2 Cor 12:7-10/Mk 6:1-6)

We are familiar with the saying, "Charity begins at home." None of us will probably question the truth and wisdom of that popular saying. Unfortunately, we are also familiar with the way and frequency by which that saying is violated. So that it might be legitimate to create a parallel saying, that is, "There is no charity at home."

Thus, we speak of broken homes. We trace the origin of their brokenness to the absence of charity which, of itself can embrace limitless areas of concern but has as its starting point the home, the circle nearest to you. So we go back to the truth and wisdom of the popular saying, "Charity begins at home."

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

Can we find this saying enshrined in the Bible, which is a book full of true and wise sayings? Yes, although not in those very words. We find its equivalent in the proverb, "Doctor, heal yourself: which ironically was applied against Jesus by his very own townmates.

His acquaintances and relatives at Nazareth were also convinced, though in a perverse way, that charity should begin at home and so they expected their famous townmate to do the same wonderful things they heard about him doing in other places.

If Jesus did not accommodate the wishes of his townmates it wasn't because of lack of charity on his part, but lack of faith in their part. Mark noted that Jesus could not perform any miracle for them, even if he wanted, because of their unbelief. Earlier, the evangelist also noted that the Nazarethans did not accord Jesus the honor and respect due to God's prophets because they could not believe that anyone among their members can outstand and outshine the rest.

So here we have a dismaying instance of unbelief and mediocrity in a small community feeding one another: unbelief leading to mediocrity and mediocrity leading to unbelief. There is little hope of improvement for unbelieving and mediocre people: just as Jesus found out, to his dismay, that he could do very little for his townmates.

It is instructive to know that Jesus is not alone in experiencing disappointment from the very people he wanted to bring a message of hope and a gift of healing. In the first reading of today's Mass (Ezekiel 2), the prophet by that same name is given the thankless job of carrying God's message to a people he knew would not listen to him anyway.

Reading that book, anyone comes out with the impression that the prophet's disappointment was at inverse proportion to his love for his countrymen. The greater the love he felt for them, the deeper his dismay because of their rebellious attitude.

So also Paul, in the second reading, expressed disappointment at the vacillation of the Corinthians in their faith and at the fickleness of their loyalty to his person, despite his having founded their Christian communities. There is no lack of persons who, by duty of office or responsibility of their calling, have a genuine desire to teach others the proper way for self-improvement and to assist their fellowmen in their various needs. They are the *de-facto* prophets in our communities.

Likewise, in any of today's Christian communities, there is no lack of persons who criticize and underrate their fellowmen only because they perceive the latter's well-meaning initiatives as foils to outshine and outstand the rest. To the *de-facto* prophets in our communities, let not the rebelliousness and negativism of their fellowmen discourage them from continuing a God-given task of bringing to the world a message of hope and a gift of healing. Let them imitate the examples of Jesus, Paul and Ezekiel.

To the kibitzers and born critics in our communities, let them not imitate the rebellious people of Israel or the mediocrity of the Nazarethans or the disloyalty of the Corinthians because unbelief and mediocrity will just be feeding one another, and will perpetuate their miserable state without recognizing or being able to explain it.

Indeed, today's three bible readings offer instructive and practical lessons of Christian life for all of us.

July 13, 2003

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Amos 7:12-15/Eph 1:3-14/Mk 6:7-13)

The topic of today's three bible readings is a carry-over from that of last Sunday's readings, namely, God's prophets or messengers. Although God's messengers may run the risk of rejection, yet he persists on sending them to deliver his message to those concerned. There must be an element of urgency in God's message to explain his persistence in getting it through no matter what.

For example, in dispatching his apostles to deliver his message, Jesus Christ instructed them, "Do not take anything with you on the trip - no bread, no bag, no money in your pocket, only a walking stick." (third reading). Jesus did not want his messengers to be distracted by carrying any personal effects, no matter how essential, except the very message they have to announce.

He added during their briefing, "If you come to a town where people do not welcome you or will not listen to you, leave it and shake the dust off your feet. That will be a warning to them."

It is not a laughable thing to reject God's message which his prophets/messengers deliver. Christ is warning us against doing such thing. Eight hundred years earlier the northern half of Israel did just that. The people there rejected God's message brought by the prophet Amos (first reading). What happened to them as a result? Hostile armies invaded and destroyed their prosperous cities, their progressive and bustling institutions, their rich lands, and took whole populations into exile just as Amos had predicted.

The book of Amos is the first ever to be composed among the prophetic books of the Old Testament. It consists only of nine chapters which you can read between a quarter to half an hour. But I can assure you those minutes will glide by unconsciously as the vividness of imagery, the vehemence and starkness of style grip your attention, the rare beauty of poetic form in which the prophecies are couched. The wonder of this all is that Amos had been all his lifetime, just a shepherd and a caretaker of fig trees.

Listen to some samplings of the strong language Amos directed to his countrymen in the North, "You people hate anyone who challenges injustice and speaks the whole truth in court. You persecute good men, take bribes and prevent the poor from getting justice in the courts." Listen to this other one, "You stretch out (your bodies) on luxurious couches, feasting on veal and lamb. You like to compose songs and play them on harps. You drink wine, by the bowlful and use the finest perfumes."

To the merchants of his time, Amos leveled this serious charge, "You say to yourselves, we cannot wait for the holy days of obligation to be over so that we can start selling again. Then we can overcharge, use false measures, and fix the scale to cheat our customers. We can sell spoiled wheat at a high price." Don't these words ring a bell in our own times and in our societies?

Amos does not spare the women their share of condemnation. Listen to this, "You women of Samaria, who grow fat like the well-fed cows of Bashan, who mistreat the weak, oppress the poor, and demand that your husbands keep you supplied with liquor."

Understandably, the people resented Amos for delivering such messages and branded him *persona-non-grata*. He was a disturber of the *status quo* in the life of comfort and absorbing pursuits they were accustomed to at the expense of charity and

justice. They asked for his deportation to his native village of Tekoa in the South. When Amos left, so too their chance for reform and survival disappeared.

Finally, in the second reading, another spokesman of God brings a message for us. Although Paul, on occasions, use fighting words like Amos, this time however, he has a good news, actually a hymn of praise to God with strong baptismal references about sonship, forgiveness of sins, incorporation to Christ, and the mark of the Holy Spirit.

This hymn directly praises God for having revealed his hidden plan to make Christ the head of a new brotherhood of men embracing Jew and Gentile alike. But it also fills our hearts with joy, courage and a resolve to reciprocate God's initiatives of love with a life of love for him and for the brethren in return.

July 20, 2003

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Jer 23:1-6/Eph 2:13-18/Mk 6:30-34)

As you perhaps can recall, last Sunday's gospel reading told us how Jesus sent his apostles to neighboring towns and villages to preach repentance and to cure the sick. This was the apostles' first, and sort of exploratory, mission. On returning from this assignment, the apostles briefed Jesus on what they had done and taught to the people. Apparently the mission was a success for thereafter many people started to form crowds around Jesus and his apostles, taking much of their time to the extent of missing their meals.

So that they could be alone by themselves and get their much-needed rest after their missionary trips, Jesus took his

apostles to a lovely place by boat. But the people ran along the coast and got ahead of them to the place they were going. Getting out of the boat, Jesus saw the milling crowd of eager and expectant people. He then felt great pity for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things, as Mark concluded his gospel story in today's third reading.

Crowd-phenomenon is something we see, every now and then. The reason may be a special event, or a special person as more frequently happens. For good or for bad, these are persons who possess charisma and easily draw crowds around them and get attention. I think, for example, of film actors and actresses, TV personalities, beauty queens, famous singers and concert groups when any of them make personal appearances, crowds are easily formed.

Or take the dictators of a generation or two ago, who heaped upon their people and others the scourges of war, they were highly gifted speakers, crowd-gatherers and spellbinders. Using their personal charisma, they galvanized their people to a united action for territorial expansion and conquest only to end in defeat and unto sufferings.

Jeremiah, in today's first reading, laid the blame of his people's misery upon the rulers of his time. This was the worse period in the history of Israel in terms of turbulence, confusion, violence and sufferings. Although the people were not entirely innocent, Jeremiah's accusation was directed mainly against the rulers. They were supposed to have taken care of the people. Instead they have scattered them and were responsible for their being driven away into exile. They, the people, were like sheep without a shepherd.

Although the history of Israel in Jeremiah's time has much to teach us about, we are more interested in Jeremiah's prediction. He announced that in time, God would give his people a king who will rule wisely and justly. When this king will appear, the people of Judah will be safe, and the people of Israel will live in peace. His name will be called, "the Lord our Justice" or "the Lord our salvation." You do not need to think hard to be able to say that Jeremiah's prediction of a king came true in the person of Jesus Christ. This is what Mother Church seems to want us to conclude when she brings together on this Sunday the first and the third readings.

Meanwhile, Paul in today's second reading, tells us that this king, this Jesus whose name is "the Lord our Justice," reconciled and united in his kingdom not only Judah and Israel (then separated and even opposed to each other) but also all Jews and Gentiles, i.e. all mankind so that all will be safe and live in peace, as Jeremiah put it.

All human beings crave for security and peace. The tragedy of it is that humanity's more gifted members, who therefore are in a position to lead and to rule, do not always have a true idea of security and peace. In the clash of opinions and programs, instead of them giving you a sense of security you get feelings of anxiety; instead of peace you get troubles and divisions.

But Christ does not disappoint. As the second reading says, "Christ brought us peace... By means of the cross he united all races into one new people and brought all back to God. It was through him that we are able to come into the presence of the Father." The important thing, therefore, is that we remain faithful to him, that we follow him wherever he goes. He is our shepherd and we are his sheep. We do not want to be like sheep without a shepherd again.

July 27, 2003

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: 2 Kg 4:42-44/Eph 4:1-6/Jn 6:1-15)

Food is humanity's great concern and for some, it is a life and death issue, let us admit it. It swallows more than half the income of a family wage earner whether computed daily, weekly or monthly. He/she tries to lessen the food budget to cover other needs like house rent, electricity and water bills, clothings, medicines, education, and transportation. And what does he/she get? Malnutrition!

I think, it is not only ignorance of proper food preparation but also a low income that is responsible for widespread malnourishment in our country. Some people blame it on the country's high birth rate. We need not involve ourselves on who or what's to blame for the widespread phenomenon of malnutrition.

We also agree that food is a great concern for all peoples. The government's rise or fall is based on the issue of whether their people can have their three square meals daily, at least in democratically organized societies which elect their governments. If you are an aspiring candidate for the next elections and you truly assure the people that they will have food in abundance at cheaper price to boot so that they would not have to spend most of their earnings on this single item, be sure they will consider you when the time comes for casting their votes.

The Galileans, who were miraculously fed by Jesus in their thousands from only five loaves of bread and two fishes, thought of doing just that. They wanted to make him king even by force, as the third reading (John 6) narrates. Jesus, however, resisted

them because their intention was not really to follow and obey him as king, but to manipulate him so that they can have their regular meals all the time without any toil or labor on their part.

Earlier to this story, some 800-900 years back, the great prophet Elisha also multiplied 20 loaves of bread to feed hundreds of his fellow prophets (first reading). These two bible stories do not teach that we should rely on miracles to provide ourselves with steady food supply. It is more proper for technology to take care of multiplying food, so that there will be enough for everybody.

What today's two readings do teach is that we should also pay attention to the miracle of miracles which is the Holy Mass, the Eucharist, where God feeds us with the truth and the life that really matters. Indeed, the two stories of multiplication of bread by Jesus and Elisha include references and expressions that hark to the liturgical language and actions we use in our celebration of the Holy Mass.

Let us not be so taken by the admittedly almost miraculous power of technology in most areas of human life that we tend to forget that God is present in every area, big or small. Technology should not elbow out religion from our consciousness and daily concerns as if God has become irrelevant and disposable.

St. Paul would protest strongly against this. In fact, he says in today's second reading, "There is-one God and Father of all mankind, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all. I urge you, then, live a life that measures up to the standard God set when he called you.

In Galilee, the people came in big crowds to listen to Jesus, and were fed by him to their full satisfaction. In our Christian

Churches, it would be a miracle if all Christians attended Mass to listen to his Word and receive his Body. Is natural bread more desirable than spiritual bread? Would there be more Christians receiving Holy Communion if it is given in the form of *pan de sal*, buns, ensaimada or donut than in the simple form of a white host. If that happens, then we would be more sad than happy because it would mean we rely more on our physical senses than on our faith. Let us resolve to be better than the Galileans who wanted to be with Jesus for just the temporal things he could give and not for the spiritual bread of wisdom and of life eternal he is offering to everyone.

August 3, 2003

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Ex 16:2-4, 12-15/Eph 4:17, 20-24/Jn 6:24-35)

I am intrigued no end by the answer Jesus gave to the Galileans. They asked him when and how he arrived at the place where they found him. In their human calculation, they could not explain how he ever got to Capernaum well ahead of them.

You or anybody would feel flattered to know that crowds of people are intently looking for you. However, Jesus was not quite happy to know that the Galileans had been looking for him. For he said this in answer to their question, "You are looking for me, not because you understood my miracles but because you ate the bread I multiplied and you had all you wanted."

Jesus was disappointed with them for failing to understand the miracle of the multiplication of the bread. For sure, they were ocular witnesses to the miracle. But seeing it done was not enough. They should have understood that the multiplied bread pointed to Jesus as the living bread, the bread from heaven, that bread which the Father gave for the life of the world.

But the Galileans did not see a deeper meaning in the miraculous bread, other than that it satisfied their hunger. How often have we not also disappointed Jesus by failing to understand the deeper meaning of miracles happening everyday before our very eyes? If we did, we would frequently thank him for them.

But no. We take for granted his miracles just as the Galileans. It is not recorded that they thanked Jesus for the multiplication of the bread. Probably, they really did not thank him. What is written in the gospel is that they tried to seize him and make him king by force, so that they could have the bread all the time and for free.

We are faced with miracles on every side. Is it not a miracle that the sun rises with unfailing regularity from behind our mountains to signal to men and beasts alike the start of a new day? Is it not a miracle that rains still fall on our land, even though we have denuded it of trees and forests? Is it not a miracle to find fish in our rivers and seas, although we have relentlessly polluted them with our carelessness and greed? Is it not a miracle to see smiling faces in frail children, although we have toxified the air they breathe; strewn with garbage and potholes the roads they walk; endangered with drugs, pedophiles, sex and kidnappers the environment they live in? Above all, is it not a miracle to find ourselves still alive each morning we wake up to start a new busy and worrying day?

According to the first reading (Ex 16), the Israelites felt hunger when they reached a desert place in the Sinai peninsula. They had experienced the awesome power of God when they left Egypt two months ago. Instead of humbly asking God to help them in their present problem, they blamed him bitterly for seemingly allowing them to starve to death.

Despite their unworthiness, God fed them miraculously with manna from heaven, everyday for the next forty years they wandered in the deserts of Sinai. For a full generation, the miracle of the manna repeated itself daily; yet the Israelites never understood its deeper meaning, and they never learned to stop complaining against God every time they met difficulties.

The Israelites lost the capacity to feel wonder and thrill at God's miracle in its daily occurrence. Have we also lost the capacity to feel wonder and thrill at Holy Mass where Jesus, the bread from heaven, the real manna, the bread of life from the Father, comes down to us? Let us follow the advice of Paul in the second reading (Eph 4) before that incapacity of appreciating God's miracles overtakes us completely. He says there, "Get rid of your old self; you must put on the new self which is created in God's image, and is upright and holy."

August 10, 2003

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: 1 Kg 19:4-8/Eph 4:30-5:2/Jn 6:41-51)

If we are perceptive individuals and use our head intelligently, we can profit, not only from the correct actions of others, but also from their mistakes. Good actions lead to their imitation by others. This is the so-called multiplier-effect of good examples. They carry within them the seed of goodness. On the other hand, mistakes can lead also to good, not on their own dynamics but on the rebound, as they say, by causing repugnance on others who would not like to replicate those mistakes.

Thus, the bible records not only the good examples of individual persons or nations but also their mistakes, wrongdoing and sins because perceptive and intelligent readers can derive

profit from them. The third reading (John 6) is a confirmation of what I am stating. It narrates the running controversy between Jesus and the Jews wherein, on the one hand, Jesus is trying to put across the truth that he, in fact is the bread of life, the bread from heaven; while on the other hand, the Jewish crowds insist on denying it.

This is a serious mistake on their part, which the bible records for us so that we may avoid it with repugnance, and we may be alert to expose this mistake in whatever disguise it may assume to deceive peoples. Let me show you where the error lies because it squats side by side with truth, hence it's the more dangerous the more it can masquerade as truth. The dispute between Jesus and his opponents opened with forceful affirmations from both sides. Jesus says, "I am the living bread from heaven." The Jews say, "How can you say you come from heaven, when we know your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters, and your occupational background. You are just a carpenter, a woodworker of Nazareth."

Their evaluation of Jesus was based on observation with their five senses. So, how can they be mistaken? To ascribe to Jesus an origin other than the commonplace, the ordinary, is to deny the five senses their certitude and reliability as tools of knowledge. Who can gainsay this? God has provided us with the five senses so that through them we can gain knowledge. But one thing is to say that the five senses are tools for knowledge and another thing is to say they are the exclusive tools for knowledge.

And this is the "original sin", the great mistake, of our modern culture and of the ancient Jews. We are giving exclusive and blanket authority to the five senses to shape our world and our life. Whatever cannot be apprehended by our senses is relegated to the background and promptly ignored.

The Jews thought they knew Jesus thoroughly about his plebeian origin, and so, they were not just about to submit themselves as obedient disciples. They were completely mistaken on two counts: first, no one knows the Son except the Father and those to whom the Father chooses to reveal him. Second, no one can come to Jesus as a follower unless the Father draws him to Jesus.

Our five senses or six, as we are being told, can never comprehend the deeper meaning of the words where Jesus says he's the living bread that came down from heaven. And as long as we allow our senses to dominate our thinking and to shape our lives, we will never feel drawn to Jesus. It is only the Father not our human faculties, that draw us to his Son.

Breaking the dominion of the flesh and the senses would require more than human efforts to succeed. Fortunately, the other two readings suggest that such help is available to us. Elijah was able to reach Mount Horeb for his safety on the strength of the bread he was miraculously fed with. That bread symbolizes the Eucharist, which is the bread for the strong. Paul, on his part, urges us to allow the Holy Spirit to take possession of us. For he, the Holy Spirit, is God's mark of ownership over us, the guarantee that God will set us free from the domination of the senses.

August 17, 2003

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Prov 9:1-6/Eph 5:15-20/Jn 6:51-58)

You can notice that all three bible readings today contain an invitation to partake of some kind of dinner or banquet. Now, there are people who, at the very mention of food, perk up and

lend you their attention. Just like what happens to some watchers of TV programs when suddenly advertisements of food are flashed before their eyes.

However, before you start to think that today, we are going to learn some recipes for food preparation, let me tell you right away that we are talking here not the kind of food you normally expect, although mention is made of meat, bread, spiced drinks and wine.

It is instead about knowledge and wisdom which, under the symbol of food, we are being invited to partake. Don't we say that knowledge is food for the mind? The three bible readings go even farther. They say knowledge is life for the man! So we go from food to wisdom to life. What a heady flight. And because it is about eternal life, undying, endless life that is at discussion here, it follows that we are not talking about ordinary wisdom nor ordinary food. They are all about very lofty matters, dizzying topics, and we need to make use of common expressions and symbols in order to comprehend them. And that takes us back to food.

There is one more reason why the bible has chosen the symbol of dinner or banquet as a tool to instruct us on the lofty subject of wisdom and life. An invitation to partake of food is a standard social sign that someone is taking you into his confidence, is establishing with you a relationship of intimacy, friendship and love.

In brief, an invitation to partake of food is a sign of shared life, like that of a family gathered at mealtime. On the part of the host, the one tendering the invitation, it is a sign of benevolence and gratuitousness. On the part of the guest, of the one being invited, it is a mark of honor and special privilege.

This is especially true when this social exchange takes place between persons of disparate dignity or position. If the host is, for example, God who invites you to partake of his food, the gesture is utterly gratuitous and benevolent. A refusal on the part of the human guest would be an ungrateful act of the ugliest kind. It is tantamount to snubbing an offer of shared life with God.

With these remarks, it is now easy to deduce from the three readings what God really wants from us. Thus, with respect to the first reading (Prov 9), God wants us to learn his own brand of wisdom so that we can share in his life. To refuse his invitation is equivalent to taking the way of folly and madness, which precludes the attainment of eternal life.

In the second reading (Eph 5), Paul says that if drink we must, let us drink instead the Holy Spirit and not get drunk with wines, inferior by comparison, and which get us into trouble. Under the influence of liquor, a person becomes irrepressibly talkative and musically dissonant. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Christian (writes Paul) speaks with the words of the Psalms and hymns; and sings sacred songs with praise in his heart.

Now we come to the peak of our discussions, viz. the theme of the living bread in the third reading (John 6). What is spectacular about this bread is that it is not only a bread that is alive but also it gives eternal life. Another spectacular thing about it is that here, the symbol of food, meat and drink does not remain a mere symbol but becomes a stark reality. We have in fact the body of Christ as food and his blood as drink which eat and drink we must, to have eternal life.

The opponents of Jesus found his statements scandalous, foolish, and impossible to accept. So do his opponents in modern times. But that's how divine wisdom operates. As St. Paul would write elsewhere (1 Cor 1:25), "What seems to be God's fool-

ishness is wiser than human wisdom. For God in his wisdom made it impossible for people to know him by the standard of their own wisdom. Instead, by means of the so-called "foolish" message we preach, God decided to save those who believe."

August 24, 2003

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Jos 24:1-2,15-17,18/Eph 5:21-32/Jn 6:60-69)

The first and third readings of today's Mass bring to mind that at certain periods in life, one is challenged to make crucial decisions that will shape the rest of his/her life's course. It is like when you reach a crossroads where you have to decide which to choose, whether the one on your left or the other on your right, either of which leads to an unknown destination.

Of course, one could just sit down at the crossroads, fearful of making up his/her mind, or having chosen, one does not pursue it to the end and retraces his/her steps in cowardice. One needs to pray for discernment and prudence to make a right decision, to beg for courage and strength to remain steady on the chosen course.

We make small choices and decisions several times in a day, but occasions requiring really big decisions do not happen frequently in one's lifetime. It would be unfortunate, however, to fail in discerning the presence of those occasions because it could involve missing up a golden opportunity for something great.

Thus, we hear in the first reading that the 12 tribes of Israel have reached a crossroads in their history, when they must make a crucial decision. Joshua made it plain to them. He showed how God, from ancestral times down to that moment of their

gathering at Shechem in central Canaan, had treated Israel with unmistakable signs of predilection and concern in exchange for their fidelity and devotion.

Now, therefore, would Israel want to continue worshipping and serving the only true God, or would they want to go back to Haran in Mesopotamia or perhaps to Egypt where people worshipped strange and false gods? That was the crucial moment. That was the time to make a big decision.

No different is the situation we see and hear about in the third reading (John 6). Jesus had been interacting tirelessly with the Galilean crowds, especially with his disciples through teaching, healing, pardoning and even feeding. Then there came a moment, apropos his discourse on the bread of life, when the disciples had to make a crucial decision: whether or not to accept his teaching that in order to gain eternal life one must receive his flesh as real food and his blood as real drink.

Taking scandal over this matter, the majority of his disciples made the fatal decision of rejecting his teaching and his friendship. They stopped being his disciples anymore. Whereupon, he turned to the few remaining disciples and asked whether they, too, would want to go away. Peter answered on behalf of the tiny group, "Lord, to whom else shall we go; you alone have the words of eternal life."

Now we understand, with a good basis, why Mother Church inserted the seemingly unrelated teaching on married life (Ephes. 5) between two readings that deal on crucial human decisions. The choice of marrying is one of those few big crossroads decisions that a man/woman makes, which will shape the orientation and outcome of his/her succeeding years.

Such decision is done after a fair amount of prayer for discernment and prudence, and once the choice is made, it has to be pursued to the end, accompanied again by prayer for courage and strength. In this way we can have a marriage for life, or as couples say on their wedding day, "for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, until death do us part." But it is this kind of marriage for life that will blossom into eternal life by virtue of the sacrament that Christian couples received.

August 31, 2003

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time Cycle B

(Readings: Dt 4:1-2, 6-8/Jas 1:17-18, 21-22, 27/Mk 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23)

The letter of James, from which today's second reading was drawn, is a little known work. But the passages we heard from it will make it known better to us, especially its author. For he makes such powerful statements in the brief passages that were selected for today's reading. Its first sentences were either personally composed by him or (which is more probable) he was quoting from a baptismal hymn current in his time.

For example, he says that God, who created the heavenly bodies of light, does not change or alter. James wishes to say that the changeless God can never be shadowed over, even though that could happen to the bodies of light he had created. What God is, that he will ever be. If he is good (and James strongly states so), he will always remain good. On this premise, James makes another profound statement, "Every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit, ultimately comes from God." You may have received something good from your wife, your husband, your parent, your friend, but ultimately it came from God who put goodness in their hearts to make them give you those presents.

In fact, when in the beginning of time, God created those heavenly luminaries; they were his first gifts (tokens of his goodness) for humankind that eventually would appear.

Though James spoke of heavenly bodies of light, he was not an "aficionado" of astronomy, but foremost a preacher, a church leader and teacher of souls. Since he is quoting from a baptismal hymn, sung during baptisms where lights and candles are used, he must be speaking concurrently about the more perfect light than the ones we see with our eyes. Indeed, he identifies this mysterious light with the "word of truth" when he states further on in this second reading that God, always wanting to dispense good gifts and perfect presents, "by his own will brought us into being through the Word of Truth, so that we should have first place among his creatures."

It is in the light of James' understanding of the "Word of Truth" that we take up the remaining first and third readings of today's Mass. According to the Book of Deuteronomy (first reading), God has set apart a people for himself (the Israelites) to whom he gave the "Word of Truth", the Law as their badge and credentials by which nations can acknowledge them as a people called to a superior morality and privileged position.

Hence, in his valedictory address, Moses exhorted the people to keep faithfully the "Word of God", the Law, not adding anything extraneous or taking away anything essential. Moses, in today's first reading, could not have delivered a better farewell sermon for he personally had taught and communicated God's greatest gift to the people - His Word, the "Word of Truth."

In the third reading (Mark 7) is a contest, a pitch-battle between the "Word of God" and the "word of man", each struggling to win the allegiance of men's hearts and minds. On the one side, stands the newly founded Christian church, shepherded

by Peter on its pilgrim journey to the homeland, and illuminated by the "Word of Truth." On the other side, stands the ultra-conservative group of Pharisees with their baggage of intricate rules and regulations, traditions and practices, for which they demanded equal, if not more, respect and observances.

The first century pitch-battle between the "Word of God" and the "word of man" continued down the centuries to our times, and will always be around in the future. We, in turn, cannot avoid taking sides in many instances of faith and moral issues. We will have to choose who should guide us through life's crises and problems, whether the "Word of God" or the rules and opinions of men. If you choose the former, do not expect God to change his Word to conform to the opinion of men, for according to James, God does not change. If you choose the latter, the rules and opinions of men, then may God help you because you are exposing yourself to danger.

So if Jesus said in his time that adultery, fornication, theft, murder, greed, maliciousness, deceit, sensuality, envy, blasphemy, arrogance were evils and rendered a man impure, also in our own times those acts continue to be evil and wicked. Like a tiger who does not change its spots, those acts will destroy the goodness in our souls and prevent us from entering the kingdom of our Father.