

TERESA OF CALCUTTA: BEATA  
*Vicente Cajilig, OP*

NEWLY CANONIZED SAINTS  
*Comboni Missionaries*

THE EUCHARIST, THE ROSARY, AND  
MOTHER FRANCISCA DEL ESPIRITU **SAI\* TO**  
*Sabino Vengco, Jr.*

THE VENERATION OF THE  
HOLY MOTHER OF GOD  
*Victor Bendico*

ADOLPH KOLPING: A MODEL  
IN TODAY'S CHURCH  
*Kolping Society Philippines, Inc.*



# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

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*Table of Contents*

|  |     |  |
|--|-----|--|
| <b>NOTES FROM<br/>THE EDITOR</b>   | 710 | TERESA OF CALCUTTA: BEATA  |
| <b>PASTORAL WORDS</b>  |     |  |
| <i>Leonardo Legaspi, OP, DD</i>  | 714 | HOMILY ON THE FORMAL<br>OPENING OF THE CAUSE FOR<br>CANONIZATION OF MOTHER<br>FRANCISCA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO |
| <i>Sabino Vengco, Jr.</i>  | 725 | THE EUCHARIST, THE ROSARY,<br>AND MOTHER FRANCISCA DEL<br>ESPIRITU SANTO                                   |
| <i>Victor Bendico</i>  | 731 | THE VENERATION OF THE<br>HOLY MOTHER OF GOD  |
| <b>DOCUMENTATION</b>   |     |  |
| <i>John Paul II</i>  | 752 | ADDRESS TO THE PILGRIMS<br>GATHERED IN ROME FOR THE<br>CANONIZATION OF THREE<br>NEW SAINTS                 |
| <i>Comboni Missionaries</i>  | 755 | NEWLY CANONIZED SAINTS   |
| <i>Kolping Society<br/>Philippines, Inc.</i>   | 767 | ADOLPH KOLPING: A MODEL<br>IN TODAY'S CHURCH   |
| <i>Congregation for the<br/>Doctrine of the Faith</i>                                      | 111 | CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING<br>PROPOSALS TO GIVE LEGAL<br>RECOGNITION TO UNIONS<br>BETWEEN HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS |
| <b>CONSULTATIVE WORDS</b>  |     |  |
| <i>Javier Gonzalez, OP</i>   | 784 | THE SACRED PALLIUM   |
| <b>GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW</b>   |     |  |
| <i>Efren Rivera, OP</i>  | 787 | HOMILETIC & BIBLIARASAL<br>POINTERS FOR JANUARY-<br>FEBRUARY 2004  |
| <b>INDEX OF VOL. LXXVIII,<br/>NOS. 834-835-836-837-838-839<br/>(January-December 2003)</b> | 819 |  |

## **Teresa of Calcutta: BEATA**

**VICENTE CAJILIG, OP**

*Beatification of Mother Teresa  
Vatican City*

Her face dominates St. Peter's Square in Rome. Her smile is exotic and uplifting. All clap their hands as the Holy Father announces this morning (October 19, 2003) that Mother Teresa of Calcutta (Gonxha Agnes) is listed among the blessed in the Catholic Church.

My coming to Rome is in a way a gift from her. It was only in September when the Spaniard Fr. Francisco Andreo (the founder of the Missionary Community of St. Paul the Apostle - MCSPA), working in Kenya and Ethiopia, invited me to visit Spain. I told him I really desired to be present at the beatification of Mother Teresa in Rome. Thus, with his financial help, I made up my mind to go first to Spain, then to Rome in order to attend the beatification of one who chose to serve the poorest of the poor.

Twice I physically met Mother Teresa in Manila at the University of Santo Tomas. But many more times I have met her in other ways through her missionary sisters and through letters. Through her sisters: time and again. I would visit the place of the sick and dying, in Tayuman, and in the orphanage they run at the foot of Del Pan bridge, in Manila. Whenever I visit a country, I manage to visit their centers: in Karachi, in Moscow, in Rome, in New Mexico, etc. I also met the Sisters in Adis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Upon her death five years ago, as editor of the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, I wrote an editorial about her possible beatification. I also published a prayer she had sent to me earlier.

In the Synod of Bishops for Asia, in 1998, I was sitting very near Sr. Mary Nirmala Joshi, MC, the one chosen to be Mother Teresa's successor as superior of the Missionaries of Charity. She echoed in the Synodal Hall what was in my heart and I guess in the hearts of many: the request that Mother Teresa be beatified as soon as possible.

Now at the ceremony of her beatification, a flood of mixed emotions invades me: of satisfaction; of reminiscence of our meetings; the straightforward tone of her letter to me about how priests should be; her smile; the memories of others... - all come at the same time. With me at the mass, is Fr. Jacob Gomes, from the Archdiocese of Dhaka, Bangladesh, my student in the faculty of theology of the University of Santo Tomas, in Manila who in a low voice tells me: "I remember the seven occasions I met her." Another person near me is Fr. Paul Murray, a professor of spirituality at the Angelicum, in Rome. He does not say anything, but his

admiration for the newly beatified saint can be seen from his face.

The beatification ceremonies go on as foreseen: the introduction is a sort of narration of the life and work of the blessed Mother Teresa. Her prayers echo in the huge *piazza* and in all the sixty channels of television from all around the world, not to count the radios that report the event as it happens. The singing focuses on the theme: *service*. For Mother Teresa is a servant of the poor, of the Church, of all. I am told that all in India, regardless of religious persuasions, are excited about the occasion: so count the Hindus, the Muslims, the Buddhists, etc.

A short biography of her life is read: she would have been embarrassed to admit all said of her, should she had been present. Six hundred foundations in 120 countries are attributed to her. This might have not been that important for her. What she would have considered more important for her was her casual and even uneventful meeting with people of all walks of life. She has become now their model of conviction and service. I remember Mr. Don Hill, Chairman of SWYX Power Telephony International on the previous evening, I met him in a restaurant near St. Peter's Square. Affirmed by his wife, Don told his story and about his work with the Missionaries of Charity in England, in Albania, and in Africa. They volunteered to interact with Msgr. Bernardito Auza, a friend, and Mr. Fernando Belmonte Jr., a staff in our office, as we enjoyed our Italian *Tavola Calda*. Excelling in commerce as livelihood, Don emphasized: "Money is nothing, we use it for God's purpose."

As the thousands and thousands in the huge *piazza* look at the newly unraveled white and blue icon of Mother Teresa, I wonder over the diverse experiences of all those people witnessing the beatification rites.

It seems that on this occasion the usual strong protagonism of the main celebrant, the Holy Father John Paul II, has been eclipsed. Who truly seems to be the center of attention is a humble servant of Jesus, Teresa, who professed her faith in the love of the Father and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

The expression of awe and wonder, the experience of inner silence in all, even amidst the intermittent shouts of jubilation from the groups of pilgrims, the solemnity of songs, the loftiness of eucharistic consecration, and the declaration of Mother Teresa as one of the blessed in the Catholic Church compose a tapestry of human and spiritual experiences impossible to express in words: all due to a woman, missionary *par excellence*.

The beatification rightly takes place in the day dedicated to missions. It is the Mission Sunday of the year 2003. What better way of letting known the vocation for mission than to honor a Missionary of Charity, raised in a village in Albania, who started her first foundation in Calcutta, and now is venerated in all parts of the world by the rich and the poor, by Hindus and Muslims alike! Her mission is for peace. If only all the money recently spent in Bosnia, Macedonia, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Israel, Iraq, etc, would have been channeled thru projects like the one of Mother Teresa, then peace could have been given a better chance to prevail.

# **Homily on the Formal Opening of the Cause for Canonization of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo**

**LEONARDO LEGASPI, OP, DD**

## ***Introduction***

"In the city of Manila, there were always some pious women wearing the habit of our Father St. Dominic who, while living in their houses, set good examples to others. Among them were Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo..."

Those of you who are members or friends of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena will recognize with deep reverence these opening words of the *Breve Relacion*, these were written with affection and sincere conviction by Fr. Juan

\* A homily delivered by His Grace, the Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D., Archbishop of Caceres during the Formal Opening of the Cause for Canonization of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo held at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City on July 8, 2003 [Tuesday], at 9:00 o'clock a.m.



de Sto. Domingo of whom it was noted that he was "the moving soul and constant animator" of the first community of your Institute.

On this happy occasion which ushers in the formal opening of the Processes of Beatification and Canonization of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo, O.P., it is vital that we recall the purpose behind the writing of this historical *Breve Relacion*, namely, in the words of Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo: "I wrote this *Relacion* so that the beginnings of this *Beaterio* be known."

Without a vibrant and intimate knowledge of beginnings as a member of the Dominican Family, you would not be able to fully grasp the essence of your vocation. For it is in our origins that we discover those charisms which constitute unique identity and which we are bound to preserve and nourish through succeeding generations. Therefore, you must not permit this knowledge of your noble lineage to be lost, as it once was for two hundred years when the *Breve Relacion* lay sadly neglected in the dust of our Archives.

### ***A Praying Community***

This morning, let our imagination roam back 300 years ago to the narrow streets of Intramuros where the first Beaterio stood in a small house donated by the widow of a Spanish Captain. The first concern of the five pioneering *Beatas* was to remodel the house so that an oratory could be provided. To have a proper oratory - this was their priority concern because it would give them the seclusion and silence they needed for

their meditation and spiritual exercises which they did even at midnight.

Fidelity to the Rosary was another historical hallmark of your founding community. The Rosary was recited collectively at the *prie-dieu* reserved for them in the Chapel of St. Rose located in the Convent of Sto Domingo. There is an interesting prescription authored by Fray Juan when he limited the number of *Beatas* to fifteen. Why only fifteen? It was to honor the 15 mysteries which the Most Holy Rosary commemorates. Accordingly, each *Beata* was assigned a mystery whose lessons and virtues she was to specialize in and internalize as her spirituality.

But above all, the first *Beatas* could be described as a community centered on the Eucharist. It was their devotion to the Eucharist which was the source of their vocation, for as the *Relacion* noted, long before their formal entry into the religious life, "These *Beatas* frequented the sacraments in our convent of St. Dominic, setting a good example of humility and devotion. "Though they lived in a period when frequent Communion was not promoted by the Church, still the *Beatas* were permitted to receive the Eucharist twice a month during Advent and Lent. The Eucharist accompanied them throughout their religious life until the hour of their death. When your Mother Francisca was in her final agony, Fray Juan narrated how she received Holy Communion with supreme joy..." We can apply to them the words of invitation addressed by Pope John Paul II to consecrated persons in the Third Millennium: "My dearest ones, encounter him and contemplate him in a very special way in the Eucharist, celebrated and adored every day as source and summit of existence and apostolic action.

## *Disciples of the Crucified Christ*

Our reading of the *Relacion* has shown us thus far two characteristics of your founding community. Prayer animated their interior life. Intense communion of the Eucharist held a central position in their spirituality. There is a third characteristic - at the heart of their vocation was the acceptance of the Cross.

They were not strangers to the sufferings of the Cross. Like their Crucified Lord, they experienced humiliation and rejection. They were caught in the middle of two quarreling ecclesiastical authorities. Great was their pain on being denied the Eucharist as a result of their excommunication by the Archbishop of Manila. They were ignominiously packed off to exile, forbidden to wear their religious habits and arbitrarily dispensed from their vows of obedience and poverty.

This was a painful period in your early history. Temptations to abandon their vocation disturbed their relationships. Fidelity to their prayer life weakened and some gave in to distractions brought about by long, gossipy chatter with visitors. Mother Francisca complained to Fray Juan that the *Beatas* no longer felt obliged to obey her since they had been dispensed of their vows. This greatly saddened Fray Juan as he witnessed dissent and frivolity weakening the foundation of his beloved *Beaterio*.

But in the end, the patience and perseverance of Mother Francisca, were rewarded. The author of the *Relacion* quotes Mother Francisca as saying: "God cannot be resisted." And he adds his own reflections: "If God made this *Beaterio*, as I believe He did, only if the *Beatas* did not live as they should, will ruin the *Beaterio*."

## *Rooted in Dominican Spirituality*

The *Beatas* did not ruin the *Beaterio* because they strove to "live as they should." But it was not easy for them to "live as they should" for they had hardly settled down when they were confronted with formidable adversities and a bitter persecution authored by the very persons from whom they naturally would expect consolation and understanding. Some could not accept the tribulations of their exile and parted ways from the community. But with Mother Francisca, a small band of *Beatas* stood fast and faithful in their vocation. Their fidelity and holiness shone like a light in that dark period. What kind of spirituality did they possess which enabled them to surmount these early vexations?

Surely, it would be of great interest to you, today's sisters of the Congregation which produced these saintly religious, to know a little more about the spiritual values and practices which animated their lives and enabled them "to live as they should." Fray Juan's accounts on the *Beatas'* spirituality are brief and sparse. He wrote more about his admonitions to them, counseling them not to waste time chatting with visitors. Instead "they should talk only about God... with much humility, sobriety and prudence..."

Did Fray Juan, the busy Prior and Provincial, President of Letran and Vicar of Sta. Catalina, find time to record some of the conferences he gave the *Beatas*? We have to be satisfied with glimpses of the conferences and spiritual retreats given the *Beatas* in his reflections during the crisis. In his chapter on Trials in Exile, he notes: "The religious state is the sure port of salvation, but it is necessary every day to perfect one's self, and increase in virtues; to be more humble every day, more

patient and obedient; persistent in prayer, limited in conversations and those only spiritual; and finally, it is necessary to advance in virtue..."

Earlier, I proposed that we allow our imagination to transport us to the ancient site where that original *Beaterio* stood. This allowed you to travel through time and become contemporaries with the key persons whose lives rooted in Christ, became the foundation of your Congregation. Hopefully this process served to deepen your understanding of your vocation. At this point, I propose that we continue our journey back to your origins, this time to listen to some of the spiritual conferences given to the *Beatas* by their venerable founder and legislator, Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo. That there is no mention of such talks in the *Relacion* should not surprise us for its author himself describes his writing as breve - brief and not comprehensive. We will need to be guided still by an imagination that is not fanciful but historical. The history of your Congregation is linked to Dominican spirituality. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Fray Juan would have given talks on St. Dominic.

The *Beatas* must have read from Fray Juan something about the personality of the founder of our Dominican Family. The words of Fr. Timothy Radcliffe when he was the Master of our Order, would not be unfamiliar to that intrepid Spanish missionary. In his book: "Sing a New Song", Fr. Radcliffe writes:

"When Dominic used to talk through villages where his life was threatened by the Albigensians, he used to sing loudly so that everyone knew he was there. The vows have any value only if they

liberate us for the mission of the Order with some of Dominic's courage and joy."

Courage and joy- - these are the Dominican virtues that the first *Beatas* were asked to cultivate by missionaries who themselves practiced them in their lives. One of them, Fr. Juan Crisostomo, OP, wrote in 1586 a Letter to Prospective Missionaries on the First Call to Dominicans to the East. He writes: "We must preach, moreover, through our life style, so that if our teaching of the doctrine does not move hearts, our lives will move all those who see us: this is the best way of teaching..." And the lives of poverty and discipline of the first Dominicans in the Philippines were mingled with that unique joy and deep sense of fulfillment that are God's gifts for those whose apostolate is to bring the Gospel to distant islands.

### *Devotion to St. Catherine of Siena*

Since it was his acknowledged devotion to St. Catherine of Siena that inspired Fray Juan to place the *Beaterio* under her patronage, he surely would have given conferences on the life of this extraordinary woman saint whom a later Pope would declare, a Doctor of the Church.

Why choose the highly intelligent and politically influential Catherine of Siena as model and patroness for native *Beatas* whose education was simple and whose social influence was insignificant? The reason for this choice as stated in the *Relacion* was simply that its author was an ardent devotee of St. Catherine.

We wonder what aspects of St. Catherine's spirituality did Fray Juan hold up for imitation by the *Beatas*? Was it her

tenderness and thoughtfulness towards her friends? Was it her fidelity and love for the Dominican way of life? Did he talk about the saint's compassion for the sick and dying to whom he ministered when a plague struck Siena? How did he describe the strong personality of this saint whose advice was followed by Popes and statesmen? Scandals in the Church grieved her sensitive heart and she did not hesitate to give counsel and to admonish even Popes and magistrates.

### *Call to Holiness*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: when the Church's declaration of the heroic holiness as witnessed in the life and mission of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo becomes official, it will signal to all that holiness knows no bounds and neither has it died in the Church. Its flame burns ever brighter, challenging each one of us. For holiness is our legacy from St. Dominic passed on to St. Catherine of Siena and handed over to Mother Francisca and who then placed this gift of holiness in your hands. It is a holiness accessible to all of us. This universal call to holiness is our common vocation "to be perfect as your Father in Heaven."

Our world needs the infusion of a "culture of holiness." The Vatican II Council underlined this call to universal holiness when it said, "all Christians in any state or walk of life, are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love." This is a holiness that is not confined within the Church but flows out to the marketplace, to factories and highways, to home and schools. In these ordinary, day-to-day settings, we shall encounter the face of Christ, radiant with God's glory and love. What a great gift to be part of this new

generation of holiness. It is ours to nourish, to live by, to die for!

Permit me now to address the daughters of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo, our Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena. Today, you are singularly happy and proud to be part of this formal opening of the process for the causes of beautification and canonization of your Venerable Mother. We admire your unflagging faith that God will not forget to make known to the world the singular holiness of your Foundress. And so you did not permit the many difficulties and disappointments you encountered in your efforts to honor this beloved Mother of your Congregation, but instead you became united in overcoming these obstacles and determined to attain the high point of this great Project - the beatification and canonization of your beloved Foundress. You truly deserve our congratulations!

Today, I made an effort to bring you back to your origins so as to fulfill the wish of the author of the *Breve Relacion* who clearly stated: "I wrote this *Relacion* so that the beginnings of this *Beaterio* will be known, and so that our Sisters will appreciate them and give thanks to our Lord who moved them to enter it."

Dear Sisters, Our Lord has moved each one of you to enter this holy Congregation. This morning's Mass provides you with the fitting and proper setting for giving thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ whose Spirit nourishes your vocation.

And there is much to appreciate and to be grateful for about your vocation. For you have entered into a historic moment of your Congregation. You stand on your Mount Tabor



- where the splendor of your vocation is revealed - the splendor of your many apostolate and educational institutions which not only are spread out all over the Philippines but have reached out to foreign lands. But this brings you also to another mount - that of Calvary where you stand beneath your crucified Lord - to face your problems, disappointments and even failures with a measure of the hope and courage of that Blessed Mother and her women companions on that blood-stained hill.

Fray Juan de Sto. Domingo wrote his *Breve Relacion* 292 years ago. Perhaps, it is time to write your own historical narrative, your *Maikling Kasaysayan*. For the next generations of Sisters who will join your Congregation will need to know, not only beginnings of the *Beaterio* but the growth and expansion of your Congregation. The next generation of Sisters will also need to know, not only the early life and works of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo, but also the life and works of the outstanding Sisters of your Congregation who, in our days, carried on with generosity, creativity and holiness the religious legacy of your vocation to the consecrated life. For, God willing, Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo shall not be the only member of your Congregation who will be honored as a model of holiness and canonized as a Saint of our times.

This contemporary story of your Congregation will look back for guidance to that document written almost three centuries ago - and will echo the concluding advice of Fray Juan de Sto. Domingo whose final paragraph of the *Relacion* reads:

"But it is necessary that all and each one seek to fulfill carefully their obligations, and thus they will live consoleji. The consolations of contemplative Sisters cannot be found except in prayers and in love of the Lord. May He keep them near Him."

It is my privilege today to make as my own that concluding advice given to the first *Beatas* by my Dominican brother, Fray Juan de Sto. Domingo in 1711 and which I now pass on to you in 2003 that you lead a prayerful Life and be faithful in the love of the Lord. I also began by quoting the opening line in the *Breve Relacion*, namely: "In the city of Manila....

Please God, that in the not so distant future, we shall again be listening to those familiar opening words: "In the city of Manila..." to which shall be added: ...Today, in a solemn ceremony, the Holy Father raised to the altars - SANTA FRANCISCA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO!"

# **The Eucharist, the Rosary, and Mother Francisca Del Espiritu Santo**

**SABINO VENGCO, JR.**

A recent local event that took place last July 8, 2003, presaging another milestone in the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, is the formal opening of the process for the causes of beatification and canonization of the servant of God, Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo. Interestingly this 18<sup>th</sup> century Filipina beata personifies deep intimacy with the Eucharist and primal devotion to the Rosary, two inestimable treasures of the Church also recently presented for our renewed attention and reflection by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *"Ecclesia de Eucharistia"* issued on April 17, 2003, and in his Apostolic Letter "The Rosary of the Virgin Mary" dated October 16, 2002. The convergence of these three happenings in the local Church is providential.

*BEATA FRANCISCA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO.* Francisca de Fuentes was born in 1647 in Intramuros, Manila, to Simon de Fuentes and Ana Maria del Castillo y Tamayo. Childless

and widowed after a brief marriage, Francisca dedicated herself to the service of God and grew spiritually persevering much in mental and vocal prayers, so much so that it was said her house looked like an oratory. Charitable to the poor, she gave to them what she herself needed since she did not have anything in excess. She used to bring food to distribute among the sick in the Hospital of San Juan de Dios, at times taking other pious women along with her. Becoming a Dominican Tertiary in 1682 with the name of Francisca del Espiritu Santo, she committed herself with greater intensity to the pursuit of Christian virtues. With three other companions she started a community in 1684 under the Rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic, which was approved by the Master General of the Friars Preachers in 1688.

Her religious community, the Beaterio de Santa Catalina, was formally established on July 26, 1696, with the professions of Mother Francisca (the first prioress) and of her seven companions, and the start of their living according to their own new Rule and Constitutions. Through trials and hardships including a two-year closure of the Beaterio ordered by the Archbishop of Manila resulting from the stand-off between the archbishop and the Dominican Order over the issue of episcopal visitation, Francisca remained steadfast in faith, charity and humility. Reopened in 1706, the Beaterio eventually became a "*colegio*" for the education of native, mestiza and Spanish young girls.

With great reputation of sanctity and virtue, Mother Francisca died on August 24, 1711. The whole city of Manila was said to have joined in her funeral celebration. Her tomb was placed over the steps of the main altar's Gospel-side in the church of the Colegio de San Juan de Letran in Intramuros.

*BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION.* After 292 years from her death, the process for the causes of beatification and canonization of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo on her reputation of sanctity and virtue has been formally opened in a solemn celebration in Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City, last July 8, 2003. Jaime Cardinal Sin as the archbishop of the seat diocese of the causes has appointed his episcopal delegate, the tribunal to conduct the process, and the commission of experts in history and the theological commission to assist. And the Holy See has given its "*Nihil Obstat*" to the entire process. The hearing of witnesses must now follow. Then the formal submission of all the needed documentation to Rome.

It is remarkable that as we now reflect on the life and mission of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo as a Filipina beata, we are also being asked by the Holy Father to reflect on the mystery of the Eucharist in the life of the Church and on the place of the Rosary of Mary in our spirituality. Francisca del Espiritu Santo was a woman of the Eucharist and of the Rosary.

*ECCLESIA DE EUCHARISTIA.* On Holy Thursday (April 17) of 2003, John Paul II gifted the Church with his latest encyclical "*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*". The Church lives and draws her strength and self-identity from the Eucharist. The Eucharist builds the Church. It is the sacrament of divine presence and the summit of and central to all Church activity. To receive the Lord in holy communion is the fulfillment of the sacramental encounter, which must be celebrated with proper dignity and reverence. And it is truly expressive of intimacy and helpful toward greater communion to stay in adoration of the blessed sacrament.

Francisca del Espiritu Santo together with her early companions Antonia de Jesus Maria Fuentes, Sebastiana de Jesus, and Maria Ana de la Vega, initially frequented the sacraments in the church of the Convent of Sto. Domingo in Intramuros. In the piety current at the time that means Mass, with Holy Communion every fortnight more or less upon the permission of the confessor or spiritual director, and frequent, even daily, confession.

An incident illustrates Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo's great love for the Eucharist. When they finally had their own Beaterio and after their return from exile in Colegio de Sta. Potenciana during the closure, Mother Francisca came up with the intense desire to have the Blessed Sacrament in their chapel. But Archbishop Diego Camacho y Avila refused to grant permission. When the new Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta arrived the following year. Mother Francisca again sought permission with insistence. Not getting it, she then proposed to the Father Provincial of the Dominicans that a direct passageway be built from the Beaterio to the church of the Colegio de San Juan de Letran. When the idea was turned down, she waited until a new Provincial was elected and who was favorable to it. But it was still the former Provincial, Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo O.P writer of the *Breve Relacion* (1711) about the Beaterio de Sta. Catalina, who actually built the passageway that gave access for the community of Mother Francisca to the Blessed Sacrament of the San Juan de Letran church. The ready access meant that through a balcony the whole choir of the church was reserved for the religious women. A communion rail was placed for them, not to mention two confessional boxes with iron gates at the side of the choir.

Weakened by sickness and consumed by her penances, fastings and mortifications, Mother Francisca was bedridden before she finally passed away at the age of 64. She was blessed by having the Mass celebrated by her bedside, receiving Holy Communion with supreme joy even twice a week. She was given the Viaticum solemnly in the Dominican way. In the afternoon of the day she died, she was buried in the church of San Juan de Letran (the first to be buried there), her tomb located over the steps of the main altar Gospel-side, as if in one final surge to be with her Eucharistic Lord and Master forever.

*ROSARIUM VIRGINIS MARIAE.* To contemplate and be with Christ in the Eucharist is the Holy Father's call to all the faithful in the Third Millennium. And this in Mary's school of prayer, contemplating Christ with Mary. The rediscovery of the treasure that is the Rosary of Mary as the sweet chain linking us to God and as the special instrument of our spiritual nourishment is very vividly exemplified in the life of Francisca del Espiritu Santo.

At the instance of their spiritual adviser Fr. Juan de Sto. Domingo, OP, early on in the formation of the group of Mother Francisca, the decision was to have fifteen beatas in honor of the mysteries of the Rosary. Each beata would take a mystery of the Holy Rosary for her own particular devotion. This was in imitation of the same practice remembered by Fr. Sto. Domingo to have been introduced in a convent of Dominican Sisters in the Canary Islands sometime in 1685 by Fr. Pedro de Santa Maria Ulloa, OP. Only later would the priest find out that such was already the idea of Mother Sebastiana, a mystic

from Pasig and one of the original companions of Mother Francisca, long before.

When the Beaterio de Sta. Catalina was finally built out of the generosity of benefactors and of the Dominican Fathers, at last they have their own oratory. Mother Francisca right away ordered that the Rosary be prayed by the community three times a day: in the morning, early afternoon and at night. Mental prayer followed the Rosary of one o'clock in the afternoon, and again at midnight. It was the conviction of Fr. Sto. Domingo, that with the help of the Virgin of the Rosary the lack of funds by the beatas did not prevent their acquisition of the needed resources.

The enriched Rosary of John Paul II with the additional Mysteries of Light would have been a welcome contemplation of the mysteries of Christ and of the mysteries of Mary for Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo, a paradigm for us today of the Christian spirituality that is anchored on the Eucharist and supported by the Rosary of Mary. Let us pray for the causes of the beatification and canonization of this servant of God, a Filipina beata.



# The Veneration of the Holy Mother of God

VICTOR BENDICO

Chapter five of the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* issued by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship in 2001 is entitled "The Veneration of the Holy Mother of God."

The outline of the chapter is very simple, namely, *Some Principles* (nn. 183-186); *Times of Pious Marian Exercises* (nn. 187-191); *Pious Exercises Recommended by the Magisterium* (nn. 192-207). I should say many of its ideas are based upon the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* of Paul VI promulgated on February 2, 1974.

What I will do in the following pages is just to briefly present and expound this chapter five, adding also some pertinent popular practices of the Filipinos in venerating the Blessed Virgin Mary which are not found in the *Directory*.

## *Clarification of Terms*

Before anything else, I wish to clarify *common terms as they refer to Mary*:

1. **Popular Devotions.** They are external practices such as the Angelus, the recitation of the Rosary, pilgrimages to Marian shrines, the singing of Marian hymns, the novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the use of Marian medals which "manifest the particular relationship of the faithful with the Blessed Virgin Mary in her privileges of grace and those of her titles which express them" (n. 8). The term "popular" makes them distinct from Liturgy.

2. **Pious Exercises.** They are private or public expressions that the faithful render to Mary inspired to some degree by Liturgy and mandated by the Apostolic See or Bishops (cf. n. 7). See examples above.

3. **Popular Piety.** This refers to private or communitarian expressions given to Mary inspired predominantly not by Liturgy but by forms derived from a particular nation, people or culture (cf. n. 9). Examples are the novenas to Mary with litanies, the *Barangay sang Birhen*, religious calendars with the pictures of Our Lady even in humble homes, small pictures of Mary in public transport, the special devotions to Mary on Saturdays in many religious communities and associations of the faithful or the grottoes dedicated to Mary in private gardens or public places. The *Directory* says that "popular piety has rightly been regarded as *a treasure of the people of God*" (n. 9), and this is true also of popular Marian piety.

4. **Popular Religiosity.** This refers to cultic expressions of the people which are linked to liturgical seasons or feasts and could be integrated into the Liturgy. Examples are the *Panuluyan* on Christmas Eve and the *Encuentro* at Easter dawn. In popular religiosity, "there is always a religious dimension in the hearts of people, nations, and their collective expressions" (n. 10). Hence, there are Marian altars and shrines, feasts and processions (street or fluvial). Another example could be *Flores de Mayo* or *Santakrusan*.

### *I. Some Principles*

The Directory clearly states a fundamental principle of the Magisterium regarding popular pious Marian exercises: "They should be derivative from the *one worship which is rightly called Christian, because it efficaciously originates in Christ, finds full expression in Christ and, through Him, in the Holy Spirit leads to the Father*" (n. 186).

This principle, taken by the *Directory* from *Marialis cultus* (MC, Introduction), expresses the trinitarian, pneumatological and ecclesial dimensions of Marian devotions in varying degrees and modes. *Trinitarian* since Marian devotions "characterize worship of the God revealed in the New Testament, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (n. 186).

The *pneumatological* aspect, according to the *Directory*, is premised on the principle that "every true form of piety comes from the Spirit and is exercised in the Spirit" (n. 186). It is the Spirit that gives life and this should be clearly expressed in Christian devotions.

The *Directory* continues that Marian devotions should have an *ecclesial* character since "the faithful... constituted as the holy people of God, gathered in prayer in the Lord's name in the vital communion of saints" (n. 186). This aspect is in relation to the Church gathered together to pray in the upper room with the Virgin Mary and the brethren of her Son Jesus Christ. Paul VI in *Marialis cultus* is emphatic about this aspect when he says "that devotion to the Blessed Virgin must bear the mark of its intrinsically ecclesiological import. That will lead to the proper planning and concentration of efforts for a sound renewal of the forms of that devotion and the texts expressing it" (MC n. 28).

The *Directory* still adds that Marian devotions should "have constant recourse to *Sacred Scriptures*" (n. 186; cf. also n. 12). Due to the recognition that biblical content and themes ought to be incorporated in Christian devotions, Marian devotions must derive new vitality and sure help from the Bible (cf. MC n. 30).

Marian devotions should "not overlook the demands of the *ecumenical movement*" (n. 186; cf. also n. 12). Surely, the *Directory* does not forget the hope of Paul VI: "that the veneration of the simple handmaid of the Lord... will, even if gradually, cease to become an obstacle, and become rather an opening and, as it were, a meeting point for achieving unity for all those who believe in Christ (MC n. 33).

Still, Marian devotions should also "consider the *anthropological* aspects of cultic expressions so as to reflect a true concept of man" (n. 186; cf. also n. 12). This does not mean that the Church ties itself to the ways of thought or expressions proper to any particular epoch or underlying anthropo-

logical views. The Church knows the difficulty of integrating ideas about Mary and different life situations. The Church also understands that certain forms of Marian cult are less suited to people of another epoch and culture. Even then, Mary is offered as an example whose way of life was anchored on charity and the will to serve (cf. MC n. 35). As a wife and a mother, she "combined and epitomized the events particularly of a woman's life" (MC n. 36).

Marian devotions should also "highlight the eschatological tension which is essential to the Gospel message" (186). I do not know exactly what the *Directory* means by "eschatological tension." But we can reflect that the holding of processions to honor Mary and the making of pilgrimages to Marian shrines done in faith and prayer are signs of the pilgrim church with an eschatological orientation. These devotions can make people aware "that in this world they have no lasting dwelling" (n. 247) and that they have "to learn to direct their earthly footsteps towards the sanctuary of Heaven (n. 262).

Lastly, Marian devotions should "make clear missionary responsibility and the duty of bearing witness" (n. 186).

## //. *Times of Pious Marian Exercises*

1. CELEBRATION OF FEASTS. In the Church, we have the feasts of the General Calendar of the Roman Rite or feasts of particular calendars of dioceses and religious families. In some ways, these feasts are related to Marian devotions and pious exercises. Here one finds a clear illustration of the relationship between the Liturgy and pious exercises. For example, the Holy Rosary is a Marian devotion that antedates the institution of the feast. Pius V introduced the feast of the Rosary

in 1573 though its devotion could be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The *Angelus Domini* is a devotion that goes back to 1269 while the feast is much more ancient.

The *Directory* cautions that Marian feasts "must be celebrated in accordance with liturgical norms, and must bear in mind the hierarchical difference between *liturgical acts* and associated *pious exercises*" (n. 187). As regards liturgical norms, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* prescribes that popular devotions "should be so fashioned that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature surpasses any of them" (SC n. 13). The *Directory* reiterates this in n. 73. In this connection, Paul VI in *Marialis cultus* strongly reminds those in charge of local communities as well as the faithful, saying: "It sometimes happens that parts of a novena or similar devotion are incorporated into the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice. The danger resulting is that the memorial of the Lord may no longer stand as the highpoint for the gathering of the Christian community but may be simply the setting for some popular devotion... popular devotions must be subordinated to the liturgy, not intermingled with it" (MCn. 31).

Pious exercises are not liturgical acts. The former are more varied, indefinite and changing which spring from the people while the latter are decreed and ordered for all by the authority of the Church; the former are informally accepted, not strictly obligatory and yet necessary for all while the latter are officially recognized of which all are obliged constitutively; the former remains always "private" even if done "in public" by a community while the latter have always a

"public" value even if done "in private." (cf. S. Marsili, "Liturgia e pii esercizi in Aa.Vv., *Anamnesis* 1 (Casale Monferrato: Casa Editrice Marietti S.p.A., 1974) 151).

We consider now the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary during special liturgical seasons in the Calendar of the Roman Rite.

A) *Advent*. This season recalls Mary. On December 8, on weekdays from December 17-24 and on Sunday before Christmas, the Church prepares for the coming of Jesus. The faithful, like the expectant Mary, wait for their Savior in the Advent liturgy.

In the Philippines, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) is a holiday of obligation and a big feast to honor its patroness. This normally falls during Advent. *Aguinaldo* masses from December 16-24 also fall during this season. Celebrated around 4 a.m. just in time at cockcrow, hence the name *Misa de Gallo*, these masses are actually votive masses in honor of Mary. The liturgical vestment is white, the color of Marian masses. The mass texts are those of the "Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Advent." Even the Fourth Sunday of Advent which usually falls within the nine-day novena masses has a strong Marian character.

In some places, the so-called "Search for an Inn" or the "*Panuluyan*" done in front of homes on Christmas Eve enhances the festive atmosphere because it dramatizes how Joseph and Mary were looking for a place to stay in but only to be refused (cf. Luke 2:1-7). Usually, this event is narrated by a chorus as the statues of Joseph and Mary are carried in a procession which ends in church. Then the midnight mass follows.

B) *Christmas*. During this season, the faithful adore the Child Jesus while they honor his Mother. On Epiphany and on the feast of the Holy Family, the Church honors Mary as it gazes on her as the Mother of the King and of the home at Nazareth.

In the Philippines, the so-called "*belen*" is usually put up within or near the sanctuary of parish churches. During the singing of the Gloria at midnight mass, the image of the Child Jesus is solemnly placed on the crib by the main celebrant who is sometimes accompanied by a few children dressed like angels. The "*belen*," often surrounded by Christmas lights and lasting through Epiphany Sunday, occasions the faithful in venerating Mary.

The feast of the Santo Nino, celebrated every Third Sunday of January, was introduced in our National Calendar in 1971 though Rome confirmed it 1975 and approved its Mass texts and Divine Office in 1978 (cf. B. Raas, *Liturgical Year 1* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 1994) 188). This feast, connected with Christmas and is considered its extension, offers the people a special moment to honor the role of Mary as the Mother of the Infant Jesus.

C) *Easter*. The *Directory* mentions the meeting between the Risen Christ and his Mother. It says: "On Easter morning two processions, one bearing the image of our Lady of Dolors, the other that of the Risen Christ, meet each other so as to show that Our Lady was the first and full participant in the mystery of the Lord's resurrection" (n. 149). Surely, this tradition is another opportunity in which Mary is venerated by the people. The *Directory* continues: "The observance of the pious



exercise should not acquire greater importance than the liturgical celebration of Easter Sunday nor occasion inappropriate mixing of liturgical expression with those of popular piety" (n. 149).

I don't think that our Filipino practice of integrating the *Encuentro* or *Salubong* with the morning Easter Mass runs counter to this provision. Ordo 2003, p. 69 informs us that this is permitted and recommended. The *Encuentro* serves as the entrance rite of the said morning Mass. Fr. A. Chupungco enumerates these justifying considerations: a) "...it does not possess anything that can qualify it as liturgical except for the antiphon *Regina coeli* sung by the 'angel;' b) "...it does not employ the liturgical ministers as performers, nor is it held in the church in the course of the liturgical celebration;" c) "...it is, strictly speaking, not a popular devotion but a drama." (A. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity and Catechesis* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 125).

How is this integration done? The Philippine Ordo states that "the presider greets the people with adopted welcome and greeting on the plaza or at the door of the church. Then the *Encuentro* is celebrated as follows: the statues of the Risen Christ and of Our Lady meet and greet each other. Then both are brought processionally inside the church (sanctuary), while an appropriate Easter song and the Gloria are sung. Then the opening prayer follows (which certainly has a strong Marian character). The introductory greeting and penitential rite are omitted."

The *Encuentro* had been criticized as biblically doubtful or non biblical at all. In this regard, I wish again to quote Fr.

A. Chupungco: "An important consideration to keep in mind is that biblical accuracy is not one of the outstanding traits of popular devotion. And when this is directed to the Mother of God, as in the *Encuentro*, devotees require no biblical proof or basis. What the Gospels fail to say, filial piety affirms. Popular devotion simply refuses to believe that Jesus did not appear first to his mother after the resurrection." (A. Chupungco, 107). This great honor which the Filipinos have for Mary "is based on the Hispanic roots of Filipino Catholicism as well as on the Filipino society's esteem and respect for women: especially mothers" (A. Chupungco, 106).

2. SATURDAYS. These days are designated as memorials of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Reasons are unknown; explanations have been advanced but not completely satisfactory historically. However, the *Directory* affirms that these memorials emphasize certain values: "it is a remembrance of the maternal example and discipleship of the Blessed Virgin Mary who, strengthened by faith and hope, on that great Saturday on which our Lord lay on the tomb, was the only one of the disciples to hold vigil in expectation of the Lord's resurrection; it is a prelude and introduction to the celebration of Sunday, the weekly memorial of the resurrection of Christ; it is a sign that the Virgin Mary is continuously present and operative in the life of the Church" (n. 188).

Undoubtedly, Saturdays in the Philippine liturgy and popular religiosity have a Marian character. Looking at our Ordo on ordinary Saturdays we read: "m of BVM on Saturday." In some parishes during First Saturdays of the month, dawn rosaries are said while an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary is carried in procession before the start of the morning mass.

Also on these days, some Marian religious organizations or associations would go on pilgrimage to a Marian Shrine.

Wednesdays in the Philippines are also colored by a Marian devotion, the "Perpetual Help Devotion." The National Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Baclaran, the numerous parishes, religious convents as well as diocesan seminaries are testimonies to this devotion. Through this weekly devotion which could be readily done even inside the homes before the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the faithful honor Mary and ask for personal and material favors.

3. TRIDUA, SEPTINARIA, MARIAN NOVENAS. As fitting preparations, a triduum, septinaria or novena can precede the feast days of Our Lady. These useful celebrations honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, afford the faithful to see the roles of Mary in the mystery of Christ and his Church, "encourage the faithful to approach the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist and renew their Christian commitment following the example of Mary" (n. 189).

Concerning novenas, the Philippine bishops in 1975, following the mind of Paul VI, already exhorted pastors to "be vigilant to prevent as far as possible the mixing of paraliturgies with liturgy, or the simple incorporation of novenas into the Eucharistic celebration." (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Ang Mahal na Birhen* (AMB), February 2, 1975, n. 83). The bishops offered two alternatives: 1) "A mass-novena with the elements of the novena incorporated into the mass either after the Communion or before the dismissal, or even during the Prayer of the Faithful. It is to be noted, however, that in this case the prayer should always be addressed to God the Father, not to Mary. 2) The novena by

itself should be renewed (in structures and prayers). Novenas will be renewed by making them more scriptural, avoiding a verbosity present in some of them and a sentimentality less in consonance with today's religious attitudes" (AMB nn. 83-84).

4. MARIAN MONTHS. As to "Marian months," it seems opportune, according to the *Directory*, "to take into account the demands of the Liturgy, the expectations of the faithful and their maturity in faith" (n. 191). The content of the "Marian months" should be in harmony with the concomitant season of the Liturgical Year. Hence "since the month of May largely corresponds with the fifty days of Easter, the pious exercises practiced at this time could emphasize Our Lady's participation in the Paschal Mystery (cf. John 19:25-27) and the Pentecost event (cf. Acts 1:14)" (n. 191).

Aspects of the Paschal Mystery during the month of May can be seen in the context of reciting and meditating the mysteries of the Rosary. In 1975, the Philippine bishops already saw this. Their Pastoral Letter *Ang Mahal na Birhen* says: "The fundamental paschal dimension came to us through the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially through the recitation and meditation on the mysteries of the Holy Rosary, a devotion which encompasses the mysteries of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection of our Lord" (AMB n. 72).

But, is there also a possibility of emphasizing Our Lady's participation in the Paschal Mystery during May when children offer flowers before the image of the Virgin Mary or when the faithful commemorate the finding of the cross with the procession of a "Constantino" and a "Reyna Elena?" The finding

of the cross by Santa Elena is sometimes dramatized but without any connection to Mary. In some places, they have a "May Flower Queen" or "Reyna de las Flores" representing the Virgin Mary. During procession the May Flower Queen is accompanied by "*zagalas*" representing the seven virtues: La Fe, La Esperanza, La Caridad, La Prudencia, La Justicia, La Fortaleza and La Templanza. Appropriate symbols are carried by the *zagalas*.

If we bear in mind John 19:25-27 ("Woman, this is your son. This is your mother") and wishing to emphasize Mary's participation in the Paschal Mystery, is it possible to include also during the May Flower procession some titles of Mary like "Refuge of Sinners," "Comforter of the Afflicted," "Queen of Martyrs," "Queen of Families"? And if we bear in mind Mary's participation at Pentecost, the solemnity of which often falls in May, is it also possible to add during the May Flower procession her titles such as "Mother of the Church," and "Queen of Apostles"? If it is possible, I think we go back to what the *Directory* has already mentioned, namely, to consider the expectation of the faithful and their maturity in faith.

The *Directory* adds: "The pious exercises connected with the month of May could easily highlight the earthly role played by the glorified Queen of Heaven, here and now, in the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist" (191). If ever we can link Mary with May and the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, it should be in the context of her maternity. Mary is a mother who brought forth her Child Jesus into the world; Christian Initiation brings forth children of God; May as the month of flowers brings new life. This aspect can be emphasized during catechesis.

In these pious Marian exercises, Mary should be seen in relation to her Son whose feasts should be given primary considerations. This recalls the provision of the Liturgy Constitution that "in celebrating the annual cycle of Christ's mystery, the Church honors with special love Mary, the Mother of God, who is joined in an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son" (SC n. 103).

### *///. Pious Exercises Recommended by the Magisterium*

#### 1. PRAYERFULLY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.

The *Directory* states that a worthy way to honor Mary is by listening to God's Word. "She lovingly accepted the Word and treasured it in her heart, meditated on it in her mind and spread it with her lips. She faithfully put it into practice and modeled her life on it" (n. 193).

Celebrating the Word of God offers the faithful many elements of worship. It can also genuinely express devotional exercises and may serve as a vehicle for a systematic catechesis on the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Through hymns, prayers, and participation of the faithful they should allow for simple and familiar expressions of popular piety which speak directly to the hearts of the people" (n. 194).

A familiar expression of popular piety in our country is the chanting of the *Pasiyon* during Holy Week that has no correlation to the liturgy especially on Good Friday. Though apocryphal texts and scenes are included in the chanting or "*Pabasa*" which narrates salvation history, yet it could be an appropriate time to reflect on God's Word and the life of Mary (and consequently honor her) since it is also based on the

Bible. The Pastoral Letter, *Ang Mahal na Birhen* clearly affirms that the "best known Tagalog *Pasiyon* (*Kasaysayan ng Pasiyong Mahal ni Hesucristong Panginoon Natin*) which begins with prayer to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, not only tells the story of the creation and fall of Adam and Eve, but even tells of the birth of Mary. After having described a series of selected events from the life of Christ, especially His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension, the death, burial and assumption into heaven of Mary are treated, as well as her crowning as Queen of Heaven" (AMB n. 18).

Also on Good Friday from 12 noon to 3 p.m., people listen to and reflect on the Seven Last Words of Jesus on the cross. The "*Siete Palabras*" are expounded and explained by chosen speakers, and they apply them to the moral and socio-political life of the people. Truly some would speak directly to the hearts of the people. Each exposition is ended by a prayer and followed by a hymn. In a way, this practice honors the Blessed Virgin Mary as it commemorates her sorrows during the third word. She stood at the foot of the cross and listened to her Son Jesus uttering these words: "Woman, this is your son. This is your mother" (John 19:25-27). Indeed, here is a listening mother, a worthy example for the faithful to honor.

2. ANGELUS DOMINI. In commemorating the Annunciation and recalling the Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the faithful pray the *Angelus* three times daily: at dawn, mid-day and at dusk. Though changed social conditions in some places hinder its recitation, every effort however should be made to maintain and promote this pious custom. The *Directory* recommends that "on some occasions, especially in religious communities, in shrines dedicated to the Blessed

Virgin, and at meetings or conventions, the *Angelas* be solemnly recited by singing the *Ave Maria*, proclaiming the Gospel of the Annunciation and by the ringing of bells" (n. 195). I think the *Directory* is also reminding us something as we gather annually.

3. REGINA COELI. In paschal tide, the *Regina coeli* replaces the *Angelas*. The *Regina coeli*, conjoining the Incarnation and Resurrection, is addressed to Mary for the resurrection of her Son. Like the *Angelus*, it can be solemnly done by singing the antiphon and proclaiming the Gospel of the Resurrection. This devotion opens another opportunity for the people to hear the Word of God.

4. THE ROSARY. This devotion, described by the *Directory* as "the most excellent prayer to the Mother of God," "a biblically inspired prayer," "a contemplative prayer," centers "on contemplation of the saving events of Christ's life, and their association with his Virgin Mother" (n. 197). The faithful are exhorted to recite it frequently and "its use is expressly recommended in the formation and spiritual life of the clerics and religious" (n. 197).

The *Directory* suggests that occasionally, the recitation of the Rosary could be made more solemn "by introducing those scriptural passages corresponding with the various mysteries, some parts could be sung, roles could be distributed, and by solemnly opening and closing of prayer" (n. 199). I think this has to do with the so-called Scriptural Rosary, Living Rosary or Interpretative Rosary. It can also be said of the Block Rosary that is "connected with the visit of images or statues of Mary from house to house and from one family to another,



where special veneration is given to Mary during the term of the image's stay" (AMB n. 12).

The *Directory* continues that various mysteries are assigned to particular days: joyful to Monday and Thursday, sorrowful to Tuesday and Friday, and glorious to Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday (n. 200). To update, John Paul II added the "mysteries of light" to the "joyful mysteries," "sorrowful mysteries" and "glorious mysteries" when he published his Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* on October 16, 2002. He retained this usual arrangement except that the "joyful mysteries" are moved to Saturday while Thursday is dedicated to the "mysteries of light." (RVM n. 38).

In case a little conflict arises between the content of the mysteries and the Liturgy of the day like Christmas Day falling on a Friday, the *Directory* is clear in saying that "the liturgical character of a given day takes precedence over the usual assignment of a mystery of the Rosary to a given day; the Rosary is such that, on particular days, it can appropriately substitute meditation on a mystery so as to harmonize this pious practice with the liturgical season" (n. 200).

Lastly, the *Directory* warns not to discredit other forms of prayer or overlook other Marian chaplets in favor of the Rosary. It notes without hesitation "to avoid inculcating a sense of guilt on those who do not habitually recite the Rosary" (n. 202).

In the Philippines, a prominent title of Mary for veneration, which is as famous as the Immaculate Conception, is Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. Under the title of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, she is not only venerated by celebrating her feast

on October and reciting the Rosary daily, but she "was referred to as the *Senora Grande de Filipinas* on account of the many favors attributed to her" (AMB n. 10). However, the popularity of this Marian title and other titles are open to abuses particularly in the area of faith healing. The Philippine bishops warned seriously the faithful "about the abuse in some places, where so-called faith-healers use the popularity of the devotion to Mary under one or other of her titles to persuade the simple people that their faith healing power comes from her or through her intercession" (AMB n. 79).

5. LITANIES OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. The *Directory* describes the litanies as consisting of "a long series of invocations to Our Lady, which follows in a uniform rhythm, thereby creating a stream of prayer characterized by insistent praise and supplication" (n. 203). Examples are "The Litany of Loreto" and the "Litany for the Coronation of the Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Though these are important acts of homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary, "a proliferation of litanies would not seem desirable just as an excessive restriction on them would not take sufficient account of the spiritual riches of some local Churches and religious communities" (n. 203).

The *Directory* says that Litanies are independent acts of worship. Hence, the Litany of Loreto, prescribed by Leo XIII to conclude the recitation of the Rosary during October, should not be taken as an appendix to the Rosary.

\* 6. CONSECRATION AND ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY. According to the *Directory*, "consecration" here is used of "consecrating children to Our Lady," by which is intended

placing children under her protection and asking her maternal blessing for them" (n. 204). "Entrustment" and "gift" are suggested alternative terms. Specifically, taking to mind John 19:25-27, this act of consecration "is a conscious recognition of the singular role of Mary in the Mystery of Christ and of the Church, of the universal and exemplary importance of her witness to the Gospel, of trust in her intercession, and of the efficacy of her patronage, of the many maternal functions she has, since she is a true mother in the order of grace to each and every one of her children" (n. 204).

The *Directory* strongly proposes a careful catechesis regarding this practice. Important points: A) The act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary is only analogously a 'consecration to God.' B) It should be free, personal and decided maturely and not emotionally. C) It is addressed to the Father, through Christ in the Spirit, imploring Mary's intercession. D) It should take place outside the Eucharistic celebration "since it is a devotional act which cannot be assimilated to the Liturgy and... differs substantially from other forms of liturgical consecration" (n. 204).

7. THE BROWN SCAPULAR AND OTHER SCAPULARS. The Scapular of Mount Carmel or the Brown Scapular is a common devotion. The *Directory* describes it as "an external sign of the filial relationship established between the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Mount Carmel, and the faithful who entrust themselves totally to her protection, who have recourse to her maternal intercession, who are mindful of the primacy of the spiritual life and the need for prayer" (n. 205).

Before receiving the Brown Scapular, the faithful are instructed on "the nature and ends of the association they are about to join and of the obligations they assume" (n. 205). A special rite is followed in imposing the Scapular. No improvisations are allowed since it "should be celebrated with the seriousness of its origins" (n. 205).

8. MEDALS. The wearing of medals, the *Directory* asserts, is a sign of venerating Mary, a trust in her maternal protection and a witness of faith. If blessed, the Church believes that they are reminders of God's love and increased trust in Mary. I wish to insert the concerns of the Philippines bishops especially on the use of medals or scapulars: "We see a danger connected at times with their use when people consider them as magic talisman, a kind of *anting-anting* for mere material or bodily protection" (AMB n. 79). The *Directory* is also emphatic about this aspect when it speaks about the Miraculous Medal which "is never to be regarded as a talisman or lead to any form of blind incredulity" (cf. n. 206). Rather wearing it "requires a humble and tenacious commitment to the Christian message, faithful and persevering prayer, and a good Christian life" (n. 206).

9. THE AKATHISTOS HYMN. This hymn belongs to Byzantine tradition. *Akathistos*, which means "sung while standing," gives reverence to the Incarnation of Jesus and Mary's virginal motherhood. Celebrated solemnly on the Fifth Sunday of Lent in the East, it encapsulates in prayer form the Church's ancient belief on Mary, that is, "the virginal life of Mary, the virginal conception, the divine motherhood, the virgin birth, Mary as the defender and model of virgins, Mary

as source of the sacred mysteries of baptism, Mary as the protector of the Christian Empire." (I. Calabuig, "The Liturgical Cult of Mary in the East and the West," in A. Chupungco, ed. *Handbook for Liturgical Studies* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 2000) 257).

According to the *Directory*, this hymn "constitutes an appeal and invocation for the unity of Christians under the guidance of the Mother of God" (n. 207). Since this hymn has been introduced recently to some communities in the Latin Rite and also popularized on some solemn liturgical celebrations of particular ecclesial significance in the presence of the Pope, this hymn can inspire the composition of songs which can be sung on many other liturgical occasions like the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25) or the liturgical days from the Ascension of the Lord to Pentecost.

# Canonization of Three New Saints

**JOHN PAUL II**

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I am pleased to meet you the day after the canonization of three shining witnesses of missionary commitment who are particularly dear to you: St Daniel Comboni, St Arnold Janssen and St Joseph Freinademetz. They are three "champions" of evangelization.

I cordially greet you all and I thank you for coming.

2. I greet you all, dear Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, who are continuing the apostolic action of St *Daniel Comboni*. He is rightly listed among the champions of the missionary movement that had an extraordinary reawakening in the 19th century. I greet in particular your recently elected Superior General, Fr Teresino Serra, and the Religious who are taking part in the General Chapter. I hope that the reflec-

\* Address of the Holy Father to the Pilgrims gathered in Rome, 6 October 2003.

tions and guidelines that result from the Chapter Assembly will imbue your institute with new missionary enthusiasm.

Next, I greet you, dear Comboni Missionary Sisters, and you, dear Secular Comboni Missionaries and dear Lay Comboni Missionaries, who are inspired by the charism of St Daniel Comboni.

May God make fruitful your every project, with which you constantly aim to spread the Gospel of hope. May he also bless your efforts in the context of human promotion and especially for youth. In this regard, I warmly hope that you will reconsider and bring to completion the project of founding a Catholic University in Sudan, the country that Comboni loved. I am sure that an important cultural institution like this will contribute a high quality service to the whole of Sudan society.

3. I now address you, dear pilgrims who have come to honour St *Arnold Janssen* and St *Joseph Freinademetz*. I greet you with special affection, dear members of the three Congregations of the Verbite religious family, with your respective Superiors General: Fr Antonio Pernia, Sr Agada Brand and Sr Mary Cecilia Hocbo.

*Arnold Janssen* was an ardent animator of the Church's mission in Central Europe. He showed courage by opening a missionary house in Steyl, in The Netherlands, when the Church was going through difficult times because of the so-called "Kulturkampf". By taking new and unexplored routes to spread the Gospel, he attracted numerous collaborators - priests, men and women religious and lay people - who carry on his apostolic work today.

4. I would now like to address a special greeting to you, dear relatives and pilgrims who have come from the Diocese of Bozen-Brixen, Bolzano-Bressanone, and in particular to the Ladin-speaking group. I greet you with affection, dear Ladin pilgrims. May *St Joseph Freinademetz* be an example for you of fidelity to Christ and to his Gospel! Providence, through the Society of the Divine Word, sent him to China where he stayed until he died.

"Your whole life for your beloved Chinese" was the formula that marked the day of his perpetual profession. With God's help he was always faithful to it. He made himself Chinese with the Chinese, assuming their mindset, practices and customs. He held these people in such sincere esteem and affection that he said: "I would like to be Chinese in Heaven". From Heaven may he continue to watch over that nation and over the whole of the Asian continent.

5. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us thank God for giving the Church *St Daniel Comboni*, *St Arnold Janssen* and *St Joseph Freinademetz*. May their example and their intercession encourage us to respond generously to our Christian vocation.

May the Virgin Mary help us, whom these new Saints loved as a tender Mother, experiencing her protection and comfort. I accompany you with my prayers as I bless you, your communities and all your loved ones.



# Newly Canonized Saints

## COMBONI MISSIONARIES

### Notes of Missionary Spirituality

*All Founders have a particular experience of the Mystery of Christ, which is then seen in their lives. It is through this specific grace (which is called "charism" in theology) that they read the times and events they live in, their own calling and their personal life-story. In this sense all about them becomes "prophecy" and proclamation of the Gospel.*

Daniel Comboni was one of the most convinced and foremost actors in the missionary movement in the Church during the 19th century. He was an eager follower of all the leading figures of his day, and became a leader with a genius of his own.

His missionary passion for the evangelisation of the peoples of Africa, his struggle against the slave trade, his pro-

\* These articles are reprints from the World Mission Magazine, vol. XV, no. 9, October 2003, pp. 31-33 and pp. 35-39.

jects for "the re-birth of Africa through Africa herself and his tireless to-ing and fro-ing around Europe to get support for his mission were sustained by a strong and specific spirituality. Only a very powerful passion could generate the kind of effective and active life that Comboni lived.

The secret of his passion revealed through his enormous correspondence, of which a great part is printed in a volume of over 2200 pages; and through the testimony of people who knew him or who followed him. But his spirituality can be read above all in the style of his life and his actions, in particular as a founder.

### *The Pierced Heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd*

There are three linked key-points in Comboni's life. His missionary vocation appears clear and certain from the age of almost 18, when he made an oath, in the presence of his spiritual father don Nicola Mazza, to consecrate his whole life to the mission to the peoples of Africa. When he was a priest, his spiritual director, Fr Giovanni Marani, confirmed him in his decision and vocation, shortly before he left for Africa, sacrificing his dearest family ties. And his vocation receives a new and very powerful thrust on 15th September 1864, when the missionary priest, while praying at the tomb of Peter in the Vatican Basilica, is overwhelmed by another inspiration from Christ. As he says himself, it is there that the "Plan for the Regeneration of Africa" came into being, in contemplation of the Pierced Heart of Christ on the Cross, the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his abandoned sheep.

Comboni sees the tragic situation of the peoples of Africa through this Mystery. So his perspective is far different from

that of philanthropists, explorers and politicians of the time, as he himself underlines pointedly. This is the first aspect of the Comboni charism; it is the starting point of his spirituality.

Love, as a total and free gift of oneself, springing from the pierced Heart of Christ, sends Comboni to gather all the men and women of Africa into his embrace, as brothers and sisters. And it makes him interpret his missionary vocation also as a call to reveal to all the rest of the earth their tragic spiritual situation and to labour to make their "regeneration", as he calls it - and which Christ has already won for them on the Cross - become effective for each one of them.

The mystery of the Cross, an event of love and salvation, is the source of his apostolic energy, of his love for those people whom both history and other people have worked against. Comboni regards the African people with indescribable tenderness (he even talks of a "nuptial link" with them), and is ready to face even martyrdom for their sake, should circumstances so demand.

### ***The Hour of Africa***

The second component of Comboni's charism is the insistent proclamation that "the Hour of Africa ("Nigrizia") has come", from every point of view. Comboni is working at a time when Africa has aroused the conflicting interests of European powers, yet is still subject to the shameful scourge of the Slave Trade. In the Church, few take an interest in the situation. A German historian, writing about Comboni at the first Vatican Council, states that his call in favour of the peoples of Africa, who had no voice, was like the voice in the desert, but that this fact did not make him fall silent.

For Comboni, the only way to bring the people of Africa to achieve their true dignity was the evangelisation of "Nigrizia" and its entry, with all its human riches, into the Church of Christ. The Church needed "Nigrizia" to make its "Catholic" character more complete and effective.

It is impressive to see how Comboni conceived a vast evangelisation project right from the start, including all the forces of Church and society. And Africans were not to be simply the object of the effort; they themselves would begin to evangelise very early on. "Regenerate Africa through Africa" was his constant refrain. He strives to form a missionary conscience in the Church but, at the same time, seeks to make the African people agents of Church activity.

Some of his missionary actions are very significant; for instance, the consecration of Africa to the Heart of Jesus (1873) and to the Virgin Mary, "Sultana" of Africa (1875), as also the foundation of early missions right in the centre of the slave trade in Sudan (at El Obeid), and sending rescued slaves to Rome to study for the priesthood.

### *Love for the Church and the Missions*

We can see, from all the above, what a fully "ecclesial" passion burned in Comboni's soul. What Christ achieved in Golgotha now has to be proclaimed and manifested by the Church in this concrete case of people who are still left out, in Africa. That is why Comboni wants to involve the whole Church in this mission. So he contacts numerous persons, groups and movements in the Church all over Europe, trying to interest them all in his mission. He becomes a friend of many Saints and important Churchmen of his time.

His sincerity and his burning love for the Church make him speak with prophetic frankness to Church and political leaders; and at the same time he has a deep sense of communion with and obedience towards the See of Peter. It can be said that his passion for the wide communion of the Church (by bringing in Africa) only increased his combination of obedience and Christian liberty, which is a characteristic of holiness. This is the third aspect of his charism.

### *Charism as life-long unifying force*

The charismatic grace becomes, in Daniel Comboni, a powerful force that drives him, that involves his mind, penetrates his heart and his body, makes him act. It turns him into a tireless traveller, as a "salesman of Africa" along the roads of Europe through the deserts of Africa: It determines his way of writing, of inter-personal relationships, of using his time, forming friendships, praying, controlling his emotions, how and what he reads, in a word, it permeates his whole being.

Comboni was deeply convinced that mission is born when the Church is full of the splendour of the Lord, who is the One who really draws in and wins over nations and individuals. If this splendour is veiled, then mission falls into lethargy, as can be seen from history.

This was the "prophecy" of the Catholic Daniel Comboni for the Church and the people of his time. It is valid even today, because the saints who enter the glory of Christ continue to influence the arduous journey of the pilgrim Church through their intercession. Comboni himself reflects this in

one of his letters, written shortly before his death, saying, in effect: "When we reach Heaven, we will not cease our energetic insistence with Jesus and Mary to work numerous miracles and raise up apostles like Paul and Francis Xavier..."

### **Missionary Motifs**

Comboni was born on 15 March, 1831 in Italy. After ordination in 1854 he went to work in Sudan. In 1867 he founded the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Verona, Italy. The Combonian Holy Mother Missionary Sisters of 'Nigrizia' (Africa), founded in 1876, were the first missionary sisters to go to Africa. In 1877, he became Apostolic Vicar for Central Africa and then its first bishop. He died on 10 October, 1881 in Khartoum, Sudan. He wrote a position paper for Vatican Council I on evangelizing Central Africa by building up Christian villages and promoting local vocations.

Already when he was a teacher in Bocholt, an article had inspired Arnold to collect money for Comboni's project to ransom slave children and give them a Catholic upbringing and thus build up Christian villages. Arnold himself gave 50 taler with the understanding that the child would receive the name Arnold in baptism. If possible the ransomed children were also to be given the donor's surname, for instance, Arnold Janssen. He collected enough money for the ransom of eight children and sent it to Fr. Noecker in Cologne. Arnold also offered to provide for the further education of the child named after him, but to his request for further details he received no reply.

## *Mutual Recommendations*

In 1877 Arnold reported in the *Sacred Heart Messenger*: "On 5 and 6 November we had the honor of receiving the Most Rev. Daniel Comboni, ordained bishop in Rome on August 15, together with his secretary and Fr. Noecker, President of the Negro Association in Cologne. The gentlemen were greatly impressed by the important development achieved by the house in the short period of two years. Msgr. Comboni said to the rector (in Latin): 'You have received neither a small nor mediocre, but a very great blessing from God; believe me, I know about such things'." Fr. Blum still remembered Comboni's visit after the passage of 24 years, in particular his magnificent mission sermon in Latin.

Later, when deciding whether to found the sisters' congregation Fr. Arnold considered Comboni's advice most important. During the 1877 visit he had explained that it was possible to invite the collaboration of other women's congregations but that this brought a number of difficulties. "Therefore he firmly advised me to found my own institute. I could not make up my mind to make a start, however, until I had clearer signs from God."

Two years after his visit to Steyl Comboni wrote at the end of 1879 asking Arnold to send as many missionaries as possible. He said he was willing to accept sisters as well as priests and brothers from Steyl in his mission. Arnold's answer had to be negative. Instead he advised the bishop to open a minor seminary. That had been the key to the success of the Steyl mission house. "Open a school for the humanities and you will have a good foundation for your mission."

Comboni's death in 1881 touched Arnold greatly. In every issue of its tenth year of publication in 1883, the Sacred Heart Messenger published a series on the life and work of the great Africa missionary, also with a picture. After his visit to Rome in 1883 Arnold visited Verona where, as he informed his brother John, "I was welcomed with genuine warmth. They gave me Msgr. Comboni's room and I slept in his bed. They said they would erect a monument in his honor."

### ***Common Mission***

At the time of Arnold's beatification in 1975 the Superior General of the Redemptorists wrote to Fr. General Musinsky: "It was a special joy for me to discover that St. Alphonsus is a kind of spiritual grandfather of Arnold Janssen. In the biography of your founder I saw that it was reading Bishop Comboni's report on his mission that gave Arnold the first push to dedicate himself to work for the missions. For Comboni this impulse had come from reading a booklet by St. Alphonsus on the Japanese martyrs and on the missions in general. Through the two Blesseds of your Society may the divine Redeemer give fresh inspiration for an ever deeper understanding of your apostolic and religious mission in the Church."

### **Chinese in Heaven**

Just a few yards from the house of the Comboni Missionaries in Brixen, a historical town of the alto Adige region of Northern Italy, the slender and pointed green bell tower of the recently built Parish Church rises out of the gentle slopes of the Isaarc Valley. The church is dedicated to a great missio-



nary to China: Joseph Freinademetz, canonized together with Daniel Comboni and Arnold Janssen on October 5.

The 122<sup>nd</sup> saint of the Church in China, Freinademetz, worked tirelessly for the gospel in the northern province of Shantung from 1879 to 1908. He was born on April 15, 1852 in Oies, a tiny village in the Badia Valley in the Alto Adige region, which at that time was known as South Tyrol and belonged to the Austrian empire. Still today Oies is made up of a handful of farmers' and shepherds' houses resting on the green and sober meadows of the valley. To many visitors, the view is reason for grateful surprise, as the holy life of a great missionary in far away China knew its beginnings in such a small and unknown place.

### *Growing Desire*

Ordained in 1875 as a priest of the Diocese of Brixen, Freinademetz served for two years in the village of St. Martin, in the same Badia Valley where he was born. During these years, he kept feeling a strong desire to leave for the missions, something that began in him during his theological studies in the Seminary of Brixen. After obtaining permission from his Bishop, Freinademetz left the diocese and became one of the first to join the Society of the Divine Word, founded by Arnold Janssen in the Dutch town of Steyl. His earnest desire was fulfilled when, in 1879, he was sent to China together with Fr. John Baptist Anzer. After two years spent in the mission of Sai Kung (HongKong) where he learned Chinese and acquired his first missionary experience, Freinademetz was sent together with Anzer to move to the heart of the Empire, in what is

today the western part of the Shan-tung Province, the birth-place of Confucius.

### *Into the Heart of China*

Freinademetz and Anzer were the first Divine Word Missionaries to be sent to China. After more companions joined in, they were entrusted with the Vicariate of South Shantung, with Anzer as its first Apostolic Vicar. Together with his companions, Freinademetz worked tirelessly for the spreading of the gospel in that region. They built a language school for the new missionaries, a center for the formation of the catechists, the seminary, a printing press, the cathedral church, and a school. This dedication to the gospel transformed a community of 158 Catholics in 1890 into a Church that in 1924 will count 106,000 faithful and 44,000 catechumens. The missionary work grew in spite of the local authorities being on many occasions openly hostile against the missionaries. At times their reaction to "the foreign devils and their strange sects" did not spare violent aggressions. On one occasion Freinademetz himself became victim of the violence of the mob, instigated by the local mandarin. The anti-foreign and anti-missionaries reaction peaked with the Boxer rebellion in 1900, when hundreds of Catholics and also many missionaries were killed. On that occasion, Freinademetz showed an unusual courage when he chose to remain with his Catholics in the village of Puoli, which was surrounded by the rebels.

### *Outstanding example*

During his 27 years as a missionary in South Shantung, Blessed Freinademetz served several times as the Adminis-

trator of the Diocese during the absence of Bishop Anzer; he was also provincial of the Divine Word missionaries from 1900 to 1908, the year of his death. Among his companions, Blessed Freinademetz was outstanding for his spirit of prayer, zeal, balance and commitment to the values of consecrated and missionary life. Although discreet and sometimes a little shy, he could find the courage to take firm position in front of his companions and even of his bishop, when the progress of the work of evangelization was at stake because of some bad example on the part of the missionaries.

### *In Love with China*

His love for the Chinese people was unmistakable. Although he was aware of and did not hide the shortcomings of his people and in spite of being easily cheated because of his being at times naive, Blessed Freinademetz loved them passionately. He would write in letters to his family and friends in Europe: "I love China and the Chinese people. I would like to die for them a thousands deaths, I want to die here among them and I wish I could be Chinese in heaven. If I could live all over again I would again want to be a missionary and to work in the south of Shantung."

Saint Freinademetz was constantly striving to become one with the Chinese people: he learned their customs and ever better their language, wore Chinese clothes and lived a simple and very sober lifestyle among the poor peasants. When he was the rector of the Seminary, he emphasized the need for the seminarians to deepen the knowledge of their own culture and among the steps he took in this direction was to insert a course of Chinese literature in the Seminary curri-

culum. In his preaching and way of acting he gave much importance and respect to Chinese moral values like filial piety, moderation and loyalty.

Joseph Freinademetz died of typhoid fever in 1908, crowning a life of dedication to the gospel and to the Chinese. He was beatified together with Arnold Janssen in 1975, by Paul VI. Bishop Mgr Zhao Fengchang, official Bishop of the Yangpu et Linqing diocese, which is located in the Shantung Province, commenting on the news of the canonization, emphasized that Blessed Freinademetz, also known as "Blessed Joseph of Shantung" is a man still very respected by the Chinese, both inside and outside the Church and well known for his missionary work. He also underlined that his diocese always honors the memory of this outstanding missionary, while his life and the miracles attributed to his intercession are told from one generation to the next.

Although Saint Freinademetz surely heard of Daniel Comboni and even pondered the possibility of joining the latter's Institute of the African Missions, we have no evidence that the two ever met face to face. This in spite of the several occasions in which Comboni was in Brixen. However, the event of their being proclaimed Saints together makes them companions in that holiness and total dedication to the spreading of the Gospel that is the soul and essential demand of missionary life. Perhaps the closeness of the Church of the Blessed Freinademetz and the House of the Comboni Missionaries in Brixen is itself a sign of that common spirit that binds together every great missionary.

# **Adolph Kolping: A Model in Today's Church**

**KOLPING SOCIETY PHILIPPINES, INC.**

Adolph Kolping was born on December 8, 1813 in Kerpen, a small village not far from Cologne. His father, Peter Kolping was a shepherd for a well-to-do farmer. In school, Adolph Kolping proved an able student, but because the family was poor, he was unable to further his education. He took up an apprenticeship as a shoemaker at age 13, but his desire for higher education never ceased. After working for ten years as a shoemaker, he entered secondary school. Adolph had been a sickly child and continued to suffer from poor health. Yet despite this fact, he managed to complete his education in record time.

It was Adolph Kolping's wish to become a priest. During his secondary years, he was able to realize his vocation and what was to be his role in life. In the summer of 1841, he began his studies in Theology at the University of Bonn. As his father died the night before his ordination, the joyous day that was to be shared by father and son was instead of sadness.

On April 13, 1845, Adolph Kolping was ordained in the Minorite Church in Cologne.

As priest, he had devoted his life in serving people as his social commitment to uplift the quality of life. He likewise dedicated his life to saving family and fostered its roots in the spirit of Christian tradition.

His devotion to his calling and his determination to further his work caused him to neglect his health, a factor which may have contributed to his early death, at the age of 51 on December 4, 1865. Father Adolp Kolping was laid to rest in Minorite Church, a church he had saved from demolition.

In recognition for Father Kolping, his ideals and goals and his own example, John Paul II beatified Father Kolping on October 27, 1991 in Rome. Pope Paul said: "WE NEED MODELS LIKE ADOLPH KOLPING IN TODAY'S CHURCH."

### ***Brief History***

Kolping's work in its 150 years of purposeful existence, continues to influence millions of people all over the world. Operating in 58 countries, there are about 5,000 Kolping Families and half a million members.

Founded in 1992, the first Kolping Families in the country were organized in the towns of Calabanga and Bombon in the province of Camarines Sur. A year after, Kolping saw a rapid spread in nearby towns including Naga City.

In 1996, the Kolping Society Philippines was recognized as a National Organization by the International Kolping Society based in Cologne, Germany. To date, Kolping Philippines has

2,000 members in about 50 Kolping Families operating in the Archdiocese of Caceres, Prelature of Libmanan, and Diocese of Daet.

### *Mission*

The Kolping Society Philippines, a Catholic social development organization, is committed to uplift the quality of life of its members and the marginalized groups in our society, particularly the working people, through a world of work that embraces human dignity, solidarity, and spirituality.

### *Vision*

We envision a civil and responsible society that regards work as an opportunity for personal development, for service to the community, and for shaping the environment based on the Christian concept of justice, and solidarity attuned to the mission of the Church.

We envision a strong solidarity of members distinguishable by a community of trust and a family-like character that looks out for the common good and welfare of every single Kolping member in pursuit of holistic development that goes beyond fulfilling needs but the economic, social, political, spiritual, moral and religious development of the individual.

### *Aims*

Our fundamental objective is to promote the total personal development of the individual for the benefit of society as a whole.

We aim to shape our members to become: Good Christians; Good Parents; Good Citizens; and Good Workers or Professionals.

### ***Major Programs***

1. Christian Values Formation and Spiritual Enrichment
2. Livelihood/Self-help Projects
3. Education and Training (Dual System of Vocational Training and Occupational Trainings)

### ***Membership***

Kolping Society is open to everyone who believes in its guiding principles and are prepared and willing to share and put them into practice. Kolping membership is not limited to a particular level of distinction. It is open to all workers, professionals, youths, and senior citizens, of all walks of life. The marked characteristic of a Kolping member is his/her commitment in the world of work and service to others. Although membership bestows certain rights and privileges, it carries with it the corresponding duties and responsibilities.



# Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons

## CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

### *Introduction*

1. In recent years, various questions relating to homosexuality have been addressed with some frequency by Pope John Paul II and by the relevant Dicasteries of the Holy See.<sup>1</sup> Homosexuality is a troubling moral and social phenomenon,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Angelus Messages* of February 20, 1994, and of June 19, 1994; *Address to the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Family* (March 24, 1999); *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 2357-2359, 2396; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Persona humana* (December 29, 1975), 8; *Letter on the pastoral care of homosexual persons* (October 1, 1986); *Some considerations concerning the response to legislative proposals on the non-discrimination of homosexual persons* (July 24, 1992); Pontifical Council for the Family, *Letter to the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe on the resolution of the European Parliament regarding homosexual couples* (March 25, 1994); *Family, marriage and "de facto" unions* (July 26, 2000), 23.

even in those countries where it does not present significant legal issues. It gives rise to greater concern in those countries that have granted or intend to grant - legal recognition to homosexual unions, which may include the possibility of adopting children. The present Considerations do not contain new doctrinal elements; they seek rather to reiterate the essential points on this question and provide arguments drawn from reason which could be used by Bishops in preparing more specific interventions, appropriate to the different situations throughout the world, aimed at protecting and promoting the dignity of marriage, the foundation of the family, and the stability of society, of which this institution is a constitutive element. The present Considerations are also intended to give direction to Catholic politicians by indicating the approaches to proposed legislation in this area which would be consistent with Christian conscience.<sup>2</sup> Since this question relates to the natural moral law, the arguments that follow are addressed not only to those who believe in Christ, but to all persons committed to promoting and defending the common good of society.

### *1. The Nature of Marriage and Its Inalienable Characteristics*

2. The Church's teaching on marriage and on the complementarity of the sexes reiterates a truth that is evident to right reason and recognized as such by all the major cultures of the world. Marriage is not just any relationship between human beings. It was established by the Creator with its own

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life* (November 24, 2002), 4.

nature, essential properties and purpose. No ideology can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, who by mutual personal gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons. In this way, they mutually perfect each other, in order to cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives.

3. The natural truth about marriage was confirmed by the Revelation contained in the biblical accounts of creation, an expression also of the original human wisdom, in which the voice of nature itself is heard. There are three fundamental elements of the Creator's plan for marriage, as narrated in the Book of Genesis.

In the first place, man, the image of God, was created "male and female" (*Gen* 1:27). Men and women are equal as persons and complementary as male and female. Sexuality is something that pertains to the physical-biological realm and has also been raised to a new level - the personal level - where nature and spirit are united.

Marriage is instituted by the Creator as a form of life in which a communion of persons is realized involving the use of the sexual faculty. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh" (*Gen* 2:24).

Third, God has willed to give the union of man and woman a special participation in his work of creation. Thus,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 48.

he blessed the man and the woman with the words "Be fruitful and multiply" (*Gen* 1:28). Therefore, in the Creator's plan, sexual complementarity and fruitfulness belong to the very nature of marriage.

Furthermore, the marital union of man and woman has been elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. The Church teaches that Christian marriage is an efficacious sign of the covenant between Christ and the Church (cf. *Eph* 5:32). This Christian meaning of marriage, far from diminishing the profoundly human value of the marital union between man and woman, confirms and strengthens it (cf. *Mt* 19:3-12; *Mk* 10:6-9).

4. There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law. Homosexual acts "close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved".<sup>4</sup>

Sacred Scripture condemns homosexual acts "as a serious depravity... (cf. *Rom* 1:24-27; 1 *Cor* 6:10; 1 *Tim* 1:10). This judgment of Scripture does not of course permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered".<sup>5</sup> This same

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2357.

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Persona humana* (December 29, 1975), 8.

moral judgment is found in many Christian writers of the first centuries<sup>6</sup> and is unanimously accepted by Catholic Tradition.

Nonetheless, according to the teaching of the Church, men and women with homosexual tendencies "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided".<sup>7</sup> They are called, like other Christians, to live the virtue of chastity.<sup>8</sup> The homosexual inclination is however "objectively disordered"<sup>9</sup> and homosexual practices are "sins gravely contrary to chastity".<sup>10</sup>

## //. *Positions on the Problem of Homosexual Unions*

5. Faced with the fact of homosexual unions, civil authorities adopt different positions. At times they simply tolerate the phenomenon; at other times they advocate legal recognition of such unions, under the pretext of avoiding, with regard to certain rights, discrimination against persons who live with someone of the same sex. In other cases, they favour giving homosexual unions legal equivalence to marriage pro-

<sup>6</sup> Cf., for example, St. Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians*, V, 3; St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 27, 1-4; Athenagoras, *Supplication for the Christians*, 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2358; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter on the pastoral care of homosexual persons* (October 1, 1986), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2359; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter on the pastoral care of homosexual persons* (October 1, 1986), 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2358.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2396.

perly so-called, along with the legal possibility of adopting children.

Where the government's policy is *de facto* tolerance and there is no explicit legal recognition of homosexual unions, it is necessary to distinguish carefully the various aspects of the problem. Moral conscience requires that, in every occasion, Christians give witness to the whole moral truth, which is contradicted both by approval of homosexual acts and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons. Therefore, discreet and prudent actions can be effective; these might involve: unmasking the way in which such tolerance might be exploited or used in the service of ideology; stating clearly the immoral nature of these unions; reminding the government of the need to contain the phenomenon within certain limits so as to safeguard public morality and, above all, to avoid exposing young people to erroneous ideas about sexuality and marriage that would deprive them of their necessary defences and contribute to the spread of the phenomenon. Those who would move from tolerance to the legitimization of specific rights for cohabiting homosexual persons need to be reminded that the approval or legalization of evil is something far different from the toleration of evil.

In those situations where homosexual unions have been legally recognized or have been given the legal status and rights belonging to marriage, clear and emphatic opposition is a duty. One must refrain from any kind of formal cooperation in the enactment or application of such gravely unjust laws and, as far as possible, from material cooperation on the level of their application. In this area, everyone can exercise the right to conscientious objection.

### *///. Arguments from Reason Against Legal Recognition of Homosexual Unions*

6. To understand why it is necessary to oppose legal recognition of homosexual unions, ethical considerations of different orders need to be taken into consideration.

#### *From the order of right reason*

The scope of the civil law is certainly more limited than that of the moral law,<sup>11</sup> but civil law cannot contradict right reason without losing its binding force on conscience.<sup>12</sup> Every humanly-created law is legitimate insofar as it is consistent with the natural moral law, recognized by right reason, and insofar as it respects the inalienable rights of every person.<sup>13</sup> Laws in favour of homosexual unions are contrary to right reason because they confer legal guarantees, analogous to those granted to marriage, to unions between persons of the same sex. Given the values at stake in this question, the State could not grant legal standing to such unions without failing in its duty to promote and defend marriage as an institution essential to the common good.

It might be asked how a law can be contrary to the common good if it does not impose any particular kind of behaviour, but simply gives legal recognition to a *de facto* reality which does not seem to cause injustice to anyone. In this area, one needs first to reflect on the difference between

<sup>11</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* (March 25, 1995), 71.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 72.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 95, a. 2.

homosexual behaviour as a private phenomenon and the same behaviour as a relationship in society, foreseen and approved by the law, to the point where it becomes one of the institutions in the legal structure. This second phenomenon is not only more serious, but also assumes a more wide-reaching and profound influence, and would result in changes to the entire organization of society, contrary to the common good. Civil laws are structuring principles of man's life in society, for good or for ill. They "play a very important and sometimes decisive role in influencing patterns of thought and behaviour".<sup>14</sup> Lifestyles and the underlying presuppositions these express not only externally shape the life of society, but also tend to modify the younger generation's perception and evaluation of forms of behaviour. Legal recognition of homosexual unions would obscure certain basic moral values and cause a devaluation of the institution of marriage.

*From the biological and anthropological order*

7. Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family which would be the basis, on the level of reason, for granting them legal recognition. Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race. The possibility of using recently discovered methods of artificial reproduction, beyond involving a grave lack of respect for human dignity,<sup>15</sup> does nothing to alter this inadequacy.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* (March 25, 1995), 90.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum vitae* (February 22, 1987), II. A. 1-3.



Homosexual unions are also totally lacking in the conjugal dimension, which represents the human and ordered form of sexuality. Sexual relations are human when and insofar as they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of new life.

As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle, recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case.

#### *From the social order*

8. Society owes its continued survival to the family, founded on marriage. The inevitable consequence of legal recognition of homosexual unions would be the redefinition of marriage, which would become, in its legal status, an institution devoid of essential reference to factors linked to heterosexuality; for example, procreation and raising children. If, from the legal standpoint, marriage between a man and a woman were to be considered just one possible form of

marriage, the concept of marriage would undergo a radical transformation, with grave detriment to the common good. By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties.

The principles of respect and non-discrimination cannot be invoked to support legal recognition of homosexual unions. Differentiating between persons or refusing social recognition or benefits is unacceptable only when it is contrary to justice.<sup>16</sup> The denial of the social and legal status of marriage to forms of cohabitation that are not and cannot be marital is not opposed to justice; on the contrary, justice requires it.

Nor can the principle of the proper autonomy of the individual be reasonably invoked. It is one thing to maintain that individual citizens may freely engage in those activities that interest them and that this falls within the common civil right to freedom; it is something quite different to hold that activities which do not represent a significant or positive contribution to the development of the human person in society can receive specific and categorical legal recognition by the State. Not even in a remote analogous sense do homosexual unions fulfill the purpose for which marriage and family deserve specific categorical recognition. On the contrary, there are good reasons for holding that such unions are harmful to the proper development of human society, especially if their impact on society were to increase.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II—II, q. 63, a. 1, c.

### *From the legal order*

9. Because married couples ensure the succession of generations and are therefore eminently within the public interest, civil law grants them institutional recognition. Homosexual unions, on the other hand, do not need specific attention from the legal standpoint since they do not exercise this function for the common good.

Nor is the argument valid according to which legal recognition of homosexual unions is necessary to avoid situations in which cohabiting homosexual persons, simply because they live together, might be deprived of real recognition of their rights as persons and citizens. In reality, they can always make use of the provisions of law - like all citizens from the standpoint of their private autonomy - to protect their rights in matters of common interest. It would be gravely unjust to sacrifice the common good and just laws on the family in order to protect personal goods that can and must be guaranteed in ways that do not harm the body of society.<sup>17</sup>

### ***IV. Positions of Catholic Politicians with Regard to Legislation in Favour of Homosexual Unions***

10. If it is true that all Catholics are obliged to oppose the legal recognition of homosexual unions, Catholic politicians

<sup>17</sup> It should not be forgotten that there is always "a danger that legislation which would make homosexuality a basis for entitlements could actually encourage a person with a homosexual orientation to declare his homosexuality or even to seek a partner in order to exploit the provisions of the law" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Some considerations concerning the response to legislative proposals on the non-discrimination of homosexual persons* [July 24, 1992], 14).

are obliged to do so in a particular way, in keeping with their responsibility as politicians. Faced with legislative proposals in favour of homosexual unions, Catholic politicians are to take account of the following ethical indications.

When legislation in favour of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic law-maker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favour of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral.

When legislation in favour of the recognition of homosexual unions is already in force, the Catholic politician must oppose it in the ways that are possible for him and make his opposition known; it is his duty to witness to the truth. If it is not possible to repeal such a law completely, the Catholic politician, recalling the indications contained in the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, "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", on condition that his "absolute personal opposition" to such laws was clear and well known and that the danger of scandal was avoided.<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that a more restrictive law in this area could be considered just or even acceptable; rather, it is a question of the legitimate and dutiful attempt to obtain at least the partial repeal of an unjust law when its total abrogation is not possible at the moment.

John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* (March 25, 1995), 73.

## ***Conclusion***

11. The Church teaches that respect for homosexual persons cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behaviour or to legal recognition of homosexual unions. The *common good* requires that laws recognize, promote and protect marriage as the basis of the family, the primary unit of society. Legal recognition of homosexual unions or placing them on the same level as marriage would mean not only the approval of deviant behaviour, with the consequence of making it a model in present-day society, but would also obscure basic values which belong to the common inheritance of humanity. The Church cannot fail to defend these values, for the good of men and women and for the good of society itself.

*The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of March 28, 2003, approved the present Considerations, adopted in the Ordinary Session of this Congregation, and ordered their publication.*

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 3, 2003, Memorial of Saint Charles Lwanga and his Companions, Martyrs.

## **Cases and Inquiries**

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

### The Sacred Pallium

*/ have heard about the Pallium. Out of curiosity, may I ask: What is it, and what is its present-day meaning?*

\* \* \*

The pallium is a white woolen circular band embroidered with six black crosses which metropolitan archbishops and the Pope himself wear over their shoulders. It has two hanging pieces, in front and in back. The pallium, worn over the chasuble, secured with gold pins, symbolizes authority and expresses a particular bond of union with the Roman Pontiff.

The pallium is made from the wool shorn from lambs that are blessed by the Pope at Saint John Lateran on the feast of St. Agnes. In fact, according to Vatican information, every year on the January 21 liturgical memory of the virgin-martyr St. Agnes, for whom the traditional symbol is a lamb, the Pope blesses several baby lambs whose wool will be used

to make the pallia. The centuries-old tradition is celebrated annually on the feast of St. Agnes who died about 350 and is buried in the basilica named after her on Rome's Via Nomentana. The lambs are raised by the Trappist Fathers of the Abbey of the Three Fountains and the pallia of the newly-shorn wool are made by the sisters of St. Cecilia. Usually in attendance at the ceremony, which takes place in the Pope's private apartments, are two Trappist fathers, two canons of the Chapter of St. John, the dean of the Roman Rota, two "sediari" (former papal chair bearers and now ceremonial officials) and two officials from the Office of the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff. »

Every year on the vigil of June 29th solemnity of the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul, the pallia are taken to the crypt of Saint Peter where they are blessed by the Pope at vespers. They are kept there overnight and are bestowed on the new metropolitan archbishops in a special ceremony on the feast.

In the 1978 document, "De Sacrii Pallii" (*Inter ExiYnia Episcopalis*), Pope Paul VI restricted the use of the pallium to the Pope and metropolitan archbishops. In 1984 John Paul II decreed that it would be conferred on the metropolitans by the Pope on the June 29 feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. '

Archbishops wear the pallium only in their own archdiocese and only on those days and occasions specified in the 'Pontificale' (a liturgical book which contains the rites for the performance of episcopal functions) or otherwise decreed by the Holy Father. Actually, regarding the metropolitan's right to wear the pallium the present law of the Church (c. 437) recognizes two limitations. The first one, liturgical: Because the pallium is a vestment, its use is naturally regulated

by liturgical law. The Ceremonial of Bishops (n. 62) prescribes that, after a residential archbishop has received the pallium, he wears it to celebrate Masses with great solemnity, ordinations, blessings of abbots and abbesses, consecration of virgins and dedications of churches and altars. The second limitation on the wearing of the pallium is territorial: the metropolitan may wear it only in the churches located within the province over which he presides.

Regarding the meaning of the pallium Pope John Paul II has, in past ceremonies, spoken of it: "The communion of faith is expressed in today's solemn celebration, also through the meaningful gesture of the imposition of the sacred pallium" on the metropolitan archbishops. "The pallium that you receive today is an expression of that unity with the See of Peter and of that witness in agreement with the Christian faith, which must characterize your episcopal ministry."

In short, the pallium is a sign of hierarchical authority (power) and of full communion with the Church of Rome.



## **Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers 2004**

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**EFREN RIVERA, OP**

The *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* is starting a new series of "Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers" after a gap of three years. As in the first series that was published in these pages from 1996 to 2000, this series of guides is for priest homilists as well as for Bibliarasal leaders and doers, who are lay people.

The author agreed with the editor that in this new series, exegesis will take a back seat. Yes, the author, being an exegete, will do exegetical work, that is to say, study the Greek New Testament words, take account of the literary forms, and use his knowledge of the biblical world. But such study will not be set forth in this pastoral guide. Maybe these elements will show up here and there, but mainly they will be hidden from view.

Each guide will have a summary of the biblical teachings (# 1) in the Gospel passages in the parade of 52 Sundays in a

year. In relation to the Seven Steps of Bibliarasal, this will be like a Supplement to Step Two, "Text Reading."

In number two (# 2) of the guides we "Again Look at the Text" (Bibliarasal Step Three) to bring out VALUES that can be picked from the passage, like guavas from a guava tree. The author is convinced that the pressing need of the Philippine Church or the Filipino nation in its present history is a massive re-education in values, whether specifically Christian or universal, that is, valid for all people of goodwill. If Filipino people would just attend to these values and actualize them in character building or formation, then, by the grace of Divine Mercy, there will be true moral and spiritual rebirth in this land.

Step Four in a Bibliarasal session is a pause to let God speak as the participants in the session keep silence. Doing this step will not appear in the guides, but people should not forget that LISTENING to the Lord is a very important step of Bible study.

Points recommended for Sharing (# 3) come next in the guides. Sharing is the heart of Bibliarasal. It should spring from the heart or life experience of the one who volunteers. The Sharer receives a "DABAR" or "WORD-EVENT" that is like a touch from Jesus Christ. It need not be a bolt of lightning and a roar of thunder, it need not be a blinding light as in the case of the future apostle Paul riding a horse on his way to Damascus. All that is needed in a real Sharing is connection between a word of the text, or an insight derived from it, and a memorable event or surprise in one's life. When a Bibliarasal group is in its first stages of formation, people

usually need some prodding to come up with a sharing. But as the participants experience the Holy Spirit moving more and more among them, volunteers will not be hard to come by. To help beginners, the guides in this series recommend some points for sharing.

What does the Lord want us to do? This is what we take up next as Step Six of Bibliarasal, and identified as number four (# 4) in the guides. When a Bibliarasal group is just beginning its formation, and there is need to spend more time in sharing, this step could be omitted. But for the maturity of one's spiritual life, one needs to ask what to do as one grows in the love of God. This is certainly something that a homilist should not omit. In our guides, we answer the question asked in this step taking the viewpoint of contextual Theology. We have to relate the teachings of the Gospel passage:

- 4.1 to Catholic Church life in the Philippines today;
- 4.2 to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural life of the people;
- 4.3 to the Spiritual and Personal life of Sunday churchgoers.

In a Bibliarasal session, it is best for the Facilitator to give a recap of the session before the participants go their separate ways or attend to other matters. This could well be done in the form of a concluding prayer (Step Seven). We need not touch on this in the guides. Instead, we end the guides for each Sunday with a brief sample homily.

So that readers will have a handy reference, we now present the Four Words and the Seven Steps of Bibliarasal.

## THE FOUR WORDS OF BIBLIARASAL

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   |   | A | R | - | - | A | L |
| B | I | B | L | I | A |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   | D | A | S | A | L |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   | A | S | A | L |
| B | I | B | L | I | A | R | A | S | A | L |

"Mag-ARAL

ng BIBLIA

upang mag-DASAL

at magbago ng ASAL."

"STUDY

the BIBLE

to PRAY and

change your BEHAVIORS

## THE SEVEN STEPS OF BIBLIARASAL

| <i>WHAT TO DO</i> |                              |  |
|-------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Step 1<br>"I"     | INVITE<br>THE LORD           | SAY AN<br>OPENING PRAYER                 |
| Step 2<br>"T"     | TEXT<br>READING              | OPEN<br>YOUR BIBLE                       |
| Step 3<br>"A"     | AGAIN LOOK<br>AT THE TEXT... | IDENTIFY<br>VALUES                       |
| Step 4<br>"G"     | GOD<br>SPEAKS...             | WE<br>LISTEN                             |
| Step 5            | SHARE                        | RELATE YOUR EXPERIENCE<br>TO GOD'S WORD  |
| Step 6            | SEARCH                       | FIND OUT WHAT THE LORD<br>WANTS US TO DO |
| Step 7            | PRAY                         | RECAP                                    |

**January 1, 2004      ◇      WORLD DAY OF PEACE**  
**Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church**  
Readings: Nm 6: 22-27; Gal 4: 4: 4-7; Lk 2: 16-21

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The baby Jesus is found lying in a manger and so his poverty is shown. With him are Mary and Joseph, similarly poor people. The ones who find him, shepherds, were among the "poorest of the poor" at that time. Luke certainly wanted his readers to keep in mind how the ANAWIM are supposed to be: poor but happy because of God's favor on them. In particular, they are the first to receive the Good News as actualized in the incarnate person of Jesus and as proclaimed by God's messengers. Mary is shown as outstanding among the ANAWIM because she "treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart." However, in this passage, it is the "poorest of the poor" who glorify and praise God and announce the Good News.

The teaching on Mary can be stated in three points:

- a) She shared in the poverty of Jesus, she is the model of the Anawim, and she is the "Mother of the Poor."
- b) As model of the Anawim, she "treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart."
- c) Together with Joseph - on par with the head of the family - she gives the name "Jesus" to the baby.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 16, "they went in haste..." - Value of prompt response to Good News.

V. 17, "once they saw, they understood..." - Value of getting a deeper understanding of the Good News through personal experience.

V. 18, "the report given by the shepherds..." - Value of spreading the Good News. <> Value of learning from the "poorest of the poor."

V. 19, "Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart." - Value of gaining a deeper understanding by "treasuring" and "reflecting" with one's heart.

V. 20, "Glorifying and praising God..." - Value of putting God ahead of oneself in glorification and praise.

V. 21, "The name Jesus was given the child..." - Value of recognizing something to live up to in one's name.

### 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- How did the experience of poverty help you get closer to God or to Jesus, Mary and Joseph?
- Have you experienced learning something important from the poor?

### 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - With the help of Mary, the Philippine Church must strive to be a "Church of the Poor." This is the guiding star pointed to by the Second Provincial Council of the Philippines (PCP-II). In line with this, Mary would like her images to be less regally adorned. Maybe the ancient images that date to the time of

the Spanish monarchs could keep their jewels and expensive robes. But why dress up images of Our Lady of Fatima? Or images of Our Lady of Lourdes? In more recent times (maybe from the time of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii), miraculous images of Mary show her to be simply dressed.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today. - The shepherds - the poorest of the poor at the time of Jesus - at least had the livelihood of tending sheep. Today, the poorest of the poor are reduced to begging. Our government, business and industry are not doing enough to provide our people with decent jobs. Most schools train their students to become employees rather than entrepreneurs.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

## **MOTHER OF THE POOR**

The Gospel Reading for today shows us that Mary can be called not only Mother of Jesus, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, but truly also the "Mother of the Poor (in Hebrew: *Anawim*)."

It would be an excellent New Year's resolution for each of us to resolve to think of Mary more often as "The Mother of the *Anawim*". She was the mother of Jesus, who was born poor, grew up in a low-bracket community in Nazareth, and died naked (except maybe for a piece of cloth around his loins). She also showed herself to be a "Mother of the *Anawim*" by helping the shepherds understand more deeply the Good News that the angels told them. Moreover, she listened to them, learned from them.

To make our New Year's resolution more concrete, it would be good to resolve to think of Mary as wearing a simple dress - the dress of a poor woman. That's how she appeared at Fatima and at Banneux (near Liege), Belgium. Because of this latter apparition in 1933, approved by the Bishop of Liege in 1949, one of her officially recognized titles is "Our Lady of the Poor."

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

**January 4, 2004      <>      Feast of the Epiphany**

Readings: Is 60: 1-6; Eph 3: 2-3. 5-6; Mt 2: 1-12

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Mary and Joseph, for Matthew, represent the people of Israel who received the Messiah at his birth. Now the Messiah or "King of the Jews" is revealed to the gentiles represented by "astrologers from the East". Ancient astrology, as a body of knowledge known only to the "wise" is not itself being commended by Matthew. What we can legitimately see here is the idea that the "seeds of the Word" can be found in the wisdom of all cultures and in the religion of peoples other than the Chosen People of Israel. However, it is necessary to turn to-the Sacred Scriptures of the People of God in order to find the fullness of revelation and the Savior sent by God. Herod, the half-Jewish king, becomes an enemy of the Messiah and God's plan of salvation. The gifts of the astrologers represent the treasures of their cultures and religions laid at the foot of the King of all cultures and all religions.



## 2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 2, "we observed his star at its rising..." - Value of being a careful observer of events that occur in the world. This is basic to being a "studious" person.

V. 2b, "we have come to do him homage..." - Value of searching for the one true God and the Messiah he promised to send to his people.

V. 10, "They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother." <> Value of being true to one's original inspiration. <> Value of seeking the Savior in his house, that is, the Church. <> Value of Marian devotion, or finding Jesus "with Mary, his mother."

V. 11, "gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." - Value of preserving and sanctifying one's pre-Christian cultural and religious treasures.

## 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Did you ever get a wake up call to appreciate the beauty and dignity of your Christian vocation?
- Did you also open your eyes to the values of cultures and religions other than your own but which contain the "Seeds of the Word of God"?

## 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - We have to continue in the path of inculturating the Christian

faith taking account of the elements of ancient Filipino cultures and religions that continue to exert influence even today.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Our country needs a "STAR," a national Vision-Mission that will grab us, unite us as a people, and guide us to integral human development.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

### **THE STAR OF ST. LORENZO RUIZ**

St. Lorenzo Ruiz, the first Filipino saint lived so long ago (he was martyred in 1637 - that's 300 years before this author's birth!) but he has many lessons to teach us today. First of all, he demonstrates that being a yellow Chinese or a brown Filipino or both (since he was a *mestizo*) is not a hindrance to being a saint in the Catholic church. Implicitly he teaches that the Chinese culture and the Filipino culture also have a place in Christianity. Besides, it can be said that the pre-Christian Chinese religion of his ancestors on his father's side and the pre-Christian Filipino religion of his ancestors on his mother's side did not prove to be hindrances to his full Catholic faith. He was a second generation or at most a third generation Christian, and so the influences of these religions on him must have been considerable. His lolos and lolas on both his father and mother sides were probably not Christian at all!

St. Lorenzo Ruiz demonstrates how the Mercy of God worked on our pre-Christian ancestors. They did not have the revelation of the Sacred Scriptures, but they did have the "Seeds

of the Word of God" that will later come to full blooming in their descendant. Those "Seeds of the Word of God" were like the Star observed and followed by the Magi so that they could come and adore the King of the Jews, the Savior of the world.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

## **January 11, 2004      <>      Baptism of the Lord**

Readings (C): Is 42: 1-4. 6-7; Acts 10: 34-38; Lk 3: 15-16. 21-22

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Jesus is the Leader of the Messianic Community. Surprisingly, he let "all the people" be baptized by John first, before he himself went to the Jordan River to be baptized. On second thought, however, this should not be surprising because baptism at the Jordan River meant one thing for the people and another thing for Jesus. For the people, it was their response to John's call for repentance. Jesus did not have to respond personally to such a call for he did not need repentance. When he did go to be baptized, it was to represent those who for one reason or another had not responded to John's call. He personified in himself the whole community of Israel past, present and future. He personified all humankind from Adam to the last men and women on earth. Moreover, personally, for himself, his baptism was going to be the inauguration of his ministry. This was attested to by the skies being opened, the Holy Spirit descending on him in the form of a dove, and the voice from heaven saying, "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests." The Beloved Son is also the Chosen Servant mentioned in four songs of Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13 - 53:12).

## 2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V 15, "the people were full of anticipation..." - Value of showing interest in what is happening around us.

V. 16b, "there is one to come who is mightier than I. I am not fit to loosen his sandal strap..." - Value of having respect for one's betters . <> Value of humility.

V 16c, "He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire..."-Value of hidden reality over external rite.

V 21b, "Jesus was at prayer..."(Jesus was about to start his public ministry). - Value of prayer to dedicate a new phase in one's life. Value of prayer to start one's day.

## 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Did you ever feel the need to get a sign from heaven to begin doing a project that you have to do?

- Did you ever take to heart the duties of being a sponsor at Baptism? Did you help you godchild become an Evangelizer?

## 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Too many Filipinos still do not really understand the meaning of their having been baptized. We have to continue looking for ways and means to make the Baptismal Catechism of candidates (if they can understand) and of sponsors more effective. In particular, we have to emphasize that baptism mandates

us to give a life-witness to the Gospel. Every baptized person must become an Evangelizer.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - The Baptism of Christ was like his inauguration as the Messiah who activated the Kingdom of God in his person and ministry. He was not a politician but he pointed out the right things that politicians did or the wrong things for which politicians should repent and which they should correct. Like Jesus Christ, we should watch our politicians, support them in their efforts for the common good, and correct them when they go astray.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

### **LISTEN AND OBEY**

The ministry of being "the Beloved Son/Chosen Servant" which Jesus inaugurated at his Baptism required him to be a Prophet, a Teacher, and Healer. As a prophet he proclaimed the Word of God to all who needed it. For some, it was a call to repentance. For others, especially the erring people who exercised authority, it was a rebuke. For some others, it was a word of encouragement and comfort. As a Teacher he helped people understand God's plan for their salvation. He helped them do what was good and avoid what was evil. As a Healer, he gave wholeness to people who were broken physically, psychologically or spiritually.

For people to benefit from the ministry of Christ, there are two things to do: LISTEN and OBEY (see Lk 9:35).

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

**January 18, 2004      <>      Feast of the Sto. Nino**

Readings (C): Is 9: 1-6; Eph 1: 3-6. 15-18; Lk 2: 41-52

Note: *National Bible Week begins tomorrow, January 19.*

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). What could be a fitting bridge between the infancy of Jesus and his public ministry? For Luke the answer is his story of Jesus, at 12 years old, active in the Temple for three days, "sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." To this he adds the observation that Jesus went back to Nazareth to be obedient to Mary and Joseph and to grow steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and man.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 41, "His parents used to go every year to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover." - Value of the yearly observance of the greatest feast of one's religion.

V. 42, "he was twelve years old..." - Value of a serene transition from boyhood to manhood.

V. 43, "the child Jesus remained behind unknown to his parents..." - Value of forming one's own character... having one's own mind... having one's own plans for life.

V. 44, "relatives and acquaintances..." - Value of having relatives and acquaintances.

V. 46, "They came upon him in the temple..." - Value of frequenting God's temple.

V. 51b "His mother meanwhile kept all these things in memory..." - Value of seeing God's hand in what happens in our life or the life of our dear ones.

### 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Would you like to share memories of parents (or a parent) or teachers (or a teacher) who helped you form your character?
- Have you met a man (Pope John Paul II? Cardinal Sin? Etc.) or woman (Mo. Teresa of Calcutta? Cory Aquino? Etc.) whose character you admire?

### 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - The church must do more to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We have to convince our people that good moral character is necessary to real success in business, politics, the arts. We must support those institutions and companies that put a premium on good moral character.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

## CHARACTER FORMATION

The Gospel Reading for today shows us Jesus in a period of transition from boyhood to adulthood and taking a hand in the formation of his character. What is character? It is the habitual mode of acting one has formed based on the values one has made his own. Values may come from one's parents and teachers and from the culture or traditions of the society in which one grows up. A man finding a lost wallet containing 100,000 pesos has good character when the idea of keeping the money for himself does not even cross his mind. All he wants to do is return the wallet to its owner.

Jesus is twelve years old. The author remembers that as his age when he finished the elementary grades. By that time he had already decided he was going to be a priest. That idea actually came from a teacher he had when he was in grade five. At twelve years old, Jesus certainly had already his own mind and his plan for his life. The Gospel passage for today tells us he deliberately remained in the Temple unknown to his parents because he wanted to "be in his Father's house."

Jesus, however, was open to the signs by which God guides human lives. For him, the coming of his parents to take him home to Nazareth was a sign. He bows to God's will, goes home to Nazareth, and was obedient to his parents until another sign (the ministry of John the Baptist) will indicate the time of his public ministry.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.



**January 25, 2004      o      Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Read ings (C): Neh 8: 2-4.5-6.8-10; 1 Cor 12:12-30 or 12:12- 14.27;  
Lk 1: -4; 4:14-21

Note: *Today is National Bible Sunday*

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The Gospel Reading combines the Prologue of Luke and the visit of Jesus at Nazareth after his Baptism at the Jordan. We learn from the prologue that the "original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" had become scarce but in their place there were "many" compilations of the traditions they had handed down. Luke meant his work to be one such compilation, not knowing that in God's providence his work will become part of Sacred Scriptures. For a brief summary of Lk 4:14-21, see the brief Homily below, "Time to Change."

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

Lk 1:1, "Compile a narrative of the events which have been fulfilled in our midst." - Value of making a compilation or chronicle of extraordinary happenings or of oral traditions.

Lk 1:2, "Transmitted to us by the original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." - Value of respecting the original eyewitnesses and the tradition they handed down.

Lk 4:14, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit..." See also the quotation from Isaiah 61:1 in v. 18. - Value of being moved by the Holy Spirit.

Lk4:16, "As he was in the habit of doing..." - Value of habitual attendance to weekly religious service in the designated place of worship.

Lk4:19, "To announce a year of favor from the Lord." - Value of being part of the observance of a year of favor from the Lord.

### 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you heard preachers who have challenged you to change? What was your reaction?
- How have you reacted to claims of people that they are moved by the Holy Spirit?

### 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Like the universal church, local churches must be *semper reformanda* (always to be reformed).

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We can do better than our neighbors only if we strive to be one step ahead of them in the changes that are required by contemporary living. However we must see to it that we do not lose the traditional values that are worth keeping.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

## TIME TO CHANGE

Jesus left his native town probably to celebrate a feast in Jerusalem. It took him time to come back. His activities at that time included his Baptism at the Jordan, which, as previously explained, was the beginning of his public ministry. Then he started making the rounds of the synagogues in Galilee and he gained such reputation that "all were loud in his praise."

When he finally returned to Nazareth, he also "entered the synagogue on the Sabbath as he was in the habit of doing." His relatives and neighbors expected him to do in their town what they heard he was doing in other places. He was ready to oblige, but first, he wanted to explain the change that had happened to him so that they too, the people of his own town, would undergo change, renewal, rebirth. He deliberately looked for the text of Isaiah 61: 1-2a. This text explains that whatever change had happened to him was due to the Spirit of the Lord that has anointed him to bring glad tidings to the poor... to announce a year of favor from the Lord." In other words, he has changed because the Lord has wanted him to start his work as the promised Messiah.

His relatives and neighbors found this claim to be incredible. Moreover, they felt that all was well with their life. There was no need to change. Don't rock the boat! Many of us feel that way too, in our own time. But Christ's invitation to change is a continuing challenge.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

**February 1, 2004**



**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Jr 1: 4-5.17-19; 1 Cor 12:31-13:13 or 13: 4-13; Lk 4:21- 30

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Today's Gospel passage shows Jesus as "a sign that is opposed" (see Lk 2:34). Indeed there is a dramatic turn of events. While the first part of the reading tells us that "all who were present spoke favorably of him," suddenly there is a change in mood introduced by the question, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (v. 22b). Soon, Jesus declares, "no prophet gains acceptance in his own native place..." and the episode ends with the "whole audience in the synagogue (being) filled with indignation. They rose up and expelled him from the town..."

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 23, "You will doubtless quote to me the proverb..." - Value of proverbs.

V 30, "Walked away..." - Value of non-violence.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you experience rejection by your relatives... neighbors... friends... family?
- Have you experienced the power of non-violence?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Heed the call to propagate the message of Divine Mercy.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We must put our talents at the service of our country but at the same time we have to recognize that our efforts will not bear fruit if they are not blessed by the Mercy of God.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

## **GOD'S MERCY IS FOR ALL**

One must be careful not to give an anti-Semitic flavor to today's Gospel passage, but one must also be careful not to distort history. It is a fact that the Jewish nation, as a whole, rejected Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah promised by God. In St. Paul's, view, however, this is something temporary. A time will come when the Jewish nation will turn to the Lord. (See Romans 9-11).

This Sunday is a special opportunity for us to reflect on the principle stated by St. Paul: "God has imprisoned all human beings in their own disobedience only to show mercy to them all."

The Pope has exhorted people time and again to pay attention to the message of Divine Mercy that God has renewed in our time through the life and Diary of St. Sr. Faustina Kowalska.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

**February 8, 2004      <>      Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Is 6: 1-2. 3-8; 1 Cor 15: 1-11 or 15:3-8. 11; Lk 5:1-11

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Jesus gets into Simon's boat first, to teach from it "a short distance from the shore," and then to "put out into deep water" for a miraculous catch of fish. What the teaching could not accomplish, the miracle did, that is, move the first disciples - Simon and Andrew, James and John - leave everything and become his followers.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 1, "the crowd pressed on him to hear the word of God..." - Value of hearing the word of God.

V 4, "teach the crowd from (Simon's) boat..." - Value of putting teaching first before miraculous action. <> If Simon's boat is taken symbolically to mean the Church, then we have here the value of the Pope's or Peter's Magisterium (Teaching Office): it is no less than Christ himself who speaks through Peter.

V. 5, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." - Value of taking risks to achieve outstanding results.

V 5b, "If you say so..." - Value of doing as the Master bids us to do.

V 7, "They signaled to their mates in the other boat to come and help them." - Value of cooperation among church workers, especially when something extraordinary is happening.

V. 9, "amazement..." - Value of having an amazing experience.

V. 10b, "Do not be afraid..." - Value of trusting in Jesus.

V 11b, "Left everything and became his disciples../" - Value of leaving all to become a disciple of Christ, staying with him as close as possible all the time.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).  
(You can choose one of the values in n. 2 for sharing.)

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO  
(*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - We have to follow the exhortations of the Pope (1) to "put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch," and (2) not to be afraid but instead trust in Divine Mercy.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Daring action or innovations are needed to go forward in Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural life. But there should be a period of learning first.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

## **PUTTING OUT INTO DEEP WATER**

*Due in altum* (Lk 5:4) - "put out into deep water" - has been one of the favorite themes of Pope John Paul II during the first few years of the new millennium. For him, more than ever before, this is the millennium when the Church has

to take considerable risks so as to be rewarded with a rich catch of people.

When one is in shallow waters and the boat starts to leak, one can paddle to shore and avoid sinking. But then, in shallow waters, one catches only small fish. One has to go to the open sea to catch big fish. Of course, when one "puts out into deep water" one takes greater risk than when one remains near the shore. If, for some reason the boat sinks, chances are, one will drown if help does not come quickly.

The Pope himself has demonstrated what it means to put out into the deep. He continues to count on the youth when the signs indicate they are losing interest in the Church and in religion. He takes up the cudgels for the United Nations when it seems powerless in opposing a superpower. He continues visiting his flock even when his health is failing. Indeed we should learn to be as daring as he is... for the sake of Christ.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

**February 15, 2004**    <>    **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
Readings (C): Jr 17: 5-8; 1 Cor 15: 12. 16-20; Lk 6: 17. 20-25

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The Gospel passage for this Sunday gives us St. Luke's presentation of "The Four Beatitudes and Four Woes". The Blessing in store for the DISCIPLES of Jesus is, firstly, being a beneficiary of the Reign of God. What this really means is clarified by two phrases: a) "You shall be filled." To be in the Reign of God is have one's hungers



satisfied. These hungers are physical, psychological and spiritual, b) "You shall laugh." Those who were weeping will see their sorrow turn into joy. What will bring this about? Simple. All one has to do is to become really and truly a DISCIPLE of Jesus Christ. How is this done? By putting one's faith and one's trust in his Divine Mercy.

## 2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 17, "Coming down the mountain..." - Value of doing one's work after praying (as Jesus did, see v. 12).

V 17, "a level stretch where there were many of his disciples; a large crowd of people was with them..." - Value of being with Jesus by belonging to one of three groups: the group of the selected few, "the Twelve;" the group of the "many disciples who remained at the level stretch;" and the crowds that came to be healed.

V 19b, "power went out from him which cured all..." - Value of trusting in the healing power of Jesus.

## 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Where do you put yourself in relation to Jesus: among the selected few... among the bigger number of disciples who did not go up the mountain... among the crowd that sought healing?

- Have you experienced the Beatitudes or the Woes in your life?

#### 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

*(Bibliarasal Step Six).*

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - As stated above, there were three groups with Jesus in St. Luke's narrative: The selected few - these could be thought of as the clergy. The bigger number of disciples in the level stretch - these could be thought of as the evangelized laity. The crowd that sought healing - these could be thought of as the faithful whose evangelization leaves something to be desired, and also people of other religions. The Church (the clergy and the evangelized laity) should minister to the crowd.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We have to pay attention to what Jesus says about "you rich..." "you who are full..." "you who laugh now..." and about the "false prophets..." Jesus invites all these people to turn to his Divine Mercy and change themselves so that they can also enjoy the Beatitudes.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

#### BELATED HAPPY VALENTINE'S

The world, especially lovers, celebrated Valentine's day yesterday. We join the celebration belatedly because we would like to focus on Friendship Love and Salvific Love, which are superior to Erotic Love, which was the kind that was celebrated yesterday.

Erotic love is selfish. Basically, it is a gratification of the senses and the ego, at best. You love someone because he or she makes you happy. At its worst, erotic love wants to exer-

cise power over the beloved. One wants to control another person, get him or her to do one's bidding, no matter how whimsical. And that is when sexual sins come in.

By contrast, Friendship Love makes the beloved a better person. This is achieved through Caring, Sharing, Affirmation and Forgiveness. You care when you respond to your friend's need: be that physical, psychological or spiritual. You share your three T's: Time, Talent, Treasure. You affirm when you put into practice the principle of good human relations, "I'm OK, You're OK." You have a forgiving heart when you keep in mind that nobody is perfect, and human beings sooner or later make mistakes. Think of those mistakes as "honest mistakes," coming from human frailty and not done out of malice.

Best of all is Salvific Love or *Agape*. It is the kind that Jesus showed us and it is the kind we show when we imitate Jesus in doing good to other people.

Summary of the teaching in the Biblical passage: see above, n. 1

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

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| <p><b>February 22, 2004</b>     o     <b>Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time</b><br/>Readings (C): 1 Sm 26; 2. 7-9 12-13. 22-23; 1 Cor 15:45-49; Lk6: 27-38<br/>Note: <i>Next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday</i></p> |
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1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). To love one's enemies means: to do good to them... to bless them... to pray for them. Long before Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus taught his disciples to answer violence with non-violence.

## 2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 29b, "When someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well." - We have an illustration from the life of St. Francis of Assisi. His own father brought him before the Bishop, who at that time served also as judge. The father wanted his son, Francis, to pay for the goods in his stock room that Francis sold so as to raise money to build a church. That was like taking a coat away from him. Francis then and there took off all his clothes and gave them to his father saying: "Here, get all my clothes. From now on I have no father except the one in heaven." Did he go naked after that? No. First, the Bishop took off his cape to cover Francis' nakedness, and later Francis found sackcloth that he converted into the Franciscan habit. For the rest of his life, his heavenly Father provided him with all his needs. - Value of trusting in the Lord when people deprive us of our goods (as long as we are truly working for our Father's Kingdom).

V. 35c, "You will rightly be called sons of the Most High..." This is illustrated by the life of St. Sr. Faustina Kowalska, Secretary of Divine Mercy. Read her Diary and you will see that she practiced love of enemy to a heroic degree. So, it is not surprising that Jesus often called her "My daughter." - Value of trusting in the Teaching and the Will of God.

## 3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Did you ever experience the power of non-violence as an answer to violence?

- Did people persecute you but failed to destroy you because of your trust in the Lord?

#### 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

*(Bibliarasal Step Six).*

a) In relation ,to Philippine Church Life Today. - The Philippine Church has enemies both within its fold and outside. But if it follows the Lord's teaching, it will be victorious.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Even in business, when you make your enemy your friend, you thereby destroy him. Maybe it is better to say that then, the country is better served by both of you.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

#### ENEMIES AMONG US

We tend to think of people in our community as our friends. Enemies are supposed to be somewhere outside. But from experience we soon realize that even within our community we have enemies. This is true, sadly, even when one looks into communities of religious men and women. St. Sr. Faustina, who was often called by the Lord Jesus as the "Secretary" or "Dispenser" of his Divine Mercy, had the pain of experiencing misunderstanding and even persecution from her own Sisters in religious life. She suffered much from these "enemies within" - some of them Superiors - but she forgave all of them and so we can take her as a model of putting into practice what Jesus teaches us in today's Gospel passage.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

**February 29, 2004    <>    First Sunday of Lent**

Readings (C): Dt 26: 4-10; Rm 10: 8-13; Lk 4: 1-13

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Jesus used two weapons to fight the devil: (1) first, he made sure he was full of the Holy Spirit and he was accompanied by the Holy Spirit the whole forty days he was in the desert; (2) secondly, he was guided by the word of God in Scripture. His three temptations were not all. After the third, the devil left him "to await another opportunity."

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V 4, "not on bread alone shall man live..." - Value of holding spiritual goods higher than material goods.

V. 8, "You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone shall you adore." - Value of adoring the One True God.

V 12, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." - Value of being humble in one's relation with God.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you experienced being happier with less material goods than with more?

- Have you experienced being happier with less power than with more power?

#### 4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

*(Bibliarasal Step Six).*

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - The Church must lead the fight against the devil. Beneath the appearances, what is going on is the ancient and never ceasing struggle between good and evil.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Being a small country in Asia, the Philippines cannot hope to be better than, for example, Japan, China, India, Indonesia. But it can seek to make its people even happier than the others. Sometimes, it takes less of "things" or material goods to be truly happy.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. - We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

### **HOW TO FIGHT TEMPTATION**

It is clear from today's Gospel that there are two main weapons for fighting temptation, whether great or small, whether daily or eschatological: (1) being filled with the Holy Spirit and (2) availing oneself of Sacred Scripture.

One does not need to join the Charismatic movement in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit, although most people might find this movement to be the most convenient way of getting to live the Life in the Spirit. What the Church insists on, however, is that we awaken in ourselves the grace of Baptism. The Lenten Sunday liturgies were designed to help in this endeavor, and the culmination is the Easter Vigil where adult catechumens are baptized.

Lent, too, was designed to be a time for a more intense study of Sacred Scripture. This was emphasized by the practice known as *Lectio Divina* among the monks. This author notes, however, that *Lectio Divina* is a monastic practice and should not be simply offered "as is" for the faithful outside monasteries. Some adaptation, and in fact, inculturation, has to be done. This author recommends *BIBLIARASAL* as a form of *Lectio Divina* adapted to lay people and inculturated in the Philippine context.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.



# INDEX OF BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

January-December 2003

Volume LXXVIII, Nos. 834-835-836-837-838

## I. Authors

BALTAZAR, Mario, O.P., *Homilies for July-August 2003*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 388-409.

BALTAZAR, Mario, O.P., *Homilies for March-April 2003*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 125-149.

BALTAZAR, Mario, O.P., *Homilies for May-June 2003*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 282-302.

BALTAZAR, Mario, O.P., *Homilies for November-December 2003*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 686-708.

BALTAZAR, Mario, O.P., *Homilies for September-October 2003*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 560-579.

BENDICO, Victor, *The Veneration of the Holy Mother of God*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 731-751.

BRANSOM, Charles, Jr., *Philippine Episcopology -Addenda-Corrigenda*, 2002, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 269-271.

BUCAYAN, Teresita, *"Thank You" Padre Pio*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 102-109.

CAJILIG, Vicente, O.P., *"Little United Nation" (Editorial)*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 2-3.

CAJILIG, Vicente, O.P., *Beyond the Fourth World Meeting of Families (Editorial)*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 152-153.

CAJILIG, Vicente, O.P., *Educational Institution as Venue of Dialogue (Editorial)*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 584-586.

CAJILIG, Vicente, O.P., *Keys to Successful Governance Vision for 2004 Election (Editorial)*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 412-413.

CAJILIG, Vicente, O.R, *Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary in Time of War (Editorial)*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 304-307.

CAJILIG, Vicente, O.R, *Teresa of Calcutta: BEATA (Editorial)*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 710-713.

CBCP-COMMISSION ON CLERGY, *Pastoral Care of Victims and Offenders: Handling Cases of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct by the Clergy*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 347-371.

COMBONI MISSIONARIES, *Newly Canonized Saints*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 755-766.

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Priest: Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 170-234.

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Considerations regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 771-783.

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 330-346.

FABC, *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (December 2002-February 2003)*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 580-581.

GOMEZ, Fausto, O.R, *Announcing the Good News of Peace*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 414-427.

GONZALEZ, Javier, O.P., *Consecrated Virgins (Cases & Inquiries)*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 557-559.

GONZALEZ, Javier, O.R, *Dismissal from a Religious Institute (Cases & Inquiries)*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 110-124.

GONZALEZ, Javier, O.P., *Lay Pastoral and Social Apostolate Ministers (Cases & Inquiries)*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 372-387.

GONZALEZ, Javier, O.P., *Matrimonial Separation (Cases & Inquiries)*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 682-685.

GONZALEZ, Javier, O.P., *Some Questions about Baptism (Cases & Inquiries)*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 272-281.

GONZALEZ, Javier, O.P., *The Sacred Pallium (Cases & Inquiries)*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 784-786.

JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the Pilgrims gathered in Rome for the Canonization of Three New Saints*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 752-754.

JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 58-101.

JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 587-650.

JOHN PAUL II, *Mary and the Mission of the Church in the Year of the Rosary*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 308-313.

JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the 40<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 651-657.

JOHN PAUL II, *Rosary Offers Christian Response to Problem of Suffering*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 314-317.

KOLPING SOCIETY PHILIPPINES, INC. *Adolph Kolping: A Model in Today's Church*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 767-770.

LEGASPI, Leonardo, O.P., D.D., *Homily on the Formal Opening of the Cause for Canonization of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 714-724.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, *Prayer for Christian Unity 2003*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 8-57.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, *Conclusions of the Pastoral Theological Congress*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 318-323.

PONTIFICAL COUNCILS FOR CULTURE & FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Jesus Christ the Bearer of Water and Life*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 459-556.

RIVERA, Efren, O.R, *Homiletic & Bibliarasal Pointers for January-February 2004*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 787-

SAMAHA, John, S.M., *The Virgin Mary: A Common Denominator between Islam and Christianity*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 677-681.

SANTOS, Ruperto, C. *Priest as Pastor and Prophet*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 658-676.

SANTOS, Ruperto, C, *Reflections and Prayers on Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 428-458.

SIN, Jaime CARD., D.D., *Position Paper on the Proposed House Bill 4110*, no. 834, January-December 2003, pp. 4-7.

SIN, Jaime, CARD, D.D., *Operational Directives on Natural Family Planning (NFP) Services the Ministry of Family and Life of the Archdiocese of Manila*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 324-329.

VENGCO, Sabino, Jr., *The Eucharist, The Rosary, and Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 725-730.

VERGARA, Romulo, JCD, *Canon Law at the Service of the Family*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 154-169.

VILLARROEL, Fidel, O.R, *The "Colegio de Santo Tomas", Fore-runner of the UST Central Seminary*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 235-262.

ZULUETA, Lito; *Gustavo Gutierrez in the Philippines*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 263-268.

## II. Sections & Topics

### EDITORIAL

- *"Little United Nation"* by Vicente Cajilig, O.P., pp. 2-3, no. 834, January-February 2003.
- *Beyond the Fourth World Meeting of Families* by Vicente Cajilig, O.P., pp. 152-153, no. 835, March-April 2003.
- *Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary in Time of War* by Vicente Cajilig, O.P., pp. 304-307, no. 836, May-June 2003.
- *Keys to Successful Governance Vision for 2004 Election* by Vicente Cajilig, O.P., pp. 412-413, no. 837, July-August 2003.
- *Educational Institution as Venue of Dialogue* by Vicente Cajilig, O.P., pp. 584-586, no. 838, September-October 2003.
- *Teresa of Calcutta: BEATA* by Vicente Cajilig, O.P., pp. 710-713, no. 839, November-December 2003.

### PASTORAL WORDS

- *Position Paper on the Proposed House Bill 4110* by Jaime CARD. Sin, DD, no. 834, January-February 2003, pp. 4-7.
- *Prayer for Christian Unity 2003* by Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, no. 834, January-February 2003, pp. 8-57.
- *Canon Law at the Service of the Family* by Romulo Vergara, JCD, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 154-169.
- *The Priest: Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* by Congregation for the Clergy, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 170-234.
- *Mary and the Mission of the Church in the Year of the Rosary* by John Paul II, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 308-313.
- *Rosary Offers Christian Response to Problem of Suffering* by John Paul II, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 314-317.

#### PASTORAL WORDS (*Continuation*)

- *Announcing the Good News of Peace* by Fausto Berlana Gomez, O.R, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 414-427.
- *Reflections and Prayers on Rosarium Virginis Mariae* by Ruperto C. Santos, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 428-458.
- *Message for the 40' World Day of Prayer for Vocations* by John Paul II, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 651-657.
- *Priest as Pastor and Prophet* by Ruperto C. Santos, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 658-676.
- *The Virgin Mary: A Common Denominator between Islam and Christianity* by John Samaha, SM, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 677-681.
- *The Eucharist, The Rosary, and Mother Francisca Del Espiritu Santo* by Sabino Vengco, Jr., no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 725-730.
- *Homily on the Formal Opening of the Cause for Canonization of Mother Francisca del Espiritu Santo* by Leonardo Legaspi, OP, DD, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 714-724.
- *The Veneration of the Holy Mother of God* by Victor Bendico, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 731-751.

#### DOCUMENTATION

- *Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae* by John Paul II, no. 834, January-February 2003, pp. 58-101.
- *"Thank You" Padre Pio* by Teresita Bucayan, no. 834, January-February 2003, pp. 102-109.
- *The "Colegio de Santo Tomas", Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 235-262.
- *Gustavo Gutierrez in the Philippines* by Lito Zulueta, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 263-268.

DOCUMENTATION (Continuation)

- *Conclusions of the Pastoral Theological Congress* by Pontifical Council for the Family, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 318-323.
- *Operational Directives on Natural Family Planning (NFP) Services the Ministry of Family and Life of the Archdiocese of Manila* by Jaime Card. Sin, DD, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 324-329.
- *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* by Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 330-346.
- *Pastoral Care of Victims and Offenders: Handling Cases of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct by the Clergy* by CBCP-Commission on Clergy, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 347-371.
- *Jesus Christ the Bearer of Water and Life* by Pontifical Councils for Culture & for Interreligious Dialogue, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 459-556.
- *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* by John Paul II, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 587-650.
- *Address to the Pilgrims gathered in Rome for the Canonization of Three New Saints* by John Paul II, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 752-754.
- *Newly Canonized Saints* by Comboni Missionaries, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 755-766.
- *Adolph Kolping: A Model in Today's Church* by Kolping Society Philippines, Inc., no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 767-770.
- *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons* by Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 771-783.

## CONSULTATIVE WORDS

- *Dismissal from A Religious Institute (Cases & Inquiries)* by Javier Gonzalez, O.P., no. 834, January-February 2003, pp. 110-124.
- *Some Questions about Baptism (Cases & Inquiries)* by Javier Gonzalez, O.P., no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 272-281.
- *Lay Pastoral and Social Apostolate Ministers (Cases & Inquiries)* by Javier Gonzalez, O.P., no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 372-387.
- *Consecrated Virgins (Cases & Inquiries)* by Javier Gonzalez, O.P., no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 557-559.
- *Matrimonial Separation (Cases & Inquiries)* by Javier Gonzalez, O.P., no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 682-685.
- *The Sacred Pallium (Cases & Inquiries)* by Javier Gonzalez, O.P., no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 784-786.

## WORDS FROM THE PAST

- *Philippine Episcopology - Addenda-Corrigenda 2002* by Charles Bransom, Jr., no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 269-271.

## FABC CORNER

- *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (December 2002-February 2003)* by FABC, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 580-581.

## GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW

- *Homilies for March-April 2003*, no. 834, January-February 2003, pp. 125-149.
  - Eight Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 125
  - First Sunday of Lent (B), p. 128
  - Second Sunday of Lent (B), p. 130
  - Third Sunday of Lent (B), p. 132
  - Fourth Sunday of Lent (B), p. 135



GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW (*Continuation*)

Fifth Sunday of Lent (B), p. 137

Passion Sunday (B), p. 140

Easter Sunday-Morning *Mass*, p. 142

Easter Sunday -*Afternoon Mass*, p. 144

Second Sunday of Easter (B), p. 147

- *Homilies for May-June 2003*, no. 835, March-April 2003, pp. 282-302.

Third Sunday of Easter (B), p. 282

Fourth Sunday of Easter (B), p. 284

Fifth Sunday of Easter (B), p. 287

Sixth Sunday of Easter (B), p. 289

Ascension (ABC), p. 291

Pentecost, p. 293

Third Sunday (B), p. 296

*Corpus Christ* (B), p. 298

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 300

- *Homilies for July-August 2003*, no. 836, May-June 2003, pp. 388-409.

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 388

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 391

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 393

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 396

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 398

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 400

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 402

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 405

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 407

- *Homilies for September-October 2003*, no. 837, July-August 2003, pp. 560-579.

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 560

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 563

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW (*Continuation*)

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 565  
Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 568  
Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 570  
Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 573  
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 575  
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 577

- *Homilies for November-December 2003*, no. 838, September-October 2003, pp. 686-708.

All Souls, p. 686  
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 689  
Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B), p. 692  
Christ the King (B), p. 694  
First Sunday of Advent (B), p. 697  
Second Sunday of Advent (B), p. 699  
Third Sunday of Advent (B), p. 702  
Fourth Sunday of Advent (B), p. 704  
Holy Family, p. 706

- *Homilies for January-February 2004*, no. 839, November-December 2003, pp. 787-818

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and  
Mother of the Church, p. 791  
Feast of the Epiphany, p. 794  
Baptism of the Lord, p. 797  
Feast of the Sto. Nino, p. 800  
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), p. 803  
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), p. 806  
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), p. 808  
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), p. 810  
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (C), p. 813  
First Sunday of Lent (C), p. 816