

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

Vol. LXXX, No. 842

May-June 2004



THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

*Efren Rivera, OP*

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OF DIRECT PARENTHOOD AND  
DENIAL OF THE FAMILY

*Card. Alfonso Lopez Trujillo*

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MESSAGE TO THE YOUTH  
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BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at UST Publishing House, Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946 and Re-entered at the UST Post Office on October 23, 1996.

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

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#### Subscription Rates (Effective January 2003)

	<i>One Year</i>	<i>Per Copy</i>
Philippines	P600.00	P100.00
Foreign: (via Air Mail)	US\$50.00	\$15.00

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

Address all communications to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

Ecclesiastical Publications Office

University of Santo Tomas

Espana Blvd., Manila 1008 Philippines

Tel. No.: (63-2) 731-3101 local 8251 • Telefax: (63-2) 740-9710

E-mail: [eccpubli@ustcc.ust.edu.ph](mailto:eccpubli@ustcc.ust.edu.ph)

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# The Passion of the Christ

EFREN RIVERA, OP

Experts agree that no one can make a movie out of the meager historical facts known about Jesus Christ. The material is simply too little to weave a story. There are too many unknowns. For example, could Jesus read and write? Probably yes, but one cannot be sure. Could he talk to Pilate in Latin, as he does in Mel Gibson's film? Most probably not. Maybe, aside from his native Aramaic tongue, he knew a few Greek words to carry on a short conversation, for Greek Koine was the *lingua franca* in the Roman world of that time. Just maybe, because there is no proof from anywhere.

What about the Four Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John? Aren't they historical? There was a time when even the most learned people of the Church, its Doctors of Divinity, accepted them as historical narratives. There are still a few ultra-conservative teachers and followers who hold to this

**\*Editor's Note:** This is a substitute for the usual editorial.

view. But the great majority of scholars hold that there is more theology than history in these ancient writings.

Alright! But can't one make a movie that is biblically faithful? One can. It has been done. For example, Passolini had his Gospel according to St. Matthew. But that is not what Mel Gibson wanted. The purpose of his film is to show how horrendously Jesus of Nazareth suffered to redeem human-kind - each and every human being from the beginning of time to the end of the world including Mel Gibson himself and including you and me - from the grip of the devil. That is why, quite early in the film the serpent appears and its head is crushed by the Messiah (see *Gen* 3:15b). From time to time in the film a woman (or is it a transvestite?) appears from nowhere to prod people to be even more cruel than usual. We are reminded, too, that Jesus of Nazareth called the Jewish elders a "brood of vipers" (see *Mt* 3:7). After Jesus dies, Mel Gibson shows that Satan has been conquered and he retreats to hell and eternal frustration.

All that can't be history - unless you are thinking of "Salvation History", which is just another term for the theology we find in the Bible.

There is some truth to the criticism that the film is anti-Jewish. None of the Four Gospels tell us of any maltreatment of Jesus when he was arrested by the "crowd with swords and clubs" (*Mk* 14:43; *Mt* 26:47). Luke omits the swords and clubs (*Lk* 22:47) while Matthew speaks of a "great crowd" (*Mt* 26:47). John says the arresting party consisted of "the cohort (led by a tribune, see v. 12) as well as guards supplied by the chief priests and the Pharisees, and came there with

lanterns, torches and weapons" (*Jn* 18:3). The first instance of slapping, according to John, was done by a "guard", who seems to be part of the (Roman?) cohort (*Jn* 18:22), while Jesus was already being questioned by the Jewish priest Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas (*Jn* 18:22). Mark and Matthew do say: "Some of them began to spit on him. They blindfolded him and hit him, saying, 'Play the prophet!' while the officers manhandled him" (*Mk* 14:65; *Mt* 26:67), but this was after Caiaphas the High Priest declared that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy punishable by death. Mel Gibson's first overkill was when he shows Jesus brutalized at the time of his arrest by the Jews, and dragged in chains back to the city. He was so beat up that he was a pitiable sight and his right eye was already damaged when he was being questioned by the Jewish High Priest. This High Priest is so spiteful that he spits on Jesus. All this has no basis in the Gospels and put the Jews in very bad light. Later in the film a Roman soldier disdainfully calls Simon of Cyrene "Judaesus!" (a Jew). That was soon after the soldier who drove Veronica away, had remarked, "These people are impossible!"

But if Mel Gibson's film is indeed anti-Jewish it is even more anti-Romans and anti-sinners! The Jews, at least thought they were doing what God wanted them to do, But the Romans who represented all non-Jewish sinners were simply enjoying themselves in reducing Jesus to a pulp even before he made his first step outside the Roman Praetorium.

Anti-Semitism is a big issue in Europe and America but not in the Philippines. Jews, except their diplomats and a few businessmen simply don't live among us. In the entire Phillip-

pires there is only one Synagogue and only some of the Israeli diplomatic corps go there.

The Roman soldiers were real monsters. No ordinary human being could have survived the scourging at the pillar. Even one who is in the full vigor of an athlete could have survived the way of the cross as portrayed in the film, with Jesus falling down more than a dozen times, and every time the heavy cross would come crashing down on him. The agony of Jesus on Calvary is so unbearable, even a winner in a Mr. Philippines contest would have died the very moment the cross was plunked down on its hole in the ground. Remember, it took Jesus three more hours before he breathed his last.

Jesus Christ gave up his divine life for us! That is Mel Gibson's message. Jesus was no ordinary man. Such a man could not have survived the scourging at the pillar. Jesus did not die while he was unconscious. HeTwas-not killed like the two criminals crucified with him. He gave up his life deliberately for us! On this point Mel Gibson was totally faithful to the Gospel according to Luke: "Jesus uttered a loud cry and said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' " {*Lk* 23:46). Full divine life still throbbed in Jesus.after all his sufferings and he could stfll shout his obedience to his Father. He was not an old man or a sick man fading away. Mel Gibson was also in agreement with the Gospel according to John: "When Jesus took the wine, he said, 'Now it is finished.' Then he bowed his head and delivered over his spirit" (*Jn* 19:30). His life was not taken away from him. He delivered it back to his Father for our redemption.

## Cloning: The Disappearance of Direct Parenthood and Denial of the Family

CARD. ALFONSO LOPEZ TRUJILLO

*The Pontifical Council for the Family considers every attempt to clarify the challenge human cloning represents to be appropriate, aware of the importance of this issue and with a view to the imminent resumption of work to draw up an International Convention against the Reproductive Cloning of Human Beings by the United Nations Organization. It is a question of contributing to a satisfactory presentation of the problem, of pointing out the negative ethical aspects and meanings of human cloning which are contrary to the dignity of the person and the family. This is the aim of this presentation, which attempts to set out some aspects of cloning to inform the general public.*

For several decades now, a whole series of biological techniques have been continuously developing. Their application to human procreation has surfaced many ethical problems and increasingly points to the need for an integral anthropology of the human being and a renewed approach to the role of



the family for humanity. In particular, recent attempts to clone a human being have raised fundamental questions regarding the family: what it means to be parents and to be a child, the dignity of the human embryo, and the truth and meaning of human sexuality. Today, the slow and subtle dissociation taking place between the concepts of human life and that of the family, which actually is the natural place where life originates and develops, is one of the most nefarious consequences of the culture of death.

Indeed, as the Instruction *Donum Vitae*, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, affirms: "The human person must be accepted in his parents' act of union and love; the generation of a child must therefore be the fruit of that mutual giving which is realized in the conjugal act, wherein the spouses cooperate as servants and not as masters in the work of the Creator who is Love. In reality, the origin of a human person is the result of an act of giving. The one conceived must be the fruit of his parents' love. He cannot be desired or conceived as the product of an intervention of medical or biological techniques; that would be equivalent to reducing him to an object of scientific technology."

The troubling possibility of the cloning of human beings for "reproductive" purposes through the technical substitution of responsible procreation is contrary to the dignity of sonship. Even more troubling are the pressing demands of groups of researchers for the legalization of cloning in order to subject the human embryos "produced" to manipulation and experimentation, and subsequently to destroy them. This state of affairs highlights a serious deterioration, both in the recognition of the dignity of life and of human procreation and in the

knowledge of the irreplaceable and fundamental role and value of the family, not only for the individual but for all humanity.

### ***1. Cloning, a possibility open to modern biology***

The term "cloning" refers to the technique used frequently in biology to reproduce cells and micro-organisms, both vegetable and animal, and, more recently, to reproduce the sequences of genetic information contained in biological material, such as fragments of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), which contain a wide range of codified nuclear genetic information. It is necessary to complete this description with a more exact definition of the cloning technique in order to gain a more adequate knowledge of its nature.

Regarding its purposes, cloning is a technical procedure of reproduction through which the genetic material of a cell or organism (vegetable or animal) is manipulated in order to obtain an individual or a colony of individuals, each one identical to the first. What distinguishes cloning from other similar techniques is that in cloning, reproduction takes place without sexual union (asexual), and without fertilization or the union of the gametes (agametic); it results in a group of individuals biologically identical to the donor who provided the nuclear genetic heritage.

The individuals obtained by cloning are called *clones*, a term used to indicate that each and every one has the same genetic information; they are not, therefore, descendants only from their progenitor (that is, there has been no genetic sexual combination of their progenitors). This is consequently a type of reproduction that can artificially replace - in the animal species (of sexual reproduction) - natural fertilization or the

union of gametes (the cells through which reproduction naturally occurs), with the resulting advantages, defects and dangers.

Taking its technical realization into consideration, "cloning" in the strictest sense, on the basis of the prospect of the procedure used, means reproduction obtained through so-called "nuclear transfer."

When scientists allude to cloning in the strict sense of the term, they usually identify it with nuclear transfer: "Fertilization properly so-called is replaced by the 'fusion' of a nucleus taken from a somatic cell of the individual one wishes to clone, or from the somatic cell itself, with an oocyte from which the nucleus has been removed, that is, an oocyte lacking the maternal genome. Since the nucleus of the somatic cell contains the whole genetic inheritance, the individual obtained possesses - except for possible alterations - the genetic identity of the nucleus' donor. It is this essential genetic correspondence with the donor that produces in the new individual the somatic replica or copy of the donor itself."

Also known as "cloning" (or "semi-cloning" or other such terms) are broader and less appropriate techniques of asexual and agametic reproduction that in some ways resemble nuclear transfer, especially because of the results they obtain: a genetically identical descendance. These include techniques such as artificial parthenogenesis or embryonic fission.

There are no particular ethical objections to cloning non-human specimens (to obtain offspring from them) and biological material (for various uses) if it is responsibly carried out, just as there are no ethical objections to the traditional and sometimes ancient horticultural practices that used this sort of technique which, moreover, has considerable advantages. The use

of cloning in zoology would undoubtedly bring great benefits. Improvements, for example, in the reproduction of domestic animals, a reduction in the production costs of certain types of meat, the possible application of cloning to save species from becoming extinct, progress in the conditions of experimentation and research in pharmacology, all make it advisable to continue research by applying cloning techniques to animal species.

In spite of this, it must be pointed out that these techniques are still in the trial stage and their results must be carefully assessed. Could they have unforeseen consequences in the future? Could they, for example, produce dangerous genetic malformations, today unknown or insufficiently known? To what extent might these involve alterations to the ecology in the medium or long term? Could uncontrolled recourse to cloning lead to unleashing new diseases and malformations?

## **2. *Human 'reproductive' or 'therapeutic' cloning***

By now it is common knowledge that attempts are being made to apply cloning to "produce" human beings, to use them in research and eventually, in medical treatment. The mass media, science fiction and a certain type of popular literature have contributed to raising false expectations about cloning, given its actual technical possibilities. Despite this, however, it is certain that (more or less scientifically exact) investigations and hypotheses have been advanced that aim to apply cloning experiments to the human being. Recently, this fact has caught the attention of public authorities worldwide, as well as of those charged with a special responsibility for the common good.

Two facets of the problem of cloning human embryos, as it appears today, have acquired a special prominence: "reproductive" cloning and "therapeutic" cloning (or for the purpose of scientific research). The difference between the two is seen in the purpose for which the cloning is intended: the complete development of an embryo through implantation in the uterus is the goal of "reproductive" cloning, whereas "therapeutic" cloning requires the use of the embryo in its pre-implantation stage in research for therapeutic ends. Therefore, the purposes of cloning would be:

1. To obtain human offspring and to plan a more effective technique for assisted procreation, with greater and better possibilities of application for certain couples ("reproductive" cloning).

2. To obtain, through this technique, what are known as "synthetic" embryos or "cell clusters" (in its earliest stages, every cell of the human embryo is totipotent or multipotent), and hence to extract stem cells without the implantation of the embryo in the maternal uterus. The stem cells extracted, properly checked, have the potential to develop into specific cells: nerve, cardiac, muscle, liver cells, etc. ("therapeutic" cloning or cloning for the purposes of scientific research).

3. ***Toward the simultaneous global prohibition of all human cloning?***

It is obvious that the application of science to the area of human procreation concerns all society, and not solely the scientific community. Thus, it was not long before work began on drafting legislation in which, without coercing the legitimate development of science, the ethical and legal boundaries

of its application would be defined once and for all and the possible cloning of human beings forbidden. In recent years, laws have been passed in some countries in which human "reproductive" cloning is strictly forbidden, while research on human cloning has so far been permitted, on condition that it is intended for research and therapeutic use (as in the United Kingdom). In other countries, instead, every kind of cloning has been banned (Germany), or parliamentary bills have been introduced with a view to prohibit any type of cloning (United States). Concern about this topic is undoubtedly growing and efforts have been redoubled to obtain the prohibition of human cloning, not only at a national level but also through the instruments of international law.

What prompted this debate was the determination to forbid human reproductive cloning. Since 1993, the International Bioethics Committee has been involved in the issue. The General Conference of UNESCO approved a "Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights", later adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1998, which states that cloning for reproductive purposes is contrary to human dignity.

The 56th General Assembly of the United Nations (12 December 2001) decided to set up a Committee that would carry its work even further, to introduce the ban on cloning through an international legal instrument and, specifically, an international Convention. At first, only a prohibition of reproductive cloning was considered. In August 2001, Germany and France asked Mr Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, for a project that would forbid it everywhere in the world. By the end of 2001, reproductive cloning was prohi-

bited in 24 countries, including Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, India, Japan, Brazil and South Africa.

Recent developments in the international situation and the initiative of certain countries in favour not only of the prohibition of reproductive cloning (the proposal of a partial ban), but of a simultaneous global prohibition of cloning both for purposes of reproduction and for research and therapy (the proposal of a total ban), represent a significant change in the work underway for an International Convention against cloning.

Particularly important in this regard are: the United States law of 27 February 2003 that totally forbids cloning (currently under examination by the Senate); the resolution of the German *Bundestag* of 7 February 2003, to promote international initiatives to prohibit it completely (not only partially, as has so far been the case); the French project of 30 January 2003, for a reform of the law on biomedicine that will ban it totally (which is still being debated); and the request for its total ban by the European Parliament on 10 April 2003 (currently being examined by the European Commission). All these recent initiatives aim to ban cloning completely, and not merely reproductive cloning. Today this international atmosphere, different from that of a few years ago, is now reinforced by an initiative that the United States and Spain have sponsored and presented to the United Nations. Its goal is an international Convention that will put a total ban on all cloning.

There are precedents of international instruments that have targeted this prohibition. In the context of the Council of Europe, after the Paris Accord (12 January 1997), work began on an anti-cloning Convention. The European Parliament accepted and adopted the project of the Council of Europe for

an "explicit prohibition of every form of human cloning", and in the meantime, it has asked "researchers and doctors participating in research on the human genome under no circumstances to intervene in the cloning of human beings before a legally binding prohibition of it comes into force." The European Convention on Human Rights and Biotechnology, also known as the "Oviedo Convention", and the additional Protocol on the prohibition of cloning human beings was the result of this work and specifically forbade "the production of human embryos for research purposes" (Art. 18.1). Thus, the ratification of the Oviedo Convention, by certain European States had already begun in 1999.

The European Parliament issued another declaration on 22 November 2001 in favour of the prohibition of every type of human cloning, this time throughout the world. This was an amendment to a report on biotechnology in which the Parliament "insistently repeats that there must be a universal and specific prohibition, at the level of the United Nations, on the cloning of human beings at any stage in their growth or development." The Parliament then invited the European Commission and the member States of the European Parliament to continue in this direction. In both April 2002 and February 2003, the votes of legislators showed that they were in favour of a ban on cloning for the purpose of extracting stem cells from the embryo. The *Bundestag* (February 2003) asked the German Government to change Germany's position at the United Nations by opting for the total ban of cloning because it represents an assault on human dignity, given that there is no substantial moral distinction between reproductive and therapeutic cloning, which both result in the creation of living human embryos.



4. *Why is human cloning, reproductive or therapeutic, ethically unacceptable?*

Concern about the possibility of human cloning is well justified and there are very serious reasons for it. The various attempts to introduce an overall, simultaneous ban on cloning throughout the world is a response to this concern. Despite the great interest shown in the realization of these projects and the expectations they have given rise to in large circles (scientists, groups of sick people hoping for new therapeutic resources, professional associations, etc.), some of which, it must be said, are more realistic than others, it would be irresponsible not to weigh carefully the objections to cloning that are backed by technical and ethical considerations and profound anthropological reasoning.

### **1. Reproductive cloning**

With regard to attempts to clone a human being for reproductive purposes, the foreseeable scientific obstacles are very serious, to the point that many experts have expressed strong doubts as to the actual viability of a truly scientific project in this regard. Despite the recent, more or less sensational announcements by the mass media, for the time being there is no real, scientifically valid proof that shows beyond all doubt that these attempts would be successful. Moreover, even were such attempts likely to be successful in the future, consideration must be given to the very grave risk of illnesses, genetic defects or monstrosities for which those who produced them would be responsible.

For example, the nuclear transfer technique has so far not led to any results other than a vast quantity of embryos

unable to develop correctly. On rare occasions when birth is obtained, the animals are frequently afflicted with diseases and sometimes with various monstrous malformations, so that their premature death is quite common. This seems to be due to defects in the genetic "reprogramming" of the nuclear transfer. It is clear that in these conditions cloning for "reproductive" purposes must not be applied to the human species because of the serious risk it would involve and the very high mortality rate it entails.

If the immorality of reproductive cloning is predetermined by the actual technical circumstances, the ethical obstacles to human reproductive cloning are in themselves insurmountable and glaringly at variance with the common moral sense of humanity.

Already in the 1980s the philosopher Hans Jonas addressed the ethical problems that the eventual cloning of a human person would pose. Cloning would mean the loss of what Jonas calls the "right of ignorance", that is, the subjective right to know that one person is not the replica of another, and a person's right not to know anything about his future development (such as, for example, future illnesses, psychological development, the foreseeable moment of natural death, etc.). As Jonas says, this "ignorance" is in a certain sense a "condition for the possibility" of human freedom, and to encroach upon it would mean placing an enormous burden on the individual's autonomy. The human clone would be brutally conditioned by knowing that he was a copy of another person, because uncertainty is an essential ingredient of the human effort to choose freely.

Without the responsibility of uncertainty, according to Jonas, the clone would foresee his every move, his own illnesses, and correct his future psychological attitudes in an unremitting, hopeless effort to separate himself from his "original", who would always be an omnipresent shadow and model, and the track he would be forced to follow or to avoid. "Being a copy" would become part and parcel of his own identity, his own being and his own conscience. Thus, a wound would be inflicted on the human right to live one's life as an original and unique discovery, basically, a discovery of themselves. As a result, the clone's way through life would become the burdensome implementation of an inhuman and alienating "programme of control". Thus, Jonas considers the cloning "method" to be "the most tyrannical and at the same time enslaving form of genetic manipulation; its goal is not the arbitrary modification of all that is inherited but, precisely, its arbitrary establishment, which is at odds with the strategy that prevails in nature."

The risk of a eugenic use of cloning (both reproductive and therapeutic), in order to "improve" the race or to select personal characteristics deemed "superior" to others, is not (despite the assertions of its supporters) a very distant possibility.

In the Resolution on cloning of 12 March 1997, the European Parliament declared that it was "firmly convinced that no society can justify or tolerate the cloning of human beings under any circumstances: neither for experimental purposes, nor in the treatment of infertility, nor in diagnosis prior to tissue implantation or transplantation, nor for any other purpose, since it constitutes a grave violation of the fundamental

human rights and denies the principle of the equality of human beings by permitting a eugenic and racist selection of the human species; it is an offense to the dignity of the person, and furthermore requires experimentation on human beings (B). In a second Resolution on cloning of 15 January 1998, the European Parliament, in requesting the prohibition of human cloning by way of experimentation for diagnosis "or for any other purpose", even describes cloning as "anti-ethical" and "morally repugnant" (B).

## **2. Therapeutic cloning**

Advocates of the therapeutic cloning of human beings often describe it as a breakthrough that would benefit genetic therapy as a remedy for diseases thus far beyond the scope of medicine. However, these possible (and disputable) positive consequences do not basically change the moral character of cloning in itself. There is a close objective continuity between reproductive and therapeutic cloning. In both, a human embryo is "produced", but therapeutic cloning envisions its subsequent destruction in the extraction of embryonic stem cells or biological material for use in treatment.

Ample uncertainty continues to surround the technical aspects of therapeutic cloning. On the one hand, people are saying that cloning would be a source of embryonic stem cells (which, since they are not differentiated, and because of their greater "plasticity", would be interesting from the biological point of view). However, people do not always take sufficiently into account the precarious condition of the cloned embryo and the high probability of producing various neoplasias (cancers and tumours) in the candidate for treatment

into whom the cells would be introduced. This is why many researchers suggest that research into adult stem cells might lead to greater success, without the ethical limitations that the use of embryonic stem cells involves.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to consider the considerable practical difficulties that the immunological rejection of these embryonic stem cells would create. These problems further weaken the argument of those who claim that human cloning can justifiably be used in such research. To get round the immunological rejection of embryonic stem cells by cloning of an embryo implies exploiting the human embryo to the full. As Elisabeth Monfort underlines, "The use of embryonic stem cells necessarily involves the technique of therapeutic cloning to prevent tissue rejection. To refuse cloning and accept the use of embryonic stem cells... is an irresponsible and even hypocritical stance that is certainly intended to reassure those who still have doubts."

Therapeutic cloning to obtain stem cells not only implies the production of an embryo, but also its manipulation and subsequent destruction. It is unacceptable to consider a human being, at any stage of his development, as a store of spare "material" or a source of tissue and organs, like "spare parts". The moral complexity of cloning can be better understood if we take into account that what it would produce, manipulate and destroy are not "things", but human beings like us. One way of facing this issue would be to put ourselves in the shoes not of the scientists who produce the clones, but of the embryo (which is what we too once were). Surely we would not want to enter the world in a laboratory rather than as the offspring of our parents' union. Nor would it be acceptable to be the

sole survivor among tens or hundreds of our twin brothers or sisters, discarded as "defective". It would be even less agreeable to be engineered in order to produce "parts" that another needs at a later date (kidneys, for example); or to die after this short and painful birth that was "produced" precisely for this end.

Of course, the use of stem cells for cell therapy could pave the way to a whole series of beneficial types of research that today offer very interesting prospects; but the use of embryonic stem cells for this goal (and, consequently, of therapeutic cloning to obtain them), has proven to be a scientific process that is unreliable, difficult and ethically unacceptable. On the other hand, when research on adult stem cells, satisfactory both from the ethical and technical viewpoints, is carried out in a dignified and responsible way and subjected to ethical criteria, it represents the way forward and a future of hope that raises no special ethical objections.

### **3. Technical, ethical and anthropological objections to human cloning**

Certain arguments that make it possible to go more deeply into the rational reasons of the immorality of cloning, show the ethical continuity between "reproductive" and "therapeutic" cloning. A deep complementarity links these arguments since they develop various rational, ethical aspects that derive from the ontological dignity of the human embryo, as they are interconnected with one another and with the anthropological and ethical status of the embryo, which must be the starting point in the whole complex issue.

a. *Irrefutable probability of the human character of the embryos obtained*

Procuring human embryos for cloning, either for reproduction or for therapy and research, would imply destroying a large number of them. For example, in order to obtain Dolly the sheep, hundreds of embryos were "wasted". And this is not all: the high risk of transmitting diseases or malformations that this technique would involve are an additional reason. This is especially true with regard to "therapeutic" cloning. Hence, it is obvious that the harvesting of *embryonic* stem cells necessarily passes through the production (and subsequent destruction) of an *embryo*, which many researchers themselves no longer insist on defining as an "accumulation of cells", a term coined to avoid the anthropological and consequently ethical question posed by the embryo. In fact, researchers acknowledge that these techniques begin by producing what they call "*early embryo*", that is, an *embryo* in its initial state. But then a question arises: what is this embryo? What would its ethical-and-juridical status be? The question points to another that is inherent in it: what is the status of every human embryo?

The assertion that the human being must be respected and treated as a person from the very moment of conception is vital to a correct explanation of the problem of the identity and status of the human embryo. "The formulation in these terms of the fundamental ethical duty to the unborn child has become vitally necessary, because of the problems raised by biotechnological development."

The expression "pre-embryo" was used precisely to avoid the fundamental anthropological and ethical question con-

cerning the status of the embryo. "The problem", people say, "is that the embryo in its initial phase has no individuality or identity since, being formed of totipotent cells, one or more human individuals cannot yet be identified in it." But let us use our reason. The embryo (we are referring to the so-called "pre-embryo"), is a being. By this word "being" we mean an existing, living reality susceptible of its own biological development, differentiated and autonomous (it possesses in itself the capacity for growth) as regards the adequate and necessary means for its subsistence and for "nourishing" its own autonomous development. In addition, and in particular, it develops for its own sake, without having any "role" external to its own life. A cell is not an individual being because it functions as a part of a whole; its development is part of the development of the whole of which it forms a part. On the other hand, the embryo is not part of any whole, it is not fundamental to the (biological) life of the mother; if we "reproduce" embryos in the laboratory, as such they have no "use" unless we plant them in a female uterus to continue the biological cycle that leads to their birth or, for this same purpose, unless they spend the whole of the gestation period in the laboratory - although it is true that with time, since they have not been implanted, they will be "rejected", "destroyed" or simply "killed", terms that in this case are synonymous.

In fact, if the question regarding the embryo is anthropologically and ethically precise, it must also be said that from the ethical viewpoint, there is a basic question that is very important for ethics: *what isn't it?* in other words: can we be *certain* that the embryo thus generated *is not* human? From the moral viewpoint, the admission alone of the probability (that none of the current studies has been able to deny) that



we have before us a human being, a product of the cloning technique, has crucial weight. It is obvious that someone looking at a shadow who is unsure whether it is an animal or a man and who fires a shot, is guilty of murder. Before firing, he is morally and strictly bound to make sure that it is not a person. This ethical principle seems to have been infringed in these practices in which the harvesting of human embryonic stem cells must necessarily pass through the creation and destruction of an embryo in the first phases of its life.

*b. The dignity of the human embryo*

The result of fertilization is a new totipotent, unicellular biological individual called a "zygote". It must be recognized that cloning has exactly the same result as that of fertilization. There are no grounds for asserting, in spite of genetic abnormalities, that cloning does not produce a zygote. It is then necessary to establish a close analogy between fertilization and cloning. It should also be noted that there is no rational reason to deny to embryos obtained through cloning the same rights as those to which embryos obtained through the process of artificial fertilization are entitled, and therefore, even more justifiably, to which all embryos begotten through the natural process of human fertilization are entitled. What, for example, would be the essential difference between them, given the totipotentiality of their cell makeup that is not disputed by anyone?

The development of the embryo is the first stage of the human individual. Father Angelo Serra considers the three main properties that characterize the human epigenetic process, which, according to C.H. Waddington, can be described

as "the continuous emergence of a form of preceding stages": in other words: 1) *coordination*. "Embryonic development, from the fusion of the gametes or 'syngamy', until the appearance of the embryonic disk at or after 14 days, is a process that manifests a coordinated sequence and the interaction of molecular and cellular activity, under the control of the new genome." This property requires the rigorous *unity* of the subject that is developing. It is not a cluster of cells but a real individual. 2) *Continuity*. Syngamy begins to a new cycle of life. "Everything would indicate that an uninterrupted and gradual differentiation of a very specific human individual takes place, according to a single, rigorously defined programme that begins at the zygote stage." This quality of continuity implies and establishes the *unicity* or uniqueness of the new human being. 3) *Gradualness*. The final form must be reached gradually.

This growth is permanently oriented from the zygote stage to the final form because of an intrinsic epigenetic law. Every human embryo keeps its own *identity*, individuality and unity. The living embryo that originates in the fusion of the gametes is not a mere accumulation of available cells, but a real, developing human individual. Yes, from that instant it is a child! The embryo is a human individual. The abusive introduction of the term *pre-embryo* was a trick to pacify consciences and allow experimentation until the end of the stage of implantation, that is, in the human species, about 14 days after fertilization has taken place. Thus, the convenient conclusion has been that the embryo would not exist for the first two weeks following fertilization.

*c. The embryo has human dignity, even when it consists of only one cell*

The refusal, therefore, to recognize the human condition of the embryo obtained through cloning (whether for reproductive purposes or to obtain embryonic stem cells from it) in the first days of its development is part of the discussion on the human embryo's anthropological and ethical status. These embryos are denied their individual character and it is said that they have no "human life". This is a contradiction. If we are dealing with embryos and not merely "oocytes that have divided" (and are on their way to extinction), then they are human individuals, endowed with human life, and not "clusters" of cells. The researcher I. Wilmut (famous for obtaining Dolly, the first cloned sheep; today he is a determined opponent of the reproductive cloning of humans, but clearly favours cloning for therapeutic purposes), recognizes that "when an embryo is created, an automatic-pilot takes over its initial development". If the embryo were the "cluster of cells", as some say it is, it would not be its own "automatic-pilot", it would have no autonomy nor a unitary teleology of its own that it clearly demonstrates it possesses.

From the moment of its conception, in fertilization, the embryo shows that it is an autonomous entity that immediately begins developing and grows gradually, continuously and harmoniously; and the constant teleological integration and cooperation of all its cells is part of this growth. It is an organism that develops, without interruption, in accordance with the programme outlined in its genome. Thus, without any outside intervention it becomes in succession a zygote, morula, blastocyst, an implanted embryo, a fetus, a child, an adolescent

and an adult. If this happens in natural fertilization, why would not the same thing happen in cloning?

This point presents a contradiction since it refuses to recognize that the result of cloning is equivalent to the result of fertilization. This distinction (cloned-embryo; fertilized-embryo) that refers back to the false distinction between the so-called "pre-embryo" and the embryo, an erroneous distinction as mentioned earlier, has become in practice the greatest obstacle to the acknowledgment that an embryo has human status. If the cloned human embryo were not human, then "what" would it be? To what animal species would it belong? Would it possess a human genome but not be human? It is not necessary to insist here on the contradictions implied in these denials. A human embryo, thus recognized by reason as a human individual endowed with an organism of its own, has its own proper dignity and therefore deserves respect. This "dignity" is not due to some external addition, but is inherent in its being, in itself and for itself.

If people refuse to admit that the embryo has human dignity under the pretext that it possesses no actual consciousness, then the dignity of people who are asleep or in a coma should also be denied. If the dignity of the embryo is rejected, then one could also deny the dignity of the child.

The human being, whatever his financial, physical or intellectual condition, cannot be used as a means or an object. The subtle offense to this fundamental principle is aggravated when this human being is powerless to defend himself against an unjust aggressor. If a person agrees to treat a human being as a means and not as an end, he himself must one day agree to be treated in the same way.

Nor should he protest. Even if the therapeutic application of stem cells obtained through the creation and destruction of human embryos were to be clearly demonstrated (something that has not been done), morals, common sense and sound judgment would be opposed to it: one cannot do evil for a good end. The end does not justify the means. The history of humanity is rich in teaching on this subject. As the philosopher J. Santayana said: "Those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it."

*d. Personality of the embryo*

The moral evaluation of human cloning, therefore, depends essentially on its goal or objective and does not primarily stem from the subjective intention for which these techniques are used. The very uncertainty as to the human nature of the product of these techniques suffices to make it a duty not to produce it. However, over and above the strict moral duty not to produce it, there are many serious reasons for holding not only that embryos obtained in this way should be duly respected as befits their human dignity, but also that they are human persons who are first manipulated and then destroyed.

*e. Inhumanity in the production and consequent destruction of embryos created by cell nuclear replacement (so-called "therapeutic" cloning)*

Upholders of the so-called "therapeutic cloning" always insist that their intention is not to go as far as "reproductive" cloning but to destroy the human embryo thus created in the very first days of its development. According to their reasoning (widely reported in the press, the mass media and political

speeches), this approach would be "ethical", whereas reproductive cloning would not.

Human cloning that could lead to the birth of a human being is to be judged an immoral method of artificial procreation. In "therapeutic cloning", this process is interrupted intentionally: a human embryo is voluntarily created, later to be destroyed in order to extract embryonic stem cells from it. In an ethical perspective, this procedure is even worse. To accept it would be on a par with accepting a radical equality between the human species and others (P. Singer). Rejection of the possibility to kill one human life for the purpose of healing other human lives does not originate in a specifically religious stance but in the force of the arguments and reasoning of common sense and the power of a coherent anthropology and a personalistic bioethics.

/ *Human cloning is contrary to the dignity of life  
and procreation*

The application of the techniques of cloning to human beings, with the intention of creating embryos, both to implant them subsequently in a uterus (reproductive) or to extract their stem cells and then destroy them (therapeutic cloning or cloning for research), not only concerns the dignity of human life and its inalienable rights, but is also contrary to the moral value of the intrinsic union between life, sexuality and procreation. The orientation of human sexuality to procreation is not a "biological addition", but corresponds to human nature and is manifested in the natural inclination for procreation by men and women. These techniques, instead, separate the procreative aspects of human sexuality from its unitive aspects

and are thus contrary to the dignity of sexuality and procreation.

Cloning techniques are, in themselves and always, "reproductive". Recent experiences also show that human cloning, despite the enormous difficulties, is not impossible in principle. The ethical question thus concerns not only the dignity of human life and the exploitation and eventual destruction of the embryo, but also the specific and precisely sexual way in which human procreation occurs that has a moral value of its own which these techniques fail to respect.

*g. Cloning of human embryos is contrary to the dignity of the family*

An important ethical factor that is often overlooked should also be considered. The human being is a social being. In human beings, the sexual and procreative dynamic takes place naturally in a context in which sexuality and procreation are harmoniously integrated in the reality of conjugal love, which fills with meaning human sexuality open to life. In marriage, love and responsibility converge in openness to life and continue in the educational task, through which parents devote the maximum care to their children.

Human cloning ruptures this whole dynamic. In cloning, life appears as an element that has nothing whatsoever to do with the family. The embryo "appears", so to speak, on the margins not only of sexuality but also of genealogy. Every human being has the right to be born from the integral love - physical and spiritual - of a father and a mother, to receive their care, to be accepted by his parents as a gift and to be raised by them. When we see looming on the horizon the dis-

turbing possibility of manipulating a conceived human being, of subjecting the embryo to experimentation only to destroy it once the cells or the biological knowledge desired have been obtained, then it is the very concept of filial, maternal and paternal relationship that is in crisis, and the idea of family is shattered.

## **5. Conclusion**

Recent developments in science show that human cloning, in spite of immense technical difficulties and the profound ethical and anthropological objections to it, is more than a hypothesis: it is becoming a possibility. The various attempts by law and by international accords to prevent this possibility from becoming reality, and to obtain recognition of it as a crime against the human person, are not based on a vague fear of progress and technology, but on important and judicious ethical motivations and on a clearly identified anthropological concept of the human person, sexuality and the family. It is up to public authorities, parliaments and international bodies to take a firm stand. This truly is a key problem for the future of humanity and for a safeguarding of the dignity of scientific research and the efforts to promote the life, health and well-being of human beings, which justifies the adoption of appropriate measures by the community of the peoples who make up the great human family.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "The Pontifical Council for the Family has the task of promoting the pastoral care of the family and-of the specific apostolate in the area of the family, by putting into effect the teachings and directives of the ecclesiastical Magisterium, so that Christian families may carry out the educative, evangelizing and apostolic mission to which they have been called. In particular... b) it attends to the spread of the doctrine of the Church regarding family problems so that it can be integrally known and correctly presented to the Christian people both in catechesis and on a scientific level;... c) it promotes and coordinates pastoral activity with regard to the problem of responsible parenthood according to the teaching of the Church;... e) it encourages, sustains and coordinates the efforts in defense of human life throughout the entire span of its existence from the very first moment of conception; f) it promotes, through the work of specialized scientific institutes (theological and pastoral), studies aimed at integrating the theological sciences and the human sciences on themes related to the family, so that the doctrine of the Church may be better understood by men of good will" (John Paul II, "Motu proprio" *Familia a Deo Instituta*, 9 March 1981, 3, V; *Osservatore Romano English edition [ORE]*, 1 June 1981, pp. 1, 10).

<sup>2</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation *Donum Vitae*, 22 February 1987, II, B, 4, c; *ORE*, 16 March 1987, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> The term "clone", used by the British geneticist and physiologist J.B.S. Haldane (*Biological Possibilities for the Human Species of the Next Ten-Thousand Years*, 1963), originally derived from botany: "a\_colony of organisms that in an asexual manner - that is, without the intervention of sex - proceed from a single progenitor" (Herbert John Webber, 1903). Its root is the Latin word "colonia, coloniae" (and the verb "colo, is, colui, coltum") that comes from the Greek ΚΧCDV, ΚΧcavg ("klon, klon6s, which means "a new shoot to plant" and alludes to the natural asexual reproduction of certain plants, such as the rose-bush, that can be reproduced by planting a portion of it. Cf. H.J. Weber, *New Horticultural and Agricultural Terms*, Science 28 (1903), pp. 501-503; A.A. Diamandopoulos, PC. Goudas, *Cloning's not a new idea: the Greeks had a word for it centuries ago*, Nature 6815/408, 21-28 December 2000, p. 905.

<sup>4</sup> J. Loeb, in 1894, artificially stimulated parthenogenesis in sea urchins, but it was the German Nobel Prize-winner H. Spemann who succeeded in 1914 in transferring nuclei to salamander cells. He was the first, in 1938, to suggest the nuclear transfer in the cells of mammals. In 1981, this technique, which had been

considerably improved, was applied successfully to rats and, in 1986, to sheep and cows. In 1997, I. Wilmut of the Roslin Institute, U.K., was successful in obtaining the birth of the first cloned sheep in the world, the famous "Dolly".

<sup>5</sup> Pontifical Academy for Life, *Riflessioni sulla Clonazione*, 11 July 1997; *ORE*, 9 July, 1997, n. 2, p. 10. Cf. D. Tettamanzi (edited by M. Doldi), "Cloning", *Dizionario di Bioetica*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato, 2002; L. Ciccone, *Bioetica, Storia, Principi, Questioni*, Ares, Milan, 2003, pp. 143-176; I. Wilmut et al., *Viable offspring derived from fetal and adult mammalian cells*, *Nature*, 385, 997, pp. 810-813.

<sup>6</sup> Natural parthenogenesis consists in the formation of a new individual from a female gamete (oocyte) without the participation of a male gamete (spermatozoon). This natural phenomenon occurs in females that produce spontaneous embryos without previous fertilization (in certain species of invertebrates, not in mammals), or in biological individuals that originated in hybridization (the cross-breeding of different species). Since there is no recombination, the progeny are identical replicas of the single progenitor, that is, natural clones.

<sup>7</sup> Embryonic fission consists in the separation from the embryo of a few cells, in such a way that a complete adult develops from each of the resulting separated cells, complete with the same genetic heritage.

<sup>8</sup> The totipotentiality of a cell consists in its ability to generate all the cells and tissues of a complete organism, including (if satisfactory circumstances exist) the development of an individual. In the human, each embryonic cell remains totipotent for a few days after fertilization. Homozygous germination (the phenomenon of identical twins) is the result of an incidental embryonic fission of the totipotent cells that make up the embryo in the first stages of its development.

<sup>9</sup> Cellular multipotentiality implies the capacity of a cell to generate differentiated cells and tissue of parts of the organism, but not of all or each of them, nor a complete individual. In the human being, in particular, multipotentiality concerns the capacity to generate cell lines and differentiated tissue derived from each one of the embryonic layers, that is, the ectoderm, mesoderm and endoderm. A stem cell is a non-differentiated cell that can make an infinite number of exact copies of itself.

<sup>10</sup> Stem cells are able to produce specialized cells of the tissues of an organism, such as the cardiac muscle, brain or liver tissue, bone marrow, etc. Scientists today are able to keep stem cells alive *in vitro* for an indefinite period, and they are beginning to know how to produce differentiated cells according to need.

<sup>11</sup> *House of Representatives*, HR534, February 2003.

<sup>12</sup> This is an agency of the United Nations system, created in the context of UNESCO.

<sup>13</sup> Resolution 53/192.

<sup>14</sup> *Ad Hoc Committee on an International Convention against the Reproductive Cloning of Human Beings*.

<sup>15</sup> "It is impossible to control the efficacy of human cloning for reproductive ends if therapeutic cloning is not also forbidden... a partial prohibition could give rise to the appearance of clandestine cloning for reproductive ends and the establishment of an illegal trade in oocytes... the juridical principle of precaution must guarantee the protection of the weakest party, in this case, the human embryo... the experience accumulated in animal cloning has revealed the unreliability of the techniques used as well as the considerable risks of malformation and deformities in the embryo.... Opposing human cloning is not equivalent to rejecting scientific progress or progress in genetic research. Cloning is not the only strategy for research for the development of regenerative medicine... a general endorsement of research into adult stem cells would help to make the most of their potential and demonstrate their effectiveness". *Memo-randum Contro la Clonazione Terapeutica*. Spanish Delegation to the United Nations, February 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution of the European Parliament of 12 March 1997, 2 and 11.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Wilmut, "father" of Dolly the sheep, and Rudolf Jaenisch testified to this before the United States Senate.

<sup>18</sup> On this point, there is an abundant scientific bibliography. For example, see the works of D. Humpherys, K. Eggan, H. Akutsu, K. Ochedlinger, W.M. Rideout, D. Biniszkiewicz, R. Yanagimachi, R. Jaenisch, *Epigenic Instability in ES Cells and Cloned Mice*, *Science*, 293 (5527), 6 July 2000, pp. 95-97; D. Bourchis, D. Le Bourhis, D. Patin, A. Niveleau, P. Comizzoli, J.-P. Renard, E. Viegas-Pdquignot, *Delayed and incomplete reprogramming of chromosome methylation patterns in bovine cloned embryos*, *Current Biology*, 2 October 2001, Vol. 11, n. 19; Y-K. Kang, D-B Koo, J-S. Park, Y-H. Choi, A-S. Chung, K-K. Lew, Y-M. Han, *Aberrant methylation of donor genome in cloned bovine embryos*, *Nature Genetics*, June 2001, Vol.28, n. 2, pp. 173-177.

<sup>19</sup> This observation on "reproductive" cloning is also valid as an objection to "therapeutic" cloning. Its application in the clinical field of stem cells harvested from cloned embryos would, to say the least, be dubious in these

circumstances. The cells of these embryos show serious genetic defects; therefore, the proposal of transferring abnormal embryonic stem cells to a human person does not seem rational.

<sup>20</sup> Alvin Toffler's book, *Future Shock* (1970), sketches a fantastic futuristic vision of man who makes copies of himself ("man will be able to make biological carbon copies of himself), and reflects in a literary way on the prospects to which these techniques give rise as well as on anxiety about their consequences. Cf. Lee M. Silver, *What are clones? They're not what you think they are*, *Nature*, 5 July 2001, Vol.412, n. 6842, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (The Main Responsibility), ed. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1984.

Cf. Hans Jonas, *Cloniamo un uomo: dalleugenetica all'ingegneria genetica*, in *Technica, Medicina ed Etica*, ed. Einaudi, Turin, 1997, p. 136.

- - Natalia Lopez Moratalla, *Las celulas adultas llevan clara ventaja a las embrionarias*, en *Palabra*, December 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Elisabeth Montfort, *La bioethique, entre confusion et responsabilite*, in AAVV (under the direction of Elisabeth Montfort, *Bioethique. Entre confusion et responsabilite. Actes du Colloque de Paris. Assimblee nationale, 1 Octobre 2001*. Three-monthly review, *Liberte politique*, ed. Francois-Xavier de Guibert, Paris, 2003, pp. 27-28.

<sup>25</sup> Pontifical Academy for Life, *Dichiarazione sulla produzione e sull'uso scientifico e terapeutico delle cellule staminali*, 25 August 2000.

<sup>26</sup> D. Tettamanzi, *Nuova bioetica cristiana*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato, 2000, pp. 235-268; L. Ciccone, *Bioetica. Storia, Principi, Questioni*, Ares, Milan, 2003, pp. 61-80; R.C. Barra, *Status giuridico dell'embrione umano*, in *Lexicon. Famiglia, vita e questioni etiche*, EDB, Bologna, 2003; E. Sgreccia, *Manuale di Bioetica* (Vol. I), *Vita e pensiero*, Milan, 1998, pp. 361-422; C. Caffarra, *Il problema morale dell'aborto*, in AAVV (edited by A.Fiori-E. Sgreccia) *L'aborto, Vita e pensiero*, Milan, 1975, pp. 313-320.

<sup>27</sup> I. Carrasco de Paula, // *rispetto dovuto all'embrione umano: prospettiva storico-dottrinale*, in Pontifical Academy for Life, *Identita e statuto dell'embrione umano*, Libr. ed. Vaticana, 1988, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> The expression "pre-embryo" is deceptive and was contrived to support abortion. Cf. A. Serra, *Lo stato biologico dell'embrione umano. Quando comincia l' "essere umano" ?*, in Pontifical Academy for Life, *Commento interdisciplinare all' Evangelium Vitae*, Libr. ed. Vaticana, 1997.

R.C. Barra, *Status giuridico dell'embrione umano*, in *Lexicon. Famiglia, vita e questioni etiche*, EDB, Bologna, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> "Syngamy" means that part of fertilization that consists in the process initiated by the penetration of the sperm into the oocyte, for the purpose of uniting the chromosomal content of both the pronuclei formed (amfimixis).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Angelo Serra, *L'uomo-embrione. Il grande misconosciuto*, ed. Cantagalli, Siena, 2003, pp. 41-52. Cf. also the items "Dignity of the human embryo" and "Embryonic selection and reduction" in *Lexicon. Termini ambigui e discussi su famiglia, vita e questioni etiche*, (edited by) the Pontifical Council for the Family, EDB, Bologna, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> The technical expressions: zygote, morula and blastocyst correspond to descriptions of the embryo on the basis of the phase in its development, according to histological and physiological criteria.

<sup>33</sup> The deceptive idea of the "pre-embryo" was coined, as is well known, by the Warnock Committee, and today is generally accepted and deeply rooted in many milieu: A. Serra, *Pari dignità all'embrione umano* in Pontifical Council for the Family, *I figli: famiglia e società nel nuovo Millennio. Atti del Congresso Internazionale Teologico-Pastorale*. Vatican City, 11-13 October 2000, Libr. ed. Vaticana, 2001, pp. 313-320; R. Colombo, *La famiglia e gli studi sul genoma umano*, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-325; A. Serra, R. Colombo, *Identità e statuto dell'embrione umano: il contributo della biologia*, in Pontifical Academy for Life, *Identità e statuto dell'embrione umano*, Libr. ed. Vaticana, 1988, p. 157; D. Tettamanzi, *Nuova bioetica cristiana*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato, 2000, pp. 235-268; L. Ciccone, *Bioetica. Storia, Principi, Questioni*, Ares, Milan, 2003, pp. 61-80; R. C. Barra, *Status giuridico dell'embrione umano*, in *Lexicon. Famiglia, vita e questioni etiche*, EDB, Bologna 2003; Ph. Caspar, *La problematique de Vanimation de Vembryon. Survoi historique et enjeux dogmatiques*, in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, 1991, n. 123.

<sup>34</sup> Rationality, conscience and autonomy would constitute a person, according to authors such as H.T. Engelhardt or P. Singer. H.T. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1986; *Manuale di bioetica*, Mondadori, Milan, 1991; *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993; Cf. L. Palazzani, *// concetto di persona tra bioetica e diritto*, Turin, Giappichelli, 1996.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Vitae*, I, 6.

# First Corinthians: A Contextual and Formal Analysis

VIRGILIO T.J. SUERTE FELIPE

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), a great German biblical scholar of the first half of the twentieth century, said that there is no exegesis without presuppositions.<sup>1</sup> This means that one's choice of biblical text is pre-conditioned by his experience.

In my teaching experience, I usually quote from First Corinthians when I discuss the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23-26), the unity and diversity in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31), and the qualities of love (1 Cor. 13:1-13). Because of the various issues discussed by St. Paul in the letter, a question is raised whether First Corinthians is a single letter or a composite of letters.

<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Schubert Ogden (New York: Meridian, 1960), 343-51. According to Anthony Thiselton, by "pre-supposition" Bultmann was referring to a "pre-undertaking" as a relation in life to the subject matter of the texts, not merely to beliefs, and especially not to fixed beliefs or doctrines that allow for no alteration. See his *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1992), 45.

To answer this basic question, this article will attempt to make a contextual and formal analysis of First Corinthians. Here, we understand contextual analysis as consisting of the historical, social and cultural background of the First Corinthians and formal analysis as consisting of the form and structure of the whole text.<sup>2</sup> An article of this length precludes a detailed, in-depth examination of First Corinthians.

### *Contextual Analysis*

Context plays a crucial and determinant role in understanding a certain word, phrase, or sentence. A change in context implies a change in meaning. Coming from the Latin word *contexere* (to weave together), context refers to the whole situation, background, environment or circumstances.

As we have said, our contextual investigation consists of the historical, social and cultural situation in which First Corinthians was written. This is important in order that we may have a better understanding and right interpretation of the contents of this canonical book.

Historical accounts of the city of Corinth show that it was a "powerful commercial city on the Isthmus, which owed its wealth to its position on 'two seas'",<sup>3</sup> namely, the Aegean and

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of contextual and formal analyses in exegesis, see Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001), 65-90. While Gorman uses contextual and formal analyses for an exegesis of biblical passage, here we adapt and modify their application to the study of the whole book of First Corinthians.

<sup>3</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch and ed. George W. MacRae, S.J. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 11.

the Adriatic seas. As a Greek city-state, it was destroyed by the Roman consul Lucius Mummius in 146 B.C. and was restored as a Roman city by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., renaming it from Ephyra to *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthinensis*.<sup>4</sup> Being the capital of the senatorial province of Achaia, the city of Corinth was governed by a proconsul sent annually from Rome. Lucius Iunius Gallio (see Acts 18:12-17) held this office in 51-52 A.D.

Religiously, the city was a center of various pagan cults. To name a few: Isis, the Egyptian goddess; Asklepios; Poseidon; Apollo and Hermes. "The Romans reestablished or refurbished the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone, with its orientation to the underworld and the dead (cf. 15:29)."<sup>5</sup> Thus, we can say that Corinth at the time of St. Paul was religiously syncretic.

Socially, the "City of Aphrodite" did not enjoy a good reputation. But Hans Conzelmann is quick to say that "the often-peddled statement that Corinth was a seat of sacred prostitution (in the service of Aphrodite) is a fable"<sup>6</sup> because Strabo, on whom the fable was based, "is not speaking of the present, but of the city's golden period."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., "The First Letter to the Corinthians", *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, S.S. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1999), 798.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 7, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, A Michael Glazier Book, 1999), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Conzelmann, 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote n. 97 of the book. See also Murphy-O'Connor, 799.



Culturally, rich merchants of the city sponsored the Isthmian games, a great panhellenic festival which "was second in importance only to the Olympic games."<sup>8</sup> Many in the population were freedmen, consisting of both Greek-and-Latin-speaking people. Names of Corinthian Christians in the middle of first century reveal a mixture of Greeks and Romans: Sosthenes (1 Cor 1:1; Acts 18:17), Chloe (1 Cor 1:14; Acts 18:8), Gaius (1 Cor 1:14), Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19), Erastus (Rom 16:23; 2 Tim 4:20), Apolos and Cephas (1 Cor 1:12).

First Corinthians itself gives us a glimpse of the culture of the city. Corinth was composed of a mixture of peoples (1:26); dinners were a social value (10:27; 11:20-21, 34). St. Paul's mention of the busy Christians (1:11; 4:17-21; 16:1-12, 17-18), the market (10:25), the games (9:24-27), the theater (4:9), and the city's cults (8:5, 10; 12:2) characterized Corinth as culturally diverse and economically progressive.

Against this historical context, Paul visited the city of Corinth (Acts 18:1-18) "between December of 47 and April of 54."<sup>9</sup> He wrote First Corinthians from Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8), "sometime after his visit, certainly no later than 57, perhaps as early as 53-54."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, 798.

<sup>9</sup> Collins, 24.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

## *Formal Analysis*

### *The Text*

Going now into the text itself, we are certain that First Corinthians is authentic.<sup>11</sup> "Papyrus 46 (Chester Beatty) contains the whole epistle."<sup>12</sup>

Because of its length (16 chapters), the variety of its subjects (division in the community, sexual morality, civil procedures, marital relations, the consumption of idol meats, hair-styles, the Lord's supper, the meaning and use of spiritual gifts, and the resurrection), the breaks and the different ways that St. Paul treats some of the topics and his sudden transitions of thought, its composition as a single letter has been questioned. Raymond T. Collins' work provides a broad survey of the many scholars who have written on the issue whether St. Paul wrote First Corinthians in the form of a single letter or whether it is composed of two or four letters.<sup>13</sup>

In the midst of this controversy, it is significant to note that "no manuscript evidence exists to suggest that 1 Corinthians once existed in a form other than that in which it exists today."<sup>14</sup> Internal evidence indicates that there are at least

<sup>11</sup> Conzelman, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. But "three verses of the letter (9:3; 14:15; 15:16) are not found at all among the papyrus sheets" in the Chester Beatty museum in Ireland according to Collins, 10.

"Collins, 11-14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

four letters to the Corinthians. Only two of these four have survived as we have them in the canon of the New Testament.

It is interesting to note at this point that, although First Corinthians is called the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, it must not be understood as the first letter that St. Paul had actually written to that assembly, as already indicated in 1 Cor 5:9 in which St. Paul referred to a previous letter. It was only called "First" in comparison with the "Second" Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. "According to the stylistic principle of compiling the NT texts, longer texts are called 'first' (1 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 1 Peter, 1 John) with respect to the shorter texts that are called 'second'." <sup>16</sup>

Having read Raymond F. Collins' and Margaret M. Mitchell's <sup>17</sup> works, this writer is inclined to believe that First Corinthians is a single composition, although it might have been most probably written or dictated by St. Paul over an extended period of time and not in a single sitting. My reasons: the literary genre of First Corinthians and its internal structure.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 5:9 ("I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people"), 2 Cor 2:3-4 ("And / wrote as I did so that when I came I might not be pained by those in whom I should have rejoiced, confident about all of you that my joy is that of all of you. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that you might be pained but that you might know the abundant love I have for you."), and 2 Cor 2:9 ("For this is why / wrote, to know your proven character, whether you were obedient in everything."). (Emphases supplied).

<sup>16</sup> Collins, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

### *Literary Genre*

It is evident that First Corinthians is in a form of a letter. As in the days of St. Paul as now, letters are clearly identified by the opening salutation and the complementary clause. First Corinthians begins with the usual epistolary salutation (1: 1-3)<sup>18</sup> and thanksgiving (1:4-9). It ends with exhortations and greetings (16:13-24). In his commentary on First Corinthians, Raymond E. Collins has convincingly established that St. Paul's letter is indeed a Hellenistic letter. He even cites extant Hellenistic letters to show that St. Paul was truly a letter writer of his own times.

Moreover, internal evidence of First Corinthians clearly manifests that St. Paul was consciously aware that he was writing a letter. "I am writing you this not to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children" (1 Cor 4:14).<sup>19</sup>

One remarkable feature of First Corinthians is the closing in which St. Paul mentions that he is signing his letter. "I, Paul, write you this greeting in my own hand" (16:21). This indicates that St. Paul dictated this letter to the Corinthians. We know that St. Paul's letter to the Romans was penned by Tertius (Rom 16:22; cf. 1 Pet 5:12). But we do not know who

<sup>18</sup> "Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the Church of God that is in Corinth ..."

<sup>19</sup> Also 1 Cor 5:11 ("But / *now write* to you not to associate with anyone named a brother, if he is immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a person.", 9:15 ("I have not used any of these gifts, however, nor do / *write* this that it be done so in my case."), and 14:37 ("If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or a spiritual person, he should recognize that what / *am writing* to you is a commandment of the Lord.")). (Emphases supplied).

transcribed First Corinthians. According to Collins, "It was not uncommon for Hellenistic letter writers to dictate their letters to professional scribes (amanuenses)."<sup>20</sup>

The unusual way in which Paul draws attention to his signature is an indication that the letter Paul had written was to be read aloud to the Corinthians. Addressed to an assembly (1:1), it was read by a single person (see 1 Thess 5:27). Most people in the gathering would not see the actual text of the letter so they would not have been able to differentiate between the hand of Paul and that of the anonymous scribe.<sup>21</sup>

Internal evidence also explains the reason for the length of the letter. St. Paul wanted to answer the oral reports brought to him by some visitors from Corinth in Ephesus. "For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you" (1:11).

Also, we learn from chapter 7, verse 1 that the Christians in Corinth wrote him a letter: "Now in regard to the matters about which you wrote ..." St. Paul answered the questions of the Corinthian community through a letter. Thus, we can also understand why the letter discusses variety of subjects. The oral reports and the letter of inquiry were answered by St. Paul in one letter.

But is it true that between the salutation and the closing, "the structure in between is free"? That unlike Galatians and

<sup>20</sup> Collins, 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Romans, "the buildup of 1 Corinthians, on the other hand, does not follow any rule" as claimed by Hans Conzelmann?<sup>22</sup>

### *Structure*

Studies on the structure of First Corinthians by Mary Ann Getty,<sup>23</sup> Jan Lambrecht,<sup>24</sup> and Raymond F. Collins<sup>25</sup> show that, viewed as a whole, the entire structure of the canonical First Corinthians is constructed according to a chiastic<sup>26</sup> tricolon A-B-A' pattern. "Paul offers some general considerations (A), then a digression that supports his argument (B), and finally a further reflection that specifies the general reflection and responds to the particular issue at hand (A')." <sup>27</sup>

Within the encompassing chiastic structure of a A-B-A' pattern, one can find small chiastic patterns. For example,

<sup>22</sup> Conzelmann, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Ann Getty, "Paul and His Writings", in *The Catholic Study Bible*, ed. Donald Senior (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), RG [reading guide] 496.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Lambrecht, "1 Corinthians", *The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. William R. Farmer (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 1602.

<sup>25</sup> Collins, 14-16.

<sup>26</sup> Coming from the Greek letter X (Chi), chiasm as a literary device refers to the X shape which can be drawn if the A elements are joined by a line and the B elements are similarly joined, as in Psalm 51:1 (NRSV):

"Have mercy on me, O God, (A) according to our steadfast love (B); according to your abundant mercy (B') blot out my transgressions.(A). Gorman, 82. When used to structure large epistolary units, it is chiasm on the macro level. When used within a single sentence or small group of sentences, it is chiasm on the micro level.

<sup>27</sup> Collins, 14.

Paul's discourse on spiritual gifts begins in ch. 12 (A). Then he digresses by writing a paean on agape in ch. 13 (B) and returns to the gifts of prophecy and glossolalia in ch. 14 (A'). Within ch. 12, a chiastic pattern may be discovered: Beginning his exposition in 12:1-11 (A), St. Paul resorts to the typical image of the body in 12:12-26 (B), only to return to spiritual gifts in 12:27-31 (A).

In addition to this organization of Paul's letter in chiastic pattern, another internal evidence proving the unity of the letter is the thesis of the whole letter in chapter 1, verse 10: "I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no division among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose." On the basis of an exegetical and meticulous investigation including a rhetorical analysis of the whole text, Margaret M. Mitchell has established in her book that First Corinthians is a single letter of unitary composition which contains a deliberative argument persuading the Christian community at Corinth to become reunited. With the theme of harmony within the community, it becomes understandable the discussion of variety of problems causing disunity.

### *Conclusion*

The concrete situation of the ancient Church in Corinth was obviously different from the concrete situation of the Church today. But the issues raised by St. Paul in First Corinthians and the manner he dealt with them have remained valid and relevant to contemporary Church. Under the overarching theme of exhortation to unity in the Church, Paul discussed:

the divisions in the Church (chs. 1-4), sexual life (chs. 5-7), worship (chs. 8-14), and the resurrection (ch. 15). Aren't these also the issues of the Church today? Have we tried to reflect and apply St. Paul's admonition?

Just as there were factions in the Corinthian community, so in every Christian community of today. In a parish, for example, are not the different organizations jealous of the others? And if there are several presbyters in the parish or community, aren't these Church groups saying: "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Apollos" or "I belong to Kephass"? Instead of listening to the wisdom of the world, should we not rather imitate St. Paul and reflect on the wisdom of the cross?

Regarding sexual matters, have we progressed morally from the time of St. Paul? Or, have we moved forward only with our sophisticated technology? St. Paul is still asking us: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (6:19).

Speaking of worship, to whom do we give our complete trust and love now? Isn't it true that "in gold, we trust"? And whenever we come together and celebrate the Eucharist, have we really considered that we are the Body of Christ?

If we cannot respond with confidence to these questions in the affirmative, how can we be witnesses to Christ's resurrection in a world of hopelessness, uncertainty and despair?

*"Marana tha.* The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus" (16-22-24).



# **Message to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of the XIX World Youth Day 2004**

JOHN PAUL II

My dear young people!

1. This year 2004 is the final stage before the great event in Cologne, where the 20<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day will be celebrated in 2005. I therefore invite you to intensify your path of spiritual preparation by reflecting on the theme I have chosen for this 19<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day: *"We wish to see Jesus"* (Jn 12:21).

This is a request made to the Apostles one day by some "Greeks". They wanted to know who Jesus was. They had come not simply to see what kind of impression the man Jesus would make. Moved by great curiosity and a presentiment that they had found the answer to their deepest questions, they wanted to know who he really was and whence he came.

2. My dear young people, I want you too to imitate those "Greeks" who spoke to Philip, moved by a desire to "see

Jesus". May your search be motivated not simply by intellectual curiosity, though that too is something positive, but be stimulated above all by an inner urge to find the answer to the question about the meaning of your life. Like the rich young man in the Gospel, you too should go in search of Jesus to ask him: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (*Mk* 10:17). Mark the Evangelist states clearly that Jesus looked at him and loved him. You may remember another episode in which Jesus says to Nathaniel: "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you", drawing from the heart of that Israelite, in whom there was no guile (cf. *Jn* 1:47), a fine profession of faith: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God!" (*Jn* 1:49). Those who approach Jesus with a heart free of prejudice can quite easily come to have faith because Jesus himself has already seen them and loved them first. The most sublime aspect of human dignity is precisely man's vocation to communicate with God in a profound exchange of glances that is life transforming. In order to see Jesus, we first need to let him look at us!

The desire to see Jesus dwells deep in the heart of each man and each woman. My dear young people, allow Jesus to gaze into your eyes so that the desire to see the Light, and to experience the splendour of the Truth, may grow within you. Whether we are aware of it or not, God has created us because he loves us and so that we in turn may love him. This is the reason for the unquenchable nostalgia for God that man preserves in his heart: "Your face, Lord, do I seek. Do not hide your face from me" (*Ps* 27: 8-9). That Face - we know - was revealed to us by God in Jesus Christ.

3. My dear young people, don't you too wish to contemplate the beauty of that Face? That is the question I address to you on this World Youth Day 2004. Don't be too hasty in your reply. First of all, create a silence within yourselves. Allow this ardent desire to see God emerge from the depth of your hearts, a desire that is sometimes stifled by the distractions of the world and by the allurements of pleasures. Allow this desire to emerge and you will have the wonderful experience of meeting Jesus. Christianity is not simply a doctrine: it is an encounter in faith with God made present in our history through the incarnation of Jesus.

Try by every means to make this encounter possible, and look towards Jesus who is passionately seeking you. Seek him with the *eyes of the flesh* through the events of life and in the faces of others; but seek him too with the *eyes of the soul* through prayer and meditation on the Word of God, because "The contemplation of Christ's face cannot fail to be inspired by all that we are told about him in Sacred Scripture" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 17).

4. To see Jesus, to contemplate his Face, is an unquenchable desire, but it is a desire that man unfortunately may also deform. This is what happens with sin, because it is the very essence of sin to draw our eyes away from the Creator and to turn them towards what he has created.

Those "Greeks" in search of the truth would not have been able to approach Christ if their desire, animated by a free and voluntary act, had not been expressed through a clear decision: "We wish to see Jesus". To be truly free means having the strength to choose the One for whom we were created

and accepting his lordship over our lives. You perceive it in the depths of your heart: all that is good on earth, all professional success, even the human love that you dream of, can never fully satisfy your deepest and most intimate desires. Only an encounter with Jesus can give full meaning to your lives: "for you made us for yourself, and our heart finds no peace until it rests in you" (Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*, book 1, chapter 1). Do not let yourselves be distracted from this search. Persevere in it because it is your fulfillment and your joy that is at stake.

5. Dear friends, if you learn to discover Jesus in the Eucharist, you will also know how to discover him in your brothers and sisters, particularly in the very poor. The Eucharist received with love and adored with fervour becomes a school of freedom and charity in order to fulfill the commandment to love. Jesus speaks to us in the wonderful language of the gift of self and of love so great as to give our own life for it. Is that an easy thing? You know very well that it is not! It is not easy to forget our self, but if we do, it draws us away from possessive and narcissistic love and opens us up to the joy of a love that is self-giving. This Eucharistic school of freedom and charity teaches us to overcome superficial emotions in order to be rooted firmly in what is true and good; it frees us from self-attachment in order to open ourselves to others. It teaches us to make the transition from an *affective* love to an *effective* love. For love is not merely a feeling; it is an act of will that consists of preferring, in a constant manner, the good of others to the good of oneself: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friends" (*Jn* 15:13).

It is with such inner freedom and such burning charity that Jesus teaches us to find him in others, first of all in the disfigured face of the poor. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta loved to distribute her "visiting card" on which were written the words: "The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace". This is the way to meet Christ. Go out to meet all of human suffering spurred on by your generosity and with the love that God instils in your hearts by means of the Holy Spirit: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Mt* 25:40). The world is in urgent need of a great prophetic sign of fraternal charity! It is not enough to "speak" of Jesus. We must also let him be "seen" somehow through the eloquent *Witness of our OWN life* (cf. *Wove milleanszio in&unte, 16*).

Do not forget to seek Christ and to recognize his presence *in the Church*, which is like the continuation of his saving action in time and space. It is in the Church and through her that Jesus continues to make himself visible today and to allow humanity to come to him. In your parishes, movements and communities, be welcoming to one another in order to build communion among yourselves. This is the visible sign of the presence of Christ in the Church, in spite of being so often blurred by human sin.

6. Do not be surprised, then, when you meet the Cross on your way. Did not Jesus say to his disciples that the grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die in order to bear much fruit (cf. *Jn* 12:23-26)? He was indicating in this way that his life given unto death would bear fruit. You know this: after the resurrection of Christ, death shall no longer have

the last word. Love is stronger than death. If Jesus accepted death on the cross, thus making it the source of life and the sign of love, he did so not out of weakness, or because he wished to suffer. He did so to gain our salvation and to allow us henceforth to take part in his divine life.

It is just this truth that I wished to bring to the minds of the young people of the world when I entrusted them with a large wooden Cross at the end of the Holy Year of the Redemption in 1984. Ever since then, it has travelled through different countries in preparation for your World Days. Hundreds of thousands of young people have prayed around this Cross. By laying at the feet of the Cross the burdens that had lain heavily upon them, they discovered that they were loved by God. Many of them also found the strength to change their lives.

This year, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that event, the Cross will be solemnly welcomed in Berlin. From there it will commence its pilgrimage throughout Germany, concluding in Cologne next year. Today I wish to repeat the words I said to you back then: "My dear young people, ... I entrust to you the Cross of Christ! Carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity, and announce to everyone that only in the death and resurrection of Christ can we find salvation and redemption."

7. Your contemporaries expect you to be witnesses of the One whom you have met and who gives you life. In your daily lives, be intrepid witnesses of a love that is stronger than death. It is up to you to accept this challenge! Put your talents and your youthful enthusiasm at the service of the

proclamation of the Good News. Be the enthusiastic friends of Jesus who present the Lord to all those who wish to see him, especially those who are farthest away from him. Philip and Andrew brought those "Greeks" to Jesus: God uses human friendship to lead hearts to the source of divine charity. Feel responsible for the evangelization of your friends and all your contemporaries.

Throughout her life, the Blessed Virgin Mary steadfastly contemplated the face of Christ. May she keep you forever under the gaze of her Son (cf. *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 10) and sustain you as you prepare for World Youth Day in Cologne. I ask you to set out towards it from now with responsible and active enthusiasm. The Virgin of Nazareth, the compassionate and patient Mother, will mould within you a contemplative heart, and teach you to fix your gaze on Jesus so that, in this world that passes away, you shall be prophets of a world that does not die.

With affection I impart a special blessing upon you that will accompany you on your way.

*From the Vatican, 22 February 2004*

## Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

### DIVORCE AND CHURCH ANNULMENT: ANY DIFFERENCE?

***Question:***

*It is a fact that the Church does not accept divorce, yet she grants marriage annulments instead. My question: Is there truly any difference between them? On the other hand, I wished to know all the grounds by which the Church grants annulments.*

***Response:***

**1. Divorce and Church 'Annulment': One and the Same?**

One of the misgivings people have, due more to ignorance than to malice, is that since the Catholic Church does not accept divorce, the so-called marriage annulments she grants are actually a sort of divorce-substitute; in other words, that "annulment" is the Catholic name for divorce. Yet, the two are quite different things. A clear understanding of both concepts is needed to avoid confusion.



First, we have to say that the word "annulment" is misleading, since in the Church's law it does not have the same meaning as in civil law. Actually, the matrimonial tribunals of the Catholic Church do not properly "annul" marriages, but only have them declared invalid. Thus the proper expression used in canon law is not "annulment" (as ordinarily people do) but rather "declaration of nullity."

Now, what is the difference between *Divorce* and *Declaration of nullity*? 'Divorce' is a formal declaration by a judge that the bond of a valid marriage established by the spouses' mutual exchange of consent at the wedding ceremony is now at an end. 'Declaration of nullity', on the other hand, is a formal declaration by a judge that a given marriage with all the appearances of validity was from the very start null and void. The difference then is great: in the case of divorce, the conjugal bond is broken; not so in the case of declaration of nullity, where such bond did not actually exist. In short, with divorce the "unbreakable" bond of marriage is broken, while with declaration of nullity there is not such breaking (and hence the indissolubility of marriage is preserved) for the marriage had been invalid from the beginning.

How can a marriage solemnized in the Church be null or invalid from the beginning? The explanation is very simple: The validity of canonical marriage rests on the simultaneous presence of three basic elements: (1) the legal capacity to marry or the absence of matrimonial impediments; (2) the exchange of a mutual valid consent; and (3) the observance of the canonical form in the celebration of marriage. If any of these three elements is missing or defective at the moment of contracting marriage, such marriage is not validly contracted and, there-

fore, is null and void. (Obviously, while it is easy to prove the existence of an impediment or of a defective canonical form, it is extremely difficult at times to prove the invalidity of matrimonial consent. Experts and witnesses are then needed).

It is evident that not all marriages contracted in the Catholic Church are valid ones, if we take into account the very definition of marriage as "a community of love and life" characterized by an interpersonal relationship that is by itself total, exclusive and permanent. *Total*, because it involves the gift of the whole person to one another; *exclusive* and *permanent*, corresponding to the essential matrimonial properties of unity and indissolubility, which "in Christian marriage acquire a distinctive firmness by reason of the sacrament" (can. 1056).

When doubts about the validity of a marriage arise (normally when the relationship has ended and the couple have irreparably separated), upon the request of one or both spouses, a competent ecclesiastical tribunal investigates the facts and circumstances of that union to determine whether there are sufficient grounds to declare that particular marriage null and void. If the existence of such ground(s) at the time of the wedding is proven "beyond reasonable doubt," a formal sentence follows declaring that a true marriage never existed there. Once this affirmative sentence is confirmed by another similar sentence from a higher tribunal, the sentence becomes definitive. This legal process is necessary for, in principle, marriage "enjoys the favor of the law" and, therefore, it is taken for granted that every solemnized marriage is valid until the contrary is proven.

The Church, following Christ's teaching, believes that marriage is meant to be a permanent, indissoluble institution;

and, therefore, that the conjugal bond, once validly established, cannot be broken by any human power. That is why the Church opposes divorce as a matter of principle. A principle that is not broken in the cases of separation of spouses (while the conjugal bond remains) or in the cases of declaration of matrimonial nullity.

## **2. What are the grounds for declaration of nullity?**

The grounds by which the Church grants declaration of nullity of marriage are numerous. Indeed, as numerous as possible causes that may render invalid a marriage at the moment of being contracted. This is due fundamentally to the three reasons already mentioned before, namely,

- a) The existence of a diriment impediment;
- b) A defective matrimonial consent; and
- c) A defective canonical form.

Let me explain more in detail each of them:

### *a. The existence of a diriment impediment:*

There is a list of matrimonial impediments in the Code of Canon Law that either incapacitate naturally or legally a person to contract marriage validly or that likewise render a marriage invalid from the very beginning. What are those impediments? They are twelve and are the following:

1. The minimal age of 16 years for men and 14 for women;
2. Impotence, which has to be antecedent and perpetual, to consummate the marriage;

3. The existence of a previous marriage bond;
4. The marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person ("disparity of cult");
5. The reception of sacred Orders;
6. The bond of a perpetual and public vow of chastity in a religious institute;
7. The abduction of a woman with a view to contracting a marriage with her;
8. The crime of killing a person's spouse, or his or her own spouse, with a view of entering marriage;
9. The relation of consanguinity in any degree of the direct line and up to the fourth degree inclusive in the collateral line;
10. The relation of affinity, between one spouse and the blood relatives of the other spouse, in any degree in the direct line;
11. The impediment of public propriety or decency, when a couple live together after an invalid marriage, or from a notorious or public concubinage. (It invalidates marriage in the first degree of the direct line between the man and those related by consanguinity to the woman, and vice versa);
12. The legal relationship coming from adoption, in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line.

The presence of any of these impediments at the moment of the wedding invalidates the marriage. Some of these impe-

diments can be dispensed by the competent ecclesiastical authority; others (those rooted in divine or natural law) are not.

*b. The exchange of a defective consent:*

The mutual consent of the spouses, by which they accept one another as husband and wife, is the most essential element in contracting marriage since the latter is brought into being by it. That is why it is so important that the act of exchanging consent be truly human, and be without any grave defect either from the part of the intellect (immaturity, ignorance, error, deceit, etc.) or from the part of the will (lack of freedom, simulation, fear...); otherwise, the marriage would be contracted invalidly.

The causes of incapacity mentioned in the Code of Canon Law are nine and they are the following:

1. Lack of sufficient use of reason;
2. Grave lack of due discretion or psychological maturity;
3. Psychological incapacity to assume the essential obligations of marriage;
4. Ignorance of essential elements of marriage, like permanency, heterosexuality, etc.;
5. Error either about the identity and quality of a person or about the essential properties of marriage, its sacramental dignity included;
6. Deceit intentionally provoked to obtain the matrimonial consent;
7. Simulation or exclusion of essential elements of marriage, such as fidelity, indissolubility or children;

8. Condition or subjection of the establishment of the bond to the fulfillment or verification of a specific circumstance or event;
9. Force and fear which are grave and irresistible.

The problem is to determine in each case when these elements affect the consent to the point of rendering it invalid. This has to be done by able ecclesiastical tribunal members with the help of experts, witnesses, and other documentary evidence.

*c. The observance of canonical form*

The exchange of matrimonial consent has to be "lawfully manifested," that is, has to take place observing certain formalities prescribed by the law for validity.

The law of the Church requires that all Catholics observe the so-called "canonical form" in the celebration of marriage. This form consists normally in the active presence of either the local Ordinary, the parish priest or someone delegated by them (who can be a priest, deacon or even a lay person) as well as the presence of two witnesses (c. 1108). In extraordinary situations where those formalities cannot be observed because the one competent to assist cannot be present or easily approached, the Church acknowledges the validity of some marriages contracted only in the presence of two witnesses (c. 1116).

This form may be dispensed only in exceptional cases, like in danger of death or in some mixed marriages. So important is this requirement that no canonical marriage is acknowledged without it (the civil marriage of Catholics is a typical

example) and those marriages contracted with defective form can be declared invalid if there is documentary evidence of it.

### 3. Cases of dissolution of marriage:

There are exceptional instances where the Church literally dissolves the bond of validly contracted marriages. The effect is similar to that of the declaration of nullity. They are the following:

a. Dissolution of ratified non-consummated marriages, granted by the Roman Pontiff by his *potestas vicaria*, that is, in his capacity as Vicar of Christ,

b. Dissolution of marriages in favor of the faith (Pauline and Petrine privileges).

Each of these cases would deserve some explanation that it is impossible to do here by reason of space, but that can be easily consulted in books or by approaching an expert in the field.

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In conclusion, to the first question, on the similarities between divorce and declaration of nullity of marriage, we say that both things are quite different since with divorce the indissoluble bond of a valid marriage is broken, while with declaration of nullity there is not such breaking for the marriage had been invalidly contracted.

To the second question, concerning the complete list of possible grounds for declaration of nullity, we answer that, all in all, there are twelve diriment impediments that render a marriage invalid, nine possible grounds for defective con-

sent, and one related to defects in the canonical form. All of them, particularly those concerning the defective consent, may serve as the bases for a declaration of nullity of marriage.

The special dispensation granted by the Roman Pontiff in some ratified and non-consummated marriages as well as the dissolution of the marriage bond "in favor of the faith" (Pauline and Petrine privileges) foreseen in some particular cases, complete the picture of possible grounds handled by Church's jurisprudence.



## **Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for July-August 2004**

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**EFREN RIVERA, OP**

**July 4, 2004**

◇ **14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Is 66:10-14; Gal 6:14-18; Lk 10:1-12, 17-20 (or 10:1-9)

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The passage is about 1) the missionary discourse of Jesus (see also 9:2-5) and 2) the successful mission of the seventy two disciples who were being trained to assist the twelve apostles (see 9:1-6). Like the twelve apostles, the seventy two missionaries will have authority over all devils and will have the power to cure diseases, as they proclaim that the Kingdom of God is near. Jesus himself will bring the Kingdom of God to those contacted by the missionaries and who accept their message, for he sent them ahead of him "to every town and place he intended to visit" (v. 1). The missionaries will be bearers of Peace (v. 5). However, they can become harbingers of doom if people reject their Good News. The omission of verses 13-16 shows that the liturgy wants to

emphasize the success of the missionaries. They come back exuberant in their joy (v. 17-20).

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

V. 1a "Jesus appointed seventy-two others." - Value of being chosen to be a cooperator in a grandiose enterprise.

V. 1b "He sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit." - Value of sending an "advance party" or an "auxiliary group" that would do preliminary work ahead of one's visit.

V. 2 "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few." - Value of not letting an abundant harvest go to waste because of the lack of laborers to gather the harvest.

V. 3 "Like lambs among wolves." - Value of taking a risk just to be able to evangelize. - Value of trusting in the Lord's protection.

V. 4 "Carry no money." - Value of a missionary's total dependence on God's Providence. The particular circumstances can vary from age to age, but the dependence on Divine Providence must always be there, if one is to be an authentic missionary.

V. 5b "First say, 'Peace to this household'." - Value of being a bearer of Peace. - Value of house-to-house evangelization. The missionaries did what Jesus had no time to do, that is, visit people from house to house.

V. 7b "The laborer deserves his payment." - Value of having no worry about the basic needs of food, clothing and

shelter. When the lower needs are satisfied, one can give his attention to higher needs (and hopefully, as psychologists would say, to one's self-actualization).

V. 9a "Cure the sick." - Value of healing as a traditional or time-honored missionary work.

V. 9b "The Kingdom of God is at hand for you." - Value of the being in the Kingdom of God on earth as a much higher good than being freed from demons or being cured.

V. 17 "The seventy-two returned rejoicing." - Value of savoring one's success.

V. 20 "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven." - Value of having a foretaste of one's future reward.

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

- Have you been a healer aside from being an evangelizer?
- Have you been a Bearer of Peace?
- Have you ever experienced or witnessed the joyful exuberance of successful missionaries?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us have more evangelizers who will be Peace bearers and Good News bearers in house to house evangelization.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We must keep alive the *Bayanihan* spirit: get people involved so that the huge job of nation-building will be achieved.

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

## SUCCESSFUL MISSIONARIES

There was a time when Catholic missionaries measured their success by counting how many people they were able to baptize, bring to confession and Holy Communion, and bring to the Sacrament of Marriage. Today's Gospel passage reminds us that the original yardstick of successful missionary work is not the sacraments. Instead, missionaries should ask themselves: Have I been a bearer of Peace? Have I healed people (physically, psychologically, spiritually)? Have I proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God? Have I prepared the way for Jesus?

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

**July 11,2004**

**<> 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Dt 30:10-14; Col 1:15-20; Lk 10:25-37

*TODAY IS WORLD POPULATION DAY*

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Jesus tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan to answer the question: who is my neighbor? Instead of answering the question directly, Jesus gives it a twist: which of the three (the Jewish priest, the Levite and the Samaritan) *proved himself a neighbor to the robbers' victim?*

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

V. 25 "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" - Value of being concerned for one's eternal life.

V. 27 "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." - Value of the "Great Commandment."

V. 28 "Do this and you will live." - Value of the life that comes from doing rather than just from knowing.

V 36 "(Among the three characters in the parable, the one who proved himself to be the neighbor of the robbers' victim is) the one who treated him with mercy." - Value of mercy that is, compassionate love shown in appropriate action.

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

- When was the last time you did a corporal work of mercy as the Good Samaritan did?
- Have you ever been helped by a Good Samaritan?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us go and do as the Good Samaritan did: show our mercy in corporal works specially to victims of poverty and crimes of violence. They are our neighbors. In fact they are our brothers and sisters.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us work so that Christians and Muslims become true brothers and sisters to one another.

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

## NEIGHBORS WITHOUT BORDERS

The story of the Good Samaritan teaches us that our neighbor is not exactly the family that shares the same fence or dividing board (*dingding*) with us, in Tagalog, our *kapitbahay*. In fact it teaches us that there should be no wall or fence between us and anyone who is in need of help, our *kapwa*. Among the best examples of people who show themselves to be Good Samaritans are the members of the group called "Doctors Without Borders." These are physicians who go to trouble spots in the world to assist the sick and wounded, usually victims of war and violence, for free.

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

**July 18, 2004**

**<> 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Gn 18:20-32; Col 1:24-28; Lk 10:38-42

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Jesus enjoys the hospitality of two sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha was hospitable by preparing a sumptuous meal for her guest. But Mary was hospitable in another way, that is, by listening to Jesus. She wanted to spend quality time with the bearer of God's Good News and Jesus said this is something that will not be taken away from her.

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

V. 38a "Jesus entered a village..." - Value of rural life.

V. 38b "A woman names Martha welcomed him." - Value of hospitality. Remember the hospitality of Abraham that earned him the assurance of having a son: Gn 18. Martha did the role of a benefactress.

V. 39 "Mary sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak." - Value of discipleship. Mary was a friend of Jesus because she sat beside him. But more than this, she was a disciple: she sat at Jesus feet and listened to him.

V. 41b "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things." - Value of being free from anxiety and worry. (This is the value that Martha lacked, but which Mary possessed).

V. 42b "Mary has chosen the better part." - Value of discipleship or listening to the word of God. If what Mary possessed were a coin, one side would be her being a listening disciple, and the other side would be freedom from anxiety and worry.

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

- Have you been like Martha: supposedly a friend and benefactress of Jesus but anxious and worried about many things?
- Do you personally know people who are like Mary - a friend and disciple of Jesus who spends quality time listening to his word (and later doing it)?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us listen to God's word and do it. In particular, people have to learn to give more importance to the first part of the Mass, which is the Liturgy of the Word of God. People must learn to feel the presence of Christ at this part of Holy Mass.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us continue the age-old custom of showing hospitality not only to our relatives and friends but also to strangers who are in need. Let us "make room" for them. We don't have to prepare something special for them. But we have to respond to their need. Sometimes, its just a listening ear that they need.

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

### **LEARN FROM MARY OF BETHANY**

It has been customary to identify Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene. But a little attention to the origin of "Magdalene" destroys this belief. Magdalene simply means a woman from the town of Magdala in Galilee. The lady in today's story is from the village of Bethany in Judea. There is a lesson we can learn from her that is very different from what we can learn from Mary Magdalene.

Mary of Bethany teaches us the value of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. In particular, she teaches us that, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one must listen to him. Some would use the expression, "contemplate his face." To do so, we have to set aside the worries and anxieties of daily living. A true disciple of Jesus should be content with a simple meal, a



simple house, a simple life-style. We must avoid being like Martha: one who thinks of herself as a friend and benefactress of Jesus but does not sit down to listen to his word.

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

**July 25,2004**

◁> **17<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Gn 18:20-32; Col 2:12-14; Lk 11:1-13

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). In today's passage Jesus teaches us how to pray. Most of the time, however, people think that Jesus is teaching a formula of prayer, namely, the "Our Father". Fortunately, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) has a whole Section (nn. 2759-2865) explaining this prayer.

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

V 1 "Lord, teach us to pray." - Value of being taught how to pray by an expert practitioner of prayer.

V. 2b "Father, hallowed be thy name." - Value of recognizing God as being, at the same time, our "Father" and also the Supreme Holy One. If, for some reason, "father" does not connote for you a loving relationship, try "mother" or "friend". <> In spite of our need to be close to God, we have to keep our distance from him because he is the "totally other". That is the meaning of God's holiness. Many people make the mistake of taking God for granted. Many think that all they have to do is to pray hard and insistently, and then

God has to give in to their petition. Such people have to remember that prayer is not meant to change God. We must want God to change us when we pray.

V. 2c "Your kingdom come." - Value of wanting the coming of the kingdom of God and working for it to come. The coming of the kingdom has to be both the work of God and the work of man. A praying person cannot say, "God, do what you want." One prays as a true Christian when one says, "God, help me do what you want me to do."

V. 3 "Give us each day our daily bread." - Value of attending to the needs of each day, day by day. Contrary to the belief that Christian prayer should not be repetitive, this verse implies that we have to pray for our basic needs every day. Our prayer should not be: Lord, give us today our whole supply of bread for the whole week or the whole month. - Value of never losing our awareness of our dependence on the mercy of God.

V. 4a "And forgive us our sins..." - Value of forgiving others out of one's experience of having been forgiven by God, of showing mercy to others, because God has been merciful to us. As in the previous petition, this one is to be done day after day.

V 4b "Do not subject us to the final test." - Value of avoiding what can be avoided. The world will undergo a final testing (the Eschatological Temptation). But individually, and each in his own time, Christians can avoid "the final test." As in the case of some students, the teacher can exempt them from the final test because they have already proven that they have mastered the subject matter.

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

- Have you used the "Our Father" just as a formula of prayer or as a map of your life of prayer?
- When you asked, did you ask from your heavenly Father, and did you show yourself as being a dutiful son or daughter? When you sought, did you seek for something you already had but unfortunately you lost it? When you knocked, did you knock on the door of your spiritual house or on the door of your friend?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us popularize what the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) teaches about the prayer, "Our Father."

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us take seriously our prayer for "daily bread". Another petition we must take seriously is that our country be delivered or prevented from undergoing the "final testing".

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

## **THE PETITIONS OF THE "OUR FATHER"**

In the Matthean version of the "Our Father" (Mt 6:9-13) there are three petitions for God's glory and four petitions for the four different areas of human need. In the Lucan version which is part of our reading for today (Lk 11:2-4), "your will

be done" is not added to "your kingdom come" - indicating that in reality, these two petitions are only one. Similarly, "deliver us from the Evil One" is not added to "do not put us to the test." Since it is the Evil One (Satan) who will bring about the final test (see 2 Th 2:3b-12), the two final petitions in Mt 6:13) can be integrated into one.

The first thing we must learn about Christian prayer is that we must be concerned in the first place for God's glory rather than for our needs. Satisfying our needs are indeed necessary for our life on earth, but then, what is this life for? It has to be lived for God. We must show this primary purpose of human life in the way we pray.

Luke reduces the prayers for human needs to three: the need for daily bread, the need for forgiving as we have been forgiven, and the need to escape from the final test. These fit - perhaps too smugly - into three categories: physical, psychological and spiritual needs.

St. Paul tells us that the last petition in Luke 11:4 can be stated positively by asking God to give us a love for truth and fidelity to the Good News as well as perseverance in the traditions of the Apostles, see 2 Th 2:3-15.

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

**August 1, 2004**

**<> 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Eccl 1:2. 2:21-23; Col 3:1-5. 9-11; Lk 12:13-21

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The lesson of the parable of the

Rich Fool is summarized in v. 15: "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

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

V. 15 "Take care to guard against all greed... one's life does not consist of possessions." - Non-value of material wealth.

V. 21 "Rich in what matters to God." - Value of being spiritually blessed.

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

- Have you experience how material wealth makes you spiritually poor?
- Have you experienced being blessed "in what matters to God"?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us become "the Church of the poor."

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us work for the Total Human Development of our society, not just for raising our GNP.

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

## NOT WHAT YOU OWN BUT WHAT YOU ARE

Jesus clearly teaches that the value of a human being is not in what he owns but in what he is. He is himself the best sermon on this. He was not a rich man. But he is the greatest man who ever lived.

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

**August 8, 2004**

◁> **19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Wis 18:6-9; Heb 11:1-2. 8-19; (or 11:1-2. 8-12); Lk 12:32-48  
*Thursday, August 12 is INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY*

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). "No fear" is the message of the first part of the reading (vv. 32-34). The second part (verses 35-40) is about vigilance for the coming of the Son of Man - the theme of the first Sunday of Advent. The third part (vv. 41-48) is about the need of Peter and the other apostles to be servants of the Church, and as such to be the first to be vigilant. They have to give an accounting to their Master when he comes.

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

V. 32 "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock." - Value of being in good hands. A flock needs not be afraid if it has a Good Shepherd.

V. 42 "Faithful and prudent steward." - Value of good stewardship.

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

- Have you experienced losing your fear because you realized that the Lord is with you?
- Do you have any experience to share about stewardship?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us continuously educate Church people about faithful stewardship.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us hold our politicians to their promises of serving the people.

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

## **SERVANTS OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT**

For many centuries people thought it was inappropriate to call Jesus Christ a Servant. Then came the Second Vatican Council, and one of the reforms it instituted is to give back value to the title of Servant. Jesus showed himself as the Servant of God (recall the washing of the Disciples' feet) and he wanted his Apostles to serve their brothers and sisters as servants accountable to him.

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

**August 15,2004**



**Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary**

Readings (C): Rev 11:19. 12:1-6. 10; 1 Cor 15:20-27; Lk 1:19-56

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). None of the-scripture readings say anything expressly about the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. This is a teaching that one can find only expressed in principle in the Scriptures. Since Mary is the first to cooperate with God and with Jesus Christ in the work of human redemption, she is fittingly the first also to share in the triumph of Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead and is now at the heavenly throne.

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

V. 42 "Most blessed are you among women." - Value of Mary's blessedness.

V 43 "The mother of my Lord." - Value of being Mother of God.

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

- How were you touched by the portrayal of Mary in the Mel Gibson's film, 'The Passion of the Christ'?
- Did the film show you that Mary is indeed the Co-Redemptrix?

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



a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us follow the teachings of Vatican II 1) that Marian devotion has to be Christ-centered; and 2) that Mary is not just Mother of God but also Mother of the Church and the model of the disciples of Christ.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us continue insisting that everybody should respect women's rights.

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

## **MARY IN MEL GIBSON'S THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST**

Discussion of Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, is understandably focused on the figure of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of the human race "by his blood". Some people, however, have averred that it is the first time they have seen Mary, Mother of Christ, bloodied by the blood of the Redeemer. That is a very theological point. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not exempt Mary from redemption - she, too, needed to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Her privilege was for redemption to be applied to her preventively, before any stain of sin could touch her. But the dogma emphasizes that this is in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, in other words, because of his blood.

The portrayal of Mary in the film is really outstanding. A number of people who shed no tears seeing the gory treatment of Jesus, had wet eyes in scenes where Mary is portrayed as the Mother to whom Peter runs after betraying Christ, the tender Woman who soaks up the blood of Christ from the

pavement after his flagellation, the faithful Disciple who finds a way to let Jesus know he was not alone on his way to Calvary, the Mater Dolorosa and Co-Redemptrix at the foot of the Cross, the Pieta who receives the dead King of the Jews.

If the true ending of the Passion of Christ is his Resurrection-Ascension, then the true ending of the Passion of Mary is the Feast we celebrate today, her Assumption.

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

**August 22,2004**

◇ **21<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Is 66:18-21; Heb 12:5-7. 11-13; Lk 13:22-30

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The Gospel reading has two parts. The first part (vv. 22-27) is the parable of the Narrow Door, given by Jesus as an answer to the question, "Will there be only a few saved?". The second part (vv. 28-30) is Jesus' observation that not only the Jews will be saved, and that in fact some Gentiles will precede the Jews in the kingdom of God.

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

V. 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door." - Value of making an effort.

V. 29 "People will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south." - Value of accepting that God does not discriminate among people but saves them if they respond to his mercy.

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

- Are you ready to enter a narrow door?"
- Do you trust in God's Mercy for your salvation?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us continue reminding people that the work of saving people has to take priority over everything else.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us see to it that the development of our country is good also for the eternal salvation of people.

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

## **FOR WHOM IS THE KINGDOM?**

The Kingdom is for all those who enter the narrow door. All those who follow Jesus' teaching about littleness in the eyes of God will enter it. Whether one thinks of the narrow door as the door of a house or the door of an ancient city, one cannot enter if one is bringing in a camel.

St. Paul will later explain that one must rely on faith and the Mercy of God. In our time, we maintain that Jesus is the one and only Savior. To be saved, one must avail oneself of his saving sacrifice. But this does not mean that one has to be a Catholic or even that one has to be baptized. God has ways we do not know of. He can pour the blood of Christ

on people who may not even have heard of his name. God cannot be a Merciful God if he will let the majority of mankind go to hell.

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

**August 29, 2004**

**<> 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Sir 3:17-18. 20. 28-29; Heb 12:18-19. 22-24; Lk 14:1. 7-14

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). Jesus makes two observations about the way the Pharisees had their banquets. First, going to a banquet should not be a way of asserting one's superiority over others. In fact, it should be an occasion for practicing humility. Secondly, a banquet should not be given out of self interest. Otherwise, it has no value in relation to the Kingdom. It is concern for the poor that helps us on our way to God.

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

V. 10 "Go and take the lowest place." - Value of humility.

V. 13-14 "Invite the poor... because of their inability to repay you." - Value of not being content with a fleeting, earthly reward, but doing what is needed for eternal life.

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

- Have you met people whose wealth and power have not made them less human?"
- Have you experienced the joy of helping the poor?

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

*(Bibliarasal Step Six).*

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us not allow the Church to fail in its mission because of wealth and power.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us reject the idea that Philippine society should encourage just some people to get rich and hope that their wealth will trickle down to the poor. Rather, our strategy should be to empower the poor to attain Total Human Development.

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

#### **INVITE THE POOR**

Few, if any of us have literally done what Jesus recommends in today's gospel reading: "when you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors..." (v. 12). Maybe there are more who have done the second part: "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" (v. 13).

Jesus did not mean to oblige us to take the first part literally. But taught it just the same, so that we would take to heart the second part: invite the poor, and do it without expecting a reward. In other words, let us help the poor because this is God's will. Not because we will get something in return.

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