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DO PEOPLE STILL WANT TO



BELONG TO A CHURCH?

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Alternative Churches for the Churchless?

If recent surveys are to be believed, it appears that there is a massive drift of Catholics away from the Catholic Church. The same phenomenon is observed in other Christian denominations. A Gallup Poll conducted by *USA Today* in 2002 showed that almost half of American adults appear to be alienated from their own Church. The study also predicted that if this trend continues, then by about the year 2042, non-Christians will outnumber the Christians in the U.S.

A study by the Philippine Institute on Church and Social Issues also showed an exodus of Filipinos from the Catholic Church because of many reasons. They still call themselves Catholics but they do not attend Church services or activities. They prefer to belong to a group (which they consider their "church") whose members they personally know, instead of identifying themselves with any parish Church.

While taking into account this study of the Institute on Church and Social Issues, we can also surmise that many Filipinos desert the Catholic Church simply because they have never perceived themselves as "actually" Catholic in practice. They have not been properly "churched" Perhaps they have never been to church because their parents didn't go either.

This increasingly growing number of un-churched Catholics must bother Catholic priests. Daily, more and more of their parishioners are turning to born-again evangelicals, pseudo-Catholic sects and organizations for their spiritual needs. These big army of the un-churched are often swept, like dry leaves, into the current of consumerism which presents itself as a pseudo religion, with its own place of worship (the Super Mall), its own rubric (advertising), and promises of salvation (from bad breath, body odor, and ugliness).

The studies and surveys mentioned above puts the blame partly on priests and ministers for this disturbing phenomenon of churchless Christians. Many parishioners are disenchanted by the kind of sermons they hear every Sunday, and the priest's inability to perform his pastoral duties well. Add to this the spate of scandals that hound the priesthood.

Cyber Churches

According to a study released by the *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, the number of people who access the Internet for religious information greatly exceeds the number of those who use the Internet for gambling,

banking or trading stocks! Fifty percent of those engaged in online search look for other Churches where they can affiliate. Thirty-five percent seek spiritual advice through e-mail. Seven percent make monetary contributions online.

Surfing the internet for cyber churches can be very entertaining. Have you ever heard of the *Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua*? Hundreds of internet surfers visit the website daily. The church describes itself as "the sacred place in cyberspace named after a little dog with cataracts that barked sideways at strangers because he couldn't see where they were". The Chihuahua is supposed to symbolize all of us, barking at a God we cannot see. Its main creed is: "We can't be right about everything we believe, and thanks God we don't have to be." The church strongly recommends its teachings to everyone, except the *fundamentalists* who are hopelessly sure that they are always right.

People who doubt and suspect everything will find solace in the *Church of Reality*. It calls itself an alternative church for those who want to see the world the way it really is. Its basic tenet is: "If it's real, believe in it." Members are called realists, defined as those who dedicate their life to the quest for truth, not those who necessarily know it. Members of other churches are called *sheep* because they do not know how to think for themselves.

A church that explicitly excludes lawyers, auditors and tax agents goes with the acronym COQO, which stands for the *Church of the Quivering Otter*. Its set of beliefs

is formulated somewhat like the Ten Commandments, although the church calls these their *The Nine Basic Suggestions*. Some of these are: 1) Thou shalt deal fairly. 2) Thou shalt share. 3) Thou shalt eat plenty of fiber. 4) Thou shalt get regular check-ups. 5) Thou shalt smile. Those who are interested to join COQO are promised membership in the church's 18 fastfood restaurants, 37 car washers, and 1 used Kleenex shop.

Fanatics of Tiger Woods will be happy to know that there exists the *First Church of Tiger Woods*, established to celebrate "the emergence of the New Messiah". Its founder strongly believes that Tiger Woods is God himself. Ample proofs of this can be seen in the celebrated games of Woods that many golfers themselves consider "miraculous". The church's founder said Woods revealed his divinity when, in one difficult tournament which he eventually won, Woods exclaimed: "To be under par, as bad as I am shooting today, was kind of a *miracle*." Wood's choice of a girlfriend also proves that he is God. His girlfriend's family name *Jagoda* contains the word GOD.

A man named Hacim was visited one night by a *chinchilla* and was given a message from God. He realized that his name, when read backwards, was Micah (one of the minor prophets in the Old Testament). Armed with this revelation, he promptly formed the *Church of the Gerhil*. A gerbil is a cute mouse with long hind legs and long furry tail, often kept as children's pet in many countries in Asia and Africa. The church believes that "God is a gerbil". Its code of conduct is summarized in its *Ten Condiments*, some of which are: 1) Thou shalt

listen to the Chipmunk song. 2) Thou shalt not microwave. 3) Thou shalt stand on your head and bark like a chicken.

Incidentally, you will come across this list of Cyber Churches in the Internet under the heading: HUMOR. It is amazing how people ignore that, and seriously join as members.

A Megashift?

Recently, a book authored by James Rutz created quite a stir. Entitled *Megashift*, it sees the millions of un-churched, but committed, Christians as evolving a new concept of church and religion. According to him, these hordes of un-churched Christians are forming themselves into teams, or are joining similar groups, creating a joyful megashift away from priest-centered, church-based religion toward a more individualistic, trans-parochial, and even home-based church where members encounter God without the mediation of a priest.

The book has this quite seductive promise - every unchurched Christian can be "a genuine *priest* with full authority to transform people and start his/her own network of believers: small, sermon-free, life-changing circles of power where people are allowed to speak and interact and form the deepest friendships of their lives."

Rutz sees this development as coinciding with the worldwide trend toward outsourcing: Businesses are figuring out how to parse and subdivide job functions, and to delegate work to the lowest-cost providers. This, according to Rutz, must also be the trend in the Church.

It must outsource its priestly function because, obviously, the number of priests is not adequate to meet the growing spiritual and pastoral demands of its members.

No Laughing Matter

Admittedly, many of those who go for Cyber Churches or are seduced by the idea of a *megashift* are people who need specialized attention - the shut-in Christians, the handicapped, the shift worker, the spiritually shipwrecked. Perhaps the Church must begin to learn how to use today's information technologies to serve the greatest number of unchurched people possible in non-traditional and non-threatening ways.

And perhaps, Catholics as well as other Christians must begin to realize that belonging to a Church is not limited to a Sunday sing-along. Nor is it about being entertained or "being fed". After all, Jesus said His food was in DOING the will of the Father. Although the Church was never intended to be a building or a fixed and immutable organization, belonging to a Church is mandatory for all Christians. We were not created to be alone. It is futile to develop a "lone ranger spirituality", working out our salvation according to our own terms, leaving out the communal dimension of faith.

THE EDITOR

FEATURES

The Church - Why Bother?*

TIM STAFFORD

About a third of Americans are unchurched, according to Barna Research Group's national data. Approximately 23 million of those - 35 percent of the unchurched - claim they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives today.

I can easily put a face on that number. I think of Duncan (not his real name), a guy I got to know through coaching kids' basketball. When Duncan found out I was a Christian, he quietly let me know he was one too.

"Julie and I met the Lord through a Bible study," he said. At the time, he and Julie attended a church. He stopped going when they got divorced. I was invited to the service when he got remarried, to Rene, in a lovely outdoor ceremony. I don't think the Lutherans quite connected with Rene, though. It's been years since the two of them have attended church.

*This article first appeared in the January 2005, Vol. 49, No. 1, Page 42 issue of *Christianity Today*. Used with permission from Christianity Today International, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

Is Duncan a Christian? He thinks he is. He would even say that faith is important to him. But like 23 million other Americans, faith doesn't necessarily involve church.

Duncan is not a new phenomenon. We have always had people who kept their distance from the church, even though they professed faith. We have never, however, had them in such astonishing numbers. They represent a significant trend, one that almost defines U.S. religion.

I would call it Gnostic faith. For them the spirit is completely separated from the body. They think your spirit can be with Jesus Christ while your body goes its own way.

Not Funny to Luther

A joke: A man is rescued after 20 years on a desert island. His rescuer is astonished to find that the castaway has built several imposing structures.

"Wow!" the rescuer says. "What's that beautiful stone building overlooking the bay?"

"That is my home," the castaway says.

"And what about that building over there, with the spires?"

"That," the castaway says, "is my church."

"But wait!" the rescuer says. "That building over there, with the bell tower. What is that?"

"That is the church I used to belong to."

The joke expresses a certain spirit of U.S. church life. We build 'em, and we quit 'em. Somebody will leave a church even if he is the only member.

Until Martin Luther, the church was the immovable center of gravity. The church had authority over individual Christians: to accept them as they approached the church, to baptize them, teach them, and provide them the means of grace.

Outside the Church there is No Salvation?

In the third century, Cyprian, a North African bishop, wrote about a doctrinally orthodox but schismatic bishop named Novatian. "We are not interested in what he teaches, since he teaches outside the Church. Whatever and whatsoever kind of man he is, he is not a Christian who is not in Christ's Church. ... He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother."

Cyprian's view - summed up in the slogan "No salvation outside the church" - gathered strength in subsequent centuries as the church countered heresies and divisions. It became the universal standard. You were either inside the Catholic Church, Christ's body - or outside of Christ.

Luther never intended to move that center of gravity. He wanted to purify the church, not defy its authority. Nevertheless, his protests led to schism. Lutheranism was followed by Calvinism, and Anabaptists were not far behind. Methodists and Baptists appeared. Once people started judging for themselves, it was hard to put an end to it. The next thing you know we had 20,000 denominations worldwide - and counting.

Consider three important steps in the transition.

1. In *America's God*, historian Mark Noll shows that colonial ministers by and large supported the American

Revolution, and with it the republican political creed - opposition to inherited authority and confidence in commonsense philosophy over tradition. ("We hold these truths to be self-evident.")

This political philosophy has shaped American theology, Noll says. Creeds and tradition became suspect, and commonsense reasoning - a man and his Bible without deference to experts - could settle any question.

As denominations sprouted up, they each argued that they had the best understanding of the gospel, implicitly appealing to the individual Christian to join them. Soon, the poles of power had reversed. Once the individual hoped for acceptance by the church. Now the church hoped for acceptance by the individual.

Funny thing is, many of those denominations today complain that people aren't loyal to the church. Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw mentioned a Christian Reformed Church publication criticizing "consumer religion." Yet the CRC, he pointed out, began with a group of Reformed ministers who attracted people from other parishes with their strict Calvinist orthodoxy. Mouw says, "It's pretty odd for people in the CRC to say, 'We don't want people shopping around.'"

2. The post World War II generation saw an explosion of para-church groups like InterVarsity, Youth for Christ, and Campus Crusade. Many young believers experienced their deepest fellowship, nurture, and mission in organizations that said openly that they were not churches. Tod Bolsinger, author of *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian*, recalls his days as a youth evangelist.

"I can remember saying to kids, 'There's no church to join, there's nothing to commit to, this is only about a relationship with Jesus.' Paul wouldn't preach that message. And the early church didn't."

3. Seeker-sensitive churches took up para-church methodology and applied it to church itself. A good church was judged, in part, by whether it appealed to the tastes of those who did not belong to it.

I admire the evangelistic spirit behind this. It has attracted many people into a church building who would probably not otherwise attend. But I think it has exaggerated a sense that the church must adapt to the general public, not the other way around. And thus many unchurched people feel justified in believing that they are fine, that it is the churches that have failed.

If 23 million Americans who claim Jesus as their Savior have no discernible church connection, they are joined by many more who attend church (between 40 percent and 50 percent of Americans do in a given week, according to Barna) but sit loose in their commitment. A good sermon, a moving worship experience, a helpful recovery group - these they look at to find "a good church."

When they become dissatisfied, they move on. Their salvation, they believe, is between them and God. The church is only one possible resource.

The Bono Effect

In February 2003, *Christianity Today* featured Bono, lead singer for the rock group U2, and his campaign for the church to become more involved in the fight against

AIDS. Bono emerged as a star example of the unchurched Christian.

Having once been involved in a loosely structured Irish fellowship, Bono now seldom goes to church. He does pray. He likes to say grace at meals. He has a favorite Bible translation. But he doesn't want to be pinned down.

"I just go where the life is, you know? Where I feel the Holy Spirit," Bono told *Christianity Today's* reporter, Cathleen Falsani. "If it's in the back of a Roman Catholic cathedral, in the quietness and the incense, which suggest the mystery of God, of God's presence, or in the bright lights of the revival tent, I just go where I find life. I don't see denomination. I generally think religion gets in the way of God."

In an editorial, "Bono's Thin Ecclesiology," CT appreciated Bono's thirst for social justice, yet criticized his lack of churchly commitment. Bono had voiced sharp criticisms of the church, suggesting it was in danger of irrelevance if it failed to act on AIDS. Wrote CT, "Any person can stand outside the church and critique its obedience to the gospel. Part of God's call on a Christian's life is to walk inside and die to self by relating to other human beings, both in their fallenness and in their redeemed glory."

Letters to the editor fiercely defended Bono. One pointed out that U2 travels with a chaplain - isn't that equivalent to church? Another suggested that Bono avoided church out of respect for other Christians, since his fame would disrupt worship. A reader complained that white evangelical churches were to blame for Bono's alienation,

since they have become more Republican than Christian. Another reader whose lifelong illness kept her from church wrote, "I do not believe not attending a regular church service ... takes away a person's beliefs, Christianity, or their salvation I have faith that Jesus Christ is more fair than that."

All good points, as far as they go, except that Bono is not too sick to attend church, could find an unpoliticized church if he tried, and doesn't mention respect for worshipers as a reason for staying away.

Clearly, Bono has chosen to keep his distance from the church, or at least to stay in the shallow margins of the pond, where he can dash for the shore at need. He has plenty of company.

Wounded by the Church

I don't want to be hard on Bono and other unchurched Christians. Churches are not always nice places. Some of the church fathers used "No salvation outside the church" to stifle dissent and maintain a monopoly on power. Even today a demand for church commitment can be the basis for abusing people, using fear and conformity to rule.

A significant minority of Christians feel wounded by the church, perhaps by abuse that anyone would recognize, perhaps by abuse so subtle others can't see it [see *"The Church's Walking Wounded,"* March 2003]. Some find any institution difficult - they're habitual loners. My friend Duncan is like that - an engineer who relates better to machines than to people. His divorce left him groping for handholds in church.

Philip Yancey's *Soul Survivor: How My Faith Survived the Church* credits a diverse list of figures - from G.K. Chesterton to Martin Luther King Jr. - with keeping his faith alive. Since all but one, Mahatma Gandhi, are Christians, and the vast majority are loyal church members, one might ask, "So the church enabled your faith to survive the church?"

But Yancey's problem was not with the church defined as the sum total of Christians. He struggled with what he experienced in actual congregations. He needed another set of Christians to help him redefine his faith, enabling it to survive the church so that he could re-engage the church.

We do not need to condemn those alienated from the institutional church, but to help them reconsider. By keeping away from church commitments, they miss out on life essential.

What's Missing

The hard questions come next: Just what do they miss?

They need not lack the Word of God. The Bible is available through Barnes & Noble, and will undoubtedly continue to be published at a profit even if all the Christians get raptured away. Radio and TV offer excellent Bible teaching. So do books and magazines.

Fellowship? The internet offers chat rooms and Bible study groups. Friends have told me their internet prayer support group reaches more depth and is more dependable than anything they encounter in the flesh.

Worship? Some people find that music CDs provide what they need. Others find great inspiration watching

Robert Schuller's *Hour of Power*. Anyway, if you need a worship fix you can slip into any big church and leave without bothering a soul.

Granted, you need a church to get baptized and to receive Communion. Let's admit, though, that in many churches the sacraments are a devalued commodity. The same for church discipline, only more so. If you expect church to provide the bracing rule that purifies souls, forget it in most places.

All that admitted, there still remain overwhelmingly strong reasons for believing that committed participation in a local congregation is essential to becoming what God wants us to be.

The sacraments or ordinances are not optional. They may not make sense to 21st-century sensibilities - but so much the more reason to pay attention to them. The sacraments are not a human tradition. They began with Jesus himself. He himself was baptized, saying it was proper "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

Offering bread and wine, he told his disciples, "Take and eat; this is my body" (26:26). Churches may have devalued the sacraments, but they still offer them. Nobody else does. How can you follow Jesus and then ... not follow him?

We need the regular rhythm of public worship, which began with the disciples' gathering on the first day of the week. D.G. Hart, referring to the Reformed liturgical tradition, says, "Being reassured weekly that your sins are forgiven is a great comfort." He suggests that anything less is too trivial to sustain us through the great crises of life.

Business has found that the teleconference is no substitute for the face-to-face meeting. Neither does singing along to a CD replace singing in a choir of fellow worshipers. Whether we listen or pray or sing, nothing substitutes for human presence in the public performance of worship. The lively, physical reality of others touches our nature as body-persons.

The author of Hebrews had something like this in mind when he wrote, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Heb. 10:24-25). Encouragement needs a face; it needs a body.

The church is the body of Christ, the tangible representation of Jesus' life on earth. As the apostle Paul wrote to the quarreling Corinthians (1 Cor. 12:21), "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" You could sum up his message this way: "If you miss connecting to the body of Christ, you miss Christ."

Paul allows no vague representation of the church as the sum of all Christians. The body analogy expresses Paul's belief that Christ is available on earth in tangible form. These various gifts come in human packages. To be "in Christ" we cannot stand off distant from this body. We absolutely must serve other Christians - parts of his body - in a continuous relationship. A body part detached from other parts is clearly useless, and soon dead. It cannot experience Christ, the head of the body.

We offer perilous advice when we urge people to "find Christ" anywhere but in a local congregation. Can you imagine Paul arriving in a city, finding the local congregation not to his taste and simply staying away?

For Paul, a Christian without his church is as unthinkable as a human being with no relatives. A person may quarrel with his kin, but he cannot leave them-they are his own flesh and blood. So it is with the church. And furthermore, they are Jesus' flesh and blood.

People need people. God's people need God's people in order to know God. Life in Christ is a corporate affair. All God's promises were made to God's people - plural. All the New Testament epistles address Christians in churches. The Bible simply does not know of the existence of an individual, isolated Christian.

Disappointment with Church

Yet it often happens that people go to church and get disappointed. Sometimes the crisis seems petty - "The people weren't friendly" - and sometimes horrific - "The pastor was sleeping with the organist." Failing to find happiness, they move on, sometimes to another church and sometimes to no church. Looking to find Christ, they meet disappointment. The effort looks like a complete failure.

But this is a perspective Paul strongly contradicts in 2 Corinthians. He had been through a horrific, unnamed experience in Asia - one bad enough to take him to the edge of death. Meanwhile he is almost equally distressed by turmoil in the Corinth church. Everything seems to go wrong. Yet Paul urgently explains that the resurrection power of Jesus is experienced only in "death" - little deaths and big deaths.

In our troubles, we experience God actually comforting us (1:4). When we are weak and broken, the treasure

we carry grows more apparent (4:7). "For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body" (4:11).

Furthermore, sorrow brings repentance. The Corinthians felt sorrow because of friction with Paul. Yet Paul sees it producing much good in their lives. "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done" (7:11).

2 Corinthians completely repudiates the American doctrine of the pursuit of happiness. Instead Paul teaches as Jesus did: The way to find your life is to lose it. The way to experience the life of Jesus is to experience human weakness. You can, of course, experience human weakness anywhere. When you experience it in church, however, you are close to Christ himself - his resurrection power showing in his own body.

A Mundane Story

A friend of mine (I'll call her Lillian) joined an ordinary church. She felt comfortable there because the people were friendly. It was a good fit for her and her family. Except for the pastor.

The pastor was not a bad man - in fact, he was a good man - but Lillian realized that he held back the church. Early in his ministry he had experienced an ugly split in a church he led. The incident had marked him. At bottom he was afraid. He had to keep control, he thought - and so he stifled any initiative. He feared putting himself on the point, so he operated by manipulation.

A consistent pattern showed itself: a new lay leader would appear, would optimistically rally the church toward new ministry, and then eventually - worn out by the pastor's style of indirection and manipulation - would quit the church and go elsewhere.

Whenever Lillian's out-of-town friends came to visit, they were struck by the church's attractiveness. "We learned to hate what we called the p word," Lillian says. "People were always telling us how much potential the church showed."

Lillian sometimes thought that if the pastor had been a bad man, had acted in an obviously sinful way, they might have gotten rid of him. As it was, she realized he would never leave. He had at least a decade before retirement. That began to seem like a life sentence.

She realized how bad her attitude had become when one Sunday the pastor said he had an important personal announcement to make. She sat up straight. Her heart began to beat hard, and her face flushed. Was he going to announce that he was leaving for another church? She could hardly breathe.

"The wonderful news I have to share with you," the pastor said with unfeigned excitement, "is that thanks to the generosity of this congregation I have a new carpet in my office."

Lillian wanted to cry.

But Lillian does not leave churches, unless it is for a much better reason than frustration with a pastor's leadership style. She stayed. She worked. She found places where she could make a difference. And she suffered. She felt deeply the gap between what her church should

be and what it actually was. It took, indeed, almost 20 long years before the pastor finally sank into retirement.

Looking back now, many years later still, Lillian finds that she cannot think a negative thought about those years and her choice to stay. It was like having a baby, she thinks. However difficult, she would not trade the experience or the result. Something died in her, but something also came to life. That something was Christ.

Somehow long-suffering is appropriate to a place and a people who worship Jesus. "How could we experience him in his death," Lillian wants to know, "if we could not tolerate some little deaths ourselves?"

What We Must Preach

The church is the body of Christ, and it carries his wounds. To know Christ is to share in the fellowship of his sufferings - even if the suffering comes at the hands of the sinners who sit in the pews or preach from the pulpit.

How can we communicate this to unchurched Christians? The only way I know is to preach it. We need to tell them, even if it goes against the grain of our culture. We need to tell them, even if talking so frankly goes against our philosophy of outreach.

If people commit themselves to the church, they will undoubtedly suffer. The church will fail them and frustrate them, because it is a human institution. Yet it will also bless them, even as it fails. A living, breathing congregation is the only place to live in a healthy relationship to God. That is because it is the only place on earth where Jesus has chosen to dwell. How can you enjoy the benefits of Christ if you detach yourself from the living Christ.

Shopping for a New Religion

ALICE ROSS T. MORTA

Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI)

Faces of Modern Day Filipino Catholics

Louie is a Catholic teenager who has stopped going to Church. He is turned off by the lack of solemnity during the Mass and is displeased with how Catholics tend to be cold to each other in church. Furthermore, he is hypercritical of Catholic leaders whose names have become synonymous to controversies. Now, Louie is "informally" taking part in Evangelical services but is contemplating on leaving his religion of birth for good.

Aling Myrna, on the other hand, lives in a middle-class village and considers herself a Catholic and a Born Again Christian at the same time. She enjoys the lively worship meetings of the Born Again and admires the group for its deep understanding of the Word of God. Despite her contentment with the Born Again, Aling Myrna has not abandoned her Catholic practices altogether such as praying to saints and going to Sunday Mass.

Louie and Aling Myrna are just two of the faces that represented the Catholics in five focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted for the Diocese of Parafique by the Institute on Church and Social Issues last June 2005. The series of FGDs were run to identify the religious attitudes and beliefs of the residents in the diocese and were participated in by fifty-nine people from the lower, middle and upper class, the urban youth, and by former Catholics who have been converted to another faith. They were asked to talk about their participation in El Shaddai gatherings, their experience of spirit possession and speaking in tongues, their concept of spiritual needs and so on. But what struck me the most in all of the discussions were the participants' views on what prompts some Catholics to leave the Church for another religion or sect.

Leaving the Faith

Departure from Catholicism, as I soon found out from the attendees, is an isolated and extreme case. It is more common, in fact, to see some Catholics conveniently "shopping around" for a religion, a trend most prevalent in the urban poor. One day they are part of Religion X; the next day, they are attending the services of Religion Y and before you know it, they are back to the Catholic Church. But more fascinating is the case of people like Aling Myrna who have overtly espoused another religion alongside Catholicism. Some consider themselves as Catholics while others casually mention that they are "religion-less." Such is the state of Aling Miling, an urban poor housewife who says that she is both Catholic and

Adventist. Choosing between the two is difficult for her so, in the end, she decided not to be part of either church.

What appears to be common among "religion shoppers," however, is that no one forced them to change religion. They exercised free will in making their choices and in forming them - either consciously or not - around what seems to be their most basic need.

Abraham Maslow (1974) best explains human motivation in what he calls the hierarchy of basic needs. In this phenomenal theory, Maslow classified human needs in five levels: physiological (the lowest level); safety; needs of love, affection and belongingness; needs for self-esteem; and the needs for self-actualization (the highest level). The ultimate need includes spiritual ones. Maslow assumes that only by meeting a lower need can a person move to a higher level. Therefore, an individual can only feel his or her spiritual needs after the physical, emotional, psychological and social demands have been met.

I looked at some of the responses made in the FGDs, specifically those given by the poor, rich and the youth, and saw that, indeed, it is not unusual for people to look at the role of religion in their lives vis-a-vis their level of needs. The poor who live on meager resources seek physical aid from the Church; the youth who puts value on groups and peers feels the need to belong; and the upper class participants are gradually reaching a stage where they want to be inspired spiritually. When the Catholic Church is unsuccessful in meeting these particular needs, that's the time that people start to look for other religious groups - whether permanently or as back-up - that can satisfy them.

Unfulfilled Material Needs

While there is no vocal desire for the Church to take more pro-active steps to alleviate poverty, the urban poor admit that some Catholics leave the Church because it fails to meet its members' material needs, which again, according to Maslow is the most basic of all needs. It is not that the Church is unable to provide the spiritual needs of the people; rather there are material functions that are ignored by the institution. One participant says that if the need is purely spiritual, then there is no need for the individual to change allegiance. Another adds that it is not enough that the Church focuses on the spiritual life of the poor; what is more pressing is to help them in their socio-economic problems.

It is said that other sects even use this "weakness" of the Catholic Church to attract people to their group. They entice membership, especially from the poor, by giving them what they cannot afford to have. Followers of the Iglesia ni Cristo, for example, interpret the verse "Go forth and multiply" not in the context of procreation but of building its group - through employment. The INC offers work at Landmark Department Store, a predominantly INC-run enterprise. Then there are the Mormons who give assistance in renovating the dwellings of the poor and the Born Again who distribute rations of rice to people who participate in their worship services. The Catholic participants themselves assert that their own acquaintances attend the services of other religious groups only for material relief. This explains why their attendance in the new group barely lasts as they are constantly in search of other benefactors.

The poor are also observed to feel the need at the second level - safety. Those who have left the Church are seeking a religion that will not give them a negative reputation, unlike the Catholic Church whose leaders are tainted by allegations of corruption and all sorts of scandals. According to a participant, and a devout Catholic at that, Church leaders who are immoral are a disgrace to the whole institution and automatically upset the image of the group. The people's trust in the Church is undermined when Church leaders do not set a good example.

Similarly, we can see a general longing of the poor for temporary respite from their problems, in a place where they do not have to worry, perhaps, about threats of demolition or illnesses that cannot be cured because of financial constraints. Thus, they are easily attracted by the lively worship of non-Catholic groups, with all the singing and dancing.

Unfulfilled Affective Needs

The youth's immediate need, as far as religion is concerned, is affection and belongingness, which according to some participants cannot be found in the Catholic Church. Louie, the boy I mentioned at the beginning of the article, attends Evangelical services where people are warm and accommodating to him. Like Louie, two other Catholic participants regularly join non-sectarian Christian services because they feel welcome in these groups. They like the feeling that they know the person next to them during worship.

Furthermore, the youth do not feel that Catholic priests adjust to all ages present during the Mass. The result: serious and boring homilies that, some young participants claim, put them to sleep. The Catholic Church pales in comparison to other religions whose services are fun and which offer activities that target the youth. This gives young Catholics another reason for leaving the Church.

The rich share the sentiments of the youth. They say that the problem with the Catholic Church is that our sense of community is weak. We got used to perceiving fellow Catholics in Mass as "others." We do not bother to build a meaningful association with them. Not only are we disconnected from God during Mass, we are also disconnected from others. Because our sense of community is weak, our concern for others is merely provisional. And this is also the opinion of Catholic participants who became non-Catholic Christians. For them, the relationship between mass-goers is trivial. There is no bonding or brotherhood, unlike in the Christian Church, which builds sincere concern for your fellows.

The wealthy agree that the most urgent work to be done by the Catholic Church is to enable its members to experience the personal worth of religion in their lives. So important is this that its absence has caused some Catholics to leave the Church. Joined to the experience of a participant's friends and acquaintances, this lack of personal touch in our religion has made other religions such as the Methodist Church and Dating Daan attractive. Some homilies are not evocative and do not make an impact on listeners. Priests seem to take for

granted their potential to direct people closer to God through the Mass. One admits that regular attendance in Mass is of minor concern to her because "there is no connection." It is just not inspiring. As a matter of fact, it is not strange to hear about Catholics being converted to Christian groups just because they watched the groups evangelize on TV. People no longer question the qualifications of the preacher. The more important thing is that religion suddenly became more relevant.

Meeting the Needs through Inspiration and Faith

An important lesson that we can get from the FGDs, I suppose, is to understand that no single strategy works for everyone. If the findings are any indication of how Catholics view the role of the Church, then it looks as though the Church will have to adopt group-specific programs to satisfy its members' needs and to protect its fort against other sects. If the Church ought to be more involved in helping the poor live a decent life, in making the youth enjoy Church services and in giving the rich new reasons to feel connected to God, then so be it. It does not hurt to be a Church *of* the people - regardless of class, age or gender. However, the Church can do more by inspiring people to actually help themselves move one level at a time.

Maslow's hierarchy is true to some extent but only as far as religion - and not faith - is concerned. The poor, for example, are so caught up in the lower levels that it is virtually impossible for them to see the spiritual dimension of religion. However, it appears that some Catholics view faith independently of religion. There is

little sense, at any social level, that the Catholic Church is the only true Church founded by Christ and a great awareness that the Bible as the Word of God. The Church is still perceived as an institution, much like the government, which has concrete obligations to them. And because it does, some people allow their loyalty to the Church to be shaped and affected by how the Church has performed. If it fails, they think that they can just change affiliation anyway. But this does not necessarily mean that they have given up faith in God. For some Catholics, religion is not even important. At the end of the day, it is the personal connection with God that matters, sustaining it in a way that works for the individual.

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A Looming Crisis of Faith

FRANCIS A. QUINN*

An overarching crisis in today's church is a crisis of faith; not faith in God, not faith in Jesus Christ, **but a crisis of faith in the institutional church.** Members of an older generation have felt a certain testing of faith since the mid-1960's. They remember their childhood: novenas, Forty Hours devotion, the Latin Mass, the priest with his back turned toward the people. Youngsters making the Sign of the Cross passing the parish church, but not allowed even to look into a Protestant church. Bishop Fulton Sheen on evening television, Fridays with macaroni and cheese or creamed tuna on toast, abstaining from food and drink from midnight on days when you received Communion, the nine First Fridays, collections in school for "pagan babies" and "JMJ" spontaneously scrawled at the top of homework papers.

Patrick Buchanan, sometime presidential candidate, recalls the day he selected the name Francis Xavier for

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his confirmation name - not just "Francis," he says, because the name Francis alone could be misunderstood to mean that other Francis, the pacifist with the pigeons.

Garry Wills, speaking about his boyhood, recalls seeing firemen carrying poles and axes at a church fire and genuflecting every time they passed back and forth before the tabernacle. Girls without hats attached Kleenex to their heads with hairpins; it fluttered like a raffish dove as they strode to the Communion rail. At the moment of the consecration of the bread and wine at Mass, there was always a hush... then the scuffling resumed; all the coughs and sniffs inhibited during the consecration formed a firecracker series of soft percussions. The bus driver put his hand over the fare box when a Sister entered the bus. In the public swimming pool one saw brown scapulars like big postage stamps glued here and there on boys' chests and backs. At the altar rail, as one knelt on a hard marble step, the altar boy nicked each Adam's apple with the paten, the cold Communion plate he carried.

Catholicism then was a vast set of intermeshed childhood habits: prayers offered, heads ducked in unison, nuns in the classroom - alternately sweet and severe. In our younger days, the church was enclosed, perfect in its circular inner logic, turned in on itself, but so vulnerable, so fragile, if one looked outward away from it... one touch of change could shatter it. No wonder we protected it as long as we could with a sense of its brittleness and that some left it when it broke. It was a ghetto, Wills says, but not a bad ghetto in which to grow up.

Then came the 1960's and the Second Vatican Council. Now we had the Mass in English, with the priest facing the people. Now we had the sign of peace and the holding

of hands at the Our Father. A gradual change from a law and order church to a flexible church - the blurring of lines of authority. Things we had thought to be static, eternal and unchanging were changing. But these were mainly peripheral things.

The past 35 years have been a time of growth, a time of adolescence in the church, and adolescence is never easy. Like adolescents, we are stumbling over our disproportionately large feet; we are breaking out in ecclesiastical acne. We need liberal and progressive Catholics who truly love the church to push us forward to new insights. And we need conservative, traditional Catholics to provide a challenge to new ideas, to insure that the essential teachings of the church are not diluted. We will remind ourselves that the church is basically Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

What we have thus far described are aftershock tremors in the institutional church. Other events, more foundational, have accumulated throughout the years to shake our trust in organized religion altogether. The endless embarrassing "religious" wars among the faiths (not usually theological wars at all, but armed conflicts for secular gains). This very day, Muslims are fighting Jews in the Middle East. Hindus are fighting Sikhs and Muslims in India. Catholics and Protestants are opposed in Northern Ireland. What is the value of organized religion anyway?

Unsettling to the faith of Catholics in our time and place is the current crisis created by sexual scandals involving the clergy. Is the Catholic Church unable to comprehend and communicate lucidly the baffling mystery of human sexuality? So many of the people around us, particularly among the young, dismiss

as irrelevant the church's teachings on abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sex and birth control. This incessant countercultural force of the modern world that rejects the church's positions can tempt Catholics to doubt. Still, the church cannot change its teachings simply because it has difficulty persuading.

Since the days of Jesus of Nazareth, what has the church become?

After Christianity's embrace by the Emperors Constantine and Theodosius in the fourth century and the reinforcement of its power by one of history's brightest intellects, St. Augustine, in *The City of God*, one strain in the church gradually developed through the centuries into a spirit of dominance, duress and triumphalism - politically, socially and theologically.

Some Christian leadership, in part knowingly but mostly unknowingly, separated diametrically from the spirit of Jesus Christ. Christ had taught non-violence, the dignity of the individual, the priority of conscience and identification with the poor and the oppressed - not the conquest that the world conceives of as success. The acquisition of political power and the subjugation of "enemies," un-Christlike pursuits, led a considerable part of the world to forsake religion in favor of secularism.

When the 18th-century Age of Enlightenment promoted reliance on reason, educated people began to recognize the contradiction implied by the notion of Christianity as power. Today the Western secularist world trusts mainly in science. It is a world that has turned away from institutional churches in the wake of Copernicus, Kepler, Bacon, Voltaire, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Einstein and Hawking.

All society, however, would do well to study the authentic, original charism of Jesus Christ and his teachings, if it hopes to find an ethical compass for the new millennium. The scientifically enlightened 20th century was in fact the most brutal of centuries. The religious wars of the past killed thousands, but the totalitarianisms of the Soviet, Nazi and Pol Pot Cambodian governments killed millions.

Some secularists think that the loss of the papal states in the 19th century and the ideal of the servant-church emphasized by the Second Vatican Council are signs that the church today is in decline. Actually it is a church closer to the vulnerable Christ, and it more nearly resembles the defenseless first Christian communities. It is moving away from structures of prestige and esteem. Hopefully it will now use the power of powerlessness.

There is accumulating evidence that changes are needed in the operation of the church and in its exercise of authority. There is need for continued serious study of human sexuality, for a renewed emphasis on personal holiness, for greater participation of women and the laity generally in the life of the church and for an unconstrained acceptance of the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

We are weakened today, but one of the most liberating things we have discovered is that it is in our weakest moments that Christ is strongest in us. As a lyric in Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" puts it: "Have you ever noticed that glass shines brightest when it's broken?"

The church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners.

Michael Buckley, S.J., recalls that Raissa Maritain in her *Journals* writes that she was enormously struck by the comment made by the Catholic thinker Charles du Bos on his deathbed. He said, "The mark of every great life is failure." Perhaps Du Bos was remembering Nietzsche dying in madness, or Mozart dying in poverty with his music trivialized, or Aquinas and Chaucer, dying with the *Summa* and *The Canterbury Tales* forever unfinished.

There is also a tradition of weakness and failure in the church. Think of Peter and his mistakes. Think of Mary Magdalen, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, son of a family that could be termed dysfunctional. Think of St. Therese of Lisieux, rather neurotic in her childhood, and St. Bernadette Soubirous, who flunked out of religion class in the second grade. Jesus himself failed in his prophetic mission to convert the people of Israel. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said the failed Jesus is his most distressing disguise.

Socrates went to his death with calmness and poise. He accepted the judgment of the court; spoke of the two alternatives suggested by death, found no cause for fear, drank the poison hemlock and died. How different the example of Jesus. He was profoundly upset in Gethsemane. He felt terror and fear; he looked for comfort from friends and for an escape from death and found neither. Then he mastered his anguish and accepted his death in silence and lonely isolation. Socrates never wept over Athens. Socrates never expressed sorrow at the betrayal of friends. Socrates, one of the most gifted persons who has ever lived, was a philosopher. But Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah: ambiguous, vulnerable, mysterious, salvific - and eternal.

Father Buckley asks seminarians, "Are you weak enough to be a priest?"

How often in the Bible, God shocks us with the words: "I do not want your religious rituals, your holocausts and sacrifices. What I want from you is mercy for the poor, for the weak." "You may multiply your prayers. I shall not listen," says Yahweh.

If when they look at the institutional church, people see Jesus Christ, they are more likely to believe - the Jesus whose priorities are persons who are weak and hurting.

Some years ago, Franco Zefferelli's mini-series "Jesus of Nazareth" was televised during Holy Week. I remember picking up The Bee, Sacramento's major daily, on Holy Saturday morning. A front page photo pictured a group of people, young, middle-aged and older, being herded into a police van. They had been demonstrating for the homeless outside the main entrance of the Federal Building on Capitol Mall. The police handled the protestors gently, but they did arrest them because they were blocking the entrance.

It crossed my mind that this scene of arrest resembled the episode of Christ's arrest in the Zefferelli movie. In that same morning paper, another photo showed the Good Friday liturgy at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Sacramento. In that picture I saw myself in the sanctuary with the other celebrants and deacons. The sight of the elaborate vestments on all of us clergy shook me for a moment, because it reminded me of another scene in the Zefferelli film: the scene of the High Priests Annas and Caiaphas and their attendants in their robes condemning Jesus. I began to wonder which of the two scenes was closer to Christ - the protestors or we, the Christian ministers.

Because this nagging thought persisted, I finally brought the question to a spiritual director. He reminded me that Mother Teresa of Calcutta was once asked why it was that she had her sisters in the chapel praying for over two hours a day instead of spending some of that time taking care of more of the dying in the streets of Calcutta. Her answer was that if the sisters were not praying two hours a day, they probably would not go out to the streets of Calcutta at all.

Our liturgies, our prayers are absolutely essential. Actually, they have generated the church's social accomplishments through the centuries. Anxieties about the relevance of our faith and rituals can be misleading and tempting. The world needs both service and sanctuary.

This is how the Italian writer, Carlo Carretto, put it:

How much I must criticize you, my Church, and yet how much I love you! You have made me suffer more than anyone, and yet I owe more to you than to anyone. I should like to see you destroyed, and yet I need your presence. You have given me much scandal, and yet you alone have made me understand holiness.

Never in this world have I seen anything more compromised, more false, yet never have I touched anything more pure, more generous, or more beautiful. Countless times I have felt like leaving you, my Church; and yet every night I have prayed that I might die in your warm, loving arms.

The people of the church will have intermittent crises of faith. But in the new millennium we still hear Jesus saying: "Why are you fearful, you of little faith? Fear not. Be not afraid. I am with you all days, even to the end of the world."

Priests for the Third Millennium

JOHN MCCLOSKEY

Today, the most effective and perhaps only way to encourage priestly vocations (apart from familial encouragement, and intense and persevering prayer, of course) will be the example and "personal influence," in the words of Cardinal Newman, of dedicated, zealous, pious, intelligent, well-formed priests: priests for the third millennium. These priests have to be the ones who will through their preaching, direction, and pastoral focus put into effect the magisterial teachings of Pope John Paul II in the decades ahead. Finally, it is in hands of the Lord of History and His Holy Spirit. However, respecting the freedom that he has granted us, He does count on our collaboration.

As we draw ever nearer to Jubilee year 2000 and to the "springtime of the Church," as John Paul II so prophetically and optimistically calls this era to come, we ask ourselves how this transformation will come about? How

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will we change from the "culture of death" (*Gospel of Life*) or "sick society" (*Letter to Families*) to which the Holy Father refers in several of his documents, to the "civilization of love truth" (*Splendor of the Truth*) that he foresees? There are many answers, but obviously it is effectively the work of the Holy Spirit joining together with the free collaboration of men to produce this radical change over decades or centuries. The laity, forming the overwhelming majority of the Church, undoubtedly will play an important role in this re-evangelization. They share in Christ's priesthood by their initiation into the Church through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. They will be stimulated (or perhaps jump started) by the various lay movements and new institutions born in this century. These organizations with their specific charisms place a strong emphasis on personal holiness and evangelization in the midst of the world. The principal agent, however, in that bright future that the Pope foresees for the next millennium will be holy apostolic priests, participants in Christ's priesthood through the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Pope St. Pius X said: "In order for Jesus Christ to reign in the world, nothing is so necessary as the holiness of the clergy, so that with their example, word, and knowledge they might be a guide for the faithful" (*Haerent Animo*, 1908). Priests participating in the ministerial priesthood of Christ, providing Christ's sacraments, preaching the word of God and communicating the authentic teaching of the Church to God's children provide the spiritual nutrition which enables the Church to build the kingdom of Christ in the society and culture. Without the ministerial priesthood in God's providential plan,

there is no Church; there are only groups of well meaning followers of Christ more or less equipped but ineffective without the sacraments groping to understand and live the Scriptures. Quite simply the formation, happiness, and effectiveness of diocesan priests in their mission is a key indicator of the health of the Church and of society. As the French early nineteenth-century philosopher and writer Joseph De Maistre once said, "The priesthood must be the chief concern of any society that wishes to renew its vitality." The transformation that the Pope envisions requires a new springtime in the flowering of priestly identity with the Person of Jesus Christ, who, after all, is not only at the heart of the Church as Lord and Savior, but also is at the center of our millennial celebration.

I believe it safe to say that the state of the priesthood in what we loosely define as the West (Western Europe, the United States and Canada) is not healthy. How often does one hear as one travels from diocese to diocese that "priestly morale is low?" Priestly defections, notable scandals, and a constant decades-long decrease in priestly vocations point to an understandable loss of priestly confidence, optimism, and happiness. In the U.S. the decrease in vocations still continues, although there are some slight signs of stabilization still way below the minimum number needed simply to replace the present population of priests; whereas there has been a general ten percent increase throughout the world during John Paul II's pontificate. There are diminishing numbers of priests due to defection, retirement and death, and this causes an ever increasing average age in those who remain.

Given that ten percent of the parishes in the U.S. are currently priestless, with more to come, demographic facts show that energetic action will be needed over the next decades simply to maintain much less increase the number of priests. This, of course, unless we simply have recourse to luring imported "missionary" priests from Africa and Asia, often attracted by money which is largely then recycled to take care of their families in their country of origin, where, I would say, they are still much more needed, given the youth of their local churches. The reality is that even though we are beginning to experience the pinch of a priest shortage, there are two additional factors to consider which perhaps show the situation in the U.S. not to be as critical as it might seem and that may provide us some breathing space to upright our ship. One, there has also been, lamentably, a vertiginous drop off over the last 30 years in the percentage of Sunday church-goers and, as one would imagine, in the practice of frequent confession. This rate continues to drop, roughly matching the drop in the number of priests. Two, the Church in United States still enjoys one of the highest priest per faithful ratio in the world. However, we cannot use the vertiginous drop in Catholic practice by the laity as an excuse for being satisfied with fewer priests. There will never be enough priests or saints in our world.

In the U.S., there are many reasons for the low morale of the priesthood that makes it difficult for young men to find the person of Christ in their priestly role models. The culture certainly is hostile to the idea of dogmatic religion and especially the very concept of apostolic

celibacy. What appeared to be at the time the rock-solid ecclesiastical superstructure of parochial grammar and diocesan high schools and the one-time excellent Catholic university system barely exist any more. There are no longer a myriad of well identified priests and religious, or the large families and stable marriages that were the seedbeds of priestly vocations up to the Sixties.

Clearly there is a radical difference from traditional Church teaching concerning priestly identity in some areas of the Church; this approach affects both priestly spiritual health and the number of new priestly vocations. In some sectors priestly and religious vocations appear to be actively discouraged as the role of "lay ministry" is presented the answer to the dearth of priests. This expedient amounts to a "clericalization of the laity," truly an insult to the goodness of the created and redeemed world, and to the radical nature of the sacrament of Baptism. The layperson's participation in the priesthood of Christ leads him normally not to liturgical participation at the altar, but rather to his preeminent task of sanctifying the temporal order in the world. One can search high and low in the documents of the Second Vatican Council to find the word "ministry" applied to laypeople. It is not there. The Council Fathers instead speak of the "apostolate" (the close following of Christ and the desire to draw others to him) that flows from the layperson's baptismal incorporation into the body of Christ. Aging women religious or lay administrators are considered by some as adequate replacements for priests who are called in (grudgingly) for the bare sacramental necessities. Even this may change with time, according to this mistaken

mindset, when doctrine and discipline are changed or "developed" in order to allow married or women priests, though all responses of the Magisterium are to the contrary.

In other sectors of the "American church," various "models of the priesthood" are presented: the priest as social worker, political agitator, psychological facilitator, mechanical sacrament distributor, diocesan bureaucrat or simply feckless hail-fellow-well-met who approaches his vocation as a "job" with plenty of time off on account of the "stress" he suffers (read laicization of the clergy), and the list goes on. None of these models can be identified with the dignity of Christ the High Priest and Redeemer. It is a wonderful tribute to the supernatural nature of the Church that the laity put up in so many cases with this type of priestly behavior. In our "modern" society priests are often portrayed from these unattractive models (or worse) in television, and cinema, and literature. I do want to make it quite clear that certainly the vast majority of the priests in the U.S. do not follow these archetypes. However defections and aberrant forms of behavior continue at an alarming rate, which would lead an impartial observer to conclude that many priests are not being given the help and support necessary to live their calling fully identified with Christ the High Priest.

Some of the reasons for this are certainly cultural. The human element in the Church is by no means immune to the killer viruses that abound in the decadent West, most notably its inability to handle affluence, thus producing the bourgeois Catholic (lay or cleric), an inevitable product of the "Americanism" so clearly condemned presciently by Pope Leo XIII in the nineteenth

century, and exacerbated by doctrinal and moral confusion following the close of the Second Vatican Council. This confusion was not caused by the Council but rather by a twisted and unfortunate interpretation of its directives by some with mistaken agendas, ideas which only now are being overcome. The confusion, although it still persists, has lessened dramatically thanks to the clear, consistent, and coherent teaching over close to two decades of John Paul II. This is not the place to speak of the various secular philosophies and ideologies from Kant to Marx down to our own time that have so noxiously affected various currents of Catholic theological thought. However, their influence has been devastating on many Catholic university and seminary theology departments, which formed, at least theologically, the priests of our generation.

This post-Conciliar crisis is nothing new in Church history; look at the advances of Arianism for many decades after the Council of Nicea, or the growth in the Protestant Revolution that continued even after the Council of Trent before receding somewhat as the Catholic Reformation took hold. This Reformation is normally largely attributed (and understandably so) to the great work of catechesis and recovery done by the new missionary congregations, most notably by the Jesuits, Theatines, and the Capuchins and by the strong spiritual influence of St. Philip Neri and his Oratory, of St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and the Discalced Carmelites. After all, the saints and often their institutional offspring are the instruments of the Holy Spirit to effect renewal in any historical epoch. Over time, however, the real, although

somewhat hidden story of renewal, was the implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent regarding priestly formation and life, which was best exemplified in the wonderful example and action of St. Charles Borromeo of Milan, the first to courageously attempt to implement these decrees, in spite of substantial opposition. The renewal of the priesthood in the twenty-first century will happen, I believe, in the same way; that is, through the commitment to holiness and the interior life of the diocesan priest and its inevitable and welcome influence on the laity - though not without a little resistance from the bourgeois.

My vision is not a chimera. These priests who are committed to holiness and faithfulness to the Church and evangelization exist; in fact their numbers are growing. There are even now some few seminaries (with others in process of reform) which are consistently producing exemplary young priests, well "armed" for the new evangelization of the U.S. There are also several dioceses which are producing disproportionately large numbers of young priests given the small size of their diocesan population. A sizable portion of these vocations are products of the new vibrant Catholic colleges or families that have been influenced by the new movements and institutions that place such an emphasis on the dynamic faithfulness of the lay vocation. If some of the very largest archdioceses in the U.S. were to "produce" vocations on a per capita basis at the rate of these small but vocation-filled dioceses, they would have almost 3000 seminarians each in their local seminaries! I see no reason why this flowering cannot happen in every diocese in

our country. Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesians once said that he believed that one out of every ten Catholic young men had a vocation to the priesthood. I agree with him.

The writings of Pope John Paul II form a "seamless garment" reflecting the Pope's attempt to implement the vision of the Second Vatican Council through the prism of his "personalistic" philosophy based solidly on the perennial philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas on two thousand years of prior magisterial teaching of the Church. We have guidance from him in the two most important areas in need of reform and renewal in today's society, the priesthood and the family. The two documents to consult, both easily readable and accessible to their designated readers, are the *Letter to Families*, written by the Holy Father for the International Year of the Family in 1994, and the *Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests* issued in 1994 by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy. The latter document is not signed by John Paul II but quite clearly has his most emphatic endorsement. Perhaps 75% of the footnotes are from his encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, and Holy Thursday Letters to Priests. Who could doubt, upon reading them, that if these messages were communicated and spread clearly and widely to the Catholic (and in many cases the non-Catholic!) faithful and put into effect by priests and families that there would be a refreshing change in our social and ecclesial environment.

In the course of my pastoral work with priests and seminarians, I am constantly surprised to find priests (present and future) who not only have never read the

Directory, but indeed have never even heard of it! The *Directory* reinforces the identification of the diocesan priest with Christ the Priest in all its aspects, leaving no doubt for clerics of good will about the mind of the Church for the priesthood as we cross "the threshold of hope." The document basically collects magisterial teaching from Pope Leo XIII down to our own day, with special emphasis on the teaching of John Paul II, and presents it in an abbreviated, clear form for contemplation and implementation. In short, the document looks to the example of the Cure of Ars, the patron of diocesan priests, and not to "the priest of what is happening now" for a model to imitate. I hope and pray that it will be widely disseminated to all diocesan priests by their bishops and friends in the years ahead.

In the heading "Means for Spiritual Life" (Number 39), the *Directory* lays out for the consideration of the priest the seven habits of holy apostolic priests. These are the reliable means by which the priest who is serious about a happy perseverance in his vocation will be assured of his holiness, and a fruitful apostolic priestly life, including attracting priestly vocations to continue his work on earth when he has gone to his reward. These are the means which, if faithfully practiced in the priestly life with its ups and downs, will bring on "the springtime of the Church" in the centuries to come. As Blessed Josemaria Escriva has pointed out, the apostolate (or evangelization) is nothing other than the "overflow of the interior life," and prayer, as Dom Chautard tells us, is the "soul of the apostolate." The seven habits are the following: (1) Daily Eucharistic Celebration; (2) Frequent Sacramental

confession and Spiritual Direction; (3) Daily Examination of Conscience; (4) Daily Reading of Scripture and Spiritual Reading; (5) Days of Recollection and Retreats; (6) Marian devotion, and (7) the Via Crucis and Meditation on the Passion of Our Lord. (I might have added exercise, sleep, and rest, all done for God's glory, but no matter!)

There is nothing new here. Indeed these habits (we could also call them a plan of life, or dare we say "lifestyle"?) are among the traditional means proposed by the Church to all the faithful, without exception, in order to further their growth in interior life and Christian behavior. The difference, of course, lies in the fact of their absolute necessity for the diocesan priest to fulfill his vocation and to sanctify, if you will, his professional work. Otherwise, he will over time inevitably fall into a passive lukewarmness and/or frenetic activism, with the consequent damage to his soul and to those entrusted to his pastoral care as well as to the universal Church. This practice is not a matter of simple external repetition but rather an expression of an intelligent and willful desire to use the habits as means to fall more deeply in love with God. A priest who acquires these habits will not, aside from the normal problems that face all men such as aging and illness, burnout. These "habits" cannot be limited to the proverbial "Holy Hour" so effectively preached by the late Archbishop Sheen. Rather they are guideposts that extend from morning to evening, from week to month, from year to decades, so that the priest is always immersed in God. Not only are they efficacious by their very nature in winning grace for the priest, but any priest who practices them openly in his parish and

rectory will find his pastoral work flourishing, because his parishioners will know they have a priest who prays from sunup to sundown; only true emergencies prevent him from his daily faithfulness to Christ in prayer. They will know they have a priest who is more interested in being than in doing or having, in pleasing God rather than men, and thus capable of making a "sincere gift of self," the Self being Christ himself. A priest who lives these habits will be able to share and pass them on effectively because all will see that he lives what he preaches and advises.

I do not think this is the place to examine the seven habits one by one because it has been done exhaustively by the magisterium, Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the saints, spiritual writers, and contributors to this review. I do think though there is one habit that is more important than all the others. My choice may surprise you. I refer to (#2) Frequent Confession and Spiritual Direction. To receive spiritual direction is a commitment to obey the Holy Spirit speaking through another person or institution. Who has ever heard of a priest who sincerely confessed his sins weekly or bi-weekly and who received frequent spiritual direction from a trustworthy, and dare I say demanding, priest who was not happy and effective in his life and pastoral work? If "the supreme art is the direction of souls," according to Pope St. Gregory, how can any priest pretend to give spiritual advice to those entrusted to his pastoral care without receiving it himself? A priest who lives this habit will inevitably live all the others. Why is this? Quite simply because a priest who confesses his sins, and lets himself be known and helped

in spiritual direction, is a humble priest, and humility is the foundational "habit" that allows all the other habits to help him to be holy and apostolic. Our Lord asked his followers to imitate him in only one virtue and that was to be "meek and humble of heart."

Priestly identity is the key to restoring morale in the priesthood and priests need an environment in which to practice the seven habits. Priests are not meant to be bachelors; they are men, given the great gift of apostolic celibacy, who are destined to form part of many families by their very participation in the priesthood of Christ as other Christs. Their family membership begins with the Holy Trinity as sons of God and continues with the Holy Family, the Church, their natural family, their dioceses, their parishes and their brother priests. They are destined to be "tremendous lovers" (in the words of Fr. Boylan), and they need a home. It is not good for man to be alone, and there are no more virile men than priests. Priests need the help, prayer, friendship, and example of all the people that surround them but, particularly, of their fellow priests. As many priests can testify, loneliness can be the most difficult Cross to embrace. However, there are remedies for loneliness, and priests are free to seek for that help upon which their happiness largely relies. Diocesan priests can certainly establish their own support groups for prayer, socializing, exercise, prayer, and relaxation. But normally that is not enough. In #29 of the DLMP, the document, echoing the Second Vatican Council (P.O. #8) and the Code of Canon law (C 550, n. 2), highly praises "those associations which support priestly fraternity, sanctity

in the exercise of their ministry, and communion with the Bishop and with the entire Church." Whether it be a priestly society, a third Order, a secular institute, or a largely lay movement, there is certainly some organization or spirituality in the Church in this millennial moment in which we see the Holy Spirit so active, that can guarantee the support, spiritual direction, and family life necessary so that all priests can live the seven habits and be happy, holy and apostolic. Mary, the Mother of God and the Church, desires and deserves no less for her most beloved sons.

Christology in Philippine Context: Vatican II Era Reflections (1965-2005)

JAMES H. KROEGER, M.M.

Blessed John XXIII (1881-1963), the pope who announced his decision to convoke the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on January 25, 1959 (he was then a mere 77-year old), is widely known and loved for many reasons. His opening speech to the Council on October 11, 1962 (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* - "Mother Church Rejoices") was a masterpiece in which he set forth his programmatic vision for Vatican II and the renewal of the Church. Among his pivotal insights, one reads: "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another" (Abbott, W. *The Documents of Vatican II*, 715). New approaches, new dynamism, and a renewed commitment to propagating the Gospel and Christian faith in the contemporary world were being elicited by "good Pope John."

The Council. Vatican II itself went on to explore how Christian faith and life "can be accommodated to

the genius and the dispositions of each culture" (AG 22). Local Churches around the world were invited to borrow "from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences," because all these sources "can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Savior's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life" (AG 22).

The Council encouraged renewed theological reflection: "theological investigation must necessarily be stirred up in each major socio-cultural area" (GS 22). Again, "theologians are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to people of today" (GS 62). The theology that seminarians study should enable them to serve their local communities and communicate the faith "in a manner suited to contemporary people" (OT 16). The entire Church, faithful to her tradition, "can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too" (GS 58).

FABC. Undoubtedly, the most influential Church body in Asia in the Vatican II era is the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. The FABC, with great breath, hope, and courage, has forged, since its foundation in 1970, an "ecclesiology of the Asian Churches." FABC has encouraged *Asian* theological reflection; it formally established its own Theological Advisory Committee (TAC) in 1987, although indigenous Asian theological reflection had already emerged in the early years of FABC.

The endeavors of the FABC:TAC are consistent with Vatican II thrusts (especially those of AG 22). The TAC

has undertaken and fostered Asian theological reflection on issues and questions that are of special relevance to the entire Church and to all the local Churches "in the FABC part of the world." In a word, FABC, because of its vision, work and effectivity, can validly be called "Asia's continuing Vatican II."

The FABC enunciated the urgency of contextualization and inculturation: "the decisive new phenomenon for Christianity in Asia will be the emergence of genuine Christian communities in Asia - Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others.... If the Asian Churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future" (Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church 14). For Asia's bishops, this urgency also encompasses the development of indigenous, local, and contextual theologies.

Philippine Bishops. In harmonious continuity with Vatican II and the FABC, the Church in the Philippines has endeavored to develop its own *Filipino* theology and catechesis fitted to the local context. An example would be the tradition of relevant pastoral letters, dealing with current public issues. In addition, in their preface to the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (CFC), the Philippine bishops state: "We need a catechism that is specifically written for Filipinos, in our actual, concrete Philippine situation" (No. 5). Efforts to formulate and communicate the faith must respond "to the concrete situation and culture of Filipino Catholics and families today, in terms of our own Filipino culture and values" (No. 6). Yes, "believing in Christ must be related directly to the daily Filipino human experience of living as Christ's disciple" (No. 13).

Philippine Christological Reflection

Set against the background of Vatican II, the insights of the FABC, and the perspectives of the Philippine Bishops (three bodies which have promoted contextual theological reflection), this "bibliographical essay" now presents a panorama of Christological reflection that has emerged in the Philippines during the four-decade, post-Vatican II era (1965-2005). This author asserts that this vast amount of literature (nearly 200 entries) represents a significant part of the rich corpus of *Philippine contextual theology*, specifically focused on the area of Christology. In a word, the copious materials contained here form a fine example of one local Church's response to the inculturation of Christological faith.

Some few introductory words to the lengthy bibliography are needed - for greater clarity. The author has taught Christology for three decades in a variety of settings: Davao City (Regional Major Seminary; Formation Institute for Religious); Manila (Loyola School of Theology; Mother of Life Catechetical Center; Maryhill School of Theology); Dhaka, Bangladesh (National Major Seminary). During this lengthy period he has pursued Christological thought and chronicled its growth. In 2005 he formulated an initial bibliography on "Philippine Christology," sent it to several noted authors in the Philippines, received - with gratitude - their suggestions, and then in mid-2006 completed this present work.

This presentation has several goals: (1) the compilation and preservation of the dedicated efforts of the many persons who have struggled to explore the meaning of Jesus Christ in the Philippine context; (2) the appreciation

of the growth of local theological reflection - all in fidelity to the 40-year-old summons of Vatican II; (3) the provision of a comprehensive resource document so that further Christological reflection can advance. The author is aware that this piece is only a bibliography and that analysis and further explorations by theologians and pastors are needed - and awaited.

This material spans the entire Vatican II era (1965-2005), ranging from two 1965 entries to the several items published in 2005; the full four-decade Philippine experience is presented. While the bulk of the material originates in printed sources, video and internet materials are included. Material is presented alphabetically by the author and in chronological order, beginning with the author's earliest works and extending to his most recent writings.

The range of Christological themes in this "bibliographical essay" is vast; in a word, it is "panoramic." It includes methodology, the historical Jesus, his ministry, teaching, and saving death and resurrection. Some presentations focus on the paschal mystery, salvation, dogma, spirituality, morality, catechesis, as well as contemporary questions (e.g. liberation, feminism, ecology, and relations with non-Christian religions). Articles on popular religiosity are included when they specifically relate to Christology.

This panoramic bibliography, while extensive, could never claim to be exhaustive. However, in the author's perspective, it is much more than a simple catalogue of resources. The great volume of material serves to capture the 40-year faith-journey of a people as well as their

engagement with the person of Jesus Christ. This presentation is then, in fact, a kind of *celebration* of the theological renewal envisioned by Vatican II. Philippine Christological reflection has been an area of abundant fruitfulness. Blessed John XXIII noted in his opening speech to the Council: "Mother Church rejoices"; forty years later the "Philippine local Church rejoices" to possess this treasury of Christological reflection!

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Building a "Civilization of Love": A Pastoral Exhortation for the Year of Social Concerns

fANGEL N. LAGDAMEO, DD

Beloved People of God:

Last January we, your Bishops, declared this year 2006, Year of Social Concerns." We pay special attention this year to the teaching, appropriation, and implementation of the social doctrine of the Church as contained in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

We are called to build a "society more human, more worthy of the human person," (*Compendium*, 582). This is a mission that we your Bishops have frequently urged all the faithful to do. Even now we continue to urge everyone to study, pray over, and apply the four Pastoral Exhortations on Philippine Politics (1997), economics (1998), culture (1999), and spirituality (2000) that we wrote for the Year of the Great Jubilee 2000.

Two new factors make the focus on social concern this year more urgent. First, the whole Church is powerfully reminded by the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, that the social concern "is as essential to her mission as the ministry of the sacraments and the preaching of the Gospel. The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word." (*DCE*, 22). Secondly, our present Philippine situation calls us to be more actively committed to living out the social teaching of the Church. Political turmoil, moral corruption, and environmental degradation have worsened massive poverty and scandalous social inequality. We are today especially concerned about a pervasive sense of weariness, cynicism, and hopelessness among many of our people.

What can we, must we, as Church do to heal this terrible malaise of spirit? What more can we do to help our people, especially the poor, believe that there is hope?

Our Commitment as Church

We believe that today the Lord's commandment of love, the social teaching of the Church, and the urgent needs of our people are calling us to intensify our commitment to build in our land "a civilization of love" (see, e.g. *Centesimus Annus*, 10). **"Love builds up,"** St. Paul teaches (*1 Cor. 8:1*). With love the Church builds up by prophetically critiquing and denouncing injustice and by prompting "positive activity" that will "promote a society befitting mankind because it befits Christ" (*Compendium*, 8, 63).

How shall we do this? We commit ourselves to a three-fold program of pastoral action:

1. The Church will continue to **build character**. Through the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, through the ministry of Catholic education, through programs of formation and spirituality, we shall seek, with the help of God's grace to build persons of faith and virtue. To build the future, we need to deepen our sense of honesty and integrity, service and responsibility, stewardship and solidarity. Corruption is rooted in a fundamental self-centeredness or selfishness, an evil that contravenes the human responsibility to exist "with" others and "for" others (see *Compendium*, 165). Transforming persons from this self-centeredness to the life of virtue and social responsibility remains our primary task and contribution to nation building.

2. The Church must **build capacity**. Poverty is not only about "not having" but also of "not being able." Poverty is also a question of capability. We have to empower those who are needy to construct a better future. Our social action programs, training programs and institutions, research centers, schools, charitable agencies and organizations, religious orders and congregations, lay organizations and movements, Basic Ecclesial Communities, need to help people grow in capacities, such as the capacity to govern themselves, the capacity to develop their abilities, the capacity to find meaningful and fruitful employment and work, the capacity to care for our environment, the capacity to make leadership accountable. We, therefore, commend our charitable institutions that

are at the service of the most vulnerable in our society. We commend programs such as *Pondo ng Pinoy*, *Gawad Kalinga* and *Tabang Mindanaw* for empowering people to participate in their own development and in continuing work of creation.

3. The Church must **build community**. Fifteen years ago we pointed out that the ruinous divisiveness in our country is rooted in a culture "too focused on the good of small social groups" (*Acts and Decrees of Second Plenary Council*, 21), on the good of those we identify with, our families, our town-mates, our province-mates, etc. Through formation and education, through various means including the use of the media of social communications, we need to promote, at every level of society and Church, *a spirituality of citizenship*, which is a concrete way of living out in our country the "fundamental social virtue": *solidarity* (see *Compendium*, 193). This spirituality of citizenship fosters a sense of patriotism and of being responsible for our country. It develops Filipinos into becoming active and constructive participants in social and political life. It enables the laity to take their rightful leadership role in the social transformation of our country.

To build community in a country battered by various kinds of conflict is to promote peace. This "requires the establishment of an order based on justice and charity" (*Compendium*, 494). Concretely we need to foster dialogue among Christians, between Filipinos of different faiths, and among different sectors of society. For this reason we commend the efforts of many peace advocates,

parishes, NGOs, religious groups, the Bishops-Ulama Conference, and others that actively dialogue for peace.

A Call to Action

We end our reflection with a call to decisive action. The late Pope John Paul II reminded us that "the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all a basis and a motivation for action" (*Centesimus Annus*, 57). Our action must not be merely seasonal or *ad hoc* or crisis driven. It has to be action that is a sustained "ministry of charity exercised in a communitarian, orderly way" (*DCF*, 21).

In particular, we reiterate the call to action from a moral standpoint expressed in our CBCP statements last January and April. We need to restore trust in our political institutions "which are perceived by many to be corrupted":

- We commend the Supreme Court as an independent institution of government for clarifying the constitutional parameters for E.O. 464 and P.P. 1017.
- We continue to view with alarm the signature campaign for the People's Initiative which many of our Social Action Centers have reported as being deceptive, lacking in adequate information and discussion, and not initiated by the people.
- We continue to call for a thorough reform of the Commission on Elections to restore trust in our electoral process. In particular, the Ombudsman's investigation of COMELEC officials involved in anomalous contracts worth P2.3 billion should be

completed as soon as possible, as directed by the Supreme Court.

- Other investigations conducted by other institutions of government should be followed up in the proper forum and fully reported to the public. We refer to the Senate hearings on the fertilizer fund appropriations which concluded that hundreds of millions of pesos remain unaccounted for. With other citizens' groups, we also ask for the full disclosure of the Mayuga Report on the conduct of certain military officers in the last elections.

We urge the faithful and all our institutions: first, to evaluate what they are presently doing to build character, capacity and community; and secondly, to pray and discern over what more we can do to promote a "civilization of love". We offer a few possible concrete steps:

Family associations for justice and peace:

Education and formation sessions and study weeks on Catholic Social Teachings;

Bantay-dagat, bantay-kalikasan movements;

Anti-corruption programs;

Livelihood programs;

Training programs for good governance;

Formation programs for good citizenship;

Election monitoring, voters' education;

Research-based social and political advocacies.

Such tasks are some of the steps to build a civilization of love. They may seem small and insignificant, but without doubt they build hope. And the ripple effect of hope is incalculable. "Christian hope generates confidence in the possibility of building a better world" (*Compendium*, 579).

Conclusion

Beloved People of God, we have declared this "Year of Social Concerns" "under the auspices of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus." We are commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (instituted in 1856 by Pope Pius IX) and the 50th anniversary of Pope Pius XII's encyclical on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (*Haurietis Aquas*). Ultimately all Christian social concern and social action flow from and participate in the boundless love of the Heart of Jesus. We thank God that so many individuals and groups in the Church witness by their life and work to the socially transforming love of Jesus.

May the Blessed Mother bring us all closer to the Heart of Jesus. We fervently pray that through our service of love the Heart of Jesus might rekindle our hope, heal and transform our society into a civilization of love.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

tANGEL N. LAGDAMEO, D.D.

Archbishop of Jaw

President, CBCP

May 11, 2006

Shepherding and Prophecy in Hope: A Pastoral Letter on Social Concerns

tANGEL N. LAGDAMEO, DD

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you. Jesus said to him, look after my sheep." (Jn. 21:16)

Beloved People of God:

Greetings of peace, joy, and hope in the Lord!

1. The Lord, indeed, has given us an experience of his love and peace in the five days that we spent doing our spiritual retreat. We prayed and meditated. In prayer we recalled that out of his love the Lord has called us to be shepherds of his flock. He has made us so by his ineffable grace of Episcopal ordination.

2. In these past days we were reminded again and again that our shepherding has to be grounded solely on the love of God. If out of love the Lord has called us, so in love of him we are to feed His flock. Thus, Peter

was called and appointed by Jesus as shepherd of the flock. Pastoral charity has to be the very life of the shepherd. Love has to be at the root of our task to proclaim the Word of God, to preside at worship, celebrate the sacraments, and lead in serving you, our beloved people.

3. But in this Year of the Social Concern of the Church, we have become even more deeply aware how challenging it is for us to be your shepherds. For what we see before us are the faces of poor people confused by complex factors beyond their control, political polarization, burning social issues, and the cultural and religious situation of our country that we all dearly love. With a sad feeling of debilitating hopelessness, they wonder when the seemingly endless political battles in Manila would ever give way to the more pressing problems of their daily economic struggles. They wonder if their deepening impoverishment would ever find a unified political response.

4. As shepherds we offer our moral and religious guidance. For this reason we focus our reflection on the social doctrine of the Church. We do so in the light of the Gospel of Jesus, our Lord and Savior as it illumines the darkness of our day. We invite you, our beloved People, to use our reflections as Pastors to help guide your own discernment, discussion, decision and action.

The Place of Social Doctrine in our Mission to Evangelize

5. At the very outset we remind you of God's love for all of us even as we experience great sorrows. *Deus Caritas Est* - the profound first encyclical of Pope Benedict

XVI, perhaps programmatic of his pontificate, brings us back to the most basic of the teachings of the Lord and of His Church: God is love. God loves us. It is because of who God is that we need to love God above all else and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

6. If, as the Lord himself says, this commandment to love God and neighbor is the summary of the law and the prophets, most certainly it likewise summarizes what Christian life - the new life given us in the Spirit of Jesus - has to be.

7. More profoundly, God's compassionate love for us is personified in His only begotten Son, Jesus our Savior. This is why our beloved Pope Benedict XVI says: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*Deus Caritas Est [DCE]*, 2005, no.1).

8. From the truth of Jesus, urgent questions arise. Do we ever encounter Jesus who is the very reason for our being Christian? How do we encounter him? Does this personal encounter change our life, our life in the family, our life in the community, our life in society? If we believe in Jesus and love Him, have we become better persons, better Christians, better citizens? Have we become better followers or disciples of Jesus? Has the fact of being Christians made our society become more peaceful, more fraternal, more just?

9. Such blunt disturbing questions, our beloved people, bring to the fore the necessity of linking faith and life. They also indicate the intimate and inseparable oneness of the Gospel of Love and the Gospel of Justice, i.e., the moral

implications of the Lord's Gospel in all dimensions of human life, individual, social, political, economic, cultural, and religious.

10. For this reason we set out before you these important realities of our faith:

"The Church's social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church [CSD]*, 2004, no. 66). Pope Paul VI had asked: "How in fact can one proclaim the new commandment (of love) without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man?" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi [EN]*, 1975, no. 31).

- As "an essential part of the Christian message," the social doctrine of the Church points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior" (CSD, 67).
- "On the one hand, religion must not be restricted 'to the purely private sphere', on the other, the Christian message must not be relegated to a purely other-worldly salvation incapable of shedding light on our earthly existence" (CSD 71, citing Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus [CA]*, no. 5).
- Undoubtedly, to be true shepherds, we as Bishops have to teach the integral Gospel, the gospel of the Lord with all its social implications. This is a non-negotiable task for the shepherd who is also the teacher of his people. The social dimension of love is, after all, the clear implication of the Lord's teaching on the love of neighbor as an active solidarity with those who are in need. Without this

solidarity one cannot be welcomed into the Reign of God (see Mt. 25:34-46; Jas. 2 and 5).

- At the same time, we as bishops do have to remind ourselves again and again that in the Church there is a variety of roles. While *"the primary responsibility for the pastoral commitment to evangelize social realities falls to the Bishop,"* (CSD, 539), *he is assisted by all members of the Church in a variety of ways.*
- Priests participate in the Bishop's mission of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the Christian community. By their life of consecrated self-giving, members of religious congregations and institutes too give an eloquent and prophetic sign of the social doctrine of the Church.
- On their part the lay faithful seek the kingdom of God by living and working in the context of secular human realities, participating directly in social, economic, and political affairs for the common good and transforming them according to God's will (see Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio [PP]*, 1967, no. 81; *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines [PCP-HJ]*, 1992, nos. 435-38; CSD, 541-543).
- On the other hand, we as shepherds clearly have the duty to pass moral judgments even in matters political but we cannot actively involve ourselves in partisan politics (PCP-II, 340). If Pastors were "to take active part in partisan politics they would weaken their teaching authority and destroy the unity they represent and protect" (PCP-II, 343).
- Granting all the above and given the autonomy of the temporal sphere, it remains a perennial teaching of the Church that she cannot take on a political task as her immediate responsibility. It is not her

responsibility to provide any political blueprint for the just ordering of society (cf. DCE 28; PCP-II, 330-53). She has her own role to play in promoting justice, e.g., to influence life, public and private, with the integral Gospel, to form the social conscience of her members, to provide a moral light that illumines, a spiritual force that critiques social behavior and structures, denounces or purifies and reinforces in the light of the Word of God (see PCP-II, 248).

The Social Doctrine of the Church as Prophetic

11. The People of God know that our role as shepherds **includes the duty to** *"teach the truth of faith: the truth not only of dogmas hut also of the morals whose source lies in human nature itself and in the Gospel"* (CSD, 70, citing Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 14 and John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 27, 64, 110). For the Church has "the right to proclaim the Gospel in the context of society, to make the liberating word of the Gospel resound in the complex worlds of production, labour, business, finance, trade, politics, law, culture, social communications, where men and women live" (CSD, *ibid.*).

12. This is also a duty, since the Church *"cannot forsake this responsibility without denying herself and her fidelity to Christ: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!'"* (1 Cor 9:16); CSD, 71). **The Gospel then has** a public relevance. This is even more understandable when we realize that the Church cannot ignore *"the corrupting effects of injustice, that is, of sin"* (CSD, *loc. cit.*).

13. Therefore, the Church has a duty *"to denounce when sin is present: the sin of injustice and violence that in different ways moves through society and is embodied*

in it" (CSD, 81). In this way the Church's social doctrine defends human rights "especially those of the poor, the least and the weak." One can easily see how this right and duty to denounce is both religious and moral. It is inseparable from the evangelizing mission of the Church.

14. In the Old Testament God chose prophets to proclaim God's word, announcing judgment and hope to Israel. Today the Church fills the role of prophet to herself and to society. Her social doctrine is prophetic. It is both judgment and hope. It calls to conversion. It enkindles hope. It bears the seeds of personal and social transformation.

Social Doctrine in the Context of the Philippines

15. In 2001 the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR) stated that the social analysis done 10 years earlier by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II, 1991) was still substantively valid. This social analysis (see PCP-II, Appendix I, pp. 275-91) described the major problems of our country in terms of:

- Political imbalances;
- Economic imbalances; and
- Ambivalent cultural values reinforcing these imbalances.

16. To prepare for the great Christian Jubilee of the Year 2000, we your Bishops picked these three major problems for pastoral reflection. Premised on theological and moral principles such as those in the social doctrine of the Church, we wrote three pastoral exhortations: on Philippine Politics (1997), on the Philippine Economy ("Development with a Human Face, 1998), and on Philippine Culture (1999). To cap these three pastoral reflections,

we suggested a long term response to our problems by writing a pastoral exhortation on Filipino Spirituality: what it means to be holy in our Philippine situation (2000).

17. We urge you, beloved People of God, to revisit these pastoral exhortations. They contain principles, directives and guidelines for action from the social doctrine of the Church that remain valid and relevant for the problems that currently beleaguer us. A reflective perusal of these documents would prevent the kind of misinformation, misinterpretation, and misunderstanding of the Bishops' position on various burning social issues.

18. Let us briefly recall the principles in the church's social doctrine that PCP-II chose to emphasize in the light of our social problems:

- Integral Development - Human Dignity and Solidarity (see **Paul VI**, *Populorum Progressio* [PP], 14; *John Paul II*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* [SRS], 29, 31; *PCP-II*, 294; *CSD*, 130-134, 192-93). *The human person is at the center of the Church's social doctrine and the subject as well as object of development in all human dimensions.*
- The Universal Purpose of earthly Goods and Private Property. This social principle (see Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 63; *PCP-II*, 297; *CSD*, 171-181) *underscores the injustice of the poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all.*
- Social Justice and Love. These are "the principal laws of social life" (John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 39; see *PCP-II*, 304; *CSD*, 201-08; *DCE*, 26, 28). *The lack of consideration for the common good is a lack of social justice. "... for interpersonal relationships and social structures to be put in order, justice is not sufficient. Love is necessary" Social justice*

as the justice of the common good (PCP-II, 305). Here we add the words of Pope Benedict XVI as a comment on our politics: "Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now" (DCE, 28).

- Peace and Active Non-Violence (see Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, nos. 40, 65; CSD, 494-96). "The road to total liberation is not the way of violence, class struggle or hate; it is the way of love, brotherhood and peaceful solidarity" (John Paul II, *To the People of Tondo*, Feb. 18, 1981, no. 7; also his speech *To the People of the Sugar Plantations*, Bacolod, Feb. 20, 1981).
- Love of Preference for the Poor. As PCP-II states, "The common good dictates that more attention must be given to the less fortunate members of society. We as a Church, indeed, opt for all men, women and children of the world but above all, preferentially we opt like Jesus for the 'little ones,' the poor and marginalized of our societies" (PCP-II, 312; see also SRS, 39, 42; PP, 47; CSD, 182-84).
- The Value of Human Work. The primary basis of the value of work is not what work produces objectively but who does the work, i.e., the human person (see John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981, nos. 6, 11-12). Again, here are the words of PCP-II: "The human person is the subject of work and must not be treated as an instrument of production. The person has primacy over things" (PCP-II, 316; see also CSD, 270-81).

- Integrity of Creation. "Because the integrity of God's creation is violated, our people suffer the destruction brought about by droughts and floods. Those disasters cannot be traced merely to the uncontrollable powers of nature, but also to human greed for short term economic gain. The physical limitations of our natural resources imply a moral demand, the duty of responsible dominion over nature" (PCP-II, 323; see SRS 26, 34; CBCP, *What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land*, 1988; see also CSD, 461-87).
- People Empowerment. "No social transformation is genuine and lasting where people themselves do not actively participate in the process.... We understand 'people power' to include greater involvement in decision-making, greater equality in both political and economic matters, more democracy, more participation" (PCP-II, 325-26; see CSD, 189-91).

19. To the above social principles, we add two more principles from the social doctrine of the Church that the NPCCR in 2001 emphasized, namely, the leading role of lay people in social transformation (see also CSD, 541-74) and the family as the focal point of the evangelizing mission of the Church in the Philippines (see also CSD, 209-254).

20. Fifteen years after the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, our social situation has not substantially changed. The above principles from the social doctrine of the Church remain relevant and prophetic. They represent a judgment on the way we are as well as hope for what we can be as a nation.

The Social Doctrine of the Church Applied to Some Burning Social Issues

21. In the light of the social doctrine of the church, we state the CBCP position on the following burning issues:

22. The Family under Siege.

We are deeply troubled by attempts to legislate or make as state policy ideas that tend to weaken or even destroy cherished religious values regarding the nature of life, the nature of marriage as union of man and woman, child bearing, the values formation of children, etc. Such ideas are part of an orientation that is fundamentally secularistic and materialistic, separated from their religious and moral roots. We find them in pending bills about population, marriage and family, reproductive health, and sex education in schools. The Filipino family is ill-served by these developments. As the foundation of a civilization of life and love, the family is most seriously threatened. Therefore, Catholic lay groups as well as our Bishops' Commission on Family and Life have made many public interventions about these and they shall continue to do so.

23. Charter Change.

We reiterate what we said in January this year: Elections in 2007 must not be cancelled. The Church recognizes that in a democracy power emanates from the people - i.e., that "the subject of political authority is the people considered in its entirety... This people transfers the exercise of sovereignty to those whom it freely elects... but it preserves the prerogative... [of] evaluating those charged with governing, and in replacing them when they do not fulfill their functions satisfactorily." (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 395)

While we agree that certain aspects of our Constitution may need amendments and revisions, we do not support hasty efforts to change this fundamental law of the land without the widespread discussion and participation that

such changes require. We continue to believe as we did in our statement on Charter Change in 2003, that changing the Constitution involving major shifts in the form of government, requires widespread participation, total transparency, and relative serenity that allows for rational discussion and debate. This is best done through a Constitutional Convention. The reasons for constitutional change must be based on the common good rather than on self-serving interests or the interests of political dynasties.

24. Impeachment.

We wish to make the CBCP position clear and unambiguous on the present impeachment plans:

- 24.1. We are undoubtedly for the search for truth. Therefore, in all sincerity we respect the position of individuals or groups that wish to continue using the impeachment process to arrive at the truth.
- 24.2. But as Bishops reflecting and acting together as a body in plenary assembly, in the light of previous circumstances, we are not inclined at the present moment to favor the impeachment process as the means for establishing the truth. For unless the process and its rules as well as the mindsets of all participating parties, pro and con, are guided by no other motive than genuine concern for the common good, impeachment will once again serve as an unproductive political exercise, dismaying every citizen, and deepening the citizen's negative perception of politicians, left, right and center.

25. Electoral Reform.

We reiterate our call for a thorough reform of the Commission of Elections to restore trust in our electoral

process. The call for resignation or even prosecution of a number of the Commissioners should not be lightly brushed aside. The electoral process, including counting of votes, needs to be reformed and modernized before the next elections.

26. Extra-judicial Killings.

On extra-judicial killings, the CBCP stand is of long standing. We have issued statements on this issue in the past. Needless to say, we join the outcry of groups that have denounced the increasing number of extra-judicial killings of journalists and social activists suspected as sympathizers of insurgents allegedly by some ultra-rightist elements in the military. But at the same time, we cannot close our eyes to the great number of extra-judicial killings that sometimes do not come to light in the newspapers but are known to us in our dioceses. These are killings reported by our people as allegedly perpetrated by insurgents for various reasons, such as *agaw-armas operations*, the failure to pay a revolutionary tax, or "blood-debt to the people."

These we also unequivocally denounce. The defense of human rights and of human dignity must itself be just. It has to be impartial, irrespective of religious belief or ideology.

Conclusion

We asked above if the fact of our bring Christians has made our society become more peaceful, more fraternal, more just? We ask the question again.

It is easy to answer no if we focus only on the many critical problems that continue to plague Philippine society and that so far have been intractable to any satisfying solution. And because of the suffering they cause, we give way to a despairing sense of helplessness.

But are we really without hope as a people?

In this Year of Social Concern, we turn our thoughts to what our faith in Christ tells us we must do out of love for our neighbor. And we see what many of our people, priests and religious, but lay men and women especially - away from the limelight and the glare of publicity - are doing quietly to put into practice what they understand Christian social concern means. Non-partisan groups like *Kapatiran* and *One Voice*, when they remain non-partisan, are especially to be commended and encouraged. So too are the many initiatives (not the least those of our own Church Social Action Centers) at combating endemic corruption in public and private life that are working quietly at the lower levels of government and society. These give us hope that our common task to bring about greater social justice in our country is not without any effect.

We have dedicated this Year of Social Concern to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We pray that their redeeming love continue to be with us as we work to bring peace and justice to our suffering people.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines,

Most Rev. Angel Lagdameo, D.D.
President, CBCP
July 9, 2006

ARTICLE

***Munus Docendi* of the Diocesan Bishop according to the Second Vatican Council**

ROMULO RODRIGUEZ, OP

Acknowledging the paramount significance of Vatican Council II in re-shaping the theology of the Catholic Church, this paper addresses the Council's effect on the office of the diocesan bishop, in particular, his *munus docendi*. It explores the very basis of his exercise of the *munus docendi*. In the process, it presents the issues related to the call for discipline, identifies the areas for its exercise and discusses the rights and obligations entailed in the bishop's *munus docendi*.

1.1 The Second Vatican Council

The truth is that the Council was a response to the deep longings of Christianity and of the entire human race. The Church could not continue in its attitude of distrust, its ghettoization, in the face of a society that was rapidly becoming planetary in scope and being

*renewed in its outlook, its customs, and its ways of being and acting. The Church had to break its 150-year silence and enter into dialogue with a partner, at a time when the church itself was now so different from what it had been.*¹

On 25 January 1959, in the basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, Pope John XIII proclaimed his intention to convene an ecumenical council "to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful."² This decision was made in fidelity to an inspiration from God in order to exercise pastoral solicitude for the welfare of the Church.

The time for renewal seemed ready. There was an urgency for the Church to respond to the needs of the contemporary world, in the framework of a deep respect for tradition, "to avoid a fatal delay in response to the needs, as had happened at the time of the Protestant Reformation."³

But with the turn of events, Vatican Council II provided a new consciousness of the Church about herself. This was supported by the terminology it introduced which was new to the majority of the faithful at the time. The Council ushered in some new concepts and revived others in order to enrich the Church's self-awareness. Some of the important concepts were: "collegiality,

¹ Rene Latourelle, "Vatican", *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, (New York: St. Paul Publ, 1994), p 1151.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1154.

³ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia, *Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)*, 4 Decembris 1963, AAS 56 (1964): 97-138. English translations of the Conciliar documents are from Marriane Lorraine Trouve, FSP, *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1999), 771 pp; SC, 1.

renewal, dialogue, ecumenism, the People of God, the Church as sacrament, religious liberty".⁴ In the light of revelation, the Council delved deeper into the central themes of Christianity and effected a new balance among them. The same could be seen in the area of ecclesiology.

*While **Dei Verbum** remains the source document for principles and method, Vatican Council II is nonetheless the council of ecclesiology. Among the gains made in this area, the following may be stressed: the emphasis on the Trinitarian origin of the Church; the Church as both institution and mystery of communion; the image of the Church as the people of God, which turned the former pyramid upside down by asserting the equality of all Christians by reason of their baptism; the recognition of the principle of collegiality and the principle of ecclesial nature of the non-Catholic Christian churches.*⁵

Thus, the Church was seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".⁶ This sense of fundamental communion was vital in reflecting on the mystery of the Church. That which was time-bound bore the eternal; the human was united with the divine; the institutional and structural served the interpersonal. This was the reason, why

⁴ Marriane Lorraine Trouve, FSP, *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1999), p. xxvi.

⁵ Rene Latourelle, "Vatican", p. 1159.

⁶ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, *Constitutio Dogmatica, Lumen Gentium (LG)*, 21 Novembris 1964, AAS 57 (1965): 5-75 pp, *LG*, 4.

Vatican Council II moved away from seeing the Church mainly in juridical terms and instead, used rich biblical images to express a less static and more dynamic nature of the Church. The Church was a "sheepfold whose one and indispensable door is Christ, a piece of land to be cultivated, building of God, Jerusalem that is above".⁷

Definitely, a re-orientation in ecclesiology effected also a re-orientation in the hierarchy. Ecclesiology before the council was rightly described by Yves Congar as "hierarchology".⁸ As Karl Rahner stated:

*At the Vatican Council II, we have for the first time a gathering of the world's episcopate not as an advisory body for the pope, but rather with him and under him the final teaching and decision-making body in the Church. For the first time a world-wide Council with a world-wide episcopate came into existence and functioned independently.*⁹

Hence, Vatican Council II did much to de-emphasize the pyramidal vision of the Church. Firstly, it affirmed that all the faithful share by baptism in the priestly, prophetic and kingly offices of Christ. Secondly, it taught that the Church is the People of God before considering its institutional structure, thus emphasizing the ecclesiological principle that the faithful begin their consideration of the Church with what they share by

⁷ LG, 6.

⁸ John Boyle, *Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies*, (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 96.

⁹ Karl Rahner, "A Basic Interpretation of Vatican II", *Theological Studies*, 40 (1979), p. 718.

baptism before reflecting on the different roles in the life of the Church. Thirdly, it acknowledged the diversity of hierarchical and charismatic gifts to be exercised by the whole people of God. Lastly, it described priests and bishops, not as rulers who exercise authority over the Church, but as pastoral leaders who gather their people around the table of the Lord.

In effect, all Christians were exhorted "to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to the Gospel spirit".¹⁰ By word and deed, all of the faithful, priests, religious and laity were to give witness to the wealth of holiness within the Church. In this way, the Vatican Council II made the Church aware of the need to broaden its understanding of her mission which concerns every Christian.

1.2 The Diocesan Bishop

Since Vatican Council II, the Church authority has herself experienced renewal especially in the episcopal office. Within the deeper ecclesiological reflection engendered on by the Council, the figure of the diocesan bishop stands out with a newer clarity in the Church. *Lumen Gentium* declared that "the fullness of the sacrament of orders is conferred by episcopal consecration".¹¹ Insofar as it is a gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the episcopate has the place of pre-eminence among the various ministries which contribute to the building up of the whole Body of Christ.

¹⁰ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in Mundo huius Temporis, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), 7 Decembris 1965, A4S58(1966): 1025-1120 pp; GS, 43.

¹¹ **LG, 21.**

1.2.1 Successor of the Apostles

The institution of the episcopate is to be understood only in relation to the college of the apostles constituted by Jesus Christ. For just as the apostles received an authoritative office from Christ himself, they in turn, appointed the bishops to succeed them, in order that the Gospel might forever be preserved in its entirety and might be lived in all its integrity in the Church. Such an institution is claimed to be of divine origin. "Undoubtedly, if we lack a proper sense of the Church's divine dimension, for us it would indeed lose its identity, be reduced to a level of other social institutions, and have little or nothing salvific to offer the world".¹²

By divine institution, the bishops succeeded in the place of the apostles. Clearly, "the basic difference between the apostles and the bishops, their successors, is that the institution of the apostles coincided with the foundation of the Church, while that of the bishop depends upon the fact that the Church has already been established by Christ".¹³ However, both the apostles and the bishops are called to the service of the whole Church, a *diakonia* which finds its most perfect exemplar in Christ "who came not to be served but to serve".¹⁴

In order that the mission entrusted to them might be continued after their death, [the apostles] consigned, by will and testament, as it were, to their immediate

¹² Thomas Green, "The Pastoral Role of the Diocesan Bishop: Foundations, Scope and Limitations", *The Jurist*, 49 (1989), p. 479.

¹³ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Decretum de Activitate Missionali Ecclesiae, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* (AG), 7 Decembris 1965, AAS 58 (1966): 947-990 pp; AG, 5.

¹⁴ Mk 10:42-45; Mt 20:25-28.

*collaborators the duty of completing and consolidating the work they had begun, urging them to tend to the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit had appointed them to shepherd the Church of God. They accordingly designated such men and then made the ruling that likewise on their death, other proven men should take over their ministry.*¹⁵

Being called to "teach all men to observe what the Lord has commanded",¹⁶ the apostles received "a special gift of the Holy Spirit".¹⁷ It is precisely this need to keep what has been transmitted to by the apostles that defines the essential aspect of the bishops' ministry: to represent the person of Christ in the midst of the faithful. To reject the succession of the apostles to the bishop is to reject not only the possibility for the Church to continue being the same Church as established by Christ on the foundation of the apostles, but also to reject the bishop's authority on the ministry.

In this sense, the episcopal office has a permanent aspect. The divine mission entrusted by Christ to the bishops "will last until the end of the world, since the Gospel they are to teach is for all the time the source of all life for the Church".¹⁸ It is exercised from the apostolic times until the present. As the apostles appointed their successors, the latter, in turn, approved other men who would take up the ministry and pass it over another appointed men. Thus, the whole life of the bishop is conditioned

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (Dublin: Veritas, 1994), #861.

¹⁶ Mt. 28:19-20.

¹⁷ Jn. 20:21-23; AA 1:8; 2:2-5.

¹⁸ LG, 20.

by the responsibility he assumes as successor of the apostles called to fulfill Christ's mandate of teaching, making disciples of all nations and passing on the responsibility to his appointed successor.

1.2.2 *Apostolic Ministry*

As successor of the apostles, the bishop is entrusted with a mission and the authority necessary to carry it out. His proper function is to continue in the Church whatever is perpetuated in the apostolic function of proclaiming the gospel by the authority of Christ, and consequently, of celebrating the sacraments, especially, the Holy Eucharist.

Acting in the person of Jesus Christ, the bishop, in a unique fashion, continues the apostolic ministry. He is called to present the Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the times. He is tasked not only "to look after those who already follow the Prince of Pastors but should also wholeheartedly devote (himself) to those who have strayed in any way from the path of truth"¹⁹

By virtue of the sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college, the bishop is constituted as a member of the episcopal body.²⁰ The authority of the body is derived from the authority of apostles themselves, whom Jesus sent in His name. He exercises his authority for the good of the universal Church in faithful recognition of the

¹⁹ *Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Decretum de Pastoralis Episcoporum Munere in Ecclesia, Christus Dominus (CD)*, 28 Octobris 1965, AAS 58 (1966): 757-775 pp; CD, 11.

²⁰ CD, 4.

primacy and pre-eminence of the Holy Pope. Thus, the episcopal office necessarily implies an openness to collegial activity in its fullest sense or otherwise, and a solidarity with and a solicitude for the universal Church.²¹

However, "though the bishop is intimately related to the Pope and somewhat dependent on him as head of the episcopal college, his pastoral governance is derived ultimately not from him but from the Holy Spirit".²² This is carried out not only when the college is convoked under the leadership of the Pope in an ecumenical council, but also when the individual bishop is placed in charge of the particular Church. After all, the individual bishop represents his own Church, being the "visible principle and foundation of unity in their particular Churches".²³ Hence, he has the designation as the diocesan bishop.

In effect, the diocesan bishop is entrusted with a portion of the People of God with the cooperation of the presbytery. As head of the local or particular Church, he is situated within a hierarchical framework in an ongoing relationship with his brother priests, especially with the Pope. Individual bishop who has been entrusted with the care of a particular Church - under the authority of the supreme Pontiff - feeds his sheep in the name of the Lord [who recognize Him] as their own ordinary and immediate pastor.²⁴ It is evident then that as a member of the college, the bishop individually and in collegial union bears a responsibility for all the Churches.

²¹ Thomas Green, "The Pastoral Role of the Diocesan Bishop: Foundations, Scope and Limitations", p. 493.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 477.

²³ **LG, 23.**

²⁴ CD, 11.

Meanwhile, the changing role of the bishop is evident over the history of the Church, showing the bishop as a theologian, feudal lord, builder, spiritual guide and other types of functionaries. Nonetheless, three traditional offices have persisted over the ages though in varied manner: sanctifying, governing and teaching offices.

1.2.2.1 Sanctifying Office

By his consecration, the bishop receives the fullness of the priesthood. He gathers the community for worship especially for the Holy Eucharist which is the "center of the life of the particular Church".²⁵ He serves as the "steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood",²⁶ because in a special manner Jesus Christ consecrates him whom He has chosen for the episcopate, in order that he may be visible representative of His sovereign priesthood. With these religious tasks, he constantly sets himself to be "intent upon prayer and the ministry of the Word".²⁷ The exterior acts then are made to be the expression, sign and cause of a profound interior and interpersonal communion.

Because it is especially by the sacraments that the priestly action of Christ extends to the faithful, the bishop is the principal minister of the sacraments. If, in this ministry, the bishop provides himself with helpers who participate in his priesthood, the entire sacramental order still remains under his authority and dependent upon him.²⁸ In the same manner, he is expected to be "diligent in

²⁵ *LG.* 26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *CD.* 15.

²⁸ Karl Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi*, (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1978), vol. 1, p. 227.

fostering holiness among the clerics, religious and laity according to the special vocation of each".²⁹

1.2.2.2 *Governing Office*

Episcopal consecration confers a charism which enables the bishop to govern the people of God. But this is a service directed to the local community to meet their needs on every level: material, social, personal and spiritual.

*The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular Churches assigned to them by their counsels, exhortations and example, but over and above that also, by the authority and sacred power which indeed they ought to exercise so as to edify, in the spirit of service which is that of their Master.*³⁰

However, the exercise of the individual bishop's power has its limitations. It is only exercised over a limited portion of the people of God, though he remains jointly responsible for the good of the universal Church. By governing well his own Church, he effectively contributes to the welfare of the universal Church. He exercises his power personally in the name of Christ, "although its exercise is ultimately regulated by the supreme authority of the Church and can be circumscribed by certain limits, for the advantage of the Church or of the faithful".³¹

²⁹ CD. 15.

TMLG, 27.

³¹ *Ibid.*

1.2.2.3 Teaching Office

The first duty of the apostles was "to teach all nations".³² Thus, the bishop with the priests as co-workers, "has the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God to all"³³ in keeping with the Lord's command. He is the "preacher of the faith, who leads new disciples to Christ; he is the authentic teacher" of the apostolic faith, "endowed with the authority of Christ".³⁴ Each bishop is responsible for the preaching of the gospel, not only to the faithful of his diocese, but to all humankind. Part of this preaching is "the task of offering precise and progressive instruction to the faithful so that they may to some extent, understand the message they have received".³⁵ This instruction is precisely called the ministry of teaching.

1.3 The *Munus Docendi*

The proclamation of the Word is central to the ministry of the Church. When the Church teaches, it is not out of conviction that it is a "body of extraordinarily wise sages whose skills of reasoning and vast knowledge deserves respect. The Church teaches because she believes that the message she proclaims is not her own. It is the Word of God."³⁶ She depends on God's

³² Mt 28:19.

³³ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Decretum de Presbyterorum Ministerio et Vita, *Presbyterorum Ordinis (PO)*. 7 Decembris, 1965, AAS55 (1966) pp. 991-1024; POA-

³⁴ LG. 25.

³⁵ Avery Dulles, "The Teaching Mission of the Church and Academic Freedom", *America* (21 April 1990), p. 398.

³⁶ Richard Gaillardetz, *Teaching With Authority*, (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), p. 23.

Word borne by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Word that gives life to the community. In that case, the teaching authority can only be asserted "in the context of an understanding of the Church, as the recipient of God's Word".³⁷ In the process, it is the community at large that receives the Spirit of God. After all, revelation has been committed to the Church, as a whole.

*The whole Church is in possession of revelation. But (as it were) God had to provide for two necessities: let the Church grow in the understanding of the Word, but also, let the Word be safeguarded in this process. The "growing into" the Word is surely the task of the whole Church, of each and all, bishops and laity. The formal safeguarding of it, however, is part of the sacramental ministry of the episcopate. Sacramental is a key word here: they can do it in virtue of a power received through ordination, independently of their merits.*³⁸

Given the multiplicity of the gifts of the Spirit in the Church, the community must then be one of on-going discernment as it seeks a deeper understanding of the faith, a greater penetration of what its Christian commitment implies for its life.³⁹ It is precisely in this view of "the Church as a community of discernment with its multiple gifts of the Spirit that some in the Church should be

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁸ Ladislav Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987), p. 34.

³⁹ John Boyle, *Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies*, p. 167.

called to various offices, including the teaching office, that they should receive gifts of the Spirit through the reception of Orders".⁴⁰ Just as the Spirit is alive through the lives of the believers, so it is present in the ecclesiastical office.

The teaching ministry is attributed to the Church as a whole. In fact, much teaching in the Church comes out of the general mission given by baptism and confirmation and by the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Every Christian believer, by virtue of baptism and confirmation, has a vocation to be a witness to the Gospel and those who are reflective and educated in their faith have the capacity and the responsibility to instruct others.

Truly, the parents are considered the first educators of their children. They strongly influence the formation of their children's life as a child spends his primary years with his family circle. Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.⁴²

However, such a teaching is neither a participation in the mission of the clergy nor a participation in the responsibility of the bishop. This kind of teaching in the Church has been recognized and fostered from the earliest times because it is

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *LG*, 11, 12.

⁴² *Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Declaratio de Educatione Christiana, Gravissimum Educationis (GE)*, 28 Octobris 1965, AAS 58 (1966): 728-739 pp; *GE*, 3.

crucial to the life of the Church. Possessing an indispensable role in the total process, the bishop verily has the authority to teach the truth in the name of Christ and to hand on the general prudential measures of Christian life. He is the "custodian (not exclusive possessor) of the Word. If ever divisions arise in the community concerning its meaning, he has the capacity to bring a judgment in the Spirit, which may not be inspired but which will not fail in truth either."⁴³ He is the qualified witness; and when the community is divided, his testimony about the truth is the final and authentic one.

In such cases, the primacy of function of Christian doctrine is to assist the community to distinguish the authentic doctrine from the false teaching through an authoritative exercise of the diocesan bishop. There is no doubt that in him lies the responsibility for ordering the gifts and function in the Church. In fact, "among the principal duties of the bishops, the preaching of the Gospel occupies an eminent place".⁴⁴ Hence, he exercises all his authority to promote and to safeguard the ministry of the Word. After all, the proclamation of the gospel is his fundamental mission.

1.3.1 Basis of the Munus Docendi

The bishop's mission to teach flows from his episcopal ordination which makes him an authentic teacher of the Church's faith, and therefore, a trustworthy voice for the people of God. Catholics believe that the episcopal ordination is a divine pledge of a special assistance given to

Ladislav Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, p. 45.

the bishop in the fulfillment of his *munus docendi*. Analogous to the concept of validity for episcopal ordination is the concept of authenticity for the mission of teaching.⁴⁵ By the fullness of the sacrament of order, he has the responsibility to teach not only as a witness to the faith of the community, but by the authority that comes to them from Christ himself.

Meanwhile, concomitant to the episcopal ordination is the bishop's communion with the college of bishops which makes him an authentic teacher of the Church's faith. Should a bishop cease to be in communion with the college of bishops, he would cease to share in the *munus docendi*. However, for the bishop who is in hierarchical communion with the college and is the authentic teacher of the faith, he merits the "religious submission"⁴⁶ of the Christian faithful. The importance of the college of bishops is based on the fact that "the college of bishops succeeds in a proportionate degree to the college of apostles. Insofar as the bishop is a member of the college does he share in that succession which confers the teaching office of Christ's shepherd".⁴⁷

An indication of a profound relationship of the bishop with the college of bishops is that judgments about the authenticity of doctrine are not rendered by the individual bishop in isolation. He is a teacher of the faith, but the

⁴ Richard Barrett, "The Bishop as Ordinary Teacher of the Faith", *Monitor Ecclesiasticus*, 67 (1992), p. 238.

⁴⁶ John Huels, "The Correction and Punishment of a Diocesan Bishop", *The Jurist*, 49(1989), p. 532.

⁴⁷ Richard Barrett, "The Bishop as Ordinary Teacher of the Faith", p. 241.

verification of his teaching stems from his communion with the Pope and his fellow bishops and with the faith of the whole Church.⁴⁸ No wonder then, each bishop has the responsibility to teach the faith in his diocese with the consciousness that his doctrine is properly not his alone. In rendering judgment, he has to be in communion with the college of bishops in order to secure its collective wisdom and support.

The whole Church recognizes the teaching of the bishops as normative for the faith. It provides directives and formation to one's beliefs. In the process, it is surely a basic article of Christian faith that the Holy Spirit maintains the Church in the true faith. This is the fulfillment of Christ's promise of the Paraclete to lead the Church in the truth.⁴⁹ Thus, the Church that is divinely maintained in the true faith by the Holy Spirit could hardly err when she deals with the norms of faith. In effect, it offers reason for the faithful to trust in the reliability of their teaching.

On the other hand, there have been other persons in the Church who were not in any hierarchical position yet have an extraordinary capacity to penetrate the mysteries to an unusual depth and the gift to articulate their discoveries for the whole community.⁵⁰ It should be noted that some doctrines which shape Christian self-understanding have never been officially defined by

⁴⁸ US Bishops' Meeting, "The Teaching Ministry of the Diocesan Bishop", *Origins*, 21 (2 January 1992) no. 30, p. 481.

⁴⁹ Jn 16:13.

⁵⁰ Ladislav Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, p. 66.

the teaching office. It involves a formal judgment whether a particular theological position does or does not accord with the Catholic doctrinal tradition. It is a fact that interpreting new insights from the revealed truth requires more than the episcopal ordination. In such a case, the bishop is counseled by the theologians in the exercise of the teaching function. With their expertise, the theologians assist the bishop in shedding new light to the issues that need to be further clarified. As a matter of fact, "many bishops who with their votes contributed to the decisions of the Vatican Council II have greatly benefited from reading later the commentaries of theologians".⁵¹

1.3.2 Ecclesiastical Magisterium

In order to preserve the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ willed to confer on the Church a share in His own infallibility.⁵² It then falls on the *Magisterium*,[^] to guarantee for God's people, the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Divine assistance is given to the Church's teaching "as the absolute and infallible assistance which enables the Church to preserve the revealed deposit without error, to define its

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵² *LG*, 25.

⁵³ *Its restrictive and exclusive usage, signifying "the teaching authority of the hierarchy"* began to develop among German theologians and canonists in the 18th century and became widely accepted in the 19th century. Its first appearance in a papal document was probably in 1835, in an encyclical by Gregory XVI to the Swiss Clergy. It was used amply in the schemata of Vatican I, and from then on it became a household term in Catholic theology. See Orsy, Ladislav. *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987), pp. 46-47.

meaning irrevocably and to explain its content".⁵⁴ By the Holy Spirit, the Church is prevented from giving a false testimony. Catholics believe that those entrusted with the task of proclaiming the revelation of Christ will not be allowed to lead the Church astray, for Christ remains with the apostolic college that teaches in His name. In doing so, in teaching the faith and in applying it to concrete situations, the individual bishop and groups of bishops draw on the resources of the Holy See, confer with their fellow bishops, consult theological experts and seek out the sense of the faithful. That is why, consultation through successive drafts and revisions seems to have flourished these days in the process of the formulation of a new document.

The exercise of the *Magisterium* takes two forms:

1.3.2.1 *Extraordinary Magisterium*

The exercise of the extraordinary *Magisterium* involves a solemn and infallible act of defining a matter of faith on the part of either the whole college of bishops, usually in an ecumenical council or the Pope as head of that college when he teaches *ex cathedra*, that is, from the Chair of St. Peter. The solemn *Magisterium* includes ecumenical council and papal definition. As stated in the Catechism:

The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful - who

⁵⁴ Thomas O'Meara, "The Teaching Office of Bishops in the Ecclesiology of Charles Journet", *The Jurist* 49 (1989), p. 28.

confirms his brethren in the faith - he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. The infallibility promised to the Church is also present when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme *Magisterium*, above all in an Ecumenical Council.⁵⁵

To define a doctrine is to commit the Church to holding and teaching a particular point of doctrine irrevocably, calling for an absolute assent to it on the part of all the faithful. It springs from the conviction that God cannot lead His chosen ones to falsehood.

1.3.2.2 *Ordinary Magisterium*

The ordinary *Magisterium* means the ordinary and usual teaching and preaching activity of the hierarchy, affirming a point of doctrine which (as yet) cannot be said to be part of the Catholic faith because (as yet) the Church has not affirmed it with a conclusive judgment.⁵⁶ It proposes a teaching that leads to a better understanding of the Revelation in matters of faith and morals. It brings about a consistent affirmation of a Catholic doctrine.

It can be divided into: the ordinary teaching with the college of bishops or the ordinary teaching of the individual bishop, dispersed throughout the world, but still in communion among themselves and with the successor of St. Peter. To this ordinary teaching, the "definitions must

Catechism, #891.

Ladislav Orsy, *The Church: Learning and Teaching*, p. 62.

be adhered to with the submission of faith".⁵⁷ Even individually, when teaching in union with the college, the bishop's voice achieves a certain authority that merits, at the very least, religious assent.⁵⁸

1.3.3 *The Munus Docendi and the Call for Discipline*

The *munus docendi*, as a central aspect of the prophetic office, sees teaching as having a "disciplinary and pastoral aspect as well".⁵⁹ As the guardian of the Christian doctrine, the bishop has the authority to impose measures to regulate the relation of the faithful to the teaching office of the Church. Thus, in the exercise of his teaching mission and office, he is called upon to evaluate not only his own teaching but also those teachings done in his name and in his authority. In all of the legislation of the Church that bears with the bishop's supervision of doctrine, accurate presentation of the Catholic doctrine must be upheld.

The monitoring of the Church authority has to be seen in the context of preserving the unity in the faith. There is a "demand for at least, a silent submission to the Church teaching, even when such teachings could be erroneous".⁶⁰ In this way, the Church calls insistently for the use of certain terminology to express the Catholic doctrine. It has to be done with greater precaution. It is in this context

⁵⁷ LG, 25,2.

⁵⁸ Richard Baret, "The Bishop as Ordinary Teacher of the Faith", p. 237.

⁵⁹ John Boyle, "The Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies", p. 170.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

why the Church requires a direct link for theologians who speak in her behalf. It also includes matters like the approval of his publications, teachings and the like. Part of the monitoring is the imposition of penalties upon Catholic theologians who have dissented from the Church teaching.

*1.3.4 Areas to Exercise the **Munus Docendi***

United with the Pope and with the other members of the episcopal college, the diocesan bishop teaches, by reason of his position to the local Church. He does this to inspire his co-workers, as well as to make the entire community to be acutely aware of this duty. As the pastor of a diocese, he has the responsibility and authority regarding the explanation of the Christian doctrine. In fact, he has a wide range of scope in the exercise of his teaching function. Particularly, he has the competence in the various facets in which the proclamation of the Word can be carried out. The locus is not limited to the pulpit. More than these venues, he has access to the schools for religious instruction and pastoral education. Truly, this is extended to the ambit of schools of higher learning, schools of theology and universities. It is evident that the teaching responsibility of the bishop is a pastoral one, grounded in his role as a leader who serves the unity and growth of faith of the ecclesial community. He then exercises this responsibility by his own teaching, whether orally or in pastoral letters, and by his promotion of sound teaching in the catechetical and educational institutions.

1.4 Rights and Obligations of the Diocesan Bishop Entailed in the *Munus Docendi*

By virtue of the teaching authority, the diocesan bishop has the following rights and obligations:

1.4.1 To Articulate the Truths of Faith

The bishop is more than a spokesperson of the Pope. He is to bring to light the profundity of the Catholic tradition in his ministry. For this reason, he aspires to advance the cause of the faith through a prayerful and informed articulation of the Catholic tradition that does not simply repeat past formulations but seeks to bring new insight to Church teaching. He responds to new questions and new problems without essentially changing the original revelation. While the bishop need not be a professional theologian, he is expected to be theologically competent in explaining the doctrines of the faith.

To propound effectively the faith, he must be personally well-informed about this life in faith of the people of God. For this reason, he constantly equips himself with the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures and the Catholic theology. There is an inescapable element of study and scholarship demanded by episcopal ministry.⁶¹ Through pastoral experience, study, reflection and judgment, he comes to a deeper personal appropriation of the teachings of the Church. However, it is not sufficient for him to be simply examining his conscience,

⁶¹ US Bishops' Meeting, "The Teaching Ministry of the Diocesan Bishop", *Origins*, 21 (2 January 1992) no. 30, p. 478.

praying, consulting advisers and calling to mind the stored knowledge of his early theological studies. Dialogue and consultation with the experts allow him to crystallize the teaching he wishes to convey. Ultimately, when everything is done "with care and assistance of all the means at his disposal, the articulation of the faith may be a responsibility whose fulfillment brings with it an experience of an evangelical joy, both for the bishop himself and for the Church entrusted to his service."⁶²

1.4.2 To Preside over the Preaching Ministry

Preaching is eminent in the ministry of the episcopate. The bishop is bound to devote himself to the ministry of the Word, religiously meditating upon it and proclaiming it boldly. It falls upon the bishop who has the apostolic teaching to give the faithful entrusted to him suitable instructions in their right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels.⁶³ His preaching is then nourished and ruled by the Sacred Scriptures, so that everyone may offer the "obedience of faith"⁶⁴ to the God who reveals. In his task of preaching, he is concerned not just about choosing arguments and having a good, elegant style, but also speaks in a way that is filled with faith, nourished by the Sacred Scriptures and expressive of pastoral love.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 491.

⁶³ Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, *Constitutio Dogmatica de Divina Revelatione, Dei Verbum (DV)*, 18 Novembris 1965, AAS 58 (1966): 817-835 pp; DV, 1.

^MDV, 5.

It should be noted that it is the bishop's duty not only to devote himself personally to the work of the Gospel, but also to supervise the entire Ministry of the Word in relation to the flock committed to his care. Thus, he makes his priests realize that preaching the Word of God is the special and absolute necessary duty of the pastor of souls. In good time, he reproves those who presume to preach doctrines, foreign to the faith; and those who refuse to be corrected, he deprives of the faculty of preaching or teaching.⁶⁵

Inasmuch as lay people fulfill their prophetic role "as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for",⁶⁶ the bishop also watches over them; but in such a way that "the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibilities of the laity in the Church."⁶⁷

1.4.3 To Supervise Religious and Theological Education

It is of great concern to the bishop that in all the schools in his diocese - no matter what kind of schools they are in, or whether or not they depend on the Church authority - young people receive a solid religious and moral education and that they be sent into society as real Christians ready to serve as leaven to improve life, human fellowship and the apostolate.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, (Ottawa: Publication Service of Canadian Catholic Conference, 1974), p. 36.

⁶⁶ **LG, 35.**

⁶⁷ *LG*, 37.

⁶⁸ *GE*, 7, 8, 10.

The same is true regarding the bishop's responsibility on those who pursue college or university life. These goals can be achieved by taking into account of the special instruction in Christian doctrine and effective teaching through the pastoral action in the field of education. It belongs to the diocesan bishop to enrich the total life of the community as he selects clerics, religious and lay people who are truly suited and who thoroughly understand Catholic doctrine, can explain correctly and are skilled in the art of teaching.

1.4.4 To Preserve the Unity *and Integrity* of the Faith

Like the apostles being chosen to preach and defend the Good News without shame, the diocesan bishop is the authentic teacher, the guardian and judge of what pertains to faith and morals. He considers it his duty to think with the Church and to conform with the Roman Pontiff. It is his responsibility to diligently cultivate theological science and daily increase it with new yet proven doctrine so that he may be faithful in safeguarding the doctrines of faith to be free from errors and dangers.

When declaring a formal doctrinal judgment, he does so specifically with the intent of proclaiming Church doctrine in an authoritative and normative manner. He makes a stand on the side of the Church. Hence, he adheres in devoted and religious allegiance to the Pope's ordinary *Magisterium*, "in such a way that his supreme *Magisterium* is acknowledged with reverence"⁶⁹ and by

LG, 25.

written and spoken word and other means of communication spreads, supports and if the need arises, defends it in his diocese. In the same way, beyond his direct ministry of preaching and teaching, he is charged to safeguard the authentic exposition of the Church teaching as carried out by others within the local Church. Thus, he reproves those who presume to preach doctrines foreign to the faith; and those who refuse to be corrected, he deprives of the faculty of preaching or teaching.⁷⁰

1.4.5 To Preserve the Faith by Missionary Activity

Christ's teaching needs to be preached to all people at all times and all places. Thus, Christ's teaching needs to be translated into different languages and expressed in different cultural settings. However, the missionary activity of the Church demands a deeper awareness of the ideas, practices and social conditions in which the Church exists and labors.

In view of this situation, the bishop leads the other heralds of the gospels in inquiring into the true state of today's society, in order to make the right plan of action for solving the problems which engulf the apostolate on every side and for opening up new ways to spread the gospel. The various forms of the apostolate should be encouraged in the whole diocese or in any particular areas of it, the coordination and close connection of all apostolic works should be fostered.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, p. 36.

⁷¹ CD, 17.

1.5 Summary

Summing up then, the summon for renewal echoed by the Vatican Council II has occasioned a new outlook in the Catholic Church. This is evident in the Church's insistent call for everyone to participate in her mission by virtue of one's faith and baptism. All baptized persons are called to live their faith by word and deed. While it is the responsibility of all Christians to pass on the faith, it is a particular duty of the bishops, as successors of the apostles to safeguard and promote the Gospel-message. Every bishop is entrusted with a special responsibility by Christ on behalf of his Church through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of his episcopal consecration that conferred the sanctifying, governing and teaching offices, the bishop leads this apostolic ministry. In other words, this is leadership by service.

In the exercise of the teaching office, the diocesan bishop, being the authentic teacher, has his share of infallibility in the *Magisterium*. His authority then entails a serious obligation. A bishop must engage in constant theological and pastoral reflection and to foster a sound formation program for his people. In the process, the diocesan bishop brings out measures to put order in the exercise of his *munus docendi*. By virtue of his office, in communion with the college of bishops, he can demand obedience to safeguard the unity of the Church teaching. In carrying out his office, he can use all possible means to reach out to his people for the proclamation of the Word, particularly in his diocese, be it in the pulpit, in the schools, universities and the like.

August-September 2006

Sunday Homilies

WILL YOU GIVE UP YOUR TV FOR A MILLION PESOS?

Fr. Phil Bloom

Feast of the Transfiguration

A wealthy man once made the following proposition: Would you, for a million pesos, give up your television? Many immediately said, "yes," but then he explained it meant never watching TV ever again. Well, that sounded more serious. So they thought about it. In the end not one said they would promise never to watch television - even in exchange for a million pesos.

The question naturally arises, why have we become so attached to that box? In spite of all the hype about "reality television," few believe it represents reality. On the contrary, many of us believe it is pure distraction or diversion. And yet, we dread the thought of life without television.

Now, I cannot offer you a million pesos in exchange for your habit of watching television. But I would like to offer you something more valuable if you will give it up, at least for the next few days. If you do, you will have an opportunity, like Peter, James and John, to experience something truly different in your life.

Most of us protest that we are too "busy," but does life necessarily have to be filled with so many activities? Pascal put his finger on our problem in one of his *Pensees*:

Weariness. - Nothing is so insufferable to man as to be completely at rest, without passions, without business, without diversion, without study. He then feels his nothingness, his forlornness, his insufficiency, his dependence, his weakness, his emptiness. There will immediately arise from the depth of his heart weariness, gloom, sadness, fretfulness, vexation, despair.

A time spent without any diversions or distractions can bring the terrible feelings Pascal describes. I remember when I made a thirty day silent retreat. I was looking forward to it for months because my life in the parish has become so complicated and stressful. But when I got to the retreat house, our retreat master told us, "I know many of you have brought letters to answer, but please put them away. They will wait until the retreat is over." Well, I knew a retreat would not be a time for reading novels and magazines or watching TV, but I thought letters would be legitimate. Then he told us to leave our spiritual books in the suitcases. "Oh, no," I thought, but I told myself I would dedicate the month to an intense Bible study. The final blow was when he

told us we would only need to read very short paragraphs from the Bible which our director would assign as springboard for prayer.

Well, I did the best I could with days of silence, but I have to admit it was the longest month of my life! In the first days of that retreat, I found myself observing planes appear in the sky and counting how many days till I would be on one. I wanted to escape from such a silent and utterly diversion-free place.

But gradually, I finally settled down - sort of. I came to appreciate silence, and to relish being intimate with the Lord in prayer. I came away with a much deeper respect for the contemplative vocation, such as Carmelite nuns or Trappist priests. And I did experience God's presence in a way I never had before. It was perhaps similar to what Peter, James, and John experience at the Transfiguration.

Now, several years after that retreat, I hardly had an experience like the one described today in the Gospel. That was a pure grace for Peter, James and John to get such a glimpse of Jesus' glory. But they needed a time set apart as a necessary condition for it to happen.

Turn off the TV (maybe even the computer) and spend some time apart with Jesus. To give up TV could be a challenging sacrifice. But on this Transfiguration Sunday, I want to ask you to consider giving up something even greater - **the future**. No, I am not asking you to take your life, but rather to concentrate on the present moment. To experience Jesus not in the past, not tomorrow, but **NOW**. Again Pascal sums up our problem:

*Let each one examine his thoughts, and he will find them all occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means; the future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live; and, **since we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so.***

We can only meet Jesus in the present moment. When I was a boy, I thought my life would really begin when I got out of high school. When I was a seminarian, I thought life would begin when I was ordained. After ordination, I thought real life would happen when I became the pastor of a certain parish. Now I am pastor of a parish which has exceeded all I hoped for. I could not ask for more - yet I sometimes find myself day-dreaming about retiring at 65 and heading back to the mountains!

I have always been in a situation that Pascal describes: ***always preparing to be happy rather than being happy.*** Of course I know that only one person can make me happy - and I am not talking about someone I wish would call! I am speaking about the one who showed his brilliance to those favored apostles. When Jesus allows us that glimpse, the awestruck words of Peter will also flow from our interior, "It is good that we are here." This present moment is unrepeatable. It is a gift - that is why it is called **PRESENT**. And when we open ourselves to its many surprises, we shall, like the apostles, experience a glorious transfiguration.

FOOD OF LIFE

Fr. Giles Hibbert, O.R

Nineteenth Sunday of the Year (B)

A scone, baked on hot stones, and a jar of water - on which Elijah traveled a considerable way. One can't, however, help feeling that a jar of *wine* would both have been more nourishing and more appetizing. And, considering the way in which such stories have a prophetic content in themselves, a jar of wine would also have been more appropriate as a pointer to the Eucharist of the New Testament.

Interestingly enough, although there is a clear 'Bread of life' discourse cited in today's reading, there is no 'Wine of life' discourse anywhere. In fact the New Testament is quite extraordinarily silent about wine. One has to assume, both by way of back reference to the Passover and its customary expression (for there is no reference to wine in the original Passover ritual), together with Jesus' passing comment on 'the fruit of the vine' in Luke, that it was wine not water that was used in that primal Eucharist.

There *is* interestingly a 'Water of Life' discourse earlier in this same Gospel. The words, Whoever drinks this water will thirst again, but anyone who drinks the water which I give will never thirst ... it will well up to eternal life inside him, spoken by Jesus to the 'Samaritan woman' are remarkably similar to Your fathers ate manna in the desert and are dead ... I am the living bread that

has come down from heaven, anyone who eats it will live for ever. No mention here of wine or blood.

John's Gospel does, however, have one extremely startling reference to water from the purification jars being turned into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Scholars have argued either way as to whether this first of the signs given by Jesus ... revealing his glory has a Eucharistic significance. But this debate pales into insignificance, I think, because this, together with the traditions surrounding the Passover, when put together with the words given to Jesus in today's reading - The bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world - has ensured that we experience as 'real' the consecrated wine of the Eucharist as the blood of Christ poured out on Calvary for our salvation.

That ceremony, as found in the tradition of Paul and the first three Gospels concerning the Last Supper, proclaims both the liberation of God's People from bondage, their being formed into a coherent Nation, and the expectation of a future Messianic banquet. We have here a sign (sacrament) of the life of the Spirit, through the Christ, enlivening his *Laos* - the Church.

But the startlingly different presentation of John contains the earliest 'description' of a 'eucharist' after the Resurrection that we have, in the primitive and almost touchable account of Jesus' resurrection appearance to Peter in Galilee (foretold in Matthew 28:16). The food shared was bread and fish. Might this not well have been the menu at the Last Supper in John?

And then there are all those incidents of bread and fishes in the Messianic feasts of all four Gospels where the bread was multiplied and the Eucharist augured. It is, however, not all that easy to keep fish in a tabernacle.

If the accounts of the Resurrection appear so muddled and inconsistent - to our enrichment, I suggest - why should we *want* the concept of the Eucharist to be so clear-cut? Presumably because it has to be 'acted out' in the liturgical life of the Church with some clarity and discipline. But in this we risk losing much.

It was bad luck that Elijah was not provided with a *cru noble*, but nevertheless what he received was 'the food of life'. It may only have lasted him till he got to Sinai, but that forty days represents, backwardly, the years in which Israel was being formed as a People, and forwardly the 'time of the Church' in which the Food of life is represented - made real to us - in the sacraments.

Fr. Giles Hibbert is the manager of Blackfriars Publications.

THE HUMAN LIFE OF GOD

Fr. Brian Davies, O.P.

Twentieth Sunday of the Year (B)

We could read today's Gospel as a call to frequent reception of the Eucharist. And John is clearly thinking of the Eucharist at this point in his text. But why is the Eucharist of value? What lies behind it? Into what context should we place it?

John's answer is that the significance of the Eucharist lies in the human life of God. He values the Eucharist because he sees it as a means by which we can engage ourselves with God incarnate. And he thinks that it matters that we do this because he thinks of the Incarnation as leading us to a genuine sharing in God's life.

Make no mistake about it: the Christian vocation is nothing less than a call to become like God. It is about being gathered up into what the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are. And it is the human life of God that began this process. God loved us enough to become one of us so that we may be one with him by being valued as the persons of the Trinity value each other.

Is true life available to us? Well, we certainly live. But we also certainly die. The world, by itself, cannot rescue us from the grave. Yet the grave cannot contain God. He is the Lord of graves. He has true (or full) life, as he shows us by his Son's resurrection.

And, John insists, God's Son (and, therefore, God himself) wants us to share in his lordship over death. He wants us to share in his true life. For he wants us to be united with him and to enjoy what he is about at the core of his being.

In today's Gospel reading, that idea is expressed in the notion of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood. These, John is saying, are true sources of nourishment, sources of true life, just as Christ is one who lives so truly that death has no claim on him. And, for John, all of that is so because Christ is God calling us to be one with him, because God, in Christ, is offering us a share in what it means to be divine.

We do not, of course, know what it means to be divine. Or, at least, we do not know what God is as God knows himself. Yet we do know what God looks like when, so to speak, he projects himself onto history in the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. God's very essence may elude us, but we can readily grasp the story of one like ourselves.

For it is a human story which is not incomprehensible. It can be pictured. It can also be imitated. And the story, the history, of God incarnate is the story, the history, of someone who tells us that true life begins in us when we take him to be its source, when we take him to be even more of a source of nourishment than the food and drink on our tables.

How do we do this? We can do so by receiving the Eucharist. But the Eucharist is not merely human nourishment. Receiving it does not guarantee us true life as,

for example, drinking milk guarantees a build up of calcium in us. We celebrate the Eucharist physically to relate ourselves to one who instituted it when coming to the end of a human life with a definite character and goal. We celebrate it to play out in symbols our devotion to him.

But that devotion, if it is to be what he meant by true life, must be more than a matter of play. It must also be a matter of thinking, talking, and acting as he taught us to think, talk, and act. It means taking into ourselves, and therefore making part of ourselves, what he was all about.

The food we eat turns into us. And the food that gives us true life, the Son of God incarnate, is something into which we are meant to turn. Unlike any other, however, this food can turn us into something which nothing else can. It is not easy to digest, but if we grasp and appreciate its ingredients, it can make us to be like God.

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CHOOSE WHOM YOU WISH TO SERVE

Fr. Rudolf Lowenstein, O.P.

Twenty-First Sunday of the Year (B)

In our lives today we have many needs, and although our needs may change over time, there will always be, among other things, the basic necessities of food and clothing. Beyond that, different people have different priorities, and varied ways of achieving what they want.

Money is often necessary for what we want - we need it to buy food, to obtain clothes or fuel to keep us warm, and so on. But what about other needs such as companionship, love, or friendship? None of these are free, although they may be easier for some people to attain than others. And once attained, they must be worked at in order to last or stay valuable.

Take what St. Paul says in today's second reading. He has often been quoted out of context in order for husbands to have an easy time of it, but if we read the whole passage so that his advice is put in context, we see that he is offering a powerful recipe for married life that will benefit both man and woman. And although his words seem to be prescriptive, offering little room for maneuver, if followed they do allow for a great freedom within the marital relationship.

We can compare this reading with the first reading. Here the choice is more stark - either follow the Lord, or do not follow him. And it is the people's response that shows us not just what to do, but that they understand all the implications of following the Lord.

Many years after the time of our first reading, when Joshua had spoken to the people, Jesus is presenting his followers with much the same question, although couched in different words. They can either accept what he says and follow him, or they can leave him. And once again, a reply is quoted that shows that someone who had listened to Jesus intended to follow him.

Different words, different time, different context - but still there is an invitation or choice presented, and there is a reply. The person who replies may not always know or understand fully what is being taken on when the message is accepted, but that is not necessarily the point of the passage set for today's Mass.

Perhaps we are being invited not just to accept the challenge or message that Christ gives us, but to accept it with our whole hearts and souls. We may be led into ways and paths that we know not; we may be broken-hearted or endure distress along the way (we need only to look at the rest of the history of the tribes of Israel or of what happened to Simon Peter), but in the end we know that once we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, accepting his challenge is the only thing we can do.

And if we need any further proof or justification that our journey will end ultimately with the Lord, we have the words of today's psalm to enlighten us: The Lord ransoms the souls of his servants. Those who hide in him shall not be condemned.

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TAKE THIS TO HEART

Fr. Aelred Connelly, O.P.

Twenty-Second Sunday of the Year (B)

Keep the commandments of the Lord your God, just as I lay them down for you. Keep them, observe them and they will demonstrate to the peoples your wisdom and understanding.

Moses urges the people of Israel to take God's commandments to heart. God is offering them a new way of living and a new identity: what great nation is there which has its gods as near as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him?

This is summed up in the two great commandments to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. In the second reading from the letter of St. James, we hear that pure unspoilt religion in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

In the Gospel Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah, to show forth how the religious leaders of his time have gone astray in their interpretation of the Law: this people honors me only with lip service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

Being ritually unclean does not matter in comparison with having an unclean heart. It is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge. It has often

been said that the greatest loss in our time is the sense of sin, usually meaning a loss of a clear vision of what is good and what is evil, or a sense of what is right and what is wrong. This is usually in relation to a moral compass based on the external observance of universally agreed moral laws.

However, I think that the real loss is the sense of the depths of sin, which is the loss of our contact with the loving heart of God our Father. He is the one who is nearer to us than ourselves when we call on him from the depth of our hearts. What binds us to him are the 'theological virtues', faith, hope and charity, received as gifts of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and allied to the practice of the old 'cardinal virtues' of justice, temperance, courage and prudence.

Right acting has to do with right thinking and right judgment in our every day lives, based on the wisdom and understanding which arises from trying to live and internalize the Law. It is all a gift from the loving heart of the Father through Jesus, the Word made flesh for us, in the Holy Spirit. It is our way now of sharing in the life of the Holy Trinity. This is what we were made for, in the words of St James: By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the Truth, so that we should be a sort of first fruits of what he had created.

So the Law given to Moses becomes the word that has been planted in us, so that we can save our souls. It takes an active co-operation, nature working with grace, in responding to God's gift to us in Jesus through the Spirit working in our everyday choices. This is the great

Catholic Christian tradition of our Church, which states firm principles, but applies them pastorally, taking into account the real needs and conditions of God's people in our own place and time.

We need to give care and consideration to the word of truth we are commanded to speak, that the message of truth be heard in words and actions of wisdom and understanding, sharing our rich tradition imaginatively from simplicity of heart, receiving the truth as well as giving it from loving hearts.

Our contemplative Dominican tradition of receiving the Word of God in hearts like Mary, the mother of Jesus, actively and humbly waiting for the Word to speak, should prune the vine of the wisdom and understanding we impart in the preaching of the Gospel.

We need to speak words of encouragement to our world and to our age, that will bring a sense of hope to those without hope, and faith to those who lack faith, or who are discouraged in their lives, and ultimately of love to those who lack in love or being loved. To do this without losing our integrity and our street credibility is perhaps the strongest challenge today. At the end of the day, we are all in need of being redeemed.

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TONGUES SING **FOR JOY**

Fr. Theodore Taylor, O.P.

Twenty-Third Sunday of **the** Year (B)

Those accompanying the afflicted man may have wanted his freeing from the 'demon' of deafness for his senses to be put in order. For the man born blind (Jn 9), the disciples themselves thought it natural to question, Who sinned, this man or his parents? Was not blindness punishment, and so what of his suffering - penalty for his own sin or sins of forbears? Physical defect implied spiritual defect. So something punitive, needing riddance, may have been thought to underlie this man's impediments.

This connection is spelled out in Leviticus. No priest's son who was blind or lame or whatever it might be could exercise ministry. Inner unworthiness was manifested by his defect; it was that that excluded him from the altar. The disciples' enquiry in John 9 indicates the same mindset.

Jesus' actions in today's gospel read like an exorcism ritual. To point up his partial social exclusion the man is taken aside. Jesus inserts fingers into the deaf ears, and with spittle on to his tongue. He sighs, probably anguished in confronting evil. His command is given in Aramaic, with translation. So cleared ears and clear speech are the outward signs of a thorough healing. Impediments to social acceptance are no more. Joy abounds.

Impediments of discrimination affect those in good health. Weekly in a Barbados newspaper a woman with

some disability promotes the cause of the 'differently abled', pleading that the 'whole' majority accept them as equals in the social inclusion they crave. Crucial for their sense of well-being are supportive attitudes, policies and behavior from the majority whose comeliness they envy.

'Fit' people demonstrate that it is *they*, who benefit from literal sight and hearing, who are by prejudice and discrimination *inwardly* blind and deaf when they fail to *heed the appeal* for understanding and support signaled from those with physical (and mental and emotional) afflictions. The columnist has to address a good number of people handicapped in humanity.

On Palm Sunday the reading from Isaiah 50 depicts us as disciples whom God each morning wakens to be receptive, listeners first before speakers. If we are willing to be alert to the challenges presented to us by our own selves and by others, God opens, wakens, our ears. We re-enter the waking world as listening learners, attending, to grasp afresh how God calls on us to recuperate and sustain our own selves and our neighbors.

First, we need to clear ourselves of illusions about our personality, and be aware of the inner contortions thwarting well-being; as it were, the demons seeking possession. Undertaking to face up to the multiplicity of our malign attitudes, such as arrogance, disdain and self-seeking, and praying for the grace of purification: we may stretch the notion of exorcism and term this the approach to righteousness and wisdom and having a self that we may value. There is much to gain as indifference and animosity are transformed into having love to give.

We are likely to fall short of the whole person God wants us to be, but, if we want to be true and compassionate disciples, contrition will turn us around and help us forward. I took to heart the observation years ago that I tended to evade honest interpersonal exchange by inept humor. I was then affecting deafness, and my responses were at times only 'stammered'. I think that, though I now hear less clearly, inwardly I am more ready to take in what I am told, and give an unambiguous response.

The gospel depicts people perhaps activated by both concern and wariness. Our pilgrim way through life accompanies others. We have to be supportive, liberated from the attitudes of dismissal and discrimination I have referred to. Divisions arising from race and class, destitution, infirmity, marginalization (homosexuals to the fore these days): we must desist from distancing, and meet our brothers and sisters, looking and behaving like us or not, who with us make up the world of diverse humanity which is radically one.

May it be so! To cite the first reading: *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unsealed; the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy.*

Fr. Theodore Taylor is superior of the Dominican brethren at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Bridgetown, Barbados, and a clinical psychologist.

MORE THAN A SCAPEGOAT

Christopher B. Harbin

Twenty-Fourth Sunday of the Year (B)

Who do we say Jesus is? We claim to serve Jesus as Lord and Savior. At times we must pause as the disciples did, reflecting on who Jesus is for us. Who is this One who claims our allegiance, and what is following Him all about? We sing His titles and proclaim His attributes, but do we allow our knowledge of Him to affect the daily routines of our lives?

The people following Jesus during His earthly ministry had many reasons for doing so. Some were after the show, some looked for the acceptance that Jesus offered, some sought miracles for themselves or their friends, some grasped for any excuse to validate their questions regarding the system of religious life in Israel. They thought Jesus was a prophet - God's spokesman for their time.

Peter chose a different word, one charged with meaning for First Century Judaism - Messiah, God's Anointed! But Jesus did not want Peter using the word, "Messiah." There was too much misunderstanding tied to the term. Jesus had spent the first half of His ministry explaining that God's reign was so much more than the authority and power structures of this world.

Jesus vehemently taught against such a focus. He spoke of the loving Father seeking after the lost sheep of Israel. He lived an expression of God's grace, mercy,

love, and forgiveness as He touched the lepers, the poor, the blind, the lame, and encouraged women and children to enter the fellowship of His disciples. He categorized His identity to John the Baptist as fulfillment of showering the outcasts with the grace and love of God, preaching Gospel to them. This was a sharp critique of Sadducee and Pharisee theology. It was a word of discomfort for those whose lives were comfortable, for Jesus called them by example to go beyond themselves and actively share God's blessings with others.

That is not where Jesus' teaching ended, however. He went further in emphasizing the spiritual and eternal reality of life with God. He spoke of God's reign as an active reality within an individual's. He categorized God's reign as a spiritual reality calling us beyond the material concerns of this world. He taught repeatedly about entering the spiritual reality, leaving the physical in its place and using its resources for the sake of God's reign. Jesus exchanged "It's all about me," for "I am all about them."

In correcting Peter, Jesus went beyond the standard way of understanding the word "Messiah". While the people were wrapped up in concerns of comfort, power, control, stability, wealth, and freedom, Jesus spoke of the messiah as a suffering servant. That wasn't the picture they had in mind. Suffering and death did not jive with their concept of Messiah and their interests in physical comfort in the here and now. They wanted release from Roman taxation. They wanted freedom for self-determination. They wanted autonomy to live their lives without the cloud of Roman oppression hanging over them.

They didn't want to hear about suffering, rejection, and death. These were the very things they were attempting to escape! Messiah was all about getting beyond those things into an ideal theocracy in which the entire nation could pursue God's blessings without the intervention of some form of political oppression. They liked the concept of the kind despot that Jesus appeared to represent. They wanted a government ruled by folks of Jesus' character - interested in the welfare of the entire nation!

That is, the outcast and oppressed liked the idea. Jesus knew that He was making the ruling parties uncomfortable. Their complicity in oppressing those who weren't like them was becoming more apparent. He prepared the disciples for the fact that they would make Jesus the brunt of their anger, guilt, and desire to maintain control. They would turn Jesus into what we understand a scapegoat to be. They would kill Jesus as though Jesus were to blame for all the unrest.

That is not a good picture of what a scapegoat was, but neither is our picture of Jesus' identity all that clear. The scapegoat was featured in the Yom Kippur celebration - the Jewish Day of Atonement. It was one of two goats used in approaching *Yahweh* for purification and renewal. One goat was sacrificed to cleanse the sanctuary with its holiest items. The scapegoat, however, was not killed at all. The people's guilt would be laid on its head, and the scapegoat would be taken out into the wilderness, bearing the nation's guilt away from the Temple.

Jesus was no scapegoat. He was so much more. He bore the brunt of the anger and frustration of the Jewish and Roman authorities. As they were intent on maintaining

power and control in search of their own comfort and welfare, they felt it necessary to destroy any and every threat. While scapegoats were exiled into the wilderness to face whatever judgment God deemed necessary, Jesus would bear the brunt of the human drive for power directly. In a sense, Jesus marched to the cross to force the hand of the religious and political structures. He gave them the chance to define themselves and make their stand to live up to the demands of God's reign or to oppose God's will categorically.

He made no attempt at escape. He brought the demands of the Gospel to them directly. He called them to show their hand, revealing their true allegiance. Would they follow a "What's in it for me?" mentality, or would they live according to "It's all about them." Would they be willing to lay down everything to live in faithful service to God? Would they truly surrender their lives and resources to serve God, or would they continue to serve self at the expense of others?

When was the last time we denied ourselves in order to serve God? When did we sacrifice our own comfort in order to live out the demands of Jesus' Gospel? When was the last time we took Jesus' words about self-denial seriously? How have we let those words impact our lives? How long has it been since we spent more time and resources ministering God's grace to people outside our walls than on our own entertainment?

It would be simpler if Jesus had just been a scapegoat. Then we might be free of guilt and live as we please. He is more than a scapegoat. His demands are so much greater. What will we do with Him?

NOT FOR THE WEAK?

Fr. Leon Pereira, O.P.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday of the Year (B)

Recently, a presenter on the radio was complaining about Christianity:

*/ thought it was about gentleness and compassion,
but instead all I heard was triumphalist, militant talk.*

He'd gone to an Easter service for the first time since childhood, and been confronted with Christ as the triumphant conqueror.

The language of Easter, of victory over sin and death, does not readily resonate with modern people. They understand the language of Christmas much better:

*Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity, suffer me to come to thee.*

Or as the carol Once in Royal David's City has it,

*Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as he.*

Today, as in the Roman Empire, Christians are seen as feeble-minded and weak, trying to be the doormats of the world. This is not surprising when their model is Christ, a good man no doubt, but a loser nonetheless; a teacher of excellent values, but one doomed to be brushed aside and killed for his efforts.

Christians, if they are to be true to their founder's spirit, are assumed to subscribe to a mild and meek sub-

servience. Like their Christ they should be simpletons, childlike in quality. After all the term *cretin*, a simple-minded buffoon, is simply derived from the French word for *Christian*. But this is myopia. Short-sightedness.

In the reading from Wisdom, aptly applied to Jesus, the ungodly lay a snare for the Righteous Man, the self-styled Son of God.

*Let us test him with insult and torture,
and make a trial of his forbearance
that we may find out how gentle he is.*

Not content with torturing him for his gentleness, they plot his death.

*Let us see if his words are true, and let us
test what will happen at the end of his life ...
Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for,
according to what he says, he will be protected.*

From their point of view God will surely protect his own. If the Righteous Man is the Son of God, then they cannot overpower him or be able to kill him. In James's letter the thinking of the ungodly, the 'wisdom from below', is characterized by disorder.

*You desire and do not have; so you kill... You do not
have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive,
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

In contrast the 'wisdom from above' is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. The Righteous Man submits to an ignominious death because he has this greater wisdom.

This is what we see in the Gospel. It is not his opponents who ambush and master him, but *Jesus* who determines his fate. *He* will be delivered up, put to death, and rise on the third day. Jesus lays down his life of his own free will, and his enemies would have no power over him unless it had been given them from above. External appearances notwithstanding, *God* is in charge.

The disciples do not understand, and argue about power: which of them is the greatest? And so Jesus takes a child, the weakest form of humans, and places him in their midst. The nature of a child calls out for acceptance and love. And somehow this betrays something about the nature of our God.

For to receive a child in his name is to receive the Son, and to receive the Father who sent him. For it is God's will that the Son should humble himself to come in our nature, to become a helpless child himself.

If God does not disdain human weakness, it is because his power and purpose surpass any earthly potential. Judgments about power from a purely human point of view are mistaken. Talk of human greatness is quite meaningless in the long run, for we are all weak and needy before God.

In contrast, the weakness and crucifixion of Jesus are the manifestation of the triumph of God over our weaknesses: sin and death. Christianity is truly a religion for the weak and the simple - but only for those who know that they are.

Fr. Leon Pereira is studying for a License in Moral Theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

Cases and Inquiries

**IF A RETIRING BISHOP IS APPOINTED
APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF HIS OWN
DIOCESE, WHAT ARE HIS POWERS WHILE
THE DIOCESE IS "SEDE VACANTE"?**

Msgr. Rey Manuel S. Monsanto, JCD

QUESTION:

The Holy Father Benedict XVI has recently accepted the resignation of Bishop N.N., of the Diocese of A.A., but at the same time has appointed him Apostolic Administrator of the same diocese "with the rights, faculties and obligations given to diocesan bishops," until the installation of his successor.

My question is: Since Bishop N.N. continues being the Pastor of his own diocese, "with the rights, faculties and obligations given to diocesan bishops," has he still the same powers of a diocesan Bishop? What would be the things he can do and what are his powers as an Apostolic Administrator?

ANSWER:

First let us say something about the present status of the Bishop as well as of the Diocese mentioned in the question above.

1. WHAT IS THE PRESENT STATUS OF BISHOP N.N. AND OF HIS DIOCESE?

In the letter from the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, dated 03 March 2006, it is stated that the Holy Father Benedict XVI has accepted the resignation presented by His Excellency N.N. from the governance of the Diocese of A.A., in conformity with can. 401, §1. But at the same time it also stated that the Holy Father has appointed him Apostolic Administrator of the same Diocese until the installation of his successor.

In the Decree from the Congregation for Bishops, dated 04 March 2006, it is clearly stated that the Ecclesiastical Diocese of N.N. is now in a canonical state called "sede vacante." And it also stated that until the taking of canonical possession of the new Bishop he is appointed as Apostolic Administrator with the rights, faculties and obligations given to diocesan bishops ("*... eique iura, facultates et officia tribuit quae Episcopis dioecesanis, ad normam canonum, competent.*")

In a letter from Cardinal Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, dated 04 March 2006, addressed to the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, telling about the decree of his appointment as Apostolic Administrator, Bishop NN is addressed now as "Bishop Emeritus."

In other words, he is considered a retired Bishop. He no longer has the powers of a diocesan Bishop. But

because he has been appointed Apostolic Administrator he is given the rights, faculties, and duties of a diocesan Bishop, in accordance with the norms of canon law, that is, in a limited way.

So, although the See of A.A. is vacant (*sede vacante*), in order to ensure the government or direction of the Diocese, before the installation of the new Bishop, Bishop N.N. has been appointed as Apostolic Administrator with the rights, faculties and duties of a diocesan bishop.

2. WHAT IS AN APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR?

Canon 371, §2 of the Code of Canon Law describes the Apostolic Administrator as he who governs an apostolic administration. But this administration is described as "*a certain portion of the people of God... not yet established by the Supreme Pontiff as a diocese*" (italics ours) and so entrusted to an Apostolic Administrator "who governs it in the name of the Supreme Pontiff." This is clearly not the kind of Apostolic Administrator Bishop N.N. is now. For, although he governs the Diocese, in the name of the Supreme Pontiff, the Diocese is already an established Diocese.

Thus, he is more like a Diocesan Administrator mentioned in Canon 419 to 430. So, it is to these Canons, especially from canons 426-429 that we refer as regards what Bishop N.N. can do or not do as Apostolic Administrator. The main difference between a Diocesan Administrator and an Apostolic Administrator in this sense is that while the former is elected by the diocesan college of consultors (c. 419), the latter is directly appointed by the Pope and governs in the name of the

Pope. But both govern a diocese in a temporary manner, and so have practically the same powers, except in some cases specified by Canon Law.

3. WHAT ARE THE POWERS OF AN APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR?

The appointment Decree says that as Apostolic Administrator, Bishop N.N. has the rights, faculties or powers and duties (obligations) which belong to the diocesan Bishops, *according to the norms to the canons* ("... eique iura, facultates et officia tribuit quae Episcopis dioecesanis, ad normam canonum, competunt.")

Canon 427 §1 says practically the same thing about the "Diocesan Administrator who is bound by the obligations, and enjoys the power, of a diocesan Bishop, excluding matters which are excepted by the nature of things or by the law itself." It would look like the cautionary clause of the appointment ("according to the norms...") and that of canon 427 ("excluding those matters...") means the same thing: both the Diocesan and Apostolic administrator even if granted the powers of a diocesan Bishop cannot do all the things a diocesan Bishop can do even if either be an ordained bishop (because a diocesan Administrator may also be a bishop, like when an auxiliary Bishop is elected Diocesan Administrator), or even if one has been the former diocesan Bishop of the place of which he is now an Administrator. So, what the Canons say about the powers of the diocesan Administrator can also be said of the apostolic Administrator, except in some particular case as can be seen in the canon (cf can. 19.)

The **general duties** are in Canons 428 and 429.

Canon 428, §1 states: "While the see is vacant, no innovation is to be made." And §2 adds: "Those who have the interim governance of the diocese are forbidden to do anything which could in any way prejudice the rights of the diocese or of the Bishop. Both the Apostolic administrator and any other persons, are specifically forbidden to remove, destroy or in any way alter documents of the diocesan curia, either personally or through another." In other words, he is to maintain the *status quo*, and he is not to make major decisions or changes. This is the general law that the apostolic Administrator has to remember and follow.

Canon 429 states: The diocesan (read also: Apostolic) Administrator is obliged to reside in the diocese, and to apply the Mass for the people..." These are some of the duties of a diocesan Bishop.

He is a **local Ordinary** according to canon 134 §1, which states: "In law the term Ordinary means, apart from the Roman Pontiff, diocesan Bishop, *and all who, even for a time only, are set over a particular Church...*" (italization mine.) And §2 says: "The term local Ordinary means all those enumerated in §1, except Superiors of religious institutes and of societies of apostolic life." Thus, he does not govern the diocese by delegated power, though in a vicarious manner since he governs it in the name of the Pope. So his name is mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer as apostolic Administrator. He remains to be a member of the Episcopal Conference. And he receives the renewal of priestly promises of the priests during the chrism Mass.

What he can do

The following are some of the things he can specifically do. Canon 525 grants him the power to install or confirm those already presented for a parish and even appoint a parish priest when the see is vacant for a year: "When a see is vacant or impeded, it is for the diocesan Administrator or whoever governs the diocese in the interim (italization mine): 1° to institute ("install" in the American translation) priests lawfully presented for a parish or to confirm those lawfully elected to one; 2° to appoint parish priests if the see has been vacant or impeded for a year."

(Note: Basing itself on can. 455, §2, 1° of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, which is can. 525 now, the "New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law" prepared by the Canon Law Society of America, says that he can even appoint a parochial vicar. This seems to be supported by the "Code of Canon Law Annotated," 2nd edition, prepared in the Spanish language by the Faculty of Canon Law of the University of Navarra, which simply states when commenting on can 525 that this canon "hardly varies from the previous legislation." And in that canon the Vicar Capitular (former name of the Diocesan Administrator) could appoint parochial vicars. And so, according to can 6, §2 of the present Code, can. 525 is to be assessed in light of canonical tradition.)

He may not, however, appoint a parish priest for this is a major decision or an innovation.

Canon 525 allows him to remove a parochial vicar: "Without prejudice to can. 682, §2, an assistant priest may for a just reason be removed by the diocesan Bishop or the diocesan Administrator."

He can give dimissorial letters for ordination according to can. 1018, §1, 2°: "The following can give dimissorial letters for the secular clergy: ... the Apostolic Administrator..." (The diocesan Administrator can do this only after the see is vacant for one year.) If the Apostolic Administrator is a Bishop then because he can allow a person to be ordained priest by another Bishop it follows that he can also do the ordination himself; that is, he can ordain. And being a Bishop he can also administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. And he can consecrate the Holy Oils on Holy Thursday.

What he cannot do

He cannot entrust a parish to a clerical religious institute: "...the diocesan Bishop, but not the diocesan (read also: apostolic) Administrator, can ... entrust a parish to a clerical religious institute or to clerical society of apostolic life..." (can. 520 §1) This would be like appointing a parish priest.

He cannot excardinate or incardinate according to can. 272: "The diocesan (read also: apostolic) Administrator cannot grant excardination nor incardination, nor permission to move to another particular Church, unless the Episcopal see has been vacant for a year, and he has the consent of the college of consultors."

He cannot establish public associations: "The authority which is competent to establish public associations is: ...the diocesan Bishop, ... but not the diocesan (read also: apostolic) Administrator... (can. 312, §1, 3°.)

He cannot bestow the office of canon Canon: "It belongs to the diocesan Bishop, ...but not to the diocesan (read also: apostolic) Administrator, to bestow each and every canonry both in the cathedral church and in a collegiate church..." (can. 509, §1.)

Just like the diocesan Administrator he cannot remove the Judicial Vicar: "When the see is vacant, they (i.e., the Judicial Vicar and vice Officials) do not cease from office, nor can they be removed by the diocesan (read also: apostolic) Administrator." (can. 1420, §5.)

4. WHEN DOES THE OFFICE BEGIN AND WHEN DOES IT CEASE?

Bishop N.N. began his new office of Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of N.N. on March 4, 2006, according to the appointment Decree, which says "...from today (*"ab hodierna die"*) or immediately, that is, on the same day his resignation was accepted.

He will cease being Apostolic Administrator on the day the new Archbishop will take possession of the Archdiocese: "...until the new Archbishop takes canonical possession of the see..." (*"donee novus episcopus canonicam sedis possessionem capiat."*) This is also what can. 430, §1 says.

5. WHAT OFFICES AUTOMATICALLY CEASE WITH THE BISHOP?

In general, it can be said that all those offices that share with the appointing diocesan Bishop the executive power are co-terminus with him. Thus:

The office of the ***Vicar General*** and of the ***Episcopal Vicar***: "The power of the Vicar general or Episcopal Vicar ceases... when the Episcopal see falls vacant" (can. 481, §1). But this power does not cease if the person holding the office is an Auxiliary Bishop: "...when the Episcopal see is vacant and until the new Bishop takes possession of the see, the auxiliary Bishop retains all and only those powers and faculties which he had as Vicar general or as Episcopal Vicar when the see was occupied." (can. 409, §2) The apostolic Administrator cannot appoint a Vicar General because, according to can. 474, §1 only a diocesan Bishop can do that and he is not a diocesan Bishop. There is nothing however to stop him from delegating others, much like a diocesan Bishop.

The ***Episcopal Council*** also ceases by reason of those composing it who are co-terminus with the appointing diocesan Bishop: "Where the Bishop judges it useful for the better promotion of pastoral action, he can establish an Episcopal council, *comprising the Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar.*" (can. 473 §4) (Italization mine.)

The ***Council of priests*** also ceases according to can. 501, §2. which states: "When the see is vacant, the council of priests lapses..." But it is to be noted that it is the obligation of the new Bishop to reconstitute this

council: "The Bishop must reconstitute the council of priests within a year of taking possession." (*Idem*)

The **diocesan Pastoral Council**, if there is one, also ceases as stated in can. 513, §2: "When the see is vacant, the pastoral council lapses."

6. WHAT OFFICES REMAIN?

The **College of Consultors** stays as can be seen from the important functions it is to perform when the see becomes vacant: it is to be convened without delay to elect a diocesan Administrator (that is, if the Apostolic See decides not to appoint an apostolic Administrator) within eight (8) days of being notified of vacancy (can. 419 and 421, §1); it takes on the functions of the council of priests (can. 501, §2); and it receives the apostolic letters of appointment of the new Bishop: "A Bishop takes canonical possession of his diocese when, personally or by proxy, *he shows the apostolic letters to the college of consultors* (italization mine), in the presence of the chancellor of the curia..." (can. 382, §3). And the diocesan or apostolic Administrator has to get its consent to remove a chancellor from office (can. 485.)

The **Chancellor** and **Vice-Chancellor** also remain. He is to record the showing of the apostolic letters of the new Bishop to the college of consultors: "A Bishop takes possession of his diocese when, ... he shows the apostolic letters to the college of consultors, *in the presence of the chancellor of the curia* (italization mine), who makes a record of the fact." (can. 382, §3). And he cannot be easily removed by the diocesan (read also: apostolic)

Administrator: "They (i.e., chancellor and vice-chancellor) can be removed by a diocesan Administrator only with the consent of the college of consultors." (can. 485.)

(A note connected with the office of chancellor concerning the secret archive during the vacancy of the see: Can. 490, §2 states: "When the see is vacant, the secret archive or safe is not to be opened except in a case of real necessity, and then by the diocesan Administrator personally." This is to safeguard the documents as we have seen in can. 428, §2 above.)

The **Judicial Vicar** of the Diocese, who had been appointed by the Bishop, also remains. Canon 1420, §5 states: "When the see is vacant, they (i.e., the judicial Vicar and the Vice-Officials) do not cease from office, nor can they be removed by the diocesan Administrator." However, they need to be confirmed in the office by the new Bishop.

Canon 423, §2 points to the remaining in office of the **Financial Administrator** (or *oeconomus*, diocesan treasurer) when it says that if he (the financial Administrator) is elected diocesan Administrator then another one must be elected: "The diocesan Administrator is not to be at the same time the financial Administrator. Accordingly, if the financial administrator of the diocese is elected Administrator, the financial Committee is to elect another temporary financial Administrator." Besides he is supposed to be appointed for five (5) years (can. 494, §2.) His presence and work is needed even in *sede vacante*, even if it be only temporarily.

Consequently, as can be seen from the task it is to perform if the Financial Administrator is elected diocesan Administrator, the Finance Committee or Council remains. Besides the members are also supposed to be appointed for five (5) years, (can. 492, §2) But, like the Apostolic Administrator, in accordance with can. 428 the council cannot make any innovation or major decision, like acquisition of properties and alienation of church properties.

How about the Commission/Apostolate Heads? They remain in their tasks until they are changed by the new Bishop, for normally in their appointment papers it says they are to remain in their tasks "until changed by me or by my successor"; or their term of work is specifically stated to last for a number of years, say five (5) years.

GREGORIAN MASSES: IS THERE ANY RECENT MODIFICATION ON THE CHURCH TEACHING?

Fr. Javier Gonzalez, O.P.

QUESTION:

*Researching on Church teaching on Gregorian Masses, I came upon the book of Fr. Excelso Garcia, OP, **Moral and Canonical Questions**, published in 1994. According to Fr. Garcia, the number of Gregorian Masses is thirty, to be said on thirty consecutive days without interruption, except in the Holy Triduum and, as indicated in the Declaration of the Sacred Council dated February 24, 1967, "due to unforeseen impediment and reasonable cause."*

May I inquire if there have been recent modifications on this matter? I will really appreciate updated information.

ANSWER:

As far as I know, there are no recent modifications on the teaching of the Church on this matter.

Fr. Garcia, in the referred book (pp. 173-179), offers enlightening information on the Gregorian Masses (that is, a series of thirty Masses celebrated within thirty consecutive days without interruption for the suffrage of the beloved departed, and called "Gregorian" because the practice began at the time of St. Gregory the Great).

This custom of offering the Holy Mass for a particular deceased person within thirty consecutive days without interruption became soon very popular and was approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on October 6, 1628. Since then, several Popes have stressed the efficacy of the Gregorian Masses and regulated this pious practice.

The latest Declaration on this matter was issued on February 24, 1967 by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, and was concerned mainly with possible interruptions in the celebration of the Masses. The Declaration, signed by Pope Paul VI, stated that:

"When the celebration of Gregorian Masses is interrupted due to an unforeseen impediment (e.g. by illness) or for a reasonable cause (e.g. due to the celebration of a funeral or wedding Mass) by dispositive action of the Church the celebration of the Gregorian Masses continues to have the effects of suffrage for the deceased which the practice and piety of the faithful have hitherto attributed to it, with the obligation of the celebrating priest, however, to complete the celebration of thirty Masses, as soon as possible. The Ordinary is to take opportune safeguards that no abuses creep into a matter of such great importance." (cf. AAS, 59 [1967], p. 229)

In summary, the present teaching of the Church on the Gregorian Masses is as follows:

1. This pious universal custom of the faithful to offer a series of Masses for a dead person has

been approved by the Church as highly efficacious to the dead for whom they are applied, and should be maintained;

2. The number of Gregorian Masses is thirty, to be said on thirty consecutive days without interruption, except in the Holy Triduum. An interruption due to an unforeseen impediment (illness) or for a reasonable cause (celebration of funeral or wedding Mass) does not hinder the efficacy of the Gregorian Masses. The priest concerned should, if possible, look for another priest when he is impeded to say the Mass or Masses on the day or days he cannot offer them himself. If that is not possible, the obligation of the celebrating priest to complete the celebration of thirty Masses as soon as possible remains;
3. The Gregorian Masses can be celebrated in an ordinary altar;
4. The Masses can be said by one or different priests. (The obligation, however, is not fulfilled by distributing the Masses among various priests and applying them in a few days: they are to be celebrated in thirty consecutive days);
5. The thirty Masses should be applied for the suffrage of only one soul;
6. To say the Mass of the Dead is not a compelling requirement, although it can be done.

In closing, I should say two things regarding Mass offerings, in general, but that are valid also for the Gregorian Masses:

First, that the Mass offering should be seen primarily *as a gift to the Church and not as a contract in return of services*. Canon 946 says that "Christ's faithful who make an offering so that Mass can be celebrated for their intention, contribute to the good of the Church, and by that offering they share in the Church's concern for the support of its ministers and its activities." By doing so, the prescription leaves no doubt that any offering given to the priest in connection with the celebration of the Eucharist is freely and willingly given and has a gratuitous nature of a gift. Obviously, the priest who accepts such offering is bound in justice to offer the Mass in accord with the intention of the person making the offering.

Second, the priest's intention is essentially *a spiritual and internal act through which he commends the intention to God*. He does not necessarily have to know the person for whom he is offering the Mass. In addition, the only obligation the priest undertakes is to celebrate the Mass; he is not even required to publicly announce the intentions of the Mass: it is enough that he has the habitual and implicit intention of celebrating the Masses at which he presides or concelebrates for the intention of the faithful who makes the offering. I say this because nowadays, in some parishes, an embarrassing atmosphere occurs when the priest feels obliged to announce the Mass intentions for fear of unpleasant relationship between him and his parishioners. It should be clear that the Mass intention announcement or publication neither adds nor subtracts from its efficacy: it may serve for the comfort of the living, but not for the benefit of the dead.

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REDEMPTIONIS SACRAMENTUM
*Congregation for Divine
Worship and the Discipline
of the Sacrament*

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