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ASIA'S BISHOPS HIGHLIGHT
THE FAMILY

James Kroeger, MM

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS:
THE ASIAN FAMILY TOWARD
A CULTURE OF LIFE

FABC

FINAL STATEMENT: NATIONAL
CONGRESS OF THE CLERGY

*Participants of the National
Congress of the Clergy*

FIFTIETH FOUNDATION
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CHURCH AND CONVENT OF
SANTO DOMINGO, QUEZON CITY

Pedro Tejero, OP

LIFE THAT IS NOT VANITY

Vicente Cajilig, OP

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Life That is Not Vanity

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

The book of Ecclesiastes says: *"And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the life breath returns for God who gave it... Vanity of vanity... all things are vanity."* It is about life and the end of life. It is about just what happens to life of a young man and where it ends. (Chap. 3, Iff) And if life is such, is there another way of seeing life, more in a positive way and a more hopeful way? There is...

Life is an opportunity, try to take it.

Life is beauty, admire it.

Life is a blessing, savor it.

Life is a dream, make it real.

These lines speak of attitudes toward this precious gift of God to everyone. These are attitudes that can help reverse any negative perception of this precious sharing of life in the divinity.

Life is a challenge, try to confront it.

Life is a duty, comply it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is precious, protect it.

Where life is taken as a challenge, a duty, a game, or something to be protected: all these give way to a new paradigm of spending moments, minutes, hours, weeks and days. The whole of the person's life becomes a daily reality to be confronted. And the arm men and women use in confrontation, is the revealed word of God through his Son.

Life is richness, make a treasure of it.

Life is love, enjoy it.

Life is mystery, try to reveal it.

Life is a promise, carry it out.

Qualities of life are referred here: it is rich, it is love itself, it is mystery, and it is a promise. This bespeaks of what is present, but also of what is future. The promise of the life of the future is so much mixed up with mystery that could only be fully unfolded at the end of time.

Life is sadness, try to get over it.

Life is a hymn, sing it.

Life is a fight, accept it.

Acceptance to what comes to one in life is short cut to peace. Whatever unpeaceful situation can be transcended. There is no situation that escapes solution. Somewhere in a corner is a solution.

Life is an adventure, run the risks.

Life is felicity, try to deserve it.

Life is life, defend it.

(From: Mother Teresa)

Kudos to all who defend life. Support them. Pray for them. For the next life they shall defend, may be yours.

Asia's Bishops Highlight the Family

JAMES KROEGER, M.M.*

For the eighth time in three decades, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) gathered in plenary assembly on August 17-23, 2004. The 181 participants from 22 Asian countries who came to Daejeon, Korea were made up of 6 cardinals, 80 bishops, and 95 priests, religious men and women, and laypersons. A similar mix of clergy, religious, and laity has characterized preceding assemblies; however, in line with the conference theme, extra steps were taken to assure the presence of laity, who numbered about 60.

The weeklong FABC gathering, focusing on "The Asian Family: Towards a Culture of Life," sought to address the

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vast changes in Asia with their concomitant new pressures on Asian families. The assembly process had begun a full year earlier, when a draft document, principally authored by Archbishop Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato, Philippines, had been circulated to all the Asian bishops' conferences. In response to their reactions, compiled as a 114-page book, and to the feedback from theologians and resource persons, a working paper was ready for all the arriving participants. The task at hand was to discuss and digest the paper, bring additional experiences and insights, and suggest specific ministry programs of family enrichment. This formula proved to be the right mix for a week of animated interaction.

In contrast to many previous FABC plenary assemblies, this 2004 meeting had no major addresses by theologians or resource persons; their contributions had already been integrated into the draft text. However, several short presentations or messages were given, often at the initial session of each day. Archbishop Oswald Gomis of Colombo, Sri Lanka, FABC Secretary General, gave a brief opening address, reminding delegates of FABC's rich, 34-year history. Gomis challenged the delegates to explore how the FABC could be a visionary force at the service of Asian families. The delegate of Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome, African Archbishop Robert Sarah, highlighted the pivotal nature of the conference, asserting that "the Catholic Church and the Asian and African societies must stand firm in presenting marriage and family life as something precious."

Assembled participants heard many other well-chosen voices. There were words and gestures of welcome to Korea from Archbishop Andreas Choi Chang-mou, president of the

Korean Bishops' Conference, and from Cardinal Stephen Kim, retired archbishop of Seoul and one of the few living original organizers of FABC in the 1970s. Japanese Cardinal Stephen Hamao, currently serving in Rome as President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, gave a description of the vast migration and refugee phenomenon in Asia, highlighting its impact on the Asian family. He graciously provided everyone with the new Vatican document *The Love of Christ toward Migrants (Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi)*. Fraternal delegates, representing various bishops' conferences, gave brief messages (Archbishop Adrian Doyle [Australia], Bishop Denis Browne [Oceania], and Bishop John Cummins [USA]). Finally, a delegation headed by Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the USA bishops' conference, visited briefly; one Asian bishop, surprised to see an African-American stand when Gregory was introduced, exclaimed: "He looks like one of us!"

FABC Plenary Assembly VIII, following a week of dedicated work, produced a "magisterial" final document, containing 124 sections and extending to 43 type-written pages. *The Asian Family toward a Culture of Integral Life* has three sections: (I) Pastoral Challenges to the Family in Asia; (II) Theological-Pastoral Reflection; (III) Pastoral Recommendations for Family Ministry. Assessing the entire document, one participant noted: "This work has emerged from the experience of pastors and families in Asia. It is very contemporary and comprehensive. I know the amount and depth of effort that went into this product. And, my hope is that it will find extensive pastoral use in Asia. Adapted to local needs, it could well serve as the guiding framework for dioceses,

parishes, and family life centers to design a truly effective - and critical - ministry for families."

The well-planned and carefully executed FABC assembly was further enriched by several factors. The daily Eucharists, homilies, prayers, and meditations moved the participants to open themselves to the evident action of the Holy Spirit. Three evening cultural events were warmly appreciated: the Tinitas Choir provided a panorama of sacred music; the Boys' and Girls' Choir of Seoul enthralled and delighted everyone; the presentation of the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts captivated the audience. There were optional screenings of several award-winning Asian films. Delegates were invited to express in writing their appreciation to retiring Assistant Secretary General, Father Edward Malone, for his lengthy service. Yes, FABC VIII provided a rich, cultural smorgasbord - to everyone's delight! And, of course, who can judge the importance and fruitfulness of the personal conversations and interaction among old and new friends?

On August 21, the penultimate working day of the conference, all delegates were hosted by the Tanbang-dong Parish in Daejeon for an inculturated celebration of Sunday Mass. Over one hundred families renewed their marriage vows during a moving Eucharist. And, one more delicious Korean meal was served in the parish hall. The day was enhanced with a pilgrimage to the near-by Hwangsee Bawee Shrine, site of the inspiring martyrdom in the 1800s of scores of Korean Catholics.

As FABC VIII concluded, a short message "To the People of God in Asia and People of Good Will" was released.

Principally authored by Bishop 'Chito' Tagle of Imus, Philippines, the message, framed in an ecumenical and interreligious tone, expresses the commitment of Catholics in Asia to work with governments, educational and media centers, and people of good will from all faiths "in strengthening the family as the focal point for the promotion of a civilization of love and a culture of life." The message, summing up the work of FABC VIII, concluded: "We entrust Asian families to God, the Fountain of Love and Life... Families of Asia, become what you are - God's gift of love and life for Asia!"

Message of the 8th Plenary Assembly: To the People of God in Asia and People of Good Will

FABC

Gathered in Daejeon, Korea for the 8th Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, we bishops, together with priests, religious and laypeople from various countries in Asia, reflected on the theme The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life, in the spirit of listening to God and to the voices of Asian families.* As this assembly comes to a close we are confirmed in the conviction that the family is truly God's gift and blessing to Asia!

We celebrate the signs of hope that abound in the Asian families. Inspired by religious and cultural values and traditions, many families strive to remain committed to the ideals of family life. They draw strength from Asian values like a profound

*The 181 participants from 22 Asian countries were made up of 6 Cardinals, 24 Archbishops, 56 Bishops and priests, religious men and women, and lay people. We note with sadness the absence of delegates from China.

reverence for life, closeness to and respect for nature, strong family ties, personal relationships, hospitality, the spirit of welcome, respect for elders, filial piety, caring for the young. The enduring spirituality and religiosity in the family and the sense of the sacredness of marriage, family and children are a cause for joy and have made many families the cradles of vocations. Faced with great odds, they manifest resilience and endurance. The Asian family is strengthened by and also transmits these values. We marvel at how the values of indigenous peoples and other religions enrich Asian families. Intercultural and inter-religious marriages also provide opportunities for spiritual enrichment, and become symbols of unconditional love in the midst of complex cultural and religious issues these marriages face. We thank you, families, for safeguarding genuine values and we encourage you to persevere.

We also share the anxieties of the Asian families. New realities impinge on the well-being of many families. An emerging global neo-liberal culture that propels individualism, selfishness and greed, with lifestyles and mindsets inspired by materialism and secularism, poses a threat to the family. Elite globalization has caused untold poverty and migration. Wars and conflicts also displace people from homes. Families face the impact of the means of social communication and coercive population programs on family values. The spread of HIV/AIDS, illegal drugs, and pornography has harmed families, especially the youth who are most vulnerable. The rise of marital divorce and break-up signals the dwindling cohesion of the family. Abortion and other attempts to manipulate human life present a severe problem. A contraceptive mentality is undermining genuine conjugal love. The continuing oppression of women and children is lamentable. Values that have served

as foundations of the family are vanishing at an alarming rate, one result being the diminishing number of vocations in some countries. We cannot also ignore the complex situation of families with single, separated, or remarried parents and the effects on the children. We unite ourselves with you, Asian families as you courageously struggle with these difficult issues.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we envision all families living by Love that comes from God, for only Divine Love strengthens and nurtures Life. God is love (I Jn 4:8) and out of love God sent the Son to bring us life (I Jn 4:9). In God's plan of salvation, the Son became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and became part of the family of Mary and Joseph. We desire that the values of the Reign of God taught by Jesus (Mt 5-7) may take root in Asian families and bloom into a culture of life. A culture of life respects and protects God's gift of human life in all its dimensions from conception to death. A culture of life vigorously opposes the forces that destroy, exploit and oppress human life. A culture of life actively promotes responsible parenthood and the primacy of human life and dignity over efficiency, capital and profit. A culture of life promotes family values from indigenous people and other religions. We believe that families, steeped in the prayer and spirituality, are sanctuaries where love is faithfully shared and life responsibly generated, enriched and defended. By their shared love, communion and mutual service, Asian families can help foster communion and solidarity in faith communities and in society as we work towards forming one family of humankind.

As pastors of the Church convinced of God's unfailing love, we bishops will look for every opportunity to promote

the good of families. We commit ourselves to strengthen Family Ministry so as to assist and accompany all families, especially those in dire need, on their journey towards fullness of life. In a particular way we would like to express our affection and concern to the Catholic families in China and North Korea. We are one with our Catholic brothers and sisters in China as they meet the challenge of transforming the Church into one family of God.

As builders of communities, we appeal to our governments, groups concerned for the welfare of families, educational institutions, mass media producers and promoters, our brothers and sisters of other religious beliefs, and all people of good will to join us in strengthening the family as the focal point for the promotion of a civilization of love and a culture of life.

We entrust Asian families to God, the Fountain of Love and Life. We pray that you may "put on love, the perfect bond" (Col 3:14). Families of Asia, become what you are - God's gift of love and life for Asia!

Instrumentum Laboris: **The Asian Family Toward a Culture of Life** FABC

Introduction

For the Bishops of Asia to come together for the 8th FABC Plenary Assembly and reflect on "The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life," is truly a great blessing from the Lord. [Since its inception in 1974 the FABC in plenary session *has presumed* the major role of the family in evangelization. Only the 4th FABC Plenary Assembly on the Laity in 1986 gave more than just a passing mention of the family, devoting 10 paragraphs to the challenges confronting the family, its central role in evangelization and in the formation not only of the laity, but also of the Church as a whole]. For the past two decades rapid cultural, scientific and technological developments *alongside economic and political developments have*

•Working document of the FABC 8th Plenary Assembly, August 16-23, 2004 at the Daejeon Catholic University in Korea.

been impacting heavily on human society. At the very center of this social ferment is the family, the cellular receptor of emerging cultures as well as initiator, for good or for bad, of influential cultural forces. Even today we refer to the family as a point of reference for social, political, economic and religion-based ideal relationships. As a world body the United Nations continues to consider the family as the basic unit of society though some neo-liberal trends in the West have questioned it. The social teaching of the Church has always accepted the family as the first basic cell and community of society. Undoubtedly the first and fundamental structure for human ecology is the family.

The universal Church *consistently insists* on the paramount importance of the Family as the way by which all history passes and as the *domestic church* or the church that is the home [*Lumen Gentium*, 11; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11; *Familiaris Consortio*, 21. From the Latin word *domus*, home, the term *domestic church* shall be used throughout the paper although it may be less than felicitous, since related words such as "domesticated," "domestic worker" can evoke images of inferiority, passivity, submissiveness, and timidity]. The Acts of the Apostles reminds us that the faith spread "from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Pope John Paul II has already convoked four World Meeting of Families in order to underline the indispensable role of the Christian Family in charting the destiny of humankind in the light of faith and the Gospel.

It is in the background of world developments and the general response of the universal Church that the reflection of FABC on the Asian family takes on both universal and local meaning. There is no doubt that global developments

have an impact even on the remotest rural Asian family. We begin our reflection on the pastoral challenges that the Asian family confronts.

I. THE PASTORAL CHALLENGES OF THE FAMILY IN ASIA

Family Traditions and Values

In the midst of swift, sweeping, and even revolutionary changes in the world, Asian families generally remain close-knit. The closeness of relationships in the nuclear family is also true in the extended family. The elderly, retired members of the family, parents and grandparents still receive respect and care *within* the family setting, notwithstanding the many difficulties and sacrifices involved. Children are cherished as treasures and gifts of God. To show their love for their children, parents are willing to undertake all kinds of sacrifices in providing for their health, their education, their general welfare. *That such values endure in Asia as part of family tradition is verified by research [see The International Social Survey Program (ISSP), 2002; cited by the Bishops of South Korea, Intervention on the Working Paper (CBCK, IWP,), July 22, 2004, p. 1].*

But strong kinship and family-centeredness has also its downside. Because their role is almost always seen traditionally and narrowly as *domestic*, wives and daughters bear the heavier burden of caring for the elderly and the children at home, a task that should be the responsibility of all members of the family. Moreover, we also observe that graft and corruption, nepotism, political and economic cronyism in Asia is often due to inordinate overly concern for family, in the

dominant and selfish desire to serve the interests of the family, of kin and cronies - at the expense of the common good.

Today, however, pervasive realities, some old, many others quickly emerging are making Asian families vulnerable to profound social changes, especially under the impact of globalization. These social changes are reshaping moral and religious beliefs, self-concepts of individuals and families, even the very structures of marriage and family.

While we need to be aware of the different cultural situations in Asia, we can recognize major commonalities in the situation of Asian families. *[But very difficult to incorporate into the general Asian situation is the condition of the family in the former Soviet Republics. For instance, the Church in Kazakhstan is not only a tiny minority among the other major religions, but like all the other religions it was also repressed for some 70 years under atheistic Communism. Thus there is a generation lost to the Church and formed according to the "Soviet materialistic and atheistic mind." Therefore, it is "difficult to speak of 'Catholic' or even 'Christian' families due to the many mixed marriages with non-practicing Christians, with Muslims, or non-believers." In fact, "Kazakhs who become Christians are often ostracized or even threatened with death by their relatives or co-nationals." Beliefs on marriage and family are quite far from the Christian norm. Thus Family Ministry has to start from the beginning with the training of suitable personnel. See Report of the Conference of the Bishops of Kazakhstan for the 8th Plenary Assembly of the FABC, pp. 1-2].*

A Variety of Family Forms

Almost common now in Asia are family situations **that** are certainly different from what Asians used to call **the**

"traditional" and even "ideal" family. Intercultural families and inter-faith families *that result from "mixed marriages"* abound. *Obviously in such marriages couples find adjustment to each other much more difficult than if they were of the same faith.* Also increasing in number are families with single parents, families with separated parents *and cases of remarriage for one or both partners.* Some parents are separated permanently while others temporarily because of work. No longer rare are children whose parents are divorced and children living with grandparents. There are families where only the father or only the mother is around with the children, families where parents only come once or twice a year and families where children do not have common fathers or mothers. There are also many families where the parents are not married and are not able to offer stability to their children. *And there are homes where parents do not wish to have children or delay the having of children. Even the traditionally close-knit Asian "extended family" of parents, their children, their grandparents, their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law and grandchildren is disappearing, as "nuclear families" tend to have lesser communication with other members of the extended family. Further, within the extended family are conflicts, e.g. with in-laws, that need a process of conflict resolution.*

With the advance of new liberation movements *and growing neo-liberal and post-modern thinking,* other forms of "families" are slowly beginning to emerge in more secularized and liberalized Asian countries, albeit, with great disapproval, such as so called "inclusive" families, e.g. families with same sex parents. Some of these family forms are disturbing. They challenge our traditional understanding of the "Christian family" where the sacramental marriage between man and woman is the

norm as well as the beginning of the family. We may also raise the question whether couples really believe in marriage as a sacred covenant or merely as a legal contract. We might also wonder about a common practice of having a civil marriage first and at a later time a church marriage. In some societies this is *not always* due to lack of available funds for families but due to clan law *or customs and traditions*.

How to consider in the light of faith this varied situation of families, how to help married couples and families reflect on these situations in the light of their commitment to the Kingdom of God, how to assist families in order to be proactive, and thus generally how to provide pastoral guidance - these are challenges of great magnitude to every parish in Asia.

The Poverty of Asian Families and Economic Globalization

The first major challenge confronting Asian families is massive poverty. It is the tragic reality of poverty that the majority of Asian families must contend with everyday and are unable to escape from. *Many poor young people have difficulty to think of marriage and start a family because of the lack of basic means of support and sustenance.* But today's Asian poverty has a new dimension. This is the process of globalization, the new world order to which every country must be oriented lest it be left behind on the road to economic progress as defined by developed countries. But globalization is ambivalent at best. Yearly UN Human Development reports regularly observe that economic globalization has *aggravated* the situation of poor people and of poor countries - and particularly of the poor in poor countries. The effect of globalization on the poverty situation may be noted in at least three areas:

a) *The Poverty of Rural Families.* Slowly many farm products of agricultural families are less in demand as economic liberalization and deregulation - the twin requirements of economic globalization - enable the freer entry of imported farm products, sold at even cheaper prices than local products. Unable to be competitive, deprived of government safeguards or safety nets to shield such farm products from unfair competition, rural families experience a new economic poverty-causing factor beyond their control. Similarly, the great majority of Asian farmers do small-scale farming. They cannot compete with the increasing trend of big business venturing into corporate farming, even as the technology of Genetically Modified Organism or GMO is increasingly becoming widespread, making Asian small farmers dependent on corporations and technology often beyond their understanding and financial reach. Moreover, often saddled with problems of land ownership, rural families find their land *becoming* unproductive in the light of such emerging conditions. *Aggravated by migration to urban centers, the above situation results in the stagnation of rural communities. Noteworthy is the observation that "the problem of the Japanese rural families is not economic poverty, but the collapse of the agricultural villages themselves" [Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan, Intervention on the Working Paper (CBCJ, IWP), July 1, 2004, p. 1].* Finally, in situations of poverty, families are sometimes driven to the extreme of selling bodily organs so as to survive.

b) *The Poverty of Urban Families.* The phenomenon of urbanization in Asia is not recent. But the migration of the rural poor to urban settings has never been as *rapid and as numerous* as in the past few decades. Globalization has not only caused in poor countries an inability to compete even in the agricul-

tural field. It has also increased an exodus of the poor from rural areas to search for jobs that are scarce because of the level of economic development in most Asian countries. The growth and proliferation of slums in urban centers attest to this rapid urbanization. Poverty conditions of the urban poor are even harsher in terms of habitat, family living conditions, family space and privacy, sanitary drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. *Since slum dwellers stay on either government owned or privately owned properties, they run the risk of being ejected and rendered homeless.* These are inducements sometimes in desperation to criminality, abuse in the family, and family break-up.

c) *The Phenomenon of Asian Migration.* In the light of the economic situation of Asian families, literally millions of Asians leave their families behind to look for jobs that often are not commensurate with their knowledge and skills. *Certainly, the more economically developed Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand as well as the oil-rich Middle East countries are favorite destination countries.* Tragically migrant workers often labor in circumstances of grave discrimination and exploitation. Asia is the great exporter of cheap labor. It is true that salaries they earn abroad are significantly much more than they can earn in their home countries, but at the price of the stability of their families, the proper education and maturation of their children, who are deprived of the presence, the guidance, and love of both parents at their most formative and impressionable age.

Moreover, indigenous peoples who migrate for purposes of work face a greater cultural dislocation than do other groups

of the population. They lose many of the positive values so cherished by their own indigenous communities. They experience great difficulties in re-entry as well. Thus we see a close link between the two priorities of FABC VII, namely migrant workers and indigenous peoples. *In sum, migrant workers and their families urgently need great pastoral care from the churches of sending and receiving countries.*

Cutting across these dimensions of Asian poverty is a new phenomenon which development reports call "the feminization of poverty." A realization is dawning that much of the burden of poverty is borne by women. In most cases it is the husband who might be providing the resources necessary for the family to survive, it is the wife who has to cope with making both ends meet as she tries to feed and clothe the children, cook for them, take care of them when they are sick, care for old members of the extended family. There does not seem to be any timetable for her in the home as though house-keeping were from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a couple of hours for a noon break. The daughters have to pitch whenever they can. And mother and daughters are also expected to help earn a few more amounts outside the home, whenever possible. It would appear then that poverty hits women more than men.

Landlessness and Loss of Ancestral Domain

Compounding the poverty situation of Asian families is the fact of landlessness. Millions of families in Asia do not own or till their own land. Large estates owned by the few show the great imbalance in the distribution of Asia's resources, one more sign of the social injustice that deprives the many poor of a real chance for a better future. Land reform in many Asian

countries remains a problem, especially where wealth controls political power and prevents legal opportunities for a more balanced land distribution.

Land is life - this axiom is especially true for the indigenous families. They have from time immemorial considered the land, the rivers and the forests as their own even without any legal ownership paper to show. Exploiting this indigenous understanding of ownership as well as the law, loggers, miners, farmers from lowland areas encroach into the ancestral domain of indigenous peoples and reduce their boundaries year after year. Often indigenous communities have to uproot themselves and retreat farther into the mountains to avoid conflict. But certainly their rights to land and to their own economic and cultural development are violated. Moreover *patterned on the neo-liberal model of development that is promoted by economic globalization* government development projects in indigenous ancestral domain sometimes work against the integral development of indigenous peoples.

Cultural Globalization

With even greater value significance, economic globalization is also bringing cultural globalization in its wake. Since the middle of the 20th century Western secularism has been strongly influencing Asian societies. But at no time has the secularizing process, now with a significant post-modern spirit of individualistic sense of freedom, been more rapid and effective in reshaping the value systems of Asian families than in the last two decades of the 20th century. The bearers of this change are economics, as we have seen, and the on-going revolution in mass global communication that has truly made the world a global village.

There are many positive features of this technological revolution. It brings into Asia a deeper awareness of individual dignity, autonomy, and human rights so characteristic of the West. It makes global solidarity in times of great disaster almost an instant reality. Knowledge has grown by leaps and bounds, and the *application* and *sharing* of that knowledge has significantly improved human life.

There is terrible downside to this process of cultural globalization. A technological culture is rapidly emerging that is uprooting families from their traditional cultures and creating anonymous societies in urban areas. Its spirit, informed by neo-liberalism, secularism, materialism, hedonism and consumerism, is alien to the religious-oriented cultures of Asia. *Relational, interconnected and interdependent lifestyles of Asian peoples are also undermined.* Many values of the technological culture run counter to Asian family values. A growing techno-mindset is eroding marital and familial relations that are eminently bonds of intimacy and love. *Many no longer see marriage as a lifetime commitment. Thus cohabitation without marriage is no longer very rare in urban areas where anonymity takes away some of the traditional stigma connected with this. Even now there are attempts to change the traditional concepts of marriage and family, even the value of life.* So pervasive and enticing is this post-modern and secular spirit in the tools of social communication, especially mass media, that it has managed subtly and insidiously to capture the souls of many Asians.

Since families are both the repositories and channels of culture, the impact of the emerging secular culture in Asian families is, indeed, very disturbing. Frequently it is the elite of Asian families that are the first receivers of such secular

culture, for it is among them that the tools of social communication are most available. But the emerging culture also reaches down to the grassroots since local TV, radio, and cinema ape the media programs served by the West whose values and portrayal of family and life gradually become normative for viewers and listeners. *Ironically, tools of social communication such as television, computers and internet, mobile phones, that are meant to enhance communication and reinforce family ties become hindrances to family relations as the members spend less quality time with one another. Family rituals, meals and recreation together, are less. No doubt such negative influences contribute to the increase of divorces, family break-ups and the juvenile crime rate as well as the breakdown of family discipline.*

The emerging global culture is establishing value gaps between old and young. Often without the guidance of parents, the young themselves experience a crisis of values. They are torn between the values treasured in their traditional homes that may not always *be* positive and the secular values in the extra-domestic fora that may not always be negative. *As family relationships diminish there is a resort to escapism, sometimes through drugs which victims mistakenly believe help them forget their tribulations.* Given the intrusiveness of information technology and mass media, there is no doubt that the emerging and ambivalent post-modern culture is seeping into the family sanctuary.

Moreover, cultural globalization is also creating new forms of poverty. New technologies and the ways by which they are improving learning and even ways of modern living are simply beyond the reach of poor families. Thus in addition to material poverty, a new form of poverty, a poverty of know-

ledge and of access to knowledge, is further marginalizing poor families. Pope John Paul II has called this phenomenon the poverty, not of the "have-nots", but of those who do *not know*. If the wealth of industrialized nations is based much more on *"the possession of know-how, technology and skills"* than on natural resources (see *Centesimus Annus*, 32), then the poverty of other nations may be construed as due largely to the absence of this new kind of wealth. *In addition we need to recognize that more than economic and technological poverty is spiritual poverty, a poverty of moral and religious convictions and values [The Japanese Bishops state that while other Asian families face economic poverty, "the major poverty confronting Japanese families is spiritual poverty, " CBCJ, IWP, p. 1].*

We also have to note that one of the responses of some sectors to the unsettling cultural changes made by globalization is recourse to fundamentalism. This seems to provide for their adherents clear and definite answers to the problems of life, such as complex issues of justice and love, marriage, the family, inter-faith relationships, politics and governance. In its extreme form, fundamentalism has given rise to intolerance and even terrorism, increasingly a source of tension in Asian societies.

Patriarchy in Asian Families and Societies

With regard to the roles of women and men in the Asian family and in the wider society, patriarchy remains sadly the determining factor. As a social attitude patriarchy has created social structures. It has fundamentally determined gender inequality and the superior role of men. The world view of patriarchy lies deep in the cultural and religious subconscious

of Asia and dominates politics, economics, human relationships, childrearing views and practices, stereotypes about men and women, community roles, etc. Patriarchy defines man in terms of prowess, brawn, authority and domination. It is at the basis of male chauvinism in society and of men's authoritarianism in the family. On the other hand patriarchy defines woman in terms of meekness, submissiveness and *subordination*. It relegates women to the home and gives her the exclusive burden of ensuring the unity and psychological happiness of the family. It regards women as subordinate human beings and generally establishes a double standard to govern the behavior of men, women, boys and girls. For instance, based on such patriarchal world-view the infidelities of a husband against his wife and his irresponsible behavior to his children are more likely to be condoned and tolerated than those of the wife. [*Even as the authority of fathers has weakened in Japanese families with mothers managing the household, "we still find sexism in society (especially in the companies)"*], CBCJ, IWP, July 1, 2004, p. 2].

In some countries patriarchy reveals its evil features in sex selection procedures during pregnancy. In those countries, the preference for the male child has created a tremendous imbalance of sex ratio in the population. Science has tragically assisted this evil feature of patriarchy through pre-natal sex identification and selection resulting in the abortion of thousands of female fetuses.

Woman and the Girl-Child

However, the acknowledgement of equality in fundamental dignity, the achievement of parity in educational advancement and attainment and in supporting the family have

slowly challenged the traditional authority role of husbands in Asian families. Indeed in recent years the role of women has slowly and gradually shifted. For women from the poorer sectors of society, professional education is not so much the psychological choice but the result of economic pressure to seek work outside the home in order to help the family care for the children or assure their family's survival especially in situations when husbands or sons do not earn enough for their families. Hence much of the traditional home-role and child-rearing role of mothers and daughters has been passed on to others. Unfortunately such changing roles often simply involve a mere transfer of the traditional home role responsibility to persons at a lower economic level, such as domestic helpers or poor relatives. This is the case of mothers who work full time in schools and in government offices. This shift in women's home-role responsibilities is especially demonstrated in urban settings where nurse-maids, domestic helpers and even grandparents take care of the children and the home while wives do full time work in their chosen professions as doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, lawyers, business managers, etc.

However, the slow shift toward egalitarianism in husband-wife relationships has not prevented cases of battered wives and other forms of discrimination and oppression against women at home and at work. In a few Asian countries tradition sadly justifies violence against wives and girl children especially in rural areas. In such countries, in addition to the onerous and oppressive dowry tradition, wives bear the added burden of trying to prove themselves truly worthy of becoming part of the immediate and extended family of their husbands.

We note the positive developments that various forms of women's liberation movements have achieved in Asia. They

have drawn public attention to the issues of violence within the family, female fetus abortion and to the need for more egalitarian relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, sons and daughters. In all countries of Asia are women, especially mothers, working for social emancipation through social and political advocacy, cooperatives, Grameen banking, appropriate technology, literacy and health programs, etc.

Child Labor

Yet another phenomenon affecting Asian families is the widespread practice of child labor. Driven by poverty and social inequalities, millions of children are engaged in labor. The phenomenon might even stem from a cultural view that parents consider their children as "properties" to be used for the welfare of the whole family. Thus, parents themselves allow or even encourage their children to pick up odd jobs in the streets, in factories and shops in order to supplement the family income, provide more food at the table, and help support their own education. *[While Japan strictly follows the prohibition of child labor, it is of record that Japan is a destination country for working children from other countries, see CBCJ, IWP, p. 2, citing the annual report of the U.S. State Department, June 2004]*. But the necessary consequences of child labor are the lack of integral growth and development of children, high illiteracy rates, malnutrition, the phenomenon of *abandoned* or "street children" without their parents and homes, and high incidence of *juvenile crime and delinquency*.

Ecology

Environmental degradation in Asia also impacts Asian families negatively. The long term ecological balance is sacri-

ficed for short term economic gain in the systematic and sometimes unbridled destruction of forests and water resources. Droughts and floods often result from such destruction and soil productivity is altered. The agricultural efficiency of rural families is thus significantly reduced. In the sprawling urban areas of Asia, environmental degradation takes another form. Air pollution and inefficient waste management are major problems and cause many illnesses, especially respiratory, particularly for the urban poor families, reducing further the quality of their lives.

Population Programs

Moreover, government population programs are especially targeting poor families. The over-all objective, it is usually claimed, is a healthy population and the reduction of population to meet decreasing food production. The Malthusian doomsday thesis is still very much a part of official government thinking despite the scientifically valid alternative views of economists who see the thesis as basically a myth that has been regularly disproved by population and food production trends in the past three decades. The political and economic agenda of developed countries with regard to the populations of poor countries do not seem to be well known. Yet it is clear that for developing countries foreign aid for development has conditionalities that require developing countries to legislate population reduction measures. These measures emphasize artificial contraception *and advocate the legalization of abortion, at least in certain cases. Such measures obviously promote a "culture of death" and are grounded on the secular and materialist ideology of a global culture as well as on the neo-liberal model of economic development. A contraceptive mentality and the rise*

of premarital sex among the youth and the increasing pervasiveness of the global secular culture are not unconnected. Moreover in the population control agenda is likewise a belief that the migration of many Asians to other countries for the proverbial greener pastures is an economic and sometimes security threat. On the other hand many Asian observers believe that in targeting the poor the population reduction programs of governments conveniently sidesteps the more difficult task of social and structural reforms toward poverty reduction, required by a more just distribution of resources and more equitable access to the fruits of development. In contrast to the above is the situation of South Korea and Japan whose very low birth rates and ageing populations are creating major problems of decreasing labor force and deteriorating public pension services. They are presently striving to increase their populations [see CBCK, IWP, p. 2; CBCJ, IWP, p. 2].

Through government population programs and other means, powerful lobby organizations with linkages to official international organizations and to private and semi-government organizations in Asian countries are influencing governments and public opinion to accept secular and liberal ideas about human life, family, children, and marriage. Thus the moment of the conception of human life, the termination of *unborn* human life, the nature of marriage as that of man and woman *and as a lifetime commitment*, the meaning of woman's health, the notion of "human right" over the human body in relation to human choice - all these are being redefined. These philosophical ideas now introduced into all Asian countries through certain strands of various emancipation movements in the West with their local counterparts, through mass media and legislation run counter to some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Church.

Families in the Midst of Conflict

In many parts of Asia hundreds of thousands of families are affected by armed conflicts of various origins. Thousands of families are regularly displaced from their homes by sporadic or sustained military skirmishes. Fears, tensions, anxieties, insecurities are often the lot of parents concerned about the safety and future of their families. The education of their children is seriously interrupted. Diseases prey on displaced families trying to fend for themselves in the miserable conditions of many evacuation camps. At a more profound level, displaced families bitterly harbor in themselves the prejudices, biases, viewpoints, attitudes, and values that are at the heart of political, economic, ideological, ethnic and religious conflicts in Asia. Communalism and fundamentalism are dimensions of these conflicts. Children of war grow up with the real possibility that they would be bearers of future wars, carrying into the future the roots of conflict that their fathers and mothers had borne in their own minds and hearts. It is heartening that in some conflict-ridden countries, mothers who are the most vulnerable to the burdens and sufferings of conflict have organized themselves as peace advocates. Strongly nurturing and caring, sensitive to in-depth needs, keenly irenic, women - indeed, mothers - have played a special role in waging peace, not war.

Bio-Genetic Threats to Life

a) Today the incredibly rapid advances of science have expanded our knowledge of human life and continue to provide valuable scientific information. The Human Genome Project is potentially of immense benefit for humankind. There is a future

where the most serious ills that have hitherto no known cures could, indeed, be cured. In the light of faith these advances have immensely increased our awe of God's infinite creative power. On the other hand, from these tremendous scientific and technological developments have emerged profound bio-ethical issues regarding the sacredness and dignity of life from its very beginning and over human stewardship of God-given life.

b) When the production of embryonic stem cells through human embryonic cloning was first announced their therapeutic potential to cause the healing or replacing of diseased body parts was immediately recognized. Embryonic stem cells are derived from human embryos that are either produced for therapeutic purpose or for reproductive purposes from in vitro fertilization. Thousands of human embryos are destroyed in order to produce embryonic stem cells. Since then some researchers in Korea have reportedly succeeded in producing embryonic stem cells. In 2003 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan submitted a comment to the government's Panel on Bioethics and protested against the production of human embryos for research purposes and therapeutic human cloning. Passionate debates continue among scientists, moral theologians, ethicists, and religious leaders. These developments are not foreign to Asia, because experiments are now going on in some Asian countries. More disturbing is the fact that ideas contrary to Church teachings are now being used to justify the production and destruction of human embryos such as the idea that human embryos are human beings but not human persons. The specter of genetics becoming eugenics, selectively and scientifically producing super-humans or "designer babies" and a super-race is looming over humankind trying to play God.

c) Clearly human embryonic cloning and the production of embryonic stem cells by way of destroying human embryos are affronts to human dignity and the sacredness of human life. Even when their intentions might be good, i.e., for therapeutic or reproductive purposes, the production, manipulation and destruction (embryonic human cloning) of human embryos to obtain suitable embryonic stem cells are not morally acceptable. They are affronts to human dignity and the sacredness of human life (see Intervention by the Holy See Delegation at the Special Committee of the 57th General Assembly of the United Nations on Human Embryonic Cloning, 23 September 2002). "The Holy See supports research on stem cells of post-natal origin [e.g., from adult bone marrows] since this approach - as has been demonstrated by the most recent studies - is a sound, promising, and ethical way to achieve issue transplantation and cell therapy that could benefit humanity" (Loc. cit.). In a pro-active stance, the Church in has to be vigilant about these developments entering the doors of Asia.

Families and Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities

A truly positive development in Asia is the growing awareness of the place and role of the family in the building of Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities toward a new way of being Church. *[To be noted is the observation of the Bishops of Japan who believe that in Japan "it is not possible for the family to be the basic cell of the ecclesial community" since "we can often find only one Catholic in so many families", CBCJ, IWP, p. 2].* Even as the family is the basic cell of society and the fundamental ecclesial community, the Church that is the home, so today in Asia there is a growing realization that the family has to be the focus of integral evangelization and the essential

building block of BEC's/BHC's and even of the local Church as a whole. In other words, the Church begins in the home, not in the parish. In the light of this perspective a rethinking of pastoral programs has to be done. Already in many approaches to the building of small communities that make up the parish, much attention is given to the family and to clusters of families, such that all the pastoral programs of parishes are focused on the family.

Sub-Conclusion

We have discerned many forces in the pastoral situation. Some forces are distinctly positive in the development of culture of *integral life*. However, other forces, facilitated by the process of *economic and cultural* globalization, threaten not only the quality of life but also the very survival of many Asian families. *Even life itself is threatened by genetic developments. While possessing many positive features the emerging secular, post-modern culture is at best ambivalent. Social, cultural, economic, political, religious factors - including structures - influence the Asian family for good or for worse. Certainly caste-ism, patriarchy and gender inequality, poverty, child labor, land problems, ecological degradation and social conflicts are major negative forces.* Such threatening forces lead to the devaluing of positive values that have traditionally characterized Asian families such as close kinship inclusive of extended families, love of children, respect and care for the elderly, harmony, a deep moral and religious sense, a deep respect for life and care for the life in the womb, a profound reverence for the sacred. They threaten our religious understanding of the origin and nature of life as well as the nature and structure of the family and marriage. They contradict responsible steward-

ship of human life considered seamless from conception to death, the sacramentality of marriage between man and woman and its God-given purpose.

All these pose a great challenge to the Church's family ministry in Asia. Almost 20 years ago the Asian Bishops said:

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the Church in Asia is that posed by the Asian family. The Asian family is the cellular receptacle of all Asia's problems, poverty, repression, exploitation and degradation, divisions and conflicts. The family is directly affected by the religious, political, economic, social and cultural problems of Asia, by the problems relating to women, health, work, business, education, etc. [Final Statement of the 4th FABC Plenary Assembly, Tokyo, 16-25 September 1986, no. 3.4.1, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Rosales and Arevalo, eds., 1992, p. 184].

Can the Church in Asia respond adequately to the pastoral challenge so described? Can the Church be effective through relevant pastoral programs for the Asian family?

II. THEOLOGICAL-PASTORAL REFLECTION

A Framework and a Process of Reflection

(new) It is the purpose of this theologico-pastoral reflection to help provide the response of faith to the various concrete challenges that the present Asian realities pose to the Church. It does this by meditating on the data of Sacred Scriptures and the Teachings of the Church, keeping always in mind the major elements of the pastoral situation that challenge the evangelizing mission of the Church. Its framework

will generally be: Communion, Solidarity, and Mission. The following is the process:

(a) To the culture of death in the Asian situation, we respond by presenting a vision of a culture of integral life with a particular orientation to marriage and the family. A culture of integral life is envisioned that is centered on covenant life with God. Here the values of the Reign of God, such as love, communion, and solidarity among individuals, families, and societies reign rather than distorted understandings of life, marriage and the family, division, exploitation, marginalization, discrimination, poverty, violence and injustice.

(b) We present this culture of integral life as a gift as well as a task given by God in and through Jesus who raised human life to the divine and shared it with us in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

(c) We reflect then on the Church itself as the Family of God that serves as a sign as well as a promise of integral life in the Reign of God. Jesus and the Reign of God that he proclaimed are our faith response to the culture of death that threatens every gospel value that the family was ordained to have from the very beginning.

We consider this perspective as imperative in the light of the pluralistic nature of many Asian families.

(d) In a penultimate stage of meditating on the Christian vision, we reflect on the God-given nature of marriage and of the family in the light of the fundamental values of covenant, love, communion, and solidarity. The thrust of our reflection is to consider the family not merely as an object to be evangelized and led to discover its identity but more importantly as

a subject of mission within itself (ad intra) and without (ad extra) - toward the culture of integral life in the Reign of God.

(e) To be certain that our meditation is far from being abstract and sterile, we apply it to some of the major social, cultural, and ecclesial challenges in Asia.

(f) The final stage of our meditation on the family-in-mission toward a culture of integral life integrates all the above stages. It is on the spirituality needed by the family in Asia to realize its identity and fulfill its mission.

A Culture of Integral Life

While the emerging culture has certainly many positive contributions to our world, it is a challenge to Asian families to evangelize it and liberate *by transforming it into a culture of integral life* it so that it may not be inimical to integral human life. In understanding a culture of life and the gravity of the threat against it, the ancient religious and philosophical traditions of Asia would most certainly be helpful. And surely there would be many convergences in the understanding. Our pastoral and theological reflection, however, will be from the perspective of our own religious faith. From this perspective, we need to understand and appreciate human life in a holistic sense, i.e., life in itself and its inherent dignity, life as a gift of God (see Gen. 2:7; Acts 17:25) and a sharing of God's life (see Rom. 6:23; Jn. 4:10, 14; Rev. 21:6), life lived today in unceasing struggle toward fullness which is its eternal destiny (Rom. 6:22), life in its fullness (Jn. 10:10) in the *Reign* of God to come. From this holistic view, with the universal Church we condemn everything that dehumanizes, exploits and oppresses human life. Any situation, relationship, structure, situation, behavior,

or action that threatens and diminishes life is death-dealing (see GS, 27) - part of a culture of death. *It is against God's will and the Reign of God.* A culture of *integral* life on the other hand respects, *nurtures*, enhances, promotes and serves human life *in all its dimensions*, from the very finality of the procreative act and the moment of conception, through its earthly struggles to its return to God *full life* at the end of time (2 Tm. **1:10**; 4:1; Heb. 9:27-28) *in the Reign of God.* *This perspective of integral life has profound implications on the meaning of "pro-life" and the extent of family ministry.*

Covenant Love and Life, Communion and Solidarity

At the basis of the culture of *integral* life, according to the Sacred Scriptures, is God's love as the Creator and Giver of all life, and especially of human life (see Gen. 1:26-28, 2:7; Wis. 15:11). In the Book of Genesis we even find a certain intimation of a Trinitarian sharing of communion with humanity: "Let us make humankind in our image... so in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." (Gen. 1: 26, 27 - NRSV) Thus human life began, only because of God's love. Formed according to the divine image, life is God's gift. For this reason the life of every person, no matter how poor and degraded, remains precious and sacred. Undoubtedly, the Scriptural creation stories place the creation of the human person as the climactic point. But we need to acknowledge that by virtue of God's creative act the whole cosmos is truly a web of interdependent relationships over which the human person exercises a royal duty of stewardship, reflecting God's own *dominion of loving care*. Indeed, at the pinnacle as well as at the heart of all creation is Christ, "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in

him all things were created... all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:15-16). Through him "all things, whether on earth or in heaven" and all broken relationships are reconciled to himself, "making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20).

The covenant between God and the chosen people in the Old Testament is one definitive moment of the culture of *integral* life. It is most significant that the covenant relationship is often described in terms of intimate family, even spousal, relationships. Thus the most tender and ineffable affection with which God cares and provides for the chosen people: "I took them up in my arms... I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love and... I bent down to them and fed them" (Hos. 11:3-4); "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you" (Is. 66:13). Even the language of communion between bridegroom and wife is used (see Hos. 2:16, 19-20). The following words exemplify the tenderness of God's life-giving love for the people: "I have called you by name, you are mine... you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you" (Is. 43:1, 4). God's covenant familial relationship with the chosen people is characterized by limitless patience, kindness, calls to renewal, mercy and forgiveness.

Because of God's loving providence over them, the covenant people are told to be in active solidarity with everyone. *This requires mission to serve others* especially with the needy, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (Ex. 22:22-23; Dt. 24:17-22; Is. 1:17; Jer. 22:3; Zech. 7:10). Finally, when the covenant relationship seems to be radically broken because of stubborn infidelities, God's life-giving love promises a radical transformation in terms of a "new heart" that is malleable to God's re-shaping (see Ez. 11:19; 36: 26).

For the Old Testament integral human life and the culture of life clearly include these four major emphases: life as God's gift of love, communion and solidarity with God and with others, *including a mission of service* especially to the poor and the needy, as covenant-demand, and God's promise of full life. *This perspective would find completion in the key Old Testament theme of the Reign of God in the end-time in which, finally, the upright life is saved and human desires fulfilled* (See, e.g., Ps. 97:11-12; 145:13, 17-21; Wis 4:7-14).

Jesus the Life: Shared Love, Communion and Solidarity

When finally viewed, as it should be, in the light of the mystery of Jesus, life takes on its full revealed meaning as a sharing in the very life of God. The love of God is nowhere as overwhelming and surpassing as when he sends his only begotten Son to assume our humanity except its sinfulness - in order that we might have eternal life (see Jn. 3:16). We believe that Jesus Christ is the Word of Life (1 Jn. 1:1). With total mastery of life, he can lay down his life for the sake of others and can "take it up again" (Jn. 10: 17-18, see also Jn. 5: 26). In ultimate self-disclosure, Jesus declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6). He then speaks of believing, of keeping his word, and of intimate communion of love. "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (Jn. 14: 23). He who is life itself describes his mission on earth as life-giving, as salvific solidarity with others, "I came so that they might have life and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). *Again and again he relates his mission of life-giving to the Reign of God, a Reign he speaks about in a radically different way in favor of the lowly and the humble*

(see, e.g., the Beatitudes in Mt. 5:3-10), even about a "new birth" without which one cannot see the Reign of God (Jn. 3:3-8).

It is at Baptism that this new life is given. By baptism the believer passes from death due to sin to life in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). From Christ comes "living water" that becomes "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn. 4:14). He is moreover "the bread of life" (Jn. 6:34, 48) that has come "from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn. 6:33). Jesus speaks here of Communion in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, his own body and blood: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn. 6:51). "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (6:54). "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (6:56). That is why the apostle Paul would exult: "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). In his turn the evangelist John would proclaim: "And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace" (Jn. 1:16).

Covenant Life in the Spirit: The Family of God, the Church

Yet there is more to the life-giving love of Jesus than just a personal relationship between believers and Jesus. Once again covenant love and life, now "sealed by the Blood" of Jesus, is at the core of a new relationship between God and a new people of faith who are given a new commandment *The new commandment is also mission*: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another as I have loved you. By this shall people know that you are my disciples" (Jn. 13:34-35). There

is no deeper communion of love and life than this - the sharing of Jesus' own Body and Blood, his whole life, with believers. His sacrificial love gives rise to a new community, a family of faith born in the Spirit. "But when Jesus dies and 'gives up His Spirit' to God, He 'hands on' his Spirit to the Church in the same act" [*Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed., Xavier Leon-Dufour, updated 2nd ed., 1982; Jn. 19:30]. Thus the Church *is born* as a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), God's "household", his own family (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tm. 3:15) born of the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Life [The church as the family of God was the special focus of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa. See Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 199].

Life in Christ then is life in the Spirit (see Rom. 8:1, 9-10). Only faith knows of such a life. But there are certain signs a life of the Spirit is, indeed, being lived. These signs are the "fruits of the Spirit" - "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22). *Paul brings the language of love to the perspective of life in the Reign of God when he writes: "...for it is not eating and drinking that make the kingdom of God, but the saving justice, the peace and the joy brought by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).* In contrast to the life of the Spirit is life in the flesh which is demonstrated by "works of the flesh" - "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like" (Gal. 5:19-21). Avoiding these "works of the flesh" is a fundamental requirement of the new covenant. Paul summarizes the covenant relationship in *terms of mission to love and serve one's neighbor*:

For you were called to freedom brethren: only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through

love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Gal. 5:13-14).

To live in the Spirit, therefore, is to lead a life of communion and solidarity with and for all. This communion and solidarity becomes even more awesome when Paul speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ where every member is important and complementary. There are different members but the Body is one. In the Body is unity in diversity, complementariness amid differences, and co-responsibility for the building up of the whole (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:4-7; 12:12; Eph.4:16).

As in the Old Testament, so in the New Testament the major realities that emerge are God's gift of Life, God's promise of Full Life, Love, Communion, Solidarity and *Mission*. They are fundamental dimensions of a culture of *integral* life. God is Life. God is Love. Because God is love, we live. If we live, then we have to love. If we love, we have to act toward communion and solidarity - and serve others. In the light of the above reflection, we can understand why the Gospel of Jesus may be called the "Gospel of Life" and why the *Reign* of God proclaimed by Jesus as "now here and yet to come" is the *Reign* of Life in its fullness.

The Family: Sanctuary of Love and Life, Covenant and Communion

The life of God's family on earth, the Church, is both a gift that anticipates the full life *in the Reign of God* that is *now here* and *is yet fully* to come and also a task that is to be done on the journey to full life. It is at the conjuncture of gift

and task that the family as the "*domestic church*" takes on a deeper significance. Pope John Paul II has said, "In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life" (CA, 39). Deeper reflection tells us why this is so. If the Church is, indeed, the privileged dwelling place of the God of Life, then the domestic Church, the family, has likewise to be the sanctuary of the God of life, the sanctuary that welcomes every life. As in the Church so also in the family, there should be co-responsibility, complementariness, mutual caring *for the family is founded on marriage*, the covenant partnership of two persons equal in human dignity, *who have* co-responsible stewardship of the covenant and everything that the covenant implies. *Further*, the family, as the Church that is the home, is clearly a community of faith, prayer and fellowship (Acts 2:42-47).

"The Christian family springy from marriage, which is an image and a sharing in the partnership of love between Christ and the Church; it will show forth to all men Christ's living presence in the world and the authentic nature of the Church by the love and generous fruitfulness of the spouses, by their unity and fidelity, and by the loving way in which all members of the family cooperate with each other" (LG 48). At the beginning of the family then is a sacred covenant between man and woman. *In their sexual difference they are fundamentally "oriented toward communion."* Marked *"with the sign masculinity and femininity"* they have from the very beginning *"a nuptial attribute, that is, the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift."* Thus *"man and woman are called from the very beginning not only to exist 'side by side' or 'together', but they are also called to exist mutually 'one for the other' ... The text of Genesis 2:18-25*

shows that marriage is the first and, in a sense, the fundamental dimension of this call" [See Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World, May 31, 2004, no. 6 - citing a reflection of Pope John Paul II on the human body based on Gen. 2:4-25]. Marriage then from which the family springs is a covenant of love and life between husband and wife whereby they "give themselves to each other and accept each other" (GS, 48; see Gen. 2:24), hold on to each other lovingly and faithfully until death (Mt 19:6) in a total reciprocity of self-giving. ,

For the Church, communion in marriage is founded on the sacramentality of marriage. "Christ's own union with the Church" is the model of this conjugal communion (LG 48). The sacramental bond of communion between husband and wife reflects the profound reality of the bond of love between Christ and the Church. Hence, the love of the husband needs to be like Christ's own love for his bride, the Church, faithful and sacrificing covenant love. So must the love of the wife be for her husband. Husband and wife are sacraments to each other of Christ's love as well as of the love of the Church. This means that their mutual conjugal love embodies Christ's love-union with the Church. Christ's love becomes an inner presence in their love, relationships, and family life as well as the source of their spiritual sustenance and growth. This is the "great mystery" (see Eph. 5:21-33) of love and life that is signified by the nuptial vow that husband and wife pronounce to each other and is symbolically expressed by the nuptial rings, or by other symbols as in some Asian cultures. When St. Paul admonishes the husband to "love" his wife, the

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full meaning of such spousal love is revealed when he instructs the wife to "respect" her husband (Eph. 5:33). *That St. Paul, in a patriarchal setting, tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved is truly revolutionary. Husbands are not just called to model their love for their wives on the conjugal love of Christ for the Church but the text in Ephesians 5:25 also implies that because Christ has loved us, we must love one another. Christ's love thus becomes for the couple the source and strength of their love for one another.* In this context, the full semantic meaning of "to respect" is "to look deeply into" the true good of the other. It is "a search for all that constitutes the good of the person who is loved" (Salvatore Fisichella, "The Christian Family in a Time of Cultural Change," Acts of the International Theological-Pastoral Congress [AITPC], The Christian Family: Good News for the Third Millennium, Fourth World Meeting of Families, Manila, January 22-24, 2003, p. 46). *Hence, even if St. Paul speaks about seemingly different duties, e.g., husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands, such values are in their full meaning identical and are reciprocally given. Husband and wives are to love and respect one another. Complementariness and reciprocity are essential to spousal love.*

Thus the mutual love between husband and wife in the sacred covenant of marriage is patterned after the covenant love between God and the chosen people of Israel, between Jesus and the Church. By loving and respecting each other, husband and wife grow together towards human and Christian maturity as they live their *conjugal* life and face the challenges of their responsibilities. Such love spills over to the rest of the family and is marked by patience, kindness, respect, trust, forgiveness, *sacrifice* and mercy, *enduring in times of pain*

and sorrow as well as in times of joy. Thus the family bond is strengthened with every child who is born. Truly, because of its divine inner riches the great mystery of the family is Good News.

When we abstract from the uniquely Christian particularities of our reflection and view everything that has been said about marriage and the family from the perspective of the Reign of God, we discover that inter-faith and inter-religious marriages and families, possess similar analogous and operative values of the Reign of God - covenant life, communion, solidarity, complementariness and reciprocity of self-giving. For this reason, the Christian partner brings into the covenant of marriage and family the distinctive riches of her/his beliefs while growing together and journeying together with the other partner and their children toward the Reign of God.

Covenant Love in Marriage: Parenthood and Children

As "the author of marriage" (LG, 48), God mandated marriage from the very beginning to be indissoluble (Mt. 19: 5-6) and radically open to God's gift of procreated life. Motherhood and fatherhood are gifts implied from the beginning in the complementariness of male and female as image of God. "By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory" (LG, 48; see also 50). Inseparable, therefore, from the gift given by God for husband and wife to become "one body" (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:3-9) is their unity of love and of life, not only of their own life together but also of any new life that God creates through

them. Indeed, they have to be radically open to any new life, because God's love does not discriminate and does not exclude anyone, a boy child or a girl child, a handicapped baby or a totally healthy baby, rich or poor. Every child is a gift of God. This does not in any way stigmatize infertile couples for in the physical inability to have children the radical and fundamental moral openness to any life that God might give is already a blessing and a grace from God.

Christian couples have to work together to educate their children in the ways of *the faith and of the Reign of God*. They are the first *teachers of faith* of their children. In this regard they seek ways to *make them* grow in *their* faith, *help them express it in their lives and share it with others, especially children of their age* through the varied opportunities offered by the Church, *or their own creativity guided by the Church*. In the pluralistic societies of Asia where Christians are a small minority and where religious education in schools may not be accessible, this mission of husband and wife to educate their children for God *and for sensible missionary consciousness* is absolutely necessary. *A family of deep religious faith is a sign of the Church and of the Reign of God. In inter-faith and inter-religious families, such deep religious sense is a counter-sign to the increasingly irreligious sense of a globalizing secular culture.*

Clearly God sows into the very nature of the family the seeds of the future through children as well as the grateful memories of its past through the elderly. Gratitude, hope, awe and reverence are the responses of both old and young for the transcendent gift that God gives in marriage when husband and wife share in the awesome creative act of God. Thus truly

the family is a trove of concern and respect, of care and love, of God-given treasures old and new.

Vocation and Mission: "Family, Become What You Are!"

Built into the very nature of the family is a divine vocation and mission. God calls men and women to family as a divine vocation, even as God calls some to live in the single state. Families and married couples have been called to search for the Reign of God above all else. Drawn together by this unconditional love of God, they are likewise impelled by it to mission. In the family, it is the mission of husband and wife to minister to each other. In a process of mutual evangelization in the ordinariness of their everyday lives, they proclaim to each other the Gospel of Life and Love that is rooted in *every heart and, for those who believe, rooted* through the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. But not only to each other do husband and wife proclaim the Good News *of God's Reign*. They are likewise called to do so to others. *The loving relationships that are developed within the family - between husband and wife, between parents and their children, between the children, and between members of the nuclear and extended families - has a missionary dimension. It fulfills the words of the Lord, "It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples" (Jn. 13:35).* It is above all by authentic witnessing that the family proclaims the Gospel of Love and Life. This is the reason that the universal Church through Pope John Paul II urges *the family*, "Family, become what you are!" (FC, 16). These famous words are a summons to integral renewal, an urgent call to fidelity, fidelity to the God-given identity of the family as a covenant of love between husband and wife, as a sanctuary of life. *It is an*

urgent call especially for the Christian family as the domestic church, the Church in its most fundamental cellular community form.

From such identity flows mission *within (ad intra,)* the family. "Family, become what you are!" Mutual evangelization takes place first in the family through the mutual loving, caring and serving of husband and wife, mutually inspiring and encouraging each other to fulfill their responsibilities in faithful love, through loving and caring for their children as well as through the love and obedience of their children. *It is in the family "where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates... all the members evangelize and are evangelized" (EN, 71).* Family members evangelize one another through anxieties and joys, the cross and resurrection in daily marital and family life, as they come to know and accept the truth about themselves even as they are accepted and loved for who and what they are. Home is the place where people can be themselves and grow integrally. *Home, too, is the place for fostering missionary vocations among sons and daughters (see RM 80; FC 54). All these take place in the daily interaction of family life in an unceasing process of witnessing to the Reign of God and to the death and resurrection of Christ the Good News of salvation. This is truly a catechesis of life.*

If the family *is the sanctuary of love and life*, then the first and primary involvement of the people is their families. *Christian couples and families* are called to illustrate in a unique way the reality that is the Church. Marriage and *becoming family* are a way of being and becoming church. By fostering human intimacy and commitment to the personal well-being of *all members families* promote in word and deed

both the reality and importance of loving, life-bringing relationships within the Church and its structures. They provide flesh and blood to the Christian conviction that God is Self-giving Love. They sacramentalize the gracious goodness of God, particularly so in the context of excessive and widespread human suffering. Committed, faithful and nurturing love (intimacy), *within the family* and not betraying love by selfishness or exploitation, or pettiness or dishonesty, or disinterestedness or insensitivity, makes more credible the Gospel value of *total* trust in God's unfailing concern. This is very important given the growing incidence of breakdown in marriages and of broken families. Driven by economic, psychological and social concerns, people are unwittingly causing family bonds to weaken or die, a phenomenon that impacts society as a whole.

From the very identity of every family comes its mission to others (ad extra), a mission still of evangelization. When God said of creation, "It is good," God did not only refer to the physical beauty of creation. There is necessarily a moral and spiritual dimension to the judgment that God made of the goodness of creation. The whole world is good because it came from God's design and images his goodness and love. It is marked by God's loving dominion. God reigns over all creation. Such moral and spiritual dimension may be specifically applied to the words that God addressed to Adam and Eve, the first husband and wife and our first parents. "Go forth and multiply and fill the earth." More than just the physical implications of the command, they were also to *fill* the earth with the goodness and beauty, justice, and love of God. The experience of our first parents of the reality of sin and human limitation made them understand the painful

process of human growth and maturity. *But* human limitations and failures are no obstacles to the fulfillment of family vocation and mission because of God's promise of continual fidelity (Is. 3 8:19; Jer. 31:3). It is thus in the midst of challenge that the original moral and spiritual brilliance of humanity be spread throughout the earth and fittingly, even if finitely, mirror the divine.

The family's mission to others extends, therefore, to the social, cultural, political, and. educational fields. The family "is one of the Church's most effective agents of evangelization" (EA, 46). This really raises the question as to what church leadership can do to strengthen family presence and relationships - that is, to build a family that is truly a transformative sign of God's Reign or to build it truly as the domestic Church. It is a challenge of empowering the family for mission by helping the members to live out their marriage and family life in accord with the values of God's Reign or the teachings of the Gospel and of the Church.

Mission and Economic Globalization

As we have already seen, the task of every family to reflect the goodness, justice, and goodness of God is nowhere more urgent and imperative than in the *moral* and social spheres of life. Our pastoral and reflection on the mission of the family thus brings us to address the phenomenon and process of globalization and its host of problems. Indeed, globalization has made more actual the buzzword of two decades ago that the world is a global village and its various peoples are becoming less isolated and more united, that the family of nations is more reflective of the various peoples and tongues

united on Pentecost than of the disorder and disunity at the Tower of Babel. We might even say that globalization could be a principal tool by which the various peoples, races and cultures of the world are to live together in peace and harmony, that the rich and the poor in this world are to share fairly and equitably the goods of creation and the benefits of development, that the whole world is one harmonious human family under God where there is no room for war and divisive conflict, prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, oppression, isolation, and marginalization.

However, the present results of globalization are sadly far from the theological Utopia that is envisioned. Social justice and peace, stewardship of creation, being responsible for one another, the common good of the one human family remain illusions. In many instances globalization has even aggravated injustice, poverty, exploitation, oppression and the destruction of the environment in most Asian countries. The drive toward competitiveness has left hundreds of millions of Asians behind in a global economic and cultural Darwinism where the mighty prevail. The Tower of Babel continues to mock pristine Paradise. Reflection on the situation in the light of faith tells us that the current path that globalization is taking is terribly wrong for the human family and that an alternative must be sought.

Pope John Paul II has rightly pointed out that for globalization to work toward world social justice, it must be "globalization *in solidarity*, a globalization *without marginalization*" [Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1998, no. 3]. This would demand the just regulation of free market forces that are now effectively in the control of the better off and

powerful economies of the world. Globalization must be regulated by international juridical norms and universal ethical principles that govern the use and development of the goods of creation and the distribution of the benefits of development. Certainly in the light of the Church's social teachings among such principles would be: the preservation of the integrity of creation, universal destination of the goods of creation, human development that is integral, equitable distribution of the benefits of development, and option for the poor, and their participation in development. These principles have been insistently taught by the church in Asia especially through the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, particularly by the various Bishops' Institutes of Social Action and Faith Encounter Institutes of Social Action.

The Family, Cultural Globalization, and Social Communication

We should also come to grips with the issue of cultural globalization and the growing onset of a culture of post-modernism. Rightly today individual autonomy and individual human rights are fostered and defended. These fundamental values are indispensable for the common good. Thus in the face of a prevailing culture of patriarchy it is necessary to emphasize and promote the rights of women in Asia. On the other hand, we might perhaps perceive that there is today less emphasis on the family as "a community of love and life" and perhaps an overemphasis in some instances on certain individual rights at the expense of the community, more emphasis on the individual rights of spouses and children over against the good of the family and community. In every case virtue would urge a right balance between poles in tension.

However, at stake is the very nature of freedom regarding marriage. Instead of being a "capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family" freedom is understood in its post-modern sense as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being" (FC, 6). Such understanding of freedom is seen today in various attempts to legislate new practices and values that are directly contrary to the tradition of our faith, such as divorce, same-sex union as marriage, abortion, and many of the ideas that the ambivalent term "reproductive health" implies as understood in various conferences of the United Nations. Thus it is necessary to be profoundly discerning regarding new "rights" that the emerging culture might press for universal recognition.

The rise of a new world culture because of globalization imposes on the Church in Asia a new dimension of evangelization. *The principal channels of the new world culture are the tools of social communication. Their power to communicate and to influence either for good or for bad is almost incredible. Even poor people have some access to one or two media resources. These tools have a moral dimension. They provide "unlimited opportunities for information, education, cultural expansion, and even spiritual growth" (Pope John Paul II, Message for World Communications Day 2004, "The Media and the Family: A Risk and Richness", no. 2). Hence, the Church is challenged to understand these tools and to have the competence and skills to use them effectively for its mission to evangelize. "Yet these same media also have the capacity to do grave harm to families by presenting an inadequate or even deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality" (Loc. cit.). Hence the church is also*

challenged to evangelize them, to purify them and make them in accord with the values of the Gospel and of God's reign. Much of the power to evangelize the media lies in parents and their families. Regulating the use of media in the home, pressing public authorities to provide guidelines for media based on the criteria of truth and human dignity would be necessary. An effective family ministry would harness the power of the family and direct it to this important task.

Evangelization of culture involves different dimensions. We need to *know more in depth our own cultures that are rich expressions of God's presence in our midst. Further we need to evangelize our own cultures and take away from them traditions, beliefs, customs, and practices that do not seem to be in consonance with the divine plan as understood by our Christian faith.* We need reciprocally to understand our own faith in the light of the Spirit-given seeds of the Word in other religious and faith-traditions. We have to forge a symbiosis of these gifts of the Spirit so that our faith may be expressed, understood, and celebrated in the language and ethos of Asian cultures. Finally we need to confront the new cultural threat posed by globalization that seeks to impose a new materialist and relativist ethical code.

The Church has perennially held that there are universal truths, though admittedly expressed with the limitations of language and culture. On the other hand, doctrinal and moral relativism devalues such truths and holds that truth changes with the times. Consequently, critics deride as "outmoded" Church doctrines that affirm marriage as a sacrament and that reject same-sex unions, divorce, contraception, abortion, etc. They declare ironically with dogmatic certainty that Church

doctrines must change with the times, "if the Church were to remain relevant." It is this doctrinal and moral relativism of the emerging culture that we need to confront in family evangelization. Indeed, we have to share the anguish of people who suffer the terrible pains of divorce, of broken marriages, the loss of life in abortion, etc. Therefore, the teaching of the truth has to be done with great humility, compassion and love (Eph. 4:15). This is required of a genuine caring and nurturing pastoral ministry for couples and their families.

The Family and Social Transformation

By its very nature as the basic cell of society, every family has a social role. But this is especially true for the Christian family. The sacrament of marriage gives "to Christian couples and parents a power and a commitment to live their vocation as lay people and therefore to 'seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them to the plan of God'" (FC, 47 quoting LG 31). The work then of "ordering temporal affairs to the plan of God" or assisting at social transformation is part of the service or kingly mission of the family. *Such mission, however, is likewise that of inter-faith and inter-religious families and of all families, for every family is never apart from this world that is always in need of transformation. And the journey to the Reign of God is every family's journey.*

In Asia social transformation is most needed in at least three key areas: the quest for social justice and peace, integrity in public service, and the integrity of creation. Injustices are often built into the social structures, including the family structure as in the case of patriarchy. Cultural, ethnic, political,

and economic differences erupt into violent conflicts. The disease of corruption in public service is not simply attitudinal, it has also become structural as the idealism of young public servants becomes hopelessly eroded and finally trapped by "the system." The destruction of the environment goes on unabated.

Social change must start in the family, through the attitudinal transformation of parents, through the education that they impart to their children, and the parental example that they give regarding the values of justice, peace, personal integrity, and the care of creation. Moreover, families in solidarity with one another can play a strong advocacy role in society through "family politics" (see FC 44) or political intervention in promoting transparency and accountability among public servants, or fostering mediation and reconciliation among conflicting parties.

Such family politics should also be exercised in the defense of their own family rights, (see the enumeration of such rights in FC, 46), rights that are sometimes trampled by the State. For this reason Asian families should become familiar with, defend, protect and promote the Charter of the Rights of the Family that the Holy See has proposed to inter-governmental and international organizations (see Appendix). These rights are not peculiar to Catholic belief. They flow from the very nature of marriage and family and can easily be the object of inter-religious collaboration.

The Family and Inter-Religious Dialogue

In Asia, the birthplace of the world's great religions, it is in the ordinariness of daily life that the encounter with peoples of other faiths takes place. It is at this juncture of daily

living that witnessing to Gospel values is foremost in the Christian mission of evangelization. The teachings of the Scriptures as interpreted by the Church reflect the values that Christian families have to live in their daily lives. To fulfill the mission of evangelization, Christian families should always keep before their minds their distinct identity as Christian, be faithful to their Christian commitments, and live by their Christian values. For Christian families only through fidelity to the Christian identity and responsibility can dialogue of life with peoples of other faiths be possible and fruitful.

Pope John Paul II observed: "Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way" (RM, 57). Many indeed are the ways by which inter-religious dialogue can take place at the level of the family. In the first place is the witness to Gospel values that Christian families must give daily in our times. Among these Gospel values are: the sacredness of life from conception to natural death, the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of marriage between man and woman, family and marriage as divinely instituted, acceptance and love of children, chastity according to each one's vocation, solidarity with the poor, the sick and the needy (see GS 51, *Evangelium Vitae* 58-67, FC 16). Mutual respect for common values will lead to mutual collaboration to protect and promote them. In particular, solidarity with the poor is a social value that should certainly lead Christian families to act together with families of other faiths in the promotion of social justice, the quest for peace and reconciliation, and in the care for the environment. It would not be farfetched likewise to imagine that at a certain point of inter-religious relationship 'Christian families could share with others their own God-

experience, their religious experience of faith and love of Jesus, not in order to proselytize but simply in order to share of themselves in transparent friendship and unity (see *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 57). Finally, one should not dismiss as impossible that Christian families could bring the Good News of salvation to people who wish to hear and freely welcome it (cf. Rom. 10:14-15). The Christian family needs to do this proclamation at least through the catechism of its members *and the witness of their lives*.

But it is especially in inter-faith marriages that inter-religious dialogue is both a dialogue of word, of love and life (see the situation given by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 7:12-16). At the beginning of the loving encounter of man and woman of different faiths, the consideration of religious differences as well as reconciliation already begins. The dialogue of word and of love proceeds through courtship and marriage, matures into a loving dialogue of life in the ordinary and daily events of married life. The values and attitudes of such dialogue flows to their children. Despite religious differences, a bridge of love and reconciliation is built, a reality so significant in societies plagued by religious strife. There is likewise no doubt that in the anxieties, sorrows, joys, hopes, and love of marital and family life, there are opportunities offered by the Spirit for the humble, respectful, silent but eloquent proclamation of Christian faith.

The Family and the Basic Ecclesial/Human Community

The *domestic church* is the most fundamental community form of the Church and must be taken seriously as an ecclesial reality. It must be part of the total ecclesial reality of the loca-

lity. Pope John Paul II has noted with approval the pastoral emphasis that the Bishops of Asia have given to BEC's "as an effective way of promoting communion and participation in parishes and Dioceses and as a genuine force for evangelization... and are, therefore, a solid starting point for building a new society, the expression of a *civilization of love*" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 25). There is no doubt that the family *as the domestic church* has a *central* place in the pastoral thrust of building Basic Ecclesial Communities in Asia. This is likewise true for the Basic Human Community particularly for Asian multi-faith societies and inter-faith marriages. The *family* is the most fundamental community component of the BEC. This is likewise true for the Basic Human Community (BHC) particularly for Asian multi-faith societies and inter-faith marriages. In most cases the BEC is made up of clusters of neighborhood families that come together regularly to pray, read and reflect on the Word of God, and apply it to their daily lives. In like manner clusters of families in BHC gather for inter-faith prayer, reflection, fellowship and common action for the good of the neighborhood.

May it not even be said that the family in the BEC should be the *focal point of evangelization*, to which all parish pastoral programs should be geared? The BEC would then be a community of families, and the parish truly a community of communities (cf. Acts 4:32). The solidarity of families in all aspects of human life in the BEC's as well as in the BHC's would, indeed, be the micro-level response to the phenomenon of economic and cultural globalization. It is these communities, at the level of the family, where the "globalization of charity and solidarity" begins [The Pope has often referred to the globalization of charity and solidarity in his World Day

of Peace Messages]. This in turn would require a renewal of parish structures and *pastoral programs* as well as a redirection of priorities in ministry, lay and ordained. Faith formation in the family leading to family empowerment in the BEC/BHC mission toward a culture of life would become the overarching pastoral priority.

Family Spirituality: Communion and Discipleship Toward a Culture of Life

[Complementing this reflection on family spirituality are the reflections of FABC 4th Plenary Assembly on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the World of Asia, Tokyo, Japan, 1986, on Lay Spirituality, nos. 4.8.1 - 4.8.11. Their emphasis on a Kingdom of God spirituality applies even more forcefully to Asian families that are inter-faith. See also FABC 5th Plenary Assembly, Bandung, Indonesia, 1990, on A Spirituality for Our Times, nos. 9.1-9.7].

At the heart of *marriage* is love, God's love drawing man and woman to each other in a union of love - *communion* - in marriage, a love radically open to life in their children. *Consequently* a? the heart of the family *likewise* is Communion, communion with God, communion of the spouses, communion of young or elderly parents and their children, communion with grandparents and other members of the extended family. Such relational communion goes beyond simply living under one roof, or being physically related by blood. It is a union of hearts and minds (Jn. 17:21; Acts 4:32; Phil. 2:2; 1 Pt. 3:8) that in a human way reflects the communion of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - the triune God from whom the family came to be. By definition a culture of life traces its ultimate

roots to the love and life of the Triune God. Hence a spirituality of communion leads the family to become an agent of a culture of *integral* life.

Communion, however, reaches out to the wider community and impels the family toward a mission of service (Jn. 17: 14, 18, 20) *for the sake of the Reign of God*. This outward movement enables the family to share the Trinitarian communion that it is gifted with. A spirituality of communion infuses vigor and enthusiasm - life - into the dynamics of the family, the relationships between spouses, between parents and children, between members of the extended family. It extends in ever widening concentric circles to include the neighborhood, the whole community. Without this spirituality the family will fail to measure up to its identity and mission.

Discipleship and the Way of the Ordinary

For Christian families a spirituality of communion is a spirituality of discipleship, of belonging to and following Christ. Family discipleship begins with listening to Christ and heeding his word in the Scriptures, in the Church, and in everyday events. What Mary told the servants at Cana at the beginning of the married life of a new couple is likewise addressed to the family: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). It is a matter of listening to Jesus and discerning his will in family relationships, at work, or in the everyday events that impinge on family life. Indeed, it is through ordinary events, including the troubles, difficulties and afflictions that the family experiences, that it discovers what pleases God and what does not, what leads to integrity, justice, unity, *harmony*, peace and love and what does not. It is also through the ordinary ways of

loving and caring, of serving and of doing one's responsibilities in the family that sanctification is achieved through the grace of God. Done in loving fidelity to discipleship, the ordinary is the way of the family towards the culture of life.

In discerning what values or practices need to be espoused and realized, married couples and families need to recall God's intimate presence in their lives. The Spirit speaks to them and through them. Hence, the whole Church has to take seriously the *sensus fidelium* of married couples and their families as a significant component in ecclesial discernment.

The values that are important in the spirituality of Christian families apply similarly to the values needed by inter-faith and inter-religious families. They are values of the Reign of God - communion, service, fidelity, integrity, justice, unity, harmony, peace, love, listening to God and heeding God's will - in the ordinariness of everyday family life. There is a discipleship of the Reign of God. What is also said below about conscience formation, prayer, love fortified by mutual sharing in sorrow or in joy, the faithful fulfillment of responsibilities, "eucharistic" self giving and mutual sanctification in the family are likewise analogously applicable for a spirituality of the Reign of God.

Conscience Formation and the Grace of Marriage

The role of conscience is indispensable in family spirituality. *Members of families* should not merely follow the current opinion or their own desires and wants. Their lives and their behavior have to be ruled by God speaking through their conscience in the light of the teaching authority of the Church as the "authentic interpreter of the divine law" (LG 50). In

these days of increasing secularism God is becoming \$n after-thought and His Church a "voice in the wilderness." Conscience is God's gift for men and women to be truly human; it is not in itself formed by polling the views of the public. Rather it has to be "conformed to the law of God" which "throws light on the meaning of married love, protects it and leads it to truly human fulfillment" (LG 50). To form an upright conscience, docile to God's law as interpreted by the Church, is a necessary dimension of conjugal and family spirituality. This certainly magnifies the work of parents in educating their children and forming in them a right conscience.

Always and in all things, ordinary or extraordinary, the reliable, gracious and transforming presence of God in the family is a sure source of strength in the journey to holiness. Our faith tells us that *Christian* spouses are "fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament; fulfilling their conjugal and family role by virtue of this sacrament, spouses are penetrated with the spirit of Christ and their whole life is suffused by faith, hope, and charity; thus they increasingly further their own perfection and their mutual sanctification, and together they render glory to God" (LG 48). In prayer or at work a vibrant awareness of this special grace of marriage will surely bear great spiritual and temporal fruit for the family and will constantly remind the family of the living presence of the Triune God.

Prayer, the Paschal Mystery, and the Eucharist

Prayer is at the center of this spirituality, "prayer by the family, prayer for the family, and prayer with the family"

(Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, no. 4). Families need to be both encouraged and trained to pray, linking in creative ways their present everyday experiences with the values of the Gospel, thus creating new prayer forms in the home as well as renewing rituals and devotions that they have grown accustomed to. Most evocative of the nature of the Church as God's Family and of the conjugal family as the domestic church is the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught his family of faith. The Our Father is pre-eminently a prayer of the family whose ultimate Father is God.

Aided by prayer the family is able to walk with the Spirit, live in the Spirit, remain in the Spirit and follow Christ in faithful discipleship. A spirituality that is laden with prayer makes faithful discipleship possible. Fidelity in marriage, the strength of marriage, the ability of spouses and their children to respond adequately to the challenges of everyday life are graces of the Holy Spirit asked for in prayer, though indeed they flow fundamentally from the sacrament of marriage. "Outstanding courage is required for the constant fulfillment of the duties of this Christian calling: spouses, therefore, will need grace for leading a holy life: they will eagerly practice a love that is firm, generous, and prompt to sacrifice and will ask for it in their prayers" (LG, 49).

Finally we should be deeply aware that while the sanctifying role of the Christian family is grounded on Baptism and Confirmation, it finds "its highest expression in the Eucharist" (FC, 57). For the Eucharist is the memorial of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, the Paschal Mystery, the font of our salvation. Even as Christ rose from his suffering and death, so through the Paschal Mystery sacramentalized in

the Eucharist families are empowered to rise from the daily trials, anxieties, discouragement, even hopelessness - the many kinds of "death" that daily marital and family life is heir to. Certainly joy, hope, forgiveness, reconciliation, and strength for couples and their families come from the Eucharist.

The Eucharist represents the covenant of love between Christ and his Church. Thus it is in the Eucharistic sacrifice that husband and wife encounter the source of their own covenant love. For this reason, both husband and wife should not look at the Eucharistic sacrifice merely as a matter of obligation but of celebration, at which they come face to face with the sacramental wellspring of their communion as well as a celebratory event with their children for renewing their spousal and *covenantal* love. Pope John Paul II reminds us: "The Eucharist *creates communion and fosters communion*" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 40). It is at the Eucharist that husband and wife and their entire family celebrate the mystery of their oneness in the Body of Christ, and their oneness with one another. As St. Augustine said: "If you are his body and members of him, then you will find set on the Lord's table your own mystery. Yes, you receive your own mystery" (*Sermo* 272: PL 38, 1247, quoted in EE, 40). Thus the spirituality of communion and discipleship needed by families is also a eucharistic spirituality, involving everything that the Eucharistic act of Jesus implies: total self-emptying, self-giving love. Holy Mass has to be truly a *family event* with the full participation of all members of the family, including children and infants [*Where children regularly have their own Holy Mass by themselves, the celebration of Holy Mass as a family event should be done, even if only once a month, see CBCK, IWP, p. 61*

III. PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FAMILY MINISTRY

A Vision of Family Ministry in Asia

In the light of the pastoral situation and of the theological-pastoral reflection on the family in Asia, certain directions of ministry to family are imperative.

- Family ministry has to be holistic, both in depth and in breadth. It should take into consideration the comprehensive understanding of a culture of life that we have discussed.
- Therefore, in breadth Family ministry should extend beyond the usual concern about contraception, abortion, euthanasia, natural family planning, pre-marriage and post marriage catechesis, and family enrichment seminars.
- In the light of the emerging secular values regarding the family, family ministry should seek the renewal of marriage as a divinely instituted sacrament between man and woman;
- Given the social, cultural, and religious realities in Asia, Family ministry should also aim to prepare couples and families to meet the challenges of inter-religious living, poverty, migration, gender, the young, environment, politics, economic and cultural globalization, etc.
- It has to care for families with special needs.
- In depth, family ministry should make the inner resources of our faith (the sacraments, liturgy, prayer,

day-to-day spirituality) available to couples and their families in their struggle toward a culture of life.

From what may be observed it would seem that Family ministries in the Episcopal conferences in Asia have strong programs on pre-nuptial catechesis and marriage enrichment. They are also quite well set on programs of Responsible Parenthood with emphasis on Natural Family Planning particularly with the use of the Billings Method. Not quite strong are the deployment of financial resources for family ministry and the training of lay personnel for family ministry, especially at the parish level. However in view of the above-mentioned directions of family ministry required by the over-all pastoral situation in Asia, we may envision Family Ministry in Asia with the following program objectives, other than the objectives already being aimed at by family ministries in the Episcopal conferences:

A Family Ministry that Forms and Empowers:

(a) The Family as the Focal Point of Evangelization -

- giving the family the highest priority as the focal point of evangelization which every pastoral program should assist and to which they should be geared;
- redirecting all pastoral programs so that they may contribute to the strengthening of the family;

(b) Faith-Formation in the Family -

- .- promoting integral faith formation in the family, *including missionary formation*, leading toward a spirituality of communion and mission;
- empowering parents through proper faith formation, family counseling, marriage enrichment, and other

means to fulfill their calling as the primary educators, catechists, and *missionary formators* of their children;

- strengthening Catholic values of marriage while remaining open to respectful dialogue with the beliefs and values of other religions;
- on-going faith formation of husband and wife, parents, and children toward a culture of life;
- promoting functional knowledge of the Charter of the Rights of the Family (the Holy See, October 22, 1983) as an essential component of family ministry;

(c) Roles of Husband and Wife in the Family -

- restoring equality of dignity, complementariness, and co-responsible partnership of husband and wife in various roles in the family;
- eradicating the evils of patriarchy and liberating women from oppressive and traditional values and structures that do not recognize their equality of dignity with men;
- providing adequate formation regarding the role of male and female sexuality in human and family relationships;
- ensuring that a program for women empowerment be a fundamental component of ministry at the diocesan and parish levels;

(d) Resources and Personnel for Family Ministry -

- providing the ordinary resources, personnel and finances, necessary to run full time diocesan and

parish family ministries, priority being given to the recruitment of lay personnel;

- providing intensive and appropriate training for all personnel in family ministries; particularly urgent is the recruitment and training of women counselors and of "couple counselors";
- encouraging and recruiting men and women in the various professions related to the welfare of the family to be part of diocesan and parish family ministries;

(e) Family Ministry and Vocations -

- providing the dimension of vocation animation in the family ministry so that families participate not only in supporting vocations but also in discovering, animating, nourishing, and recruiting vocations;

(f) Approaches, Support Groups and Programs for Family Ministry -

- establishing support groups in the parish to help in all aspects of integral mission;
- using the couple to couple approach and family to family approach for mutual assistance, support and encouragement;
- producing materials for sex education, moral issues in conjugal relationships, Christian parenting, *missionary formation of children*, and family catechesis for the use of schools, Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities;
- incorporating family ministry in the curriculum of seminaries and other houses of formation;

- *integrating the mass media into the Church's pastoral planning and activity to be able to integrate the Christian message into the "new culture" promoted by modern communications so as to assist the families in proclaiming the Gospel;*

A Family Ministry that Cares and Serves:

Special Programs for the Family Ministry -

- setting up holistic programs for the care of single parents, inter-cultural marriages, *ecumenical marriages*, inter-religious and interfaith marriages;
- setting up programs for the compassionate care of families in difficult situations - such as divorced parents, divorced and remarried parents;
- setting up programs for families with migrant workers abroad and helping migrant workers before they leave and when they return;
- addressing the problems of violence and abuse in the family, marriage of minors, arranged marriages, substance addiction, and HIV related problems;
- providing counseling to families, including vocational counseling for youth;
- setting up child care programs;
- providing opportunities for families of different faiths to come together in sharing religious experiences toward mutual understanding and respect;

A Family Ministry that Promotes Social Transformation:

- promoting the subsidiary role of the State and of church institutions regarding the family;
- setting up integral human development programs for families through Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities, beginning with social awareness enabling them to mobilize themselves for social and political advocacy and action;
- integrating gender perspectives into the task of social transformation in accordance with the "new feminism" that Pope John Paul II has advocated;
- enlisting women in the task of promoting social justice and peace;
- skills training, networking and building family solidarity among inter-religious and interfaith families in Basic Ecclesial/Human Communities for social and political advocacy, including vigilance over the means of social communication and cyberspace (the globalization of family solidarity at the grassroots);
- fostering inter-religious and interfaith family ministry programs in Catholic schools which have a privileged relationship with families because of their role *in loco parentis*;
- setting up competent multidisciplinary groups of lay people and couples for social and political advocacy on behalf of Gospel values threatened by media and legislation;
- stopping the use of children and minors in war;

- stopping child and women trafficking for all forms of activity, particularly sex tourism;

The fundamental dynamic force of family ministry in Asia has to be a relevant and engaged Family Spirituality of Communion and Mission that is ecclesial, sacramental, and Christocentric. Given the multi-cultural and multi-religious situation of Asian families, this spirituality has to give particular attention to a Kingdom of God spirituality that would serve as a common denominator for mission, that aims at assisting Asian families establish a genuine culture of life in Asia.

DOCUMENTATION

19th National Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Liturgy: Resolutions*

EPISCOPAL COMMISSION ON LITURGY

1. ON THE INSTRUCTION *"REDEMPTIONS SACRAMENTUM"*: We are cognizant of the abuses and improprieties in the liturgy. However, we do not consider sanctions as the only remedy but rather a solid theological, historical, spiritual formation in the liturgy of the clergy, religious and the laity. We recommend Paul VI Institute of Liturgy and the San Beda College Graduate School of Liturgy among others for such formation.

2. ON THE PRESENTATION OF GIFTS: The offerings that are neither elements for the Eucharistic Celebration nor expressions of charity for the poor and the needs of the Church may not be brought to the altar as offerings of the faithful. Hence, offerings that are purely symbolic are not allowed during Mass.

3. ON DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION: Even in cases where consecrated hosts are lacking for communion,

•Resolutions approved by the Diocesan Directors of Liturgy at their annual meeting held last September 3-7, 2004 at Malolos City.

we discourage the practice of intincting unconsecrated host in consecrated wine to give communion to the faithful.

4. ON THE FREQUENCY OF CELEBRATING HOLY MASS: In consideration of the very large number of faithful and their great desire for the celebration of the Eucharist, we urge the local bishops to request the Apostolic See for an indult to extend the limits to the frequency of Masses on weekdays and Sundays and of the pluri-intentional Masses.

5. ON THE SANCTUARY: We call on all those who are involved in the design and construction of church furnishings to consider, in coordination with the diocesan directors of liturgy, not only the functionality and aesthetics but also the theological and iconological significance of the furnishings of the sanctuary, especially the altar, ambo and the chair. We request the Graduate School of Liturgy in San Beda to organize a series of lectures and seminars on Church Architecture and Art to which architects, designers and diocesan directors are to be invited.

6. ON LITURGICAL BOOKS: Missalettes and other similar materials should not be used to replace the liturgical books such as the Sacramentary, Lectionary and the Book of the Gospels.

7. ON SUNDAY ASSEMBLY IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRIEST: We recommend the adoption of the *Order of the Sunday Assembly in the Absence of the Priest* approved by the CBCP in 2001 as well as the formularies for the same contained in the *Supplement to the Roman Sacramentary for the Philippines*.

8. ON WORSHIP OF THE EUCHARIST OUTSIDE THE MASS: Perpetual Adoration Chapels should be regulated by the norms issued by the Holy See in the Instruction: "Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside the Mass" (1973).

Philippine Episcopology: Addenda-Corrigenda, 2004

CHARLES BRANSOM, JR.

The following list updates entries in the "Philippine Episcopology" previously published in the *Boletin* and continues the "Episcopology" with the details of the episcopal ordinations of those bishops consecrated subsequent to the final installment and the previous lists of Addenda-Corrigenda.

- N. 103 **Gabriel Martelino Reyes** - named Bishop of Cebu 29 July 1932.
- N. 132 **Charles Van den Ouwelant, M.S.C.** - died at Butuan 22 August 2003.
- N. 152 **Jesus J. Sison** - died 26 March 2004 at El Paso, Texas.
- N. 155 **Julio Xavier Labayen, O.C.D.** - resigned 28 June 2003.
- N. 159 **Antonio Yapsutco Fortich** - died 2 July 2003 at Bacolod.
- N. 160 **Jaime Lachica Sin** - resigned 15 September 2003.

- N. 161 **Jesus Y. Varela** - resigned 16 April 2003.
- N. 173 **Francisco F. Claver, S.J.** - resigned from his vicariate 19 March 2004.
- N. 190 **Simeon O. Valerio, S.V.D.** - died 23 June 2003 at Quezon City.
- N. 195 **Gaudencio Borbon Rosales** - Archbishop of Manila 15 September 2003.
- N. 208 **Generoso C. Camina** - resigned 11 February 2003.
- N. 209 **Nestor C. Carino** - Titular Bishop of Acholla and Auxiliary of Daet, 11 June 2003.
- N. 217 **Ruben T. Profugo** - resigned 13 September 2003.
- N. 226 **Gabriel Villaruz Reyes** - Bishop of Antipolo 7 December 2002.
- N. 234 **Antonio Realubin Tobias** - Apostolic Administrator of Novaliches, *sede plena*, 21 June 2003; Bishop of Novaliches 25 November 2003.
- N. 235 **Teodoro J. Buhain** - resigned as Auxiliary of Manila 23 September 2003.
- N. 238 **Francisco C. San Diego** - first Bishop of Pasig 28 June 2003.
- N. 240 **Teodoro C. Bacani** - first Bishop of Novaliches 7 December 2002; resigned 25 November 2003.
- N. 242 **Emilio Z. Marquez** - succeeded to Lucena 13 September 2003.
- N. 244 **Deogracias S. Iniguez** - first Bishop of Kalookan 28 June 2003.

- N. 250 **Camilo Diaz Gregorio** - Bishop Prelate of Batanes
13 September 2003.
- N. 252 **Leo M. Drona, S.D.B.** - Bishop of San Pablo
14 May 2004.
- N. 262 **Antonio Racelis Rafiola** - resigned as Auxiliary of
Cebu 2 October 2003.
- N. 264 **Oswaldo Padiua** - Apostolic Nuncio to Costa Rica
31 July 2003.
- N. 269 **Ramon C. Argiuelles** - Archbishop of Lipa 14 May
2004.
- N. 271 **Crisostomo Yalung** - resigned 7 December 2002.
- N. 273 **Rolando Joven Tria Tirona, O.C.D.** - Bishop
Prelate of Infanta 28 June 2003.
- N. 274 **Zacharias Jimenez** - Titular Bishop of Abra and
Auxiliary of Butuan, 11 June 2003.
- N. 277 **Jose Paala Salazar, O.P.** - Auxiliary of Lipa 11 June
2003; died at Lipa 30 May 2004.
- N. 280 **Jesse Eugenio Mercado** - first Bishop of Paranaque
7 December 2002.
- N. 282 **Arturo Mandin Bastes, S.V.D.** - succeeded to
Sorsogon 16 April 2003.
- N. 287 **Honesto F. Ongtioco** - first Bishop of Cubao
28 June 2003.
- N. 288 **Antonieto Dumagan Cabajog** - his second co-
consecrator was Archbishop Onesimo Cadiz
Gordoncillo of Capiz.

- N. 289 **Jose Francisco Oliveros** - Apostolic Administrator of Malolos, *sede vacante*, 15 August 2003; Bishop of Malolos 14 May 2004.
- N. 290 **Guillermo Vega Afable** - succeeded to Digos 11 February 2003.
- N. 292 **Socrates Buenaventura Villegas** - Bishop of Balanga 3 May 2004.
- N. 296 **Edwin Angot de la Peiia, M.S.P.** - Apostolic Administrator of Pagadian, *sede vacante*, 15 August 2003.
- N. 301 **Buenaventura Malayo Famadico** - Bishop of Gumaca 11 June 2003.
- N. 303.2002, 18 February, at Cebu, Cathedral
 Cardinal Ricardo Jamin Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu assisted by Msgr. John Forrosuelo Du, Bishop of Dumaguete and by Msgr. Leopoldo Sumaylo Tumulak, Bishop of Tagbilaran
 consecrated Msgr. **Isabelo Caiban Abarquez**, Titular Bishop of Talaptula, Auxiliary of Cebu, born at Panlaan (Cebu) 8 July 1956; priest 23 June 1987; named 27 December 2002.
- N. 304.2003, 19 February, at Punta Princesa, Cebu, Lourdes Church
 Cardinal Ricardo Jamin Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu assisted by Msgr. Precioso D. Cantillas, Bishop of Maasin and by Msgr. Vicente Macanan Navarra, Bishop of Bacolod
 consecrated Msgr. **Patricio Abella Buzon, S.D.B.**, Bishop of Kabankalan, born at San Nicolas (Cebu) 14 March 1950; Salesian 29 June 1967; priest 8 December 1976; named 27 December 2002.

- N. 305.2003, 16 July, at Tabuk, Cathedral of Saint William
 Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese,
 Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines
 assisted by Msgr. Diosdado Aenlle Talamayan,
 Archbishop of Tuguegarao
 and by Msgr. Carlito J. Cenzon, Titular Bishop of
 Scebatiana
 consecrated Msgr. **Prudencio Padilla Andaya,**
C.I.C.M., Titular Bishop of Fuerteventura, Vicar
 Apostolic of Tabuk, born at Lubuagan (Tabuk)
 2 January 1959; priest 8 December 1986; named
 28 March 2003.
- N. 306.2003, 30 July, at Kalibo, Cathedral
 Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin, Archbishop of Manila
 assisted by Msgr. Onesimo Cadiz Gondoncillo,
 Archbishop of Capiz
 and by Msgr. Gabriel Villaruz Reyes, Bishop of
 Antipolo
 consecrated Msgr. **Jose Corazon Tumbagahan**
Tala-oc, Bishop of Romblon,
 born at Tagas (Kalibo) 16 June 1950; priest 9 April
 1979; named 11 June 2003.
- N. 307.2003, 29 August, at Ulaanbaatar, Church of Saints Peter
 and Paul
 Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Prefect of the Congrega-
 tion for the Evangelization of Peoples
 assisted by Msgr. Giovanni Battista Morandini,
 Titular Archbishop of Numida, Apostolic Nuncio
 to Mongolia
 and by Msgr. Antonio Realubin Tobias, Bishop of
 San Fernando de La Union and Apostolic Admi-
 nistrator of Novaliches

- consecrated Msgr. **Wenceslao Selga Padilla, C.I.C.M.**, Titular Bishop of Tharros, Prefect Apostolic of Ulaanbaatar, born at Tubao (San Fernando de La Union) 29 September 1949; priest 17 March 1976; Superior of the Mission *sui iuris* of Urga 19 April 1992; Prefect Apostolic of Ulaanbaatar 30 April 2002; Titular Bishop of Tharros 2 August 2003.
- 308.2003, 29 December, at San Jose de Buenavista, Cathedral Msgr. Antonio Franco, Titular Archbishop of Gallese, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines assisted by Msgr. Angel N. Lagdameo, Archbishop of Jaro and by Msgr. Romulo Tolentino de la Cruz, Bishop of San Jose de Antique consecrated Msgr. **Jose Romeo Orquejo Lazo**, Bishop of Kalibo, born at San Jose de Buenavista (San Jose de Antique) 23 January 1949; priest 1 April 1975; named 15 November 2003.
- 309.2004, 10 February, at Los Angeles, Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels Cardinal Roger Michael Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles assisted by Msgr. Sam Joseph Galip Jacobs, Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux and by Msgr. Charles Michael Jarrell, Bishop of Lafayette consecrated Msgr. **Oscar Azarcon Solis**, Titular Bishop of Urci, Auxiliary of Los Angeles, born at San Jose 13 October 1953; priest 28 April 1979; named 11 December 2003.

Final Statement:
National Congress of the Clergy
PARTICIPANTS OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS
OF THE CLERGY

*"And they shall look at him whom they pierced."
(Jn. 19:37)*

We have experienced five extraordinary days of grace. We, almost 4000 bishops, priests and deacons from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao have participated in the first National Congress of the Clergy. The big number of participants is a sign that we love our vocation. These days have been an intense experience of union with the Lord and with each other in the Lord, most of all in common prayer and the Eucharist, common study and reflection, shared meals, laughter, tears and dreams. We have been confirmed in priestly brotherhood. We are grateful to God for showing once again His love and mercy to His priests. We thank the CBCP Commission on the

•Theme: "A Renewed Clergy, A Renewed Church, A Renewed Country",
World Trade Center, Pasay City, July 5-9, 2004.

Clergy, the Congress organizers, their collaborators and staff, the benefactors and host families, and the multitudes that prayed. Your love has given us more reason to persevere in hope.

At the Congress, we looked closely at the priestly ministry and life in our time while looking at Jesus who was pierced on the cross (Jn 19:37). Having seen, we were invited to make judgments and decisions about ourselves as priests. We now challenge ourselves to act on what we have seen and judged.

We commit ourselves to a joyful embrace of the undeserved gift of our vocation. We believe that we are called to holiness, to union with God through following Jesus in openness to the Holy Spirit's power. We will strengthen our communion with the Church and humanity through conscientious proclamation of the Gospel, faithful celebration of the sacraments, and humble shepherding of the community. The gift we have been given is for optimal service of the communion of God's people and not for personal gain.

We commit ourselves to a style of life in harmony with our vocation. We will develop a vibrant life of prayer that will nurture a Christ-like lifestyle, marked by discipline, self-offering and single-heartedness. As we render loving service to the poor, we will assume a lifestyle of simplicity, generosity and freedom. We will focus our energies on the Church's mission so that we may live by clear priorities. We will deepen the spirit of community and fraternal life among bishops and priests.

We commit ourselves to our on-going formation and renewal so that we may correspond to the ever renewing grace

of God. The bishops among us are committed to developing and supporting programs for the renewal and care of the priests and of ourselves too. The priests among us will embark of continuing formation, not only for our personal growth, but also for the optimal service God's people deserve from us.

The priesthood is a gift that the Lord does not take back despite our brokenness and sins. In response to God's fidelity, we renew our commitment to serve wholeheartedly. We invite all sectors in the Church and Philippine society to join us in the common pursuit of individual and communal renewal so that as one people we may experience fullness of life and peace! Let us open ourselves to God who unceasingly renews us. Through the prayers of Mary may we priests put on the mind and heart of Jesus so as to become a *Renewed Clergy* in a *Renewed Church* for a *Renewed Country*!

Fiftieth Foundation Anniversary of the Church and Convent of Santo Domingo, Quezon City

PEDRO TEJERO, OP

October 10 of this year 2004 marks the 50th foundation anniversary of the church and convent of Santo Domingo, in Quezon City. This date brings to our memory important historical events worth being remembered and treasured with gratitude. Forgetting the tradition inherited from our ancestors is tantamount to renounce to our own personality, while remembering and reviving that tradition means to enrich ourselves and to deepen in the life and development of the individuals, institutions and peoples.

On December 27, 1941 a squadron of Japanese airplanes flew over the city of Manila, leaving behind a rain of destructive and incendiary bombs. On that fatal day, in a matter of hours, the convent and church of Santo Domingo were reduced to a heap of embers and ashes. Very little or nothing was spared from fire and destruction. The next day, at noontime, the

Japanese airplanes hit again destroying and burning the *Beaterio of Santa Catalina*, Santa Rosa College and part of the College of San Juan de Letran and adjacent buildings. Those who witnessed it described the entire scene as dantesque, unforgettable.

Amid these fateful events and misfortunes, what happened to the venerable image of Our Lady of the Rosary (*La Naval*) enthroned in Santo Domingo church? Thank God the Virgin was spared from the flames. The Santo Domingo Fathers, foreseeing the worst possible scenario, a few days earlier, took down the Virgin from her altar and placed it in the safety vault of a building adjacent to the convent, called *Procuracion de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*. Three days after these events took place, a group of Dominican Fathers approached the place where the safety vault was. After removing a heap of still smoking ashes, they managed to open the safety vault. With immense joy and feelings of gratitude to God, they saw that the image of the Virgin was unscathed. It had been saved from the fire! With devoted veneration they put it on a wagon and transferred it to the chapel of the University of Santo Tomas. Therein it was placed at the center of the altar for the cult and veneration of the faithful who came in crowds to see it again on her throne. From the date until its transfer to the convent and church of Santo Domingo, in Quezon City, on October 10, 1954 the Virgin presided and graced all the worship activities, novenas and celebrations of the parish and of the University of Santo Tomas.

The cornerstone of the Santo Domingo convent and church, in Quezon City, was blessed in 1950 by the Bishop of Batanes, Msgr. Peregrin de la Fuente. The lands where the

present convent and church were at that time rice fields. The completion of the convent and of the church construction took four years. Thus the Dominican community settled in the convent on September 25, 1954 and it was composed by a quite large number of members.

The transfer of the venerated image of Our Lady of the Rosary (*La Naval*) to the new church took place on October 10, 1954. On that very day, at ten o'clock in the morning, the church was blessed by the Archbishop of Manila, Msgr. Rufino Santos. At four o'clock in the afternoon, around one million faithful had gathered to join and watch the procession. The Virgin, enthroned on a soberly adorned *carroza*, traveled from the chapel of the University of Santo Tomas to Santo Domingo church. Throngs of people crowded together all along España and Quezon Boulevards. A good number of bishops joined the procession together with the members of the Central Seminary and the UST Dominican community. Upon reaching the church, at the sunset, the Virgin was placed at the gate and there the Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was held, presided by Fr. Esteban Gomez, OP, Pro-vicar General of the Order of Preachers and delegated by Rome to preside at those acts. Since the church was still unfinished, a temporary wooden altar had to be constructed to accommodate the image of the Virgin.

The morning of October 11 gave us a pleasant surprise. As soon as the gates of the church were opened, a crowd of faithful filled it up in a matter of minutes. This was totally unexpected. A mass was celebrated but the communicants were so many that there was shortage of hosts to the point that many faithful were unable to receive communion!

Although the Virgin had taken possession of her magnificent shrine, however, the construction work of the church was on going. For this reason the community Fathers deemed necessary to transfer the image to an improvised chapel, in the *Sala de las Cofradías* (Guilds' Hall), at the entrance of the interior cloister of the convent. That was the venue where the community gathered together to pray the Divine Office, the rosary and celebrate the morning masses. Large numbers of faithful came to this chapel to see the miraculous image closely and enjoy her sweet and merciful look.

When the construction was finally completed and the altar of the Virgin had been covered with marble brought from Italy, the image was transferred to its throne, located then at the right side looking towards the main altar. On the left side altar there was the beautiful and inspiring carving of the *Cristo del Santo Entierro*, a very popular confraternity in the church of Intramuros.

At this stage, the apostolate and pastoral activities started being organized. The schedule of masses was established, both on weekdays and on Sundays and Holydays of obligation. The attendance to those Eucharistic celebrations was truly massive from the very beginning. The confessional boxes were approached by a large number of penitents coming from all over the Archipelago. The Third Order and the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary were reestablished. Also the Holy Name Society, with its national headquarters. Another confraternity that was revived with powerful vitality was the one of the *Santo Entierro y Virgen de la Soledad*: Former members returned to the bosom of the Confraternity, which held annually with great solemnity the *Santo Entierro* on Good

Friday. It can be said that the apostolic activities of the church were, from the very beginning, intense and spearheaded for a promising future.

These were the beginnings of Santo Domingo convent and church in Quezon City, declared as *National Shrine of the Rosary* by the Philippine hierarchy. We close this historical footnote giving thanks to God and to the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary for having inspired in the Superiors of the Holy Rosary Province the construction and enhancement of the grandiose shrine. Thanks also to the many people who worked and made possible such magnificent project. Surely their names are written in the book of life, in the presence of God, who rewards everyone according to their deeds.

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

FACULTIES TO EXERCISE SOME PASTORAL FUNCTIONS IN THE DIOCESE

INQUIRY:

Priests and deacons in the past needed a number of faculties from their Bishops or Superiors in order to exercise some pastoral or ministerial functions in the diocese. For instance, the faculty to hear confessions, to administer baptism and confirmation to adults, to assist at marriages, to grant dispensations, to preach, etc. Is it still the same now after the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law? Are not these faculties granted automatically by law and by virtue of the office? In any case, if still needed, may I know what are those faculties and who is their granting authority? One more thing: Can Vicars General and Episcopal Vicars be considered Ordinaries on this regard? I would appreciate some enlightenment on the matter.

ANSWER:

This matter concerning the so-called "faculties" needed to exercise some ministerial functions is directly related to the *power of governance* in the Church, traditionally known as jurisdiction.

Now, within the power of governance there is a further distinction between *ordinary* power of governance and *delegated* power of governance. The former is attached to a specific office by reason of the law itself; for instance, a parish priest, upon taking possession of his office, has power given to him by law to solemnize marriages within the territory of his parish. On the other hand, the *delegated* power of governance is conferred upon a person (priest, deacon, lay person) by special concession either by the law itself (for instance, the faculty given by canon 976 to any priest to absolve validly and lawfully penitents who are in danger of death from any censures and sins) or by someone enjoying the ordinary power of governance; for example, a local Ordinary or a parish priest can delegate a deacon or another priest to assist at a marriage.

These faculties - which are somehow favors, although they cannot be considered as personal privileges - are regulated by the canonical provisions concerning *delegated power*. They are a sort of empowerment to act, and are generally issued in the name of the diocesan Bishop, even if he has designated someone else to issue the faculties in his name. Granting them is an administrative act. So is their removal, which can be done by the diocesan Bishop or by another local Ordinary (e.g. Vicar General, Episcopal Vicar) in the diocese authorized by him to do this.

These faculties are called ministerial faculties or "habitual faculties" and are granted either indefinitely or for a limited time, like, *perdurante munere* (for the duration of the assignment), for one or three years, for a certain number of cases, etc.

*Are faculties **for** some ministries still needed?*

Yes, they are. Actually certain actions are not valid unless they are performed by someone with the proper power or authority to do them. For instance, the faculty to administer confirmation, to hear confessions, to absolve censures, to assist at marriages, to grant dispensations, etc.

That these faculties are needed is clearly seen in certain canonical provisions like the one found in canon 966 §1 concerning the administration of the sacrament of Penance: "The valid absolution of sins requires that the minister have, in addition to the power of order, *the faculty of exercising it* for the faithful to whom he imparts absolution." Or the following one related to the sacrament of Confirmation: "A priest can validly confer the sacrament of Confirmation *if he has the faculty to do so*, either from the general law or by way of a special grant from the competent authority" (can. 882). Another example is the authorization needed to assist validly at marriages.

Bishops normally grant faculties to priests and deacons incardinated in their dioceses, to other clergy who minister there, and at times to lay people. One thing is clear: nobody is entitled to these faculties; they are a free grant by the diocesan Bishop or someone acting in his name. They extend to those "ministers" the authorization which is needed to perform certain pastoral functions, and grant them the delegation to

enable them to perform other services normally reserved to a higher authority (e.g. to absolve from censures or dispense from impediments).

Some faculties are necessary for the ministry; others are optional. Actually the only faculty which is strictly necessary for a priest to exercise his ministry is the faculty to hear confessions (c. 966 §1). The law itself grants this faculty to local ordinaries, canons penitentiary, to parish priests and to those others who are in the place of the parish priest (c. 968 §1). Superiors of religious institutes or of societies of apostolic life, if they are clerical and of pontifical right, also have from the law this faculty to hear confessions to their subjects and household. All other priests must be granted the faculty by the local Ordinary, who is the competent authority to do it.

Other faculties are optional or, in other words, not essential for the ministry of priests and deacons, and it is up to the discretion of diocesan authorities to determine which faculties to grant and to whom. In some instances faculties are extended to parochial vicars to do what a parish priest can do in virtue of his office. In other instances faculties are a delegation to priests and deacons to do what a local ordinary can do. Lay people can be delegated for certain functions, too, like to assist at marriages where there are no priests and deacons (c. 1112 §1).

Are not these faculties granted by law or by virtue of office?

Some of them, yes; others, no. Let me explain.

Some faculties are granted by the law itself or are attached to an office; others need the concession by the competent authority. For instance, the faculty to hear confessions is given by the law itself to local ordinaries, canons penitentiary and

parish priests, as we have said; to other priests, it is given by concession or delegation issued by the competent authority: local Ordinaries or religious Superiors. The law itself may grant power in certain circumstances, as canon 976 grants to all priests - even secularized ones - faculty to absolve from all censures and sins in danger of death.

By virtue of their office parish priests are authorized to assist at marriages. Since this authority to assist at marriages is attached to their offices, parish priests enjoy such authority or power from the moment they legitimately assume them. Logically, they lose this authority or power when they lose the office. (This same authorization extends also to those considered in law equivalent to parish priests: parochial administrators, parish priests of quasi parishes or missions, and members of the team of priests to whom the pastoral care of a parish has been entrusted *in solidum*.) However, parish priests may not assist at marriages of their subjects when they are outside their territory, unless they have previously been delegated by the local Ordinary or by the parish priest of the place where the marriage is to be celebrated.

Some more examples of concession by law itself: The law grants priests and deacons the faculty to preach everywhere, "unless this faculty has been restricted or removed by the competent Ordinary, or unless particular law requires express permission" (c. 764); also to dispense from certain marriage impediments if properly authorized to assist at the marriage in question (cc. 1079 §2, 1080). Likewise, the law grants the faculty to priests to perform certain sacramental actions when someone is in danger of death; for instance, confirmation (c. 833,3°), and anointing of the sick (c.1003).

By law any priest may lawfully celebrate the Eucharist, provided he is not canonically impeded by some irregularity or by a penal sanction (cf. c. 900 §2). Etc.

However, in spite of the various faculties granted by the present Code of Canon Law to priests, deacons and even laity for pastoral functions, faculties must still be granted by the diocesan Bishop or other local Ordinary to exercise some ministerial functions in a diocese.

Who can grant faculties?

Who is the competent authority to grant faculties? A partial answer has been given already in the previous paragraphs. It has been said that faculties for certain ministerial functions in a diocese are generally issued in the name of the diocesan Bishop and granted either by him personally or by someone else designated to issue the faculties in his name. Those faculties that the Bishop has not reserved to himself or that do not require by law a special mandate of the Bishop can also be granted by the Vicar General and the Episcopal Vicar, for their respective territory, since the law gives them the same executive power which belongs by law to the diocesan Bishop (cf. c. 479). It has been said also that certain Superiors of religious institutes or of societies of apostolic life can likewise delegate their subjects some specific faculties.

Perhaps then the best way to answer to the question on who can grant faculties be by using the terms "Ordinary" and "local Ordinary" as they are enumerated in the Code of Canon Law (c. 134). These church officials have in virtue of the law or of their office *ordinary* power of governance in their own territory and for their own subjects. Granting faculties is

simply a way of extending to others the powers that they have. Since such power, like all authority in the Church, is intended for service, the granting of faculties is done when those in authority judge that it contributes to the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

This already answers to the question on whether Vicars General and Episcopal Vicars can be considered Ordinaries in the context of granting faculties. The answer is *yes*, since both of them are given in principle the same executive power which belongs by law to the diocesan Bishop (cf. c. 479).

Regarding the manner in which faculties are granted, we should say that they are to be granted in writing (c.51). And concerning their duration, the norm is that faculties end on the expiry of the time or the completion of the number of cases for which they were granted as well as on their revocation by the granting authority; however, they do not normally end on the expiry of the granting authority, unless this appears from clauses attached to them (cf. c.142).

Which are those faculties?

It is becoming a practice in many dioceses for the diocesan Bishop to grant ministerial faculties to a particular priest, for instance, by issuing a decree declaring that he may exercise the faculties proper to him in accordance with the norms of canon law and pertinent apostolic decrees, plus in addition some specific functions (enumerated there) with certain conditions attached. This is done "By virtue of our authority as Bishop of the place, and in virtue of the authority delegated to us by the Apostolic See."

What I have noticed is that in many instances bishops include in their listing of "faculties" prescriptions of general law which do not require the added intervention of the Bishop for the cleric to act, but which the diocesan Bishop wishes to bring to his attention.

And since most faculties are optional, they are granted according to the discretion of the diocesan authorities, and furthermore granted to priests, deacons and even lay people in accord with the needs of the particular church. That is why, it is practically impossible to make up a uniform list of the faculties to be granted.

Thus in answer to the question on which are those faculties, I will reproduce a "Sample List of Faculties" that may be granted to priests (and most of them also to deacons) when pastorally beneficial and opportune for a given situation. They are granted either for a determined period of time or "until revoked" or "for the duration of your ministry in this diocese."

Sample List of Faculties*

a) Granted by diocesan bishop; necessary faculty:

1. For priests who are not parish priests, the habitual faculty to hear confessions.

b) Granted by diocesan bishop; optional faculties - may or may not be included:

2. To baptize persons 14 and older without previously referring the matter to the diocesan bishop;

*Acknowledgement: This list was initially prepared by the Canon Law Society of America in 1983, and modified by J. Provost, in "Clergy Procedural Handbook," edited by R. Calvo and N. Klinger, CLSA, 1992, pp. 103-108.

3. For priests who are assigned to a parish, to confirm persons 14 and older whom they have baptized or received into full communion with the Catholic Church;

4. To confirm Catholics who, although baptized earlier, have not been reared in the Church, on the occasion of their being reconciled to the Church;

5. To celebrate the Eucharist twice on weekdays and, of the exercise of order, three times on Sundays and holydays of obligation;

6. To dispense from irregularities for the exercise of orders already received, in either the internal or external forum within the confines of the diocese, and on behalf of any cleric regardless of his residence or the place where the irregularity was incurred, provided their dispensation is not reserved to the Apostolic See;

7. To remit in the internal or external forum a *latae sententiae* penalty established by law but not yet declared, provided its remission is not reserved to the Apostolic See. This faculty can be exercised only within the boundaries of the diocese and on behalf of any person, regardless of the person's residence or the place where the penalty was incurred;

8. For those assigned to a parish who are not parish priests, to assist at marriages within the boundaries of the parish to which they are assigned;

9. To those assigned to a parish, for a just and reasonable cause to permit the marriage between two baptized persons, one of whom was baptized in the Catholic church or received into it after baptism and who has not departed from

the Church by a formal act, and the other of whom belongs to a church or ecclesial community not in full communion with the Catholic Church, provided the conditions mentioned in canon 1125 are fulfilled;

10. To those assigned to a parish, for a just and reasonable cause to dispense from the impediment of disparity of cult, provided the conditions mentioned in canon 1125 have been fulfilled;

11. For those able to assist at marriages, even in cases which are not occult, to dispense all the impediments to marriage which may be dispensed by the local Ordinary, when everything has been prepared for the marriage and when the marriage cannot be delayed without the probable danger of grave harm until the dispensation can be obtained from the competent authority (see c. 1080);

12. To those assigned to a parish, if serious difficulties pose an obstacle to the observance of the canonical form in a religiously mixed marriage, to dispense from the form in individual cases provided the marriage is to take place within the confines of this diocese, and there will be some public form of celebration;

13. To those assigned to a parish but who are not parish priests, to permit the marriage of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic to be celebrated outside the parish church but in another Catholic church or oratory;

14. To those assigned to a parish, to permit the marriage of two Catholics and of a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic to be celebrated outside the parish church but in another Catholic church or oratory;

15. To those assigned to a parish, to allow Catholic funeral rites for an unbaptized child if the parents had intended to have the child baptized;

16. To those assigned to a parish, to allow Catholic funeral rites for a baptized person belonging to a non-Catholic church or ecclesial community, provided this is clearly not contrary to the wishes of the deceased and provided a minister of his or her own faith is not available;

17. To dispense, in individual cases and for a just reason, from the Eucharistic fast;

18. For those assigned to a parish who are not parish priests, to dispense in individual instances and for a just reason, from the obligation of observing a day of precept or a day of penance, or to commute the obligation into other pious works; this faculty may be exercised on behalf of a parishioner and of a person visiting within the boundaries of the parish;

19. For those assigned to a parish who are not parish priests, to dispense from private vows made by a person belonging to the parish and also by a visitor within the territory of the parish, provided the dispensation will not injure the acquired rights of others;

20. To those assigned to a parish who are not parish priests, to commute to a lesser good what was promised by a private vow made by a person belonging to the parish and also by a visitor within the territory of the parish;

21. To those assigned to a parish who are not parish priests, to suspend, dispense, or commute a promissory oath made by a person belonging to the parish and also by a visitor within the territory of the parish, provided the dispensation

would not tend to prejudice those who refuse to remit its obligation;

c) Granted by the law itself- may be included as a reminder:

22. To preach the word of God everywhere, with the at least presumed consent of the Rector of the church, unless this faculty has been restricted or taken away by the competent Ordinary or unless express permission is required by particular law (c.764);

23. To priests, to confirm a person who is no longer an infant and whom they have baptized by reason of office or mandate from the diocesan bishop, or an already baptized person whom they admit into the full communion of the Catholic Church (c. 883, 2°);

24. To priests, to confirm those in danger of death (c. 883, 3°);

25. To priests, to celebrate the Eucharist unless canonically impeded (c.900);

26. To priests, to absolve any penitent who is in danger of death, from any kind of censures and sins, even if an approved priest is present (c.976);

27. For those able to assist at marriages, to dispense those in danger of death from all impediments of ecclesiastical law, except the impediment arising from sacred order of the presbyterate, provided the local ordinary cannot be reached (c. 1079 §2);

28. For confessors, to dispense those in danger of death from all impediments of ecclesiastical law, except the impe-

diment arising from sacred order of the presbyterate, provided the local ordinary cannot be reached and the impediment is occult (c. 1079 §3);

29. For those able to assist at marriages, to dispense those about to be married or to convalidate their marriage, from all impediments except those arising from sacred orders, from a public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute of pontifical right, or crime (c.1090), provided the marriage cannot be deferred without probable danger of serious harm until a dispensation can be obtained from competent authority, and the case is an occult one (c.1080);

30. For confessors, to dispense those about to be married or to convalidate their marriage, from all impediments except those arising from sacred orders, from a public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute of pontifical right, or crime (c. 1090), provided the marriage cannot be deferred without probable danger of serious harm until a dispensation can be obtained from competent authority, and the case as well as the impediment is occult (c.1080);

31. For parish priests, to permit the marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic to take place in a church or oratory other than the parish church (C.1118§1);

32. For priests, to impart any blessings not otherwise reserved do the Roman Pontiff or to bishops (c. 1169 §2); for deacons, to impart those blessings which are expressly permitted to them by law (c.1169 §3);

33. For parish priests, to dispense for a just reason from private vows made by a person belonging to the parish and

also by a visitor within the territory of the parish, provided the dispensation does not injure a right acquired by others (c. 1196, 1°), or to commute a private vow to a lesser good (c. 1197);

34. For parish priests, for a just reason to suspend, dispense or commute a promissory oath made by a person belonging to the parish and also by a visitor within the territory of the parish, provided a dispensation does not prejudice others who refuse to remit its obligation (c. 1203);

35. For parish priests, for a just reason and in accord with any prescriptions of the diocesan bishop, to dispense from the obligation to observe a feast day or a day of penance, or to commute this to other pious works (c. 1245); this faculty may be exercised on behalf of a parishioner and of a person visiting within the boundaries of the parish.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for January-February 2005

EFREN RIVERA, OP

January 1, 2005



Mother of God

Readings (A): Num 6:22-27; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2: 16-21

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The shepherds find Mary and Joseph and their baby lying in the manger.* <> The books of Matthew and Luke when compared to Mark, have something new. For them, the story of Jesus does not begin, as in Mark, with the preaching of John the Baptist, the Precursor. It begins with God's Choice of Mary to be the Mother of the Messiah / Savior. Before ending his second chapter, Luke reflects on the role of Mary in human salvation. The shepherds (in whom we can see ourselves) find Jesus not as a lonely infant that dropped from the sky (like Superbaby who becomes Superman), but as a baby laid by his mother in a manger. She embodies the *Anawim* - the Poor of the Lord - who had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah. She is the model

of the Christian who reflects on the Word-Events of the Savior's story.

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

V. 16 "The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem..." - Value of hurrying or not losing time to respond to a divine revelation.

V. 17 "When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about the child. - Value of sharing Good News with others (and not just keeping it to oneself).

V. 19 "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." - Value of assimilating and deepening one's perception of God's work of salvation.

V. 20 "Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. - Value of glorifying and praising God.

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

- The story of Christ's birth divided people into two sides: those who had political or religious power (the Caesars and Roman governors and the religious leaders of the Jews) on one hand and those who were powerless in themselves but were -waiting for God to show his might for the salvation of people, on the other hand. The latter were, in the first place, the "*Anawim*" or the Poor of the Lord. On which side have you experienced life?

- Have you included Mary in your picture of God's work of salvation? How did the inclusion of Mary in the picture affect your life?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Without giving up our admiration and veneration of the glory of Mary in heaven, let us think of her as our companion in our earthly journey to our eternal fatherland. She too had to journey on this earth, she too experienced our joys and our sorrows.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us keep reminding people that Marian devotion is part of Filipino culture.

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

CHILDREN AND THE ROSARY WILL MOVE FAMILIES TO GOD

In 1994, on Christmas, Pope John Paul II released a letter to children, saying, "Dear young friends, it is to your prayers that I entrust the problems of your own families, and all the families of the world." What a tremendous and unthinkable challenge! Was the Pope just dreaming? No. Not for Connie Schneider, organizer for the St. Paul and Minneapolis archdiocesan division (USA) of the World Apostolate of Fatima. She saw great wisdom in what the Pope had said.

So, Connie Schneider and her group decided to do something in line with the Pope's insight to mark the year of the Rosary (2003). She planned to invite the schoolchildren of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to the Cathedral of St. Paul for a rosary and holy hour on October 7, the feast of

Our Lady of the Rosary. The children will be asked to pray for their families.

Both laity and clergy told the group that their plan will never work, and they should not even try. But 28 schools responded and more than 3,200 children filled St. Paul's Cathedral to capacity. That evening, more than 3,000 people attended a candlelight rosary procession during which they carried Our Lady of Fatima's statue from the capitol to the cathedral.

Since the people's response in 2003 was so enthusiastic, Connie and her group decided to invite every diocese in the world to unite on October 7, 2004 for rosary field trips for school children and evening candlelight rosary processions for families.

The October 7, 2004 event was meant to be a springboard to prayerfully usher in the year of the Eucharist which is from October 10, 2004 to October 29, 2005. During this period, Connie and her group hope that educators and parents are encouraged to gather the children for holy hours of adoration, and to pray the rosary throughout the year for the family and for respect for all life. Then, on October 7, 2005, they are planning an international children's celebration of thanksgiving for the Year of the Eucharist in cathedrals and parish churches all over the world.

Do families have problems? Leave those problems to the hands of children praying the rosary. Mama Mary and all those children praying the rosary will move families closer to God.

Internet source: <http://www.zenit.org/7EO4I00423>

January 2, 2005



Epiphany of Our Lord

Readings (A): Is 60:1-6; Eph 3:2-3, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The Magi saw the child and did him homage.* <> Matthew composed his first two chapters as a collection of Midrashim about the Messiah. This means that he chose some Old Testament texts and wove around each of them a story that shows how they were fulfilled by Jesus, who is therefore the Messiah whom the prophets longed for. For Matthew, it is not the details of what really happened that counts. What matters is the revelation that is being conveyed to his readers by means of a story turning around an Old Testament text. For the Feast of the Epiphany, that text is from Micah 5:1, "And you, Bethlehem... from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." This is fulfilled in such a way that the "people Israel" is enlarged to include the Gentiles who come from afar to worship the Shepherd King.

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

V. 2 "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?" - Value of searching for the promised king to do him homage.

V. 5b "It has been written through the prophet..." - Value of the written word of God.

V. 9b "Behold the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them..." - Value of searching also the world of nature to learn about God's plan of salvation.

V. 10b "They saw the child with Mary his mother..." - Value of finding Jesus in the arms of Mary, his mother.

V. 11b "They offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." - Value of giving to Jesus the best of what our country produces.

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

- In this year of the Eucharist, let us remember that the Liturgy speaks of the Eucharist as an "exchange of gifts". God gives us himself and we give ourselves to God. Whether it is Jesus or us, the best gift is the gift of self. Do you have insights on this? Is there a story you would like to share?

- In the story of the Epiphany, the finding of Jesus is the result of a long journey and of diligent study. Is this the way you found Jesus, or did you find him more easily?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - The Church reminds us this year that we can easily find Jesus in the Eucharist.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us keep in mind that the Philippines, our country, is surrounded by people who are like the astrologers or wise men searching for the King of the Jews, while we are like the Israelite people who have the Word of God in our possession. Do we know this Word of God enough to share it with our neighbors?

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

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION FOR KIDS

Epiphany is a feast of revelation. To connect it with the Year of the Eucharist, we ask, "How do you reveal the Eucharist to children?" We have the answer from Father Antoine Thomas, 46, a priest of the Congregation of St. John, who has been working in youth ministry for 15 years at Princeville, Illinois (USA). He began leading children's holy hours more than 10 years ago. Now he has started a program, "Children of Hope," that helps others lead adoration for kids.

Father Thomas recalls the words of Jesus, "Let the children come to me." Then he says, "I think we had better obey and bring him the children."

Here, in part, is an interview of ZENIT with Father Thomas.

Q: What benefits have you seen from children spending time with our Eucharistic Lord?

Father Thomas: The children have a great excitement about being part of this kind of prayer group. They enjoy being at the feet of Jesus, resting under the loving gaze of he who is no longer hidden in the tabernacle. The children experience a pacification of body, mind and spirit.

They have a deeper desire to pray, are more attentive at Mass and have an unshakeable faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Q: How do you help kids understand adoration and get the most out of the experience? How do you keep them focused and engaged for an entire hour?

Father Thomas: None of us will ever fully understand this mystery. What we do with the children is to remind them

of the love that Jesus has for all. On the night before he died 2,000 years ago, driven by love and a desire for us not to forget, he chose this way, the Eucharist, to remain close to us in a more visible way. He chose this not out of necessity, but out of his infinite and merciful love. They are reminded of the words of consecration and that Jesus gave this power to all priests. Once they realize they are spending time with Jesus they are thrilled to come each week; it is their time with him.

Parents are usually the ones who are worried at first about the children being bored. After attending a children's holy hour, they are amazed at how fast the time goes by.

One 6-year-old boy remarked at the end of his first hour, "Can we stay a little while longer, Mommy? I am not through talking to Jesus."

Another exclaimed, "I had the best talk with Jesus!"

Far from being bored, these little ones begin to feel that love which Jesus has for them. They come to understand they are important to him, and their prayers are heard and answered.

Internet source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZEO4100523>

January 9, 2005



Baptism of the Lord

Readings (A): Is 42:1-4, 6-7; Acts 10:34-38; Mt 3:13-17

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *This is my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on him.* ◇ In the Liturgy the Baptism of Christ at the Jordan River is his "Great Manifestation" (EPIPHANY) to the people of Israel at the start of his public ministry. That

is why, for the praying of the Rosary, Pope John Paul II has made it the first of the Luminous Mysteries. In Matthew the Baptism of Jesus is the culmination of the preparatory work of John the Baptism. Matthew, like Luke, gives it an eschatological dimension inasmuch as it comes after John had said that the Messiah who will come after him will have "his winnowing fork in his hand, and he will clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Mt 3:12). Matthew alone among the Synoptic Gospels indicates the Baptism of Jesus as a way of "fulfilling all righteousness" (v. 15).

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

V. 13 "Then Jesus came... to John... to be baptized by him." - Value of undergoing a symbolic rite.

V 15b "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." - Value of righteousness.

V. 16b "The heavens were opened." - Value of the symbolic opening of heaven at the baptism of Jesus.

V 16c "He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him." - Value of the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. - Value of the Holy Spirit coming on a person.

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

- Christian Baptism - the Sacrament that we, Catholics receive - is both in water and the Holy Spirit, like what happened to Jesus Christ. True, we receive this Sacrament as babies (the usual case). But in mature life we can "revive"

the Sacrament and receive the Holy Spirit with full awareness. Do you have an experience to share regarding this?

- Christian Baptism incorporates us to the Body of Christ. This is completed by the Sacrament of the Eucharist given to us at Holy Mass. It is then, more than at any other time, that we should be aware of belonging to the Body of Christ. Do you wish to share an experience connected with this?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us keep in mind what the Catechism for Filipino Catholics says: "It is on the adult faith of the *parents, the god-parents and sponsors*, that the responsibility falls for developing the seed of faith received by the infants in baptism" (CFC 1595).

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us keep reminding god-parents or sponsors at Baptisms that they have obligations to fulfill to their *inaanak* other than just giving them material gifts.

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

THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST/THE EUCHARIST

In a June 4, 2004 speech to a group of U.S. bishops, the Pope explained what it means to proclaim the Gospel today. The underlying dynamic of the Church's prophetic mission is

to enable people "to be transformed by the power of the Gospel which permeates their way of thinking, standards of judgment, and norms of behavior."

To achieve this transformation the Pope urged the bishops that the center of their preaching of the Gospel be based on an encounter with Christ. "In fact, it is only by knowing, loving and imitating Christ that, with him, we can transform history by bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture."

Internet source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZEO4062601>

Connecting this to the Year of the Eucharist, we should keep in mind the following teaching of Vatican II:

"The other sacraments, and indeed all the ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed towards it.* For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the entire spiritual wealth of the church, namely Christ himself our Pasch and our living bread, who gives life to people through his flesh - that flesh which is given life and gives life by the holy Spirit. Thus people are invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation in union with Christ. For this reason the Eucharist appears as the source and the summit of all preaching of the Gospel."

Vatican II Presbyterorum Ordinis, 5

•The document quotes St. Thomas Aquinas who wrote, "The Eucharist is as it were the completion of the spiritual life and the summit of all the sacraments" (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 73 a 3 c).

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Become like little children to enter the kingdom of Heaven.* ◇ In Matthew this passage begins "The Discourse on the Church." There is more to the Church than just being a community of "little ones." But this is where we begin.

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

V. 3 "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." - Value of becoming like children to enter the kingdom of heaven.

V 4 "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." - Value of humility.

V. 5 "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me." - Value of "receiving" a child in the name of Jesus.

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

- Next to obedience to God's Will, the greatest argument against divorce is that we have to provide for the good of the children. Do you wish to share an experience connected with this?

- A good number of women who opted to bear a child when others were for aborting it, have later experienced being

blessed by God. Do you wish to share an experience connected with this?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us keep in mind that in the Catechism for Filipino Catholics, The Feast of the Sto. Nino is a way of inculturating belief in Jesus as the Son of God.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us not fail to emphasize the rich meaning of the Feast of the Santo Nino.

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

STO. NINO IN THE YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST

As we celebrate the Feast of Sto. Nino during the Year of the Eucharist, it is best to connect the two in our reflection. One way of doing this is to listen to words said by Pope John Paul II back in 1996, as follows.

"I urge priests, religious and lay people to continue and redouble their efforts to teach the younger generations the meaning and value of Eucharistic adoration and devotion. How will young people be able to know the Lord if they are not introduced to the mystery of his presence?"

"[...] By learning the words of the prayer of the heart, they will be closer to the Lord, who will accompany them in their spiritual and human growth. ...All interior life needs silence and intimacy with Christ in order to develop."

"This gradual familiarity with the Lord will enable certain young people to be involved ... and to take a more active part in Mass; for young boys, to be near the altar is also a privileged opportunity to hear Christ's call to follow him more radically in the priestly ministry."

Internet source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZEO4100523>

January 23, 2005

<> Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (A): Is 8:23-9:3; 1 Cor 1:10-13, 17; Mt 4:12-23 or 4:12-17

National Bible Week begins on Monday, January 24.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum to start his ministry, o* To start his ministry, Jesus leaves the home where he grew up and lived as a carpenter for some thirty years. He left his mother, Mary (now a widow?). He left his countrymen. All this meant making a sacrifice. It might not be such a big sacrifice, but we must remember that Jesus experienced something that is truly a part of ordinary human life: leaving home to move on. For the headquarters of his ministry he chose Capernaum, a town that was small but strategically located for good communication with the lakeside towns. To describe what kind of prophet Jesus was, Mark emphasized the actions of Jesus that healed people. Matthew, for his part, directs our attention to Jesus as Teacher, a Light for those in darkness.

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

V. 13 "He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea." - Value of choosing a strategic place for one's ministry. <> Capernaum was strategic because it was "by the sea". One can easily take a boat and get to all the places around the Lake (Sea) of Tiberias.

V. 14 "That what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled." - Once more we have here the value of prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

V. 16 "The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light." - Value of light for those in darkness. - Value of the coming of a teacher to enlighten the people.

V. 17b "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." - Value of repentance. - Value of preparing for a coming great event.

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

- Have you been a teacher? Did you enlighten people about their salvation?
- Have you experienced leaving home to be a missionary?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us continue to earnestly invite people to reflect on the Third "Mystery of Light" - the preaching of the Kingdom.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us remember that good communication is vital for progress. Good communication means not only having good roads and good means of transportation (including vehicles, ships and airplanes). It also means mastery of one's own language and of the language used for international commerce and international relations.

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

LIGHT AND LIFE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The Eucharistic Year began last October 17, at the closing of the Eucharistic Congress at Guadalajara, Mexico. Let us recall that the theme of that Congress was, "The Eucharist, Light and Life of the New Millennium". That theme is also set forth in the apostolic letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, which the Pope gave to the church to guide and assist all those involved in the year-long celebration. In particular, chapter 2 of the document is entitled, "The Eucharist, Mystery of Light."

The Eucharist is a mystery of light for many reasons. Jesus speaks of himself as "light of the world" (Jn 8:12). In the darkness of faith, the Eucharist becomes for the Christian a mystery of light, as it introduces him to the depths of the divine mystery. The Eucharistic celebration nourishes the disciple of Christ with two "tables," that of the Word of God, and that of the Bread of Life. In the first part of the Mass, the Scriptures are read so that we may be enlightened and our hearts may burn. In the homily, the Word of God is illustrated and adapted for the life of the Christian in our time.

When minds are enlightened and hearts burn, the signs speak. In the Eucharistic signs, in a certain sense the mystery is opened to the eyes of believers. The two disciples of Emmaus recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Internet source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZEO4101006> and ZEO4100801

January 30,2005 ◇ Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (A): Zeph 2:3; 3:12-13; 1 Cor 1:26-31; Mt 5:1-12

Today is National Bible Sunday

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The Beatitudes*. Chapter 5 of Matthew forms a block with chapters 6 and 7 to form what is known as the "Sermon on the Mount," It is the first of five collections of discourses in Matthew. For today's Sunday Gospel reading, we have the section called the Beatitudes. Traditionally we count in Matthew eight "one liners" that indicate qualities (like being poor in spirit) that will include their possessors in the ambit of God's reign. (Verses 11 and 12 are perceived to constitute a more wordy expression of the thought in v. 10, and so are not counted as a ninth beatitude although the word at the beginning is "Blessed (*makarioi*)" just like in the foregoing verses.

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

V. 3 "Poor in spirit" (1)

V. 4 "They who mourn." (2)

V 5 "The meek." (3)

- V. 6 "They who hunger and thirst for righteousness." (4)
- V. 7 "The merciful." (5)
- V. 8 "The clean of heart." (6)
- V. 9 "The peacemakers." (7)
- V. 10 "They who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness." (8)

People who possess one or all of the above values are included among those in that special care of God called "God's reign."

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

- What particular Beatitude have you experienced in your life?
- Share your insight if you see any connection between a particular Beatitude and the Eucharist. Do you have an experience to support your insight?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let our devotion to the Eucharist give us the Beatitudes (those qualities or values that include us among those specially cared for by God).

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - The practice of the Beatitudes is the best answer to terrorism of any kind.

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

BEATITUDES, ROSARY, EUCHARIST

At the Theological Pastoral Symposium in preparation for the Eucharistic Congress at Guadalajara, Mexico, and also in preparation for the year-long celebration of the Year of the Eucharist, Cardinal Jonas Backis, one of the speakers, spoke in such a way that one can see how the Beatitudes, the Rosary, and the Eucharist are very closely interrelated.

The Beatitudes speak about those persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Cardinal Backis, who is Archbishop of Vilnius in Lithuania, had something to share about persecutions of this kind. He recalled that during World War II, many Lithuanians showed their rosaries to the occupying German forces when asked for identity papers. For them, the rosary was a sufficient identity document. When the Soviets took over and deported entire families to Siberia and elsewhere, the families took their rosaries along - often one of their few personal items. Lithuanian prisoners in Siberia and elsewhere made rosaries out of bread, wetting crumbs, drying them and tying them with thread. "In my family home in Vilnius," the Cardinal said, "we kept a rosary of those times."

Shifting to Divine Mercy (see the 5th Beatitude), Cardinal Backis said, "In Vilnius, the capital of my homeland, Jesus taught holy Mother (St.) Faustina how he wanted God's mercy for the world," referring to Maria Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), apostle of Divine Mercy. "The message is especially important and urgent today, when the world is shaken by the horrible terrorism and blind malice of man, " Cardinal Backis said. "The only salvation possible is total confidence in God's mercy." It is understood that such mercy is found in the Eucharist.

Internet source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZEO4100821>

February 6,2005

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Readings (A): Is 58:7-10; 1 Cor 2:1-5; Mt 5:13-16

February 9 is Ash Wednesday

1. **SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING** (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Christians are Salt and Light*. Jesus was an innovator when he said his followers are the salt of the earth. They were to preserve society from getting totally corrupted. They were to give wisdom to the foolish. As for being "light of the world," this is not totally new. The Israelite people were already given this mission, see Is. 60:3 and 62:1.

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

V. 13 "You are the salt of the earth..." - Value of being an element of preserving society from corruption. - Value of influencing people to be wiser in line with the wisdom of God.

V. 14 "You are the light of the world." - Value of being the bearer of a teaching that will dispel darkness from human minds.

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

- Have you influenced people to do good?
- Have you shared Christian teaching with non-Christian people and influenced them?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six):

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us live up to our Christian vocation of preserving society from total corruption and of getting people to see the wisdom of God's ways. Let us help non-Christian people to be more enlightened especially in questions touching on human life and the family.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us get people to appreciate the Social teachings of the Church.

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

WORDS OF THE POPE

Bishops of the USA went to Rome in 2004 to do their obligatory visit to the Pope (*Ad limina*). For each batch the Pope had a special message. In relation to the Gospel passage on Salt and Light, the following words of the Pope to the group of Bishops from the state of New York are most appropriate.

"Brothers, I pray that at every opportunity you will be able to work together, so that the Gospel may be more effectively proclaimed throughout your country. I wish to express my appreciation for all that you have already accomplished together, particularly in your statements on life issues, education and peace. I invite you now to turn your attention to the many other pressing issues that directly affect the Church's mission and her spiritual integrity, for example the decline in Mass attendance and in recourse to the Sacrament of Recon-

ciliation, the threats to marriage and the religious needs of immigrants. Let your voice be clearly heard, announcing the message of salvation in season and out of season (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1). Confidently preach the Good News so that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4)."

"As I conclude my remarks today, I make my own the words of Saint Paul: "Encourage one another. Live in harmony and peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11)."

Internet source: <http://ZAvwww.zenit.org/ZEO4100824>

February 13, 2005



Lent I

Readings (A): Gn 2:7-9;3:1-7; Rm 5:12-19 or 5:12, 17-19; Mt 4:1-11

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Satan tempts Jesus*. Jesus, in reality, was tempted many times in his life. The story of his three temptations *after fasting forty days in the desert* (- *that's how Matthew presents them*) is a literary attempt to show that in areas of life where the human race is usually tempted and fails, Jesus also underwent temptation but prevailed. He is the victorious "offspring of the woman" who strikes at the head of the serpent while it strikes at his heel (Gen 3:15). The first temptation concerns lust for Power. The devil wants people to use power for their selfish and material ends, without being guided by God's Word. Jesus triumphs by availing himself of God's Word in Scripture. The second temptation

concerns Vain Glory. There is also the added dimension of a wily misuse of Scripture. Again, Jesus triumphs because, with the help of Scripture, he looks at the devil's proposal from God's viewpoint rather than from a selfish lust. The third temptation concerns False Religion (devil worship). Jesus routs the devil when, once more aided by Scripture, he stands for the worship of the one true God.

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

V. 1 "Led by the Spirit." - Value of being led by the Spirit.

V. 2 "He fasted for forty days and forty nights." - Value of fasting.

V. 4 "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God." - Value of God's word in giving bodily and spiritual life.

V. 7 "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."
- Value of abiding by what God clearly wants people to do, and not doing the opposite.

V. 10 "The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone you shall serve." - Value of worshipping and serving the One True God.

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

- Have you had brushes with temptation that made you a morally stronger person?

- Have you availed yourself of Scripture to be faithful to God's will?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - We have to avail ourselves of the Word of God and the Eucharist (both available at Holy Mass) to triumph over temptations.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us not be too eager to have the material things of this world at the expense of forgetting our eternal destination.

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

THE GREATEST TEMPTATION

The greatest temptation of man today is the suggestion of the devil to banish the presence of God from our daily lives. We have to counteract this through our fidelity to the Eucharist. Reading the Apostolic Letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, chapter 2, will be a great help to us in this endeavor.

One can make a partial summary of the instruction thus: The way in which we celebrate Mass must manifest our acute awareness of the real presence of Christ. Moments of silence must not be neglected. Long periods of adoration of Jesus present in the tabernacle will demonstrate our love for him. Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament outside Mass must be a special commitment this year in parishes and religious communities. In particular, emphasis must be placed on reparation, contemplation and biblical and Christocentric meditation.

Internet source: <http://Avwww.zenit.org/ZEO4100801>

February 20, 2005



Lent II

Readings (A): Gn 12:1-4; 2 Tim 1:8-10; Mt 17:1-9

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The Transfiguration of Jesus*.
Lent can be imagined as a journey from the Mount of Transfiguration down to the Jordan valley and up again to Mount Calvary. The Transfiguration reminds us that our Redeemer, who suffered and died for us, is none other than God's beloved Son with whom he is well pleased.

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

V. 1 "Led to a high mountain..." - Value of going up a high mountain.

V. 2 "He was transfigured before them..." - Value of personal transformation.

V. 5 "Listen to him." - Value of listening to God's beloved Son.

V. 7 "Do not be afraid." - Value of not being crushed by an awesome experience.

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

- Have you experienced going up a mountain for spiritual renewal?

- Do you think of Jesus as "just a friend" or as God's "Beloved Son with whom God is well pleased"?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasil Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us work for the continuing renewal - transformation - of the church.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us remember that it is good for people in public life to take a break - go for a retreat or for days of meditation - to get the right perspective on how to respond to the people's needs.

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

VARIOUS TRANSFIGURATIONS

If one goes as a pilgrim to the Holy Land, a visit to Mt. Tabor, where there is a basilica of the Transfiguration of Christ, is a must. Inside the basilica, one should go to that part called "the confession." It is a crypt-like place, but one end is open. In the part that looks like a cave, one finds mosaics portraying the various "transfigurations of Christ." The idea is that there are various events in the life of Christ that transformed him. For example, at his nativity in Bethlehem, he was transformed from being the Eternal Son of God to being the son of Mary who had no better cradle for him than a manger. At the Last Supper, he was transformed from being the Messianic Prophet to being the Eucharistic Bread.

Internet source: <http://Avwww.zenit.org/ZEO4100523>

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan Woman*. The central point of Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman is the promise of Jesus to give "living water." If we take account of the Second Reading, this living water is no other than the love of God that is to be poured out into the hearts of people who become Christian disciples by the Spirit given to them (see Rm 5:5).

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

V. 10 "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." - Value of recognizing Jesus as "the gift of God". - Value of asking for the gift of "living water."

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

- Has drinking water any symbolism in your life?
- Do you think of Jesus as God's "gift" to you? Do you have an experience to share connected with this?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us continue renewing our experience of the love of God poured

out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us (Rm 5:5).

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic^ Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us keep addressing these concerns in our ecclesial celebrations like the Year of the Eucharist and World Youth Day, Philippine Marian Year.

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

WATER OF LIFE AND BREAD OF LIFE

Jesus Christ is both the Water of Life and the Bread of Life. He comes to us, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the Sacrament of Baptism to start the heavenly life in us. He comes, also with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, to nourish that heavenly life in us while we are still in our earthly journey to our home in heaven.

In the Eucharist, we get close to the humanity of Jesus, which is present in its glorious form in this Sacrament. That is what we call the "Real Presence" of Jesus Christ. It is what we feel when we concentrate on the face of Jesus. It is, in a fuller manner, what the Samaritan woman felt when she realized she was in the presence of the Messiah.

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NATIONAL LAUNCHING OF THE EUCHARISTIC AND MARIAN YEAR

This *PRAYER* is to be recited in all churches and public oratories before the Prayer after Communion at Masses on August 15, 2004 till December 8, 2005.

Lord Jesus Christ,
We celebrate a year of Grace,
 A year we dedicate to the Holy Eucharist
 And to the Blessed Virgin Mary, your Mother.
We need to experience as a nation
 The transforming power of the Eucharist
 And the loving care of Mary, our Mother.
For we are a wounded people,
 Wounded by political conflicts and tribal wars,
 Wounded by unjust socio-economic divisions,
 Wounded by corruption and moral degeneration.

Lord Jesus Christ,
As often as we celebrate the Holy Eucharist,
We remember how much you love us.
Let the Eucharist help us to work together as a people
So that in every home, barangay, town, and city
All may live in culture of peace, unity, and renewal.
May the prayer of Mary, our Mother, accompany us
As we journey together in this year of Grace
Toward national healing and reconciliation.

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May the prayer of Mary, our Mother, accompany us
As we journey together in this year of Grace
Toward national healing and reconciliation.

Lord Jesus Christ,
We believe in the transforming power of the Eucharist
And we trust in the loving care of Mary, our Mother:
Grant then in your tender mercy
What we ask for in faith, hope, and love, Amen.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.
Saint Lorenzo Ruiz, pray for us.
That in all things God may be glorified.