

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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IF AUGUSTINE WERE
BORN TODAY

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DIRECTION IN THE LIFE
OF COMMUNION

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IN THE CHURCH?

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PILGRIMAGE TO OUR
LADY OF LOURDES,
FRANCE

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OUR COVER: The painting seen on the cover is the work of Fr. Dominador Besares, OSA. It portrays St. Augustine after his conversion. The background spells out native artistic genius found on the facade of the church of Miag-ao, Iloilo. The whole work of art portrays the influence of the Augustinians in the local church. The seal represents the jubilee logo commemorating the 1650th anniversary of St. Augustine's birth. For the cover of the succeeding issues, only the seal will be kept.

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EDITORIAL

St. Augustine: 1650th Birth Anniversary

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

2004 marked the 1650th anniversary of the birth of St. Augustine, born in the year 354. For this reason the Augustinians have designed 2004-2006 as a jubilee year, a time for rejoicing.

The Augustinian Family, composed of different families or sectors - priests, religious brothers and sisters, and laypersons who follow St. Augustine's spirituality in their daily living - has indeed every reason to rejoice. So does the whole Church, especially those religious groups that claim to have been influenced by his life and spirituality: for example, the Dominicans, who, while having saint Dominic de Guzman as their founder, follow the rule of saint Augustine. (After all, being a devotee or a follower of Augustine is not the sole privilege of the members of the Augustinian Family!)

The presence and testimony of the Augustinians today serve as a mirror of the life of their Father. This Jubilee is an opportunity for them not only to come together as a Family, but also to hold some relevant activities in common. Among

them are the following, decided as early as 2002 by the Prior General, Fr. Robert Prevost, OSA: a) the so-called "Concrete Social Gesture" in favor of Africa; b) a pilgrimage to Algeria and to Tunisia, especially to those places where the Saint was born, grew up and worked as a bishop; c) the preparation of a joined letter by the Augustinian Superior Generals addressed to all the Augustinians in the world; d) a common Augustinian Jubilee of prayer; e) the publication of works providing information on the Augustinian charism as experienced in the various sectors of the Family; and f) a celebration in Pavia open to all Augustinians.

The groups participating in the planning were the following: Order of the Augustinian Recollects, Order of the Discalced Augustinians, Order of Saint Augustine, Daughters of the Crucified, Augustinian Sisters of the Divine Love, Augustinian Sisters of Jesus and Mary, Augustinian Missionary Sisters, and Oblate Sisters of the Child Jesus. All together decided to focus on a yearly theme: 2004 - *"In our interior dwells the truth"*; 2005 - *"We are servants of the Church"*; and 2006 - *"One heart and one soul, united on the way to God."*

In the Philippines, aside from being missionaries and builders of churches, the Augustinians have excelled in the fields of Catholic education and formation, as well as in the study of indigenous culture. To mention a few examples: Fr. Rodolfo Arreza, OSA, has written the history of the University of San Agustin, in Iloilo; important studies and researches have been done on the areas of the literature and values of the different social groups in Panay Islands; the present Rector, Fr. Manuel Vergara, OSA, of the University of

San Agustin, is proudly disseminating his works *Maaram* (on native ingenuity) and *SaNag* (a word that expresses the values, learning and wisdom coming from writers trained under the tutelage of the Augustinians), etc.

The *Boletin Ecclesiastico* wishes also to render tribute to St. Augustine, as a saint and as a doctor with such an enormous influence in the history of the Church. It is curious to note that in the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* St. Augustine is after saint Paul the author most quoted and referred to. Wouldn't this be an indication that our times need his wisdom so that the City of Man may become the City of God?

If Augustine Were Born Today

ARTHUR PURCARO, OSA

If Augustine were born in northern Africa this, 2004, instead of 1650 years ago, just what would be his chances of living, surviving and being able to share with humanity the fruits of his spirituality and life-enriching experience.

The year 2004 is the 1650th anniversary of the birth of St. Augustine, on the 13th of November, 354. The major superiors of many of the Augustinian families have recently encouraged us to join in celebrating an "Augustinian Jubilee" to commemorate this significant event this year.

Reflecting on the significance of the event we are commemorating, I could not help but recall the title of a book by former Prior General Theodore Tack, OSA: "If Augustine Were Alive today." What drew my mind down that path was the thought that, if Augustine were born in northern Africa this year, 2004, instead of 1650 years ago, just what would be his chances of living, surviving and being able to share

*This article is featured in the OSA INTeractive, no. 4 - 2003, p. 8-9.

with humanity the fruits of his spirituality and life-enriching experience.

The statistics certainly do not favor a child born in Africa today: One in every five people is chronically undernourished; this will affect their overall health, their ability to learn, their vision. Can we imagine an Augustine with a listless, rather than restless, heart?

Eighteen million of a total of 40 million people around the world who are living with HIV are in Sub-Saharan Africa, where in the two hardest hit countries HIV prevalence is almost 40%. Would Augustine today be able to survive, not only the disastrous infant mortality rate but also the damage of HIV?

In their letter to us, the major superiors reminded us that "the Jubilee should not be limited to mere celebrations. Rather, we are proposing that in any activity, there be some gesture or aspect that gives meaningful expression to our commitment to serving the poor. In this sense, we are suggesting that the African continent home of St. Augustine, currently experiencing oppressive conditions of poverty and disease be the focus of some common action taken on by the Augustinian Families."

Allow me to suggest one such action for your consideration: an HIV counseling clinic in the Augustinian parish of Baba Dogo, Kenya.

Baba Dogo is a sprawling slum of mud huts precariously linked together. Due to the chronically low income of the people, basic necessities such as water, sewage - are lacking, and disease is rampant. Although the HIV/AIDS

program is sponsored and located within the parish, its services are free and available to all people of whatever denomination. Volunteer health workers visit patients on a daily basis; those who are bed-ridden are given nursing care in their homes while those who still have a bit of energy but cannot walk are brought to the clinic by a hand-cart or wheel-barrow for medical attention.

Counseling services are offered to those willing to be tested for HIV/AIDS. These services are offered both before and after the test. The statistics show that the most infected group are females between the ages of 15-40. The total average of people coming for test in a month is 360 and about 30% test positive.

The Order of St. Augustine is certainly blessed in Africa, although our presence on that continent represents just 5% of the Order world wide. Sixty two of the 142 Augustinians in Africa, representing 43% of the total, are in formation (from novitiate onward). The General Chapter of 2001 approved the creation of the very first province of the Order in the continent of Augustine's birth and ministry. The formation houses of the province of Nigeria, as well as our formation houses in Tanzania, Congo and Kenya, are overflowing.

At the same time, if Augustine were a candidate in one of our formation houses in Africa today, he would have much less access to bibliography for reading and research than most of our much less populated houses of formation in Europe and the United States.

The 2001 General Chapter invited us to turn to our mind and heart toward Africa and also mandated that the General

Council seek out funding for initial and ongoing formation programs for that continent. And so I ask that you consider the following English-Speaking formation communities as possible beneficiaries of your generosity: the house of philosophy in Nairobi, Kenya; the international house of theology in Nairobi, Kenya; the formation community in Morogoro, Tanzania; the Novitiate in Jos, Nigeria; the house of philosophy in Makurdi, Nigeria.

The specific donation I ask you to consider is for a set of the works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, published by the New City Press in collaboration with the Augustinian Heritage Institute. To date 26 volumes have been published; for US \$2,500 a standing order can be placed which includes those volumes already available as well as the expected 22 yet to be published (and shipping costs). Donations can be made through the General Curia in Rome.

Also of great significance would be a donation of books in the areas of philosophy and theology for the formation communities in Nigeria. If your community is willing to go through your own stock and send what you consider to be useful publications to the Curia or directly to the province of Nigeria, this could greatly help to respond to the acute shortage of books in the formation libraries of the first Augustinian Province in Africa.

"We must not forget the challenges of our world today, as well as the joys and sufferings of humanity. The problems of our times include a world that is in crisis because of a lack of bread (marginalization and unjust poverty) or because of the exaggerations of those who seek to live by bread alone

(materialism and consumerism)" our major superiors reminded us in their recent letter announcing the Augustinian Jubilee.

And so I would like to encourage you to assume as fully as possible the Augustinian Hunger Awareness Campaign, launched on World Food Day (October 16, 2003) and which extends through till Christmas 2004.

The Campaign is meant to encourage support for reaching the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half by 2015 the number of people who die of hunger. This is a critical topic, as approximately 24,000 people die each day from hunger-related causes, a large number of them in sub Saharan Africa. The problem stems not from a lack of food, but rather the inequitable distribution of it. In developing countries that are ravaged by war or led by power-hungry dictators, food is used as a matter of control to keep people weak, desperate, and unable to fight for their rights or for freedom.

I urge you to participate in and promote this Campaign both within your local community and through your apostolic activity by prayer, reflection and at least one concrete action. The specific activity I encourage each Augustinian to become involved personally in and promote actively in and through the apostolate is a letter writing campaign to those responsible in national government for effectively providing support for achieving the Millennium Development Goal.

Our efforts today be it at the HIV clinic in Baba Dogo, the libraries of our Augustinian formation houses or our campaign against hunger - can help make all the young "Augustines" who will be born in Africa this year have more of an opportunity to share their gifts and help make this world a better place for all.

Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes, France

RUPERTO SANTOS

I kept my promise. I came back to them not only once but twice. First was on August 5-8, 2003 and then on July 15-18, 2004. On these two different dates I accompanied the Filipino Helping Hand community of Paris and the El Shaddai DWXI PPF of France chapter for religious pilgrimages to Lourdes. Brother Leo Mojica and Sister Gina Castillo were respectively in charge of these two groups. On these both occasions we traveled by bus. We met at Parc du Trocadéro and left past ten in the evening. As we traveled we recited these prayers:

O Immaculate Virgin Mary,
you are the refuge of sinners,
the health of the sick, and
comfort of the afflicted.

By your appearances at the Grotto of Lourdes,
you made it a privileged sanctuary when your favors
are given to people flocking to it from all over the world.

over the years, countless sufferers have obtained the cure for their infirmities - whether of soul, mind, and body.

Therefore, I come with limitless confidence to implore your motherly intercessions,
loving mother, obtain for me the favors I request,
let me strive to imitate your virtues on earth
so that I may one day share your glory in heaven.
Amen.

Along the road I shared to them these reflections. First was about the Apparitions at Lourdes and afterwards the life of Saint Bernadette.

Apparitions at Lourdes

The apparition site is Massabielle. From local Bigourdan dialect Massabielle means 'old rock.' It is an ordinary land, a pig's shelter and infamous with the expression "*brought up at Massabielle*" which connotes badly educated. Here Our Lady appeared 18 times between February 11 and July 16, 1858 to Bernadette Soubirous. Bernadette on Thursday of February 11 went to Massabielle on the banks of the Gave de Pau to collect some woods. She was with her sister Marie, known as Toinette and a friend, Jeanne Abadie.

As Bernadatte removed her socks in order to cross the stream, she heard a noise resounding to a gust of wind. She looked up to the high mass of rock, as commonly called grotto. Bernadette recalled, "*I saw a young lady dressed in dazzling white garment, wearing a light blue waistband and a yellow rose on her foot.*" Bernadette made the sign of the cross and recited the Rosary with the Lady. At the end of their prayer the Lady suddenly disappeared.

On Thursday of February 18 during the 3rd apparition the Lady spoke. Bernadette held up a pen and paper as she asked for her name. The response was *"it is not necessary."* Then the Lady continued, *"I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the other."* She asked Bernadette, *"Would you be kind enough to come here for fifteen days?"* From then on Bernadette returned to the grotto for other Apparitions.

On Friday of February 19 the apparition was short and silent. Bernadette came to the grotto with a lighted and blessed candle. This is the origin of carrying candles and lighting them in front of the grotto.

On Wednesday of February 24 the message of the Lady was an earnest appeal for people to turn away from their sins and return to the loving mercy of God. It was a message that she continuously addressed to us today: *Penance, Penance, Penance. Pray to God on behalf of sinners. Kiss the earth in penance for sinners."*

And on the following day and 9th apparition the Lady asked Bernadette to *"go, drink of the spring and wash yourself there. You will eat the grass that is there,"* which Bernadette did. She crawled on her knees, ate the bitter herbs, scratched the ground at the back of the grotto and drank the muddy water. She dirtied her face and was covered with mud. The crowd thought that she was mad. But Bernadette replied that she did it *"for sinners."* Reflecting deeper we can conclude that sin stains our soul. It dirties and soils our harmonious relationships with god. Sin blackens us before God, deforming His image in us.

During the 10th apparition of Saturday February 27 the mud turned into a stream of clear water. Bernadette prayed.

She drank the water from the spring. She was in deep penance. Her face was radiant and tidied. This should lead us to admit that as water from the spring has cleaned the mud, penance cleansed the stains of sins in us. God's pardon renews us. God's love makes us new. God's mercy us refresh us and recreate us.

The first recorded miracle was witnessed during the 12th apparition. That Monday night of March 1 Catharine Latapie plunged her dislocated arm into the water of the spring. She then regained the movements of her arm and hand.

On the 13th apparition of Tuesday, March 02 the Lady asked Bernadette *"Go, tell the priests to come here in procession and build a chapel here."* Bernadette relayed this message to the parish priest of Lourdes, Father Dominique Peyramale. The priest wanted to know the name of the Lady. He also tested her by asking to make the wild rose bush at the Grotto to bloom during that winter season.

It was only on the 16th apparition of Thursday, March 25 that the Lady revealed her name. But the wild rose bush did not bloom. Bernadette recalled that the Lady *"lifted up her eyes to heaven, joined her hands as though in prayer, that were held out and open towards the ground and said to me: que soy era Immaculata Conception (I am the Immaculate Conception)."* Bernadette left, running and repeating these words to herself. She went directly to Father Dominique Peyramale and told him the name. He was surprised and was dumbfounded. Bernadette did not know of this theological title that was given to the Blessed Virgin Mary and was declared by the reigning Pope Pius IX on December 08, 1854 as a Catholic dogma.

The 17th apparition of Wednesday, April 07 was the miracle of the candle. Bernadette kept her candle lighted. But the flame licked her hand. Yet her hand was not burned. A medical doctor by the name of Douzous attested and witnessed the miracle.

The last apparition was on Thursday of July 16. The Grotto was blocked and closed by barriers as civil authorities prohibited public entrance to the Grotto. They even erected wooden barricades. So Bernadette came across from the Grotto to the side of the Gave du Pau. She recounted, *"I felt that I was in front of the Grotto, at the same distance as before, I saw only the Blessed Virgin Mary, and she was more beautiful than ever."*

Truly Bernadette in spite of intimidation of civil authorities and even mockeries of her own people perseveringly continued *'to come here for a fortnight'* (3rd apparition) to Our Lady. Even under threats and with great suffering Bernadette fulfilled in humility and with complete honesty the urgent requests of Our Lady to *"penance. Pray to God"* (8th apparition), *"go, drink..."* (9th Apparition); *"go, tell..."* (13th apparition).

As to end the first part of my reflections I shared to them these to questions:

1. Do we go always to our Blessed Mother?
2. Do we always share to others what we know about her and receive from her?
3. Do we always live what we learned from her?

We paused for a while. Then I started the second part of my reflections.

The Life of Bernadette

Bernadette Soubirous has nothing. She came from a poor family. She has no proper education and her health was not sound. Yet the Blessed Virgin Mary chose her to bring her messages of penance and prayers. Bernadette as faithful witness of the Blessed Virgin Mary lived her life with what she saw and heard from Our Lady.

Bernadette was born on January 07, 1844 to Francois Soubirous and Louise Casterot. She was the eldest to nine children whom five died at a very early age. They lived in Boly Mill as they were family of millers. Two days later Bernadette was baptized in the parish Church of Saint Peter. With the coming of industrial mills, the family mill was no longer profitable and they were always in financial difficulties. So in 1852 the mill was sold. Unable to pay the rent the Soubirous family left in 1854 from one dwelling place to another.

At the beginning of November 1856 the family settled in Rue des Petits-Fosses and stayed in a room of 3,7 meters by 4,2 meters given to them by their cousin. The room was a '*dark and damp hovel*' and was commonly known as '*cachot*.' The family underwent terrible hardships and even destitution. They suffered so much. Francois lost an eye. He did not find permanent work and ended up as a '*braissier*,' one who hired his strength at a rate of 1,22 francs which was cheaper compared to a horse's fare of 1,55 francs. Francois was even imprisoned as a suspect for missing sacks of wheat. He was proven innocent, and then released. Bernadette contracted cholera. Yet the family was united and remained strong, ^hey held their trust to God. They faithfully recited the Rosary.

who were present her body was intact, free from corruption. And anyone can see her body perfectly preserved in the Convent Chapel of Saint Gildard, at Nevers.

On December 8, 1933 Pope Pius XI elevated her the servant and shepherdess of Lourdes, the faithful witness of Our Lady's call to prayer and penance to the sainthood. Her feast was set every 8th of February.

As I end the second part of my reflections I asked them to remember these three things:

1. Whatever are we now and whatever we have, we are still important, valuable and special to God. God loves us. God watches over us.

2. Whoever we are and whatever we have God is always calling us to His vineyard, to His service, to be with Him in heaven. God needs us. God wants us.

3. Wherever we are and whatever we have we can always do something for God and for His people. We can always give something for Him and for His people.

It was almost midnight. I asked them to pray the Holy Rosary as to conclude our night prayers and reflections. I also informed them that after the recitation of the Holy Rosary they could find me seated at back of the bus and very much available for the sacrament of penance. And as the bus continued its journey I was fully awake thinking of this blessing to do a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes and leading her children to her.

We arrived at Lourdes around 9 in the morning. We went directly to our hotel, Ville du Etoile which is located at

Avenue Antoine Buguere, 9. It is a quite a distance to the Sanctuary. The council of elders, Sisters Candelaria Artuz and Jocelyn Bancud, gave a brief orientation about the house rules and everyday *schedules*. *I informed them that I want to meet all of them at twelve before lunch which will be served at one o' clock. "/> will tell you about three things that you must do here before you go around the Sanctuary. " "And you must fulfill them as you are here in Lourdes but before that you must rest for the heavy schedules ahead,"* I added.

I went to my room that was located at the end corner of ~~the~~ second floor. I arranged my things and review what I will share to them before lunch.

"Here in Lourdes, we are not tourist. We are not on vacations. We are not here to relax. We are here to pray for what we need in this life and to praise God for what he has done to us. We are here to meet Him through the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance. We have to perform sacrifices and be sorry for the sins we have committed. So there will be no complaining about the food, schedules or lodging. There should be cooperation and coordination among ourselves. There should be sharing and doing services.

Here in Lourdes, we are pilgrims. We come here to spend time with God. We withdraw from the crowd, from our hectic activities to be alone with God. God will meet us here. And from the silence of our hearts, He will speak to us. Furthermore our dearest mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we sweetly call Our Lady of Lourdes waits for us and welcomes us.

So let us take this opportunity to be a grace-filled moment for all of us. Let us turn this event to a blessing. And to make this happen I propose that you do these three things.

These are to touch the rock, wash your face or drink with water from the spring and light a candle."

Touch the rock:

The Grotto where Our Lady appeared is only 3.8 meters high, 9.50 meters deep and 9.85 meters wide from that 27 meters high massive mass of rock. Rock in biblical language is rich in symbolism. From the book of Psalm we read, *"I love you, Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my savior. God, you are the rock where I take refuge; my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold"* (18, 1-3). Thus rock refers to God who was being portrayed as a great defender, a constant provider and a staunch supporter. Describing God as rock shows His power, His might and His grandeur. In the New Testament rock signifies God's sacrificial love and redemptive acts. At the cave of Bethlehem, Jesus was born in a manger. At the cave of Calvary, His mortal body was interred and on the third day He rose again. Thus the important events of man's salvation occurred with rock. Rock here connotes foundation, beginning. Jesus said, *"you are Peter (or Rock) and on this rock I will build my Church; and never will the powers of death overcome it"* (Matthew 16,18).

The rock at Massabielle is polished and shining from constant and numerous rubbing of pilgrims. *Touching the rock at Massabielle* is an act of faith. It is an expression of trust in God. It is to manifest one's dependence to God. To touch it is an admission one's urgent need for God. It is as to affirm and openly say, *"I come to you. I trust you. I put myself in your service. Be my shelter. Be my support. Be my strength. You are the foundation of my life. It is with you and for you that I want to build up my life. Yes, you are my God, my*

protector and gracious provider who will surely help and heal me."

Now as we *touch the rock at Massabielle* let us silently pray to God to make our faith solid and strong so that we will never doubt or resist His will. Let us implore God to make our journey safe and we will never stray from His way. As we touch the rock at Massabielle let us beg the good Lord to shower us with His bountiful blessings and make our health always sound.

To wash your face and drink with the water from the spring:

On February 25, 1858 during the 9th apparition Bernadette obeyed the request of Our Lady: *"go, drink from the spring and wash yourself there."* The water from the spring is ordinary water. It is not magical or medicinal. There is symbolism here. As the mud smeared the radiant face of Bernadette, a trickle of clear water flowed from the spring which she uncovered at the back of the Grotto restored again her radiant face *"image of God"* (Genesis 1, 27) the water of Baptism cleanses us from stains of sins and recreates us as children of God. Water washes and cleans. Water purifies. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and said, *"if I don't wash you, you can have no part with me"* (John 13, 8). Water means life. It sustains life. Jesus promised the Samaritan woman, *"those who drink of the water that I shall give will never be thirsty; for the water that I shall give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4, 14). Water signifies God's love. Water implies us that God wants us to live, to have eternal life. Jesus gives us new life. He is constantly giving sharing us His life as manifested that from *"his side... immediately there came out blood and water"* (John 19, 34).

To wash your face and drink the water from the spring is to accept with deep conviction that we want to be cleansed, to be renewed, to be purified by God. We admit our sins, our failings, our mistakes and we want to be reconciled with Him. We want to be filled and consumed with His Holy Spirit. Now as we *wash our face and drink with waterfront the spring* let us silently pray to God to make our lives clean and transparent; our thoughts pure; our feelings true; our dealings honest; our relationships faithful; our words prudent and our actions exemplary.

To light a candle:

During the 17th apparition that was on Wednesday of April 07, Bernadette came to the Grotto with a candle. She held her candle lighted. The flame licked her hand. But it did not burn her hand. Our Lady asked her to leave the candle burning at the Grotto. From then on pilgrims *light and leave candles at the Grotto*. To light a candle is to offer, to say a prayer, to express gratitude for the received favors. To light a candle means deliverance from darkness, from fear. Light in biblical terms speaks of the redemptive actions of God. God appeared to Moses in "*burning bush*" (Genesis 3, 2). From the book of Isaiah we read that, "*the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light. A light has dawned on those who live in the land of the shadow of death*" (9, 1). Jesus is the light as He said, "*I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have light and life*" (John 8, 12).

To light a candle at the Grotto is an act of faith that we want to be led by Jesus and to Jesus. We want our path to be

lighted by God. We want to experience the warmth of God's love and free ourselves from the darkness of sins, of despair and of disappointments in life. To light a candle at the Grotto is an act of self-surrender to God, that is, we are resolved to walk His footsteps, to work for Him and to be His faithful witnesses to the world. Now as we light a candle let us silently pray to God to give us the necessary grace to fulfill what Jesus told us in the gospel of Saint Matthew, "*you are the light of the world*" (5, 14).

I shared this reflection to them. They were all very quiet and attentive. They nodded with approval to everything I said. And I know from that moment they will do what I told them and this pilgrimage will be spiritually uplifting for them. A sumptuous lunch was served at one in the afternoon. Before three we left our hotel for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at the Chapel of Saint Joseph. Father Apolo de Guzman, the chaplain of Filipino Migrants in Brussels, Belgium presided the Holy Mass. He joined us with his thirty-one pilgrims. I gave the homily on which I focused my reflection about the Immaculate Conception. This is what I imparted to them.

"On March 25, 1858 in her 16th apparition, Our Lady revealed herself to Bernadette, saying "*I am the Immaculate Conception.*" But it was not until December 8, 1854 that Pope Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception a dogma of faith. Long before this, however, there was widespread recognition and acceptance of the important role that the Blessed Virgin Mary played in the incarnation of Jesus. She who will conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and bear the sinless Son of God is herself conceived without sin. What we are celebrating every December 8 is not the virginal conception

of Jesus but the Blessed Virgin Mary's own immaculate conception.

God loves mankind. Sadly, however, they have become mired in sin. God wills and plans for their salvation. He wants to send His only Son to redeem them and give them a second chance. God's plan will be fulfilled with the cooperation of a virgin from a town of Galilee called Nazareth (Luke 1, 26). To make this woman worthy of bearing His Son, God preserves her from any stain of sin right from the first moment of her formation in her mother Anne's womb. God chooses Mary to be the mother of His Son, Jesus and God prepares her for this noble role. When Mary hears God's invitation from the angel Gabriel she voices total and unconditional submission to God's will, saying "*behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word*" (Luke 1, 38).

God loves us and wants our salvation above all else. But God does not impose His will on us. God respects us. God wants our collaboration. God works through us - after we have signified our willingness to take part in His plan. Like the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us give our unconditional yes to God. We can participate actively in his plan by sharing and living His word. We can be receivers as well as agents of salvation. Let us allow God to do great things in us and through us. As to end my brief reflection I urged them to ask themselves these questions: *what separates us from our beloved Mother Mary? What must we change in our lives so that we may be worthy to be called children of our blessed Mother Mary?*

We did the station of the cross after the Holy Mass. Sister Tina Vasquez was the prayer leader. It was five in the after-

noon, hot and humid. Truly it was a sacrifice. The place of the station of the cross is situated on the hillsides that along a steep wooden area of 1,500 meters path. There are brightly painted 115 life size figures in cast iron within the fifteen stations. The remaining time was spent for personal prayers and devotions. I was confident they did what I told them, that is, to touch the rock, wash and drink the water from the spring and to light a candle. Of course posing for pictures and buying religious articles were not missed.

We ended our first day with the candlelight Marian procession. It was nine in the evening. We gathered around the Grotto and walked towards the Rosary Square. We carried lighted candles and followed the recitation of the Holy Rosary in different languages over the public sound system. It was so solemn, so touching. The sick in wheelchairs or small carts were assisted and helped by caring, able bodied. People of different countries, of different ages were united in prayers. All regardless of social status, regardless of physical conditions were in unison expressing their love and devotion to the Blessed Mother. That scene touched my heart. And I will never forget that spiritual experience.

Everybody was faithful to the schedules. Everybody was excited and ready for every activity. No one was late. No one was a burden. Everybody became a brother and sister to one another. There was a spirit of respectable caring. Togetherness was very much evident. We woke early for the 6 o'clock Holy Mass at the Grotto. And the Grotto was completely for our prayers. We all took charged of the singing, reading and serving. I was the main celebrant and preacher. This is what I shared to them:

"As we came here we bring our love, our loyalty, even our life to our dearest Mother, the Our Lady of Lourdes. We devotedly offered to her our prayers, petitions and praises. We humbly requested her to lead us to her Son, Jesus and to lead us safely home, to our true home in heaven. We earnestly begged her to lighten our burdens, and to enlighten us from our own the darkness and discouragement. We touched the rock with faith that God will touch our hearts. We washed and drunk with water from the spring with humble contrition that God will cleanse us from our personal sins and own selfishness. We lighted candles with complete resolution that we will be light of Christ to all.

Now we will go back to our respective cities and countries. But before we go home, Our Lady of Lourdes like any loving and ever solicitous mother is giving us reminders as our guides as we continue our journey of faith, our pilgrimage of life. To remember these three important reminders, they begin with letter C's. First is CONVERSION.

Conversion from Latin word means *"to turn toward,"* that is, turning towards God. Conversion connotes submission to God's will. It implies self-surrender to God's way as what Jesus wanted when He said, *"change your heart, the Kingdom of Heaven is near"* (Matthew 4, 17). Conversion demands a change of heart, not of resolutions, not promises. God's invitation is this *"...return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning. Rend your heart, not your garment. Return to Yahweh, your God-gracious and compassionate"* (Joel 2, 12).

In conversion one is sorry for the wrong he has done. He renounces his sins, resolves and not to do them again and

renews his life. He accepts God, obeys His commandments and configures his life to Jesus. A converted person has the true intention to lead a new life, to make amendments for the sins he has committed, to do the necessary reparation. A converted person follows God, not what he wants or what he desires. He fulfills God's will, not what the material world offers or not what others say. What matters for him is God. It is God first and foremost. And God in His supreme kindness waits and welcomes us back to His loving fold. God in His unconditional mercy consoles and comforts us. He in His great love for us forgives us and forgets our sins.

During the 8th Apparition of Wednesday of February 24, Our Lady imparted the urgent appeal for conversion. She said, *"Penance! Penance! Penance! Pray to God for sinners. Kiss the ground as an act of penance for sinners."* Bernadette admitted, *"my own concerns are no longer concern me: from now on I must belong entirely to God and God alone. Never to myself"*

Second is CHARITY. It is not just an act of pity. It is not just a feeling of being sympathetic. Charity is not just a matter of giving something. Charity is love, that is, to share or to give love. Charity is to love one's neighbor. Saint Thomas Aquinas clearly affirmed *"the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity, first and foremost in the love of God, then in the love of neighbor"* (Ha Ilae, q. 154, a3). The charity being asked from us is love. It is to love God first and foremost. Then to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (cfr. Matthew 22,37-40). To love especially and essentially love those who are unloved, those who are in dire needs, those who are lost and least in our society. To love them is to love

in the way God loves us. To love them is to do to them what Jesus did to us. And Jesus urged us *"love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in Heaven. For he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good, and he gives rain to both the just and the unjust"* (Matthew 5, 44-45).

Bernadette professed, *"O Jesus and Mary, grant that all my consolation in this world may be to love you, serve you, and suffer for sinners."* And even on hour of her imminent death and amidst suffering the last words of Bernadette were *"J'aime... I love"* repeating them as she kissed a crucifix which she was holding.

Third is COMFORT the sick. Here in Lourdes, the sick are chosen ones. They are given precedence and proper attention. Though sickness connotes suffering and sorrows, here in Lourdes they are special. They are loved. They are well taken cared of. This shows that life in whatever status is sacred. Life is holy. All are human. All are endowed with dignity.

In sickness we come to know that we are limited. We are all in need. And here in Lourdes, we come to realize that God is the answer. God suffices. God is our hope. He is our solution. God is our only salvation. He helps and He heals. Our dearest Mother, Our Lady of Lourdes intercedes for us. She mediates for us. She is telling us as she did during the wedding at Cana, Galilee, *"Do whatever he tells you"* (John 2,6).

From her early age, Bernadette experienced serious sickness. She did not complained. She trusted God. Her prayers

were of gratitude to God. She said *"I thank you, Jesus, for everything; for the graces of my life, also for my weakness and infirmity; my faults of character and disposition, my humiliation, my limitations... I thank you for all of these. "*

In communion with the sick and those who are suffering, let us offer to them this prayer of healing (taken from "40, personal prayers" which I have written and published by Saint Pauls').

Dearest Almighty God, merciful Father

I pray for myself.

I surrender myself to your holy will.

Do what is best for me:

touch me with your caring hands that I may be healed,

speak consoling words to me that my strength may return,

ease my pain that I may bear it with faith,

cure me of my illness that I may do more for you,

restore my health that I may serve you better.

With your constant grace and loving assistance

let me understand your ways in my sufferings.

I pray also for those who care for us who are sick,

that they may perform their tasks well.

Give them, O Lord,

a heart that never ceases to love despite the constant witness
of illness and sufferings;

hands that are always warm and caring, never holding back
in indifference

nor pushing away in disgust;

a spirit that never stops to serve, never weighed down by dis-
couragement and frustration.

With your great love and immense mercy grant them:

renewed understanding,

abiding compassion,
selfless service,
faith in your words, and
in the teaching of the Church.
I pray too for all of us who are suffering.
Bestow on us the gift of yourself.
May our faith endure.
May we never lose hope.
May we continue to trust.
May we hear your healing words, telling us:
*"your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be free of this
illness"* (Mark 5, 34).
Amen.

After the Holy Mass we went directly at the Salle Peyramale. It is located near the Forum Information for video showing. We watched the *story of Lourdes* which lasted for thirty minutes. All were completely silent, reverently reflecting every given words. They were all moved, deeply touched by the inspiring obedience of Bernadette. There was for me a sense of contentment, a feeling of fulfillment. I was so happy to be able to bring them to Lourdes, to Our Lady.

I felt an intense desire to know her more, to see her. As I walked back to the Grotto for the last time to touch the rock, wash my face at the spring and light a candle I made a promise to myself that I will go to the Convent Saint-Gildard in Nevers where the holy and incorrupt body of Saint Bernadette is visible to see. I will not be alone I will also bring them and together we will pray and pay her our respect. And I know she will be happy, and waiting for us.

Healing, Prayer and Spiritual-Pastoral Care; Essential Ways to Wholeness

ANDY PETER M. LUBI

Introduction

It was the year 1993 when my mother had a mild stroke and was consequently diagnosed to have a coronary atherosclerotic heart disease with mitral valve regurgitation. Her attending cardiologist recommended an extraordinary bypass operation which during that time was being performed in Texas, USA. My mother asked the doctor about the possibility of success and recovery to which he responded that it ultimately rests in God's hands. After a prayerful discernment, my mother opted to forego the operation and instead put her trust in God hoping that she would just be given a least of life so she could witness one of her sons become a priest. After three years, her prayers were granted when I was ordained to the priesthood. Now 11 years have elapsed since that initial discovery of the heart ailment, my mother still lives on in God's healing grace. I see in her both the fidelity to God in a life of prayer and to her doctors as she faithfully

follow all their prescriptions aside from living a stress-free, loved-filled and peaceful life.

The case of one of our most dedicated pastoral worker in the diocese was a different story. It was years back when she started experiencing pain on one of her breasts. But instead of taking a medical check up she opted to consult a "faith healer."¹ For more than a year, she underwent regular healing sessions but many have noticed that her condition seemed to worsen. She went from one faith healer to another, convinced all the while that she would be healed, before finally her family and friends were able to convince her to go to the hospital. But unfortunately, it was too late and the cancer was already malignant. She succumbed to cancer last year but in retrospect, if only the proper medical intervention was done earlier, she could have been saved.

I believe, both of these cases indicate important ethical questions regarding health care specifically on matters pertaining to faith, prayer and spiritual healing vis-a-vis the pursuit of the total well-being of the person. It is valuable to ask such questions as: How should we look at health and sickness? How do we understand healing in relation to physical, psychological, social and spiritual health? What is the proper domain of spiritual healing and how is it related to medical treatment? When is recourse to faith and prayer the right and prudent ethical decision, and when it is not?

¹ The word "faith healer" has many connotations. In the Philippine cultural context especially in view of popular tradition and religiosity, "faith healers" may range from indigenous homeopathic healers (*arbularyo*, *hilot*), the synergistic faith-healers and *espiritistas* using Christian symbols, to those associated with Christian fundamentalist and Pentecostal sects. In the case mentioned, it is more of the second type. Cf. Zeus Salazar, "Faith Healing in the Philippines: An Historical Perspective," in *Asian Studies* 1979-1980, 27-40.

These are some of the issues that this article aims to address. The presentation begins with a discussion on health as wholeness rooted on the integrity of the human person. Interventions would not then be limited in scope to medication, prevention and cure of diseases but would be more directed towards holistic healing. The person of Jesus Christ and His own healing ministry serve as the source of healing grace and as paradigm for the Church's healing ministry. The concept of healing and its kinds will also be tackled in relation to the theological virtues of faith, hope and love before zeroing on spiritual healing through faith, prayer, and the sacraments. The last part would be a more practical discussion about the significance of spiritual-pastoral care including an overview of the significant ethical principles and guidelines that should guide this ministry.

In the end, health is seen as striving for wholeness. It demands a balanced and discriminate choice of proper interventions at all levels of the human person, thus avoiding both extremes of physicalism and spiritualism. Health ultimately is openness to God's healing grace at work through the medical professionals, the health care team, the ministry of spiritual-pastoral care, and through those who work for a just and peaceful society. All of these are geared towards the realization of the fullness of life in Christ (cf. John. 10:10b).

I. HEALTH AS WHOLENESS

A. *God Wills our Wholeness*

Most of the time when I visit sick persons especially those who are experiencing so much suffering, I feel "bombarded" with such questions as... "Father, why? Am I so bad to deserve

this illness? Are all the things I do for God and for the church not enough? I've been begging the Lord to heal me but why does He seem to be oblivious to my plight? Is it God's will that I suffer?" Indeed, there are no easy and point-blank answers. It's a mystery we couldn't fully fathom although the whole vision of God's salvific activity would definitely shed much light.

Confronted with these existential questions, I would always begin with the assuring words that God would not definitely want us to suffer because He Himself is life and love; He rather wishes to share with us His very self and that includes health and salvation. We have to hold on to the belief that as human persons we are created in the "image and likeness of God." (Gen. 1: 27) As embodied spirits, we are called to wholeness; a wholeness that comes from total communion with God and from being sharers in His divine life.² But because of our choice to disobey God, we became subjects to the power of sin and evil that sets us apart from Him. This separation from the font of life brings brokenness and alienation as well as the weaknesses and suffering that can be attributed to our fallen nature.

Despite all these afflictions, God willed that in Christ Jesus, we would regain our fundamental communion with Him effecting wholeness in ourselves and harmony in our relationship with others and with all of creation. We are then reconciled, transformed and restored in Christ (cf. Col. 1:20).

² Jean Vanier, *The Broken Body* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1988), 17.

The ethical implication of these tenets is our responsibility to cooperate with Christ and His Spirit in renewing humanity and the world. We are His stewards and collaborators in upholding the dignity of life in all its forms and working for the liberation of creation from the shackles of sin and death towards the fullness of God's Reign (cf. Gen. 1:28, CCC 307). Indeed, "God make all things work together for the good of those who love Him." (Romans 8:28a) An inspiring statement by St. Paul affirming God's beneficence to those who faithfully love Him and do His will.

B. *The Human Person as Subject of Healing*

Medical ethics' ordinary concern is prevention of illness and cure; but it is good to look at these procedures within the context of a healing process. Healing is more holistic and comprehensive; it refers not just to absence of sickness but to total well-being. To provide a basis for this proposition, an analysis of health and its meanings is important.

The word "health" is related etymologically to the Anglo-Saxon word from which are derived not only *healing* but also *holiness* and *wholeness*. The root word denotes "completeness," a whole that has all its parts. It is both structural and functional. The concept of health must also be based on the basic concept of a human being as an *organism* (etymologically "a complex of instruments" or organs), that is, *a living whole composed of functionally differentiated parts*. A human being is thus a dynamic or *open system*. A system is a "complex of interacting elements." A living system is dynamic or *open*, that is, capable of maintaining *homeostasis* (dynamic

stability) in relation to its environment by regulating the input and output of matter and energy.³

Health in the broad sense corresponds to the integrated fulfillment of all the human needs at all levels - beginning from primary physical needs to higher spiritual needs. A holistic concept of health is thus "optimal functioning of the human organism to meet biological, psychological, social and spiritual (creative) needs."⁴ Health too has something to do with the attainment of integral well being of the human person. It is rooted in the reality of interrelatedness of all levels and aspects of the person and the maintenance of a harmonious relationship with the environment. This is why the human person is primarily responsible for his/her health with the support of the family, the community and health care professionals.⁵

Health should also be seen from the perspective of the salvation of the total person as a unity of body and soul, and that the proper Christian attitude towards the body must occupy "a middle position between spiritualistic-dualistic hostility to the body and its materialistic idolization."⁶ The concept of health therefore should not only be taken in the sense of bodily health for the health of mind and soul is of

³ See references Vaux, 1978; Erde, 1979, Bertalanffy, 1968 in Benedict Ashley, OP and Kevin O'Rourke, OP, *Health Care Ethics: A Theological Analysis*, 2nd Revised Edition (St. Louis: Catholic Health Association, 1982), 22-24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25. Based also on the World Health Organization's description of health.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38ff.

⁶ Karl H. Pesche, SVD, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Vol. 2 (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2001), 243.

even greater importance. The overall criterion for human health is not mere physical vitality. It is **rather** a person's best possible aptness for his total vocation.⁷

C. Sickness and Illness as "Brokenness" and Absence of Health

Given the description of health as wholeness, sickness is the absence of this health, of this wholeness. It is manifested by the inability of the person to function optimally. Sickness, disease, ailment or malady is regarded as a specific disvalue - physical, psychological, spiritual, moral and socio-political disvalues. Although sickness is not always the result of moral sin, the fact remains that it is the result of original sin.

Health is our ideal state as human beings, that sickness and disability are unwelcome intrusions into our well-being, and that healing is important precisely in order not only to be whole again or feel whole once more, but to recommence one's life project. This is the real point of healing: to be whole persons, whole human beings again.⁸ Sickness as a result of sin is due not to God's vindictiveness but to man's own self-destructiveness. Before it is moral, sin is the state of man "away from God" detached from the source of life, of health and of well-being. Sin is the vulnerability and malady-proneness of man as creature. The good news is that Jesus has come not to take that vulnerability and proneness away; but that life and health can be affirmed despite and

⁷ See Bernard Haring, *Medical Ethics* (Slough, England: St. Paul Publications), 1972, 152-155.

⁸ Cf. Dionisio Miranda, SVD, *Pagkamakabuhay: On the Side of Life* (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 1994), 278.

beyond them. Sharing then in His Paschal Mystery would merit a new life where sickness and death would be no more.

Medicine must take the interrelatedness of bodily, psychological and social functions into account, if it wants to help the sick effectively. Man has always seen a relation between sickness and sin. The biblical narratives of the miraculous cures by Christ repeatedly mention the forgiveness of sins as an integral aspect of healing. The burden of serious sins bears heavily upon one's soul and affects the body-soul relation, if the healing of the spirit is neglected.⁹

There is a need then to avoid certain misconceptions: "I am responsible for my illness, therefore I am bad" or "God is responsible so I "offer up" my illness." God isn't responsible for illness, but only for health. Usually I am responsible for my illness and it is not redemptive; while sometimes, I am not responsible for my illness. Some illnesses bring redemptive suffering to be "offered up." God heals in His most loving way through "soaking in prayer."¹⁰

D. Healing and Its Kinds

Healing when taken in a holistic sense is also a "communal action whose goal is the restoration not only of physical and mental wholeness to those who suffer illness, but also of their dignity as persons, that is, as beings-in-relation to themselves and to other persons."¹¹ Healing requires both com-

⁹ See Peschke, 243-246.

¹⁰ Matthew Linn, SJ and Dennis Linn, SJ. *Healing Life's Hurts: Healing Memories Through Five Stages of Forgiveness* (NY: Paulist Press, 1978), 48.

¹¹ Warren Thomas Reich, *Encyclopedia of Bio ethics*, revised edition, vol. 2 (New York: Simon, Schuster & Macmillan, 1995), 1037.

petence - in scientific diagnosis and treatment, and compassion - the capacity to enter into the experience of illness with the patient.¹²

Four different kinds of basic healing can be deduced from and differentiated by the kinds of sickness that afflict us and the basic causes of those sickness.¹³ This is of paramount importance because the awareness of these differences is necessary for us to come up with a right diagnosis of the particular sickness and employ the proper intervention.

These are the three basic kinds of sickness:¹⁴ (1) sickness of our spirit caused by our own personal sin, (2) psycho-emotional sickness and problems caused by the emotional hurts of our past, and (3) physical sickness in our bodies, caused by disease or accidents. To this we may add, any of the above-mentioned sickness caused by demonic oppression, a different cause that requires a different intervention in the form of the prayer for exorcism. Consequently, there are at least four basic prayer methods we must understand in order to exercise a complete healing ministry:

¹² Edmund D. Pellegrino, "Being Ill and Being Healed": Some Reflections on the Grounding of Medical Morality," in *The Humanity of the Ill: Phenomenological Perspectives*, pp. 157-166, ed. by Victor Kestenbaum (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).

¹³ For an in-depth discussion of the kinds of healing, see Francis MacNutt, O.P., *Healing* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1974), 161-168.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162-164.

- 1) Spiritual healing for repentance and conversion
- 2) Psycho-emotional or inner healing ("healing of memories")
- 3) Physical healing
- 4) Healing involving deliverance

Healing is nothing but the application of the appropriate cure for the appropriate sickness: natural healing for physical disease, social healing for social illness, preternatural healing for preternatural ailments, psychological healing for psychological disturbances, religious healing for religious suffering.

Although most cases would require specific intervention and prayer, in view of the holistic view of the human person discussed above, there are cases wherein there is a need for all of these forms of healing. The link for instance between emotional and physical healing has already been established.¹⁵ Through the healing of memories, those emotions like anxiety, fear, anger and guilt are surfaced and resolved accordingly. If not, these unresolved anger and guilt in emotionally stressful situations can trigger both hypertension and much physical illness - heart diseases, cancer and others. The "fight" (anger) and "flight" (fear) reactions trigger detrimental physical changes.¹⁶

The focus of healing is on life in general rather than bodily existence. Human existence, including health, is "a configuration of harmonious relations between the physical

¹⁵ This is one of the contentions of Matthew Linn, SJ and Dennis Linn, SJ in chapter IV, pp. 30ff of *Healing Life's Hurts: Healing Memories through Five Stages of Forgiveness*, 1978.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 33-48.

body and the spiritual well-being of man."¹⁷ Accordingly, a purely physicalist and biological attitude to life would not be fully ethical.

II. PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL HEALING

We now go to the subject of prayer. How should we look at prayer from the perspective of holistic healing? Prayer is not a supplement to the insufficiency of the practitioner's medical knowledge and practice; it is not some divine insurance policy that one's medical skill will work; it is not a warrant of one's personal integrity as physician. Prayer is the means to make God present, whether one's medical skill succeeds or not. This may be the reason why Christ always prayed. His healing arose out of his beliefs in God's salvific activity as much as from sentiments of pure humanism.¹⁸

In his book, *Healing Words*, Larry Dossey, M.D. wishes to establish the efficacy of prayer in healing. Prayer has been proven to effect healing in a lot of illnesses which merits the establishment of an intrinsic relationship between prayer or prayerfulness and healing.¹⁹

A. *The Paradigmatic Salvific Healing of Christ*

Our primary model for healing is Jesus Christ. He was a healer not just of bodily infirmities but his actions are directed to the attainment of the wholeness of the person. The Gospel

¹⁷ F. Landa Jocano, *Folk Christianity* (Quezon City: Trinity Research Institute, 1981), 94-118.

¹⁸ Miranda, 302.

¹⁹ cf. Larry Dossey, M.D., *Healing Words* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 169-195.

accounts indicate that Jesus went around preaching the gospel and healing the sick (cf. Mt. 8:16-17, 9:35-36). This is a manifestation of His Messiah-ship and the inauguration of the reign of God's Kingdom.²⁰

Although the primary vocation of Jesus is to preach, to proclaim the message of God's reign, he performs miracles especially of healing to affirm this message. The nature and purpose which Jesus had in his healing can be seen in the kinds of healing which he performed as well as his preference for certain types. His emphasis on the religious and moral character of his healings is proof of their importance to Him. The integration he aimed to bring went beyond the physical; the forgiveness he dispensed to the suffering spirit preceded the relief from bodily affliction.

Healing makes persons whole again. The "making-whole again" which Jesus performed in healing is to be understood as well in a "wholistic" sense. This means that Jesus is concerned with the whole person, not merely a part of the person. Jesus was clearly concerned with a healing of persons rather than merely of bodies and of minds. When Jesus healed, it was to make concrete the good news of the love of the Father for his people, that salvation is not only of the spirit but embraces physical reality as well.

Jesus was proclaiming the Kingdom, his highest value. In the moral sense, he saw sickness as a block to man's participation in the kingdom. The infirm, sick and possessed cannot

²⁰ In the four Gospels, there are around 51 accounts of Christ's healing. An outline is provided for in a little booklet on prayers for healing entitled *Healing Presence*, by Maribi Mapa-Garcia (Makati: St. Pauls, 2003), 118-121.

glorify God. Only the living and whole can rejoice in the Kingdom. Jesus heals so that men may come to know God's love and rejoice in his goodness. Blindness, deafness and death become religious symbols. Jesus recreates and strengthens the fallen, heals the wounded and liberates the possessed.²¹

B. The Foundations of Healing in the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Love

One evening, I received a sick call and the one who fetched me said that the patient's condition was critical and the possibility of survival was very slim. True enough, when I arrived at the ICU of the hospital, several doctors were already trying their best to resuscitate the patient who was already convulsing. When I was about to commence the prayers, the doctors gave way for me to administer what could already be the "last rite." I was rushing with my prayer thinking that I have to finish immediately the rite so the doctors could resume their medical intervention. But something happened when I asked all the relatives present to join me in laying hands on the patient. The patient seemed to calm down. I thought it might be a sign of eventual resignation to death. After the rite, the doctors immediately resumed their task of saving the patient. The following day, I met our parish leader who accompanied me that evening and to my astonishment she gladly told me the good news, that the one we visited is all well, and in fact, she is already eating. This for me was a sort of a miracle and right there I realized my lack of faith especially on the power of God working through the sacrament. For healing to be holistic and effective, it must then

Miranda, 279-280.

be founded on the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

1. Healing Through Faith

Faith is a fundamental prerequisite for healing. There are many examples in the Scriptures wherein faith brings about healing - the woman afflicted with hemorrhage (Mt. 9: 20-21), the centurion's servant (Mt. 8:5-13), the Samaritan woman (Mt. 15:21-28), the leper (Mk. 1:40-44), the paralytic at Capernaum (Mk. 2:1-12). In faith, the primary focus is on the personhood of God and the acknowledgment of His sovereignty. It is only faith that can give hope and meaning to human suffering and dying. It is an expression of trust and confidence in God.²² Bishop Socrates Villegas has these beautiful words to say about the power of faith:

Most sick people tend to feel desperate and depressed because of the pain and suffering that their sickness inflicts not only on their bodies but also on their spirits. But behind this shadow of despair and pain, there is still a glimmer of faith and trust in the Lord as they, in silence, pray, open their hearts and entrust themselves to His loving care. They still believe, like Job did, that God will never leave them especially during the times of grave suffering. It is through prayer and begging for the healing presence of God that they, though physically and spiritually wounded, will be able to recover from the detri-

²² Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma, *The Christian Virtues in Medical Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 42-45.

mental effects of their sickness and to gather again the broken pieces of their humbled spirits.²³

Faith however must not be equated with folk religiosity, with superstitious beliefs and adherence to *espiritistas*, *hilot*, *albularyos*, and other forms of "faith healing" which in many cases are detrimental to one's adherence to God as the ultimate healer. Engaging in these beliefs and practices can be considered as outright sins against the religious virtue of faith although as cultural expressions of popular piety they still need to be carefully analyzed and morally evaluated.²⁴

2. *The Sustenance of Healing in Hope*

Healing is also founded on the virtue of hope. It is hope which sustains the process of healing. Hope in God's design for us, in His mercy, and in his promise of an after life whose glories we cannot even conceive, provides the motivation to sustain and relieve our suffering even when death is inevitable.²⁵

We Christians are taught and helped to carry our crosses in patient endurance with Christ, confident that God's faithfulness will not abandon us and expose our suffering to futility, but transmute it together with the cross of Christ into glory. While hope gives Christians fortitude to endure in suffering, our patient bearing in distress also becomes a wit-

²³ Socrates Villegas, in his Preface in the booklet on Healing by Maribi Mapa-Garcia, 25 October 2002.

²⁴ Miranda, 275.

²⁵ Pellegrino and Thomasma, 67.

ness to the strength of the hope we possess.²⁶ To be healed in the face of uncertainties brought about by illness and suffering, we must be motivated by hope. For hope to be an aid to healing, it must be engendered and nurtured in a right measure.²⁷ It is necessary therefore that hope would not come to a point where presumption, despair, faint-heartedness and resignation take place.²⁸

3. *Healing as Fruit of Charity*

Healing is a fruit of charity. Jesus' healing ministry was rooted in compassion for the afflicted (cf. Mt. 9:35-36). This is the primary motivation for any healing ministry. "Compassionate healing enables the healer to reconstruct the person, to help him or her to become whole again."²⁹ A genuine Christian ethic motivated by charity would then be incompatible with health care as a commodity transaction and the healing relationship as a commercial activity. Instead, the model of physician-patient relationships most consistent with Christian ethics is the covenant, in which the physician pledges fidelity to a binding promise to help. It is based on a commitment of service in the name of love.³⁰

Charity in action takes the forms of compassion and caring. Compassion is the concrete evidence that the virtue of charity is at work in the healer. For health care professionals, com-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

²⁸ See Peschke, 78-81.

²⁹ Pellegrino and Thomasma, 88.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 80.

passion too is the quality that separates a mere career from a true Christian vocation. A commitment to Christian compassion shapes and focuses the way we interpret and apply the three major principles of medical ethics today - beneficence, justice and autonomy. Charity being the ordering principle of Christian ethics raises the healing care to an act of grace, and the profession of medicine to a Christian vocation.³¹

Finally, healing is a Christian responsibility. It arises out of Jesus' specific command to his disciples to heal as well as his demand in Matthew 25: 31-40 to visit the sick. It is to be guided by two principles: it must be done in Jesus' name and it must be ordered primarily towards the least of his brethren. "Faith orients the healer to the way in which the practice of healing becomes charitable healing, i.e., an act of love performed in the manner of Christ's healing."³²

III. THE SACRAMENTS AS FOUNTAIN OF HEALING GRACE

The Church shares in the mission of Christ and through the sacraments and other rites (sacramentals), she becomes a channel of healing grace. Divine life is bestowed and received through the Initiation Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist); repentance, conversion, reconciliation and inner healing take place in the Sacrament of Reconciliation; physical healing is meant to take place in the Anointing of the Sick and deliverance from demonic oppression or possession takes.

³¹ *Ibid.*, chapter 6, 84-96.

³² *Ibid.*, 52.

place in the Rite of Exorcism. The purposes of Church's healing are: "apologetic - to proclaim the truth about Jesus as the Messiah; sacramental as the church's ministers perform in Jesus' name and power; and moral, for the church to be true to her mission."³³

A. Celebrating God's Mercy and Love

In my 6 years of pastoral ministry, the celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes has always been designated as a special day for the sick. The whole parish community prays for healing and the day is spent in visiting the sick and the aged members of the parish, anointing them with oil, hearing their confessions, giving them communion and sharing with them some gifts. It's one way of letting them feel God's compassion and love in the midst of suffering and weakness brought about by their sickness and advance age. With the involvement of the community, the sacraments then become true celebrations of God's mercy and love.

B. Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist

Divine life is received through the waters of Baptism. New born babies become children of God and members of the Christian community. Baptism does not only bestow spiritual life but also bodily life and strength, and in many cases, even healing from sickness. Confirmation is the source of the empowerment of the Spirit while the Eucharistic food when received regularly provides the physical, emotional and spiritual nourishment that strengthens every Christian in our earthly pilgrimage.

³³ Miranda, 282-283.

C. The Sacrament of Reconciliation

The first and deepest kind of healing that Christ brings is the forgiveness of our sins. Through Jesus' death, our sins are forgiven if we are open to receive God's mercy and love. The forgiveness of sins is intimately connected with bodily and emotional healing. They are not separate. In fact, far from being a sign of God's blessing, much physical sickness is a direct sign that we are not right with God and our neighbor.

It is also through the Sacrament of Reconciliation that the healing of memories takes place. One is guided along the path of reconciliation with the self and with other members of the family and community to attain interior peace of mind and heart.

D. The Anointing of the Sick

The new rite of Anointing of the Sick³⁴ emphasizes that this sacrament is not only for the dying but for any person seriously ill, either physically or psychologically. The priest as minister acts in the name of God and also of the Christian community, by his words and his actions conveying acceptance, presence, loving and healing touch. This sacrament must not only be seen as the domain of the priest, nor is there a competition. The sacrament must be seen as a celebration of God's healing work, which God performs not only through the ritual, but also through the ministry of physicians, nurses, and administration.

³⁴ See Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick*, 1972; Catechism, no. 1500ff.

The anointing begins with the rite of reconciliation making it possible for the sick person to experience reconciliation with self, with others and with God, followed by the proclamation of the Word, and reaches its climax in the reception of the Eucharist, giving the patient the food for bodily and spiritual recovery of wholeness. "Physical healing and wholeness will result from utilizing the power of the sacrament, and we are called to deepen our faith in God's willingness to make us healthy."³⁵

IV. THE ETHICAL PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL-PASTORAL CARE

The care for the sick is undoubtedly an essential part of Christian ministry patterned to that of Christ. Traditionally, religious ministry has the four-fold functions: to heal, sustain, guide and reconcile.³⁶ In affirming the importance of pastoral care, the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERD, 1994) states:

Directed to spiritual needs that are often appreciated more deeply during times of illness, pastoral care is an integral part of Catholic health care. Pastoral care encompasses the full range of spiritual services, including a listening presence; helping with powerlessness, pain and alienation; and assistance in recognizing and responding to God's will with greater joy and peace.³⁷

³⁵ Barbara Leany Shlemon, Dennis Linn, SJ and Matthew Linn, SJ. *To Heal as Jesus Healed* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1986), 9.

³⁶ Clebsch and Jaekle, 1964; Holifield, 1983.

³⁷ Quoted from Benedict M. Ashley, OP and Kevin D. O'Rourke, OP, *Health Care Ethics*, 436.

Indeed, the pastoral care department in every medical institution is invaluable to help the patients deal with the existential (spiritual) problems that arise so acutely in times of illness or dying. This is in view of the stress on the communal and ecclesial dimensions of sickness and health. God works ordinarily through the doctors, psychiatrists, counselors and nurses to facilitate nature's healing process. A problem arises when both in the circles of medical practitioners and in church or religious ministers, an opposition between medicine and prayer is being held - as if God's way of healing is through prayer alone, while the medical profession is a secular means of healing. Consequently, they either encourage people to just pray and not see the doctor, or conversely, stressing that there is no need for prayer because sickness is a purely medical issue requiring medical attention. But God works through the doctors to heal as well as through the prayer for healing - for the doctor, the counselor and the nurse are all ministers of healing. All of these different professions, with their different competencies, make up God's healing team. Any time we disparage any person who helps bring about the healing of the whole human person, we are destroying the kind of cooperative healing ministry that the Christian community might have and are setting up false divisions between divine and human healing methods.³⁸

Here are some of the common concrete manifestations of these divisions: "faith healers who tell the sick they don't need to see a doctor, doctors who disparage the ministry of healing

³⁸ For an in-depth discussion about the problems and difficulties arising from a dualistic understanding of spiritual and medical responses to healing, see Francis MacNutt, O.P., *Healing*, 1974, 164-166.

as a nonscientific appeal to the credulous; evangelists who disparage church sacraments as dead rites; ministers of the sacraments who have little belief how much of God's healing power can flow through the Anointing of the Sick and Penance; persons who believe in healing but who prefer to ignore the ministry of exorcism, and exorcists to disparage the ministry of inner healing." These divisions and misunderstandings are detrimental to the attainment of holistic health and healing.³⁹ The ones who suffer are the sick who may be dissuaded from the means of healing they most need because of the ignorance of the very ministers of healing who should be helping them. There is then a need to work as a team, rather than as competitors, to bring God's healing power to the entire Christian community. Anyone who prays for healing should have a healthy respect for all type& of healing prayer as well as all other methods of bringing- the healing about. We must also be aware of our gifts and of our limitations. Where we are limited, we should be ready to defer to the ministry of someone else, more gifted, wiser, or more experienced than we are.

It is also necessary that those who are engaged in pastoral care must deal with the whole person or patient as a person and not just be concerned with the special parts of the person. In viewing the patient under the aspect of physical health, the physician is the chief of any health care team and *de jure* has the ultimate decision in presenting to the patient an evaluation of a possible course of treatment, although *de facto* a nurse, dietician, physical therapist, or pharmacist may actually know more about the patient. The ultimate decision, however,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 165.

remains with the patient or those responsible for the incompetent patient.⁴⁰

As integrated persons making their decisions about how to use the services of the health care team, patients must take into consideration other aspects of personality than just physical health. Consequently, patients need the help and counsel of the psychotherapist, the ethical counselor, and the spiritual guide. In taking such counsel, it is clear that to the patients, physical health is only a part of the problem; in this problem, the ethical and spiritual aspects are more inclusive than the psychotherapeutic or physical aspects of the person's health. From this point of view, patients, after receiving the physician's advice, may need to take ultimate counsel with their minister, priest or some other equivalent spiritual guide. Sensitive physicians are quick to realize this and are happy not to stretch their responsibility beyond their professional competence for physical or, mental health.

Nevertheless, chaplains and other spiritual guides, insofar as they stand for the personhood of the patient in its totality and its ultimately spiritual character, have the obligation to defend the patient as a person in conflict situations, against both unjust actions of the staff and imprudence or negligence of the family or other guardians. On the behalf of the whole person, the first task of the health care ministry is to help patients understand the several dimensions of any health decision.

⁴⁰ Katz, 1994. See also F. Daniel Davis, "Friendship as an Ideal for the Patient-Physician Relationship: A Critique and an Alternative,," 13-34 in David C. Thomasma and Judith Lee Kissell, eds., *The Health Care Professional as Friend and Healer* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000).

A. *Pastoral Care Ministry*

Pastoral Care Ministry in its essence is a shepherding responsibility. It must be rooted on the spirituality of a "true shepherd" and not just of a "hireling." (cf. John 10: 11-13) It entails loving presence, care, sacrifice and self-giving.

The spiritual task of pastoral care is not just confined to counseling, talking about the presence of God, but it must deepen into experiencing this presence in prayer, worship, celebration and communion.⁴¹ Their presence is already a sacrament, a visible sign of God's presence. This is actualized through empathy, listening and not judging as "other Christs." The encouraging words from the Scriptures, the healing touch that gives assurance to the sick persons that they are not alone - this is the primordial sacramental rite on which all the other sacraments are based - the human body contact as a sign of spiritual presence.

One issue pertaining to pastoral care has something to do with the role of the minister in moral reflection and inquiry. Nowadays, "many ministers are becoming confused about their role as shapers of values and maintainers of meanings. They are aspiring to fashion their ministry more and more according to the model of the secular psychotherapist."⁴² For the church to enact its pastoral care successfully, it must place its care in the context of a "practical theology" that addresses a variety of practical moral issues that are invariably funda-

⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1135ff.

⁴² Don S. Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 96-99.

mental to the context of care. To exercise pastoral care, the church must make progress on these practical moral issues. This is the task of its moral discourse. The minister builds a moral universe and facilitates right conduct in a community of persons; thus building a moral community is to contribute to health. To help establish the value framework for right action is to contribute indirectly to health. To minimize value confusion, to clarify the objects and values worthy of people's loyalty, is to contribute to their emotional and mental well-being.⁴³

Healthy action has to do with the capacity to act without conflict. Moral action has to do with the intention to act responsibly so that the consequences of one's action contribute to the enrichment of values for oneself and the wider community. So when the minister, through his preaching and through his work with groups, stimulates a community of moral inquiry, not only is he building a moral world, he is caring for the health of both his church members and the larger society which they may influence.⁴⁴ This would create a support group not only to the patient but also to the professionals so the more they could give of themselves in utmost service.

B. Spiritual Counseling

The closing of the Great Jubilee 2000 was particularly significant for me. I'm referring to the days before Christmas 2000 up to the beginning of the new year 2001. This was because of my spiritual-pastoral encounters with Dr. Mendoza

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

who was then suffering from bone cancer. I remember her asking me... "Father, why is it that God permitted that my right arm be inflicted with cancer, the very arm which for more than 40 years of my medical service in several far flung barrios, had given life to countless babies and had saved a lot from ailments? I grappled for the right answer but again it was the Spirit who prompted me to tell her that if before it was the strength of her right arm that had given bodily health, now its pain and weakness in identification with that of Christ, would be the one to give spiritual health to those who are in need of spiritual conversion. Indeed, it is during these down moments in the life of sick persons when they need the spiritual strength from those who are willing to help them in their search for meaning and enlightenment.

Spiritual ministers are called to help patients in their struggles and may also be called on to help members of the health team who are faced with problems in their personal lives and in their professional involvement with patients. The first task is to establish trust, founded on behavior not just on words. The chaplain must be trustworthy, available, non-judgmental, empathetic and very careful about confidentiality. If need be, care must also be extended to the patient's family. This trust however has its limits, to help the patient grow and be more responsible and independent.

Spiritual ministers aid in moral discernment, they help the patient find meaning in suffering for it to become a moment of conversion. They are witnesses to God's loving presence through truthfulness, patience and understanding, and serve as a bridge with the community to eliminate loneliness brought about by isolation.

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines⁴⁵ was quiet empathic when it stressed that the Catholic hospitals and institutions bear witness to the Gospel by their dedicated and compassionate attention and care for the sick. In order to maximize the apostolic potential of the personnel of these hospitals, they need to be provided with regular spiritual formation so that they may see their work not only as a livelihood but as a Christian ministry. They should also be taught the Christian meaning of sickness, suffering and death and the apostolic potential inherent in them. They should, above all be schooled in compassion and Christian charity, so that they realize that what they do to the sick they do to Christ. The Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) must also be an integral part of the on-going formation of priests and the formation and training of community-based health workers and volunteers for this kind of apostolate.

Conclusion

We are all called to wholeness. It is God's ordained design which evil and sin try to destroy, but the grace of God in Christ at work in us through the Spirit gives us the power that heals and liberates, transforming us into a new creation. This vocation also entails a mission - an active participation in God's task of healing and renewal that begins with our primary responsibility to take care of ourselves and flows out to the service of life in all its forms.

Science, technology and medicine must be regarded as gifts of God, given for the protection and enhancement of life on earth. Medicine must forsake its propensity to allow

⁴⁵ PCPII, 614-618.

materialistic or value-free norms to direct its momentum. Rather, the scientific enterprise must celebrate and honor our moral and spiritual heritage.⁴⁶ The medical and health care profession therefore must be seen both as a vocation and an apostolate. Faith requires that we see not only a curing but also a caring dimension in our health care activity; hope entails that all our endeavors must be sustained by the promised-gift of wellness, and charity demands that we follow the example of Jesus, that our service must be to the greater need. To love others as Christ loved us.

Health care must also avoid falling into the trap of dualism and reduction but must treat human persons as integrated and embodied spirits. This means that advocacy and mobilization in pursuit of health intrinsically involve physical, emotional, social and spiritual enrichment and necessarily engage us in the work for the just distribution of earthly goods and resources, the alleviation of poverty and senseless misery, the empowerment of the poor and the marginalized, and the promotion of peace and the integrity of creation. Health care must give preference to the poor and the least, those who are most vulnerable to ailments due to their living conditions, and those who are deprived even of the basic necessities of life. All of these are concrete ways of proclaiming the "Gospel of Life" in the midst of a prevalent "culture of death."⁴⁷

⁴⁶* A conviction I share with Jan Van Eys and Kenneth Vaux, in their "Declaration of Faith and Health", p. 245 of *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, Second Edition, ed. by Stephen E. Lammers and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

⁴⁷ The core message of Pope John Paul II's Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, March 25, 1995.

Ultimately, we all have to go back to the person - the virtues and dispositions, and the healing deeds of Jesus to provide us a paradigm for our strivings aimed at health and wholeness. The mission the healing Jesus commits us to is a holistic understanding of health and healthcare: "See, I am making the whole of creation new" (Rev. 21:5). Indeed, healing is a process whereby humankind individually and collectively struggles to be restored to the divine image in which it was originally formed. According to this way of thinking, "where there is injustice, there is ill-health; where there is suffering without meaning, there is ill-health; where there is oppression of the poor by the rich, there is ill-health. Therefore, health care that confines itself to a medical model of health is deficient from a theological and spiritual point of view. Healthcare must contribute to the recreation of the world."⁴⁸

All of us then are called to be "wounded healers", for it is in our experience of brokenness that we can be one with those who suffer and help alleviate their pains; while holding on to our faith in Jesus Christ who willingly endured all the pangs and consequences of evil and sin in order to redeem and share with us the fullness of His life. May we all be healing presences of Christ in our world today.

⁴⁸ I share these insights with Gerald A. Arbuckle, S.M., as presented in the introduction of his book, *Health Care Ministry* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), xvii-xviii.

Dynamics of Spiritual Direction in the Life of Communion

ROSAURO DAVID LUNARIQ

Introduction

We recognize the importance and urgency of becoming a church where communion is not just a matter of theological discussion but also an on-going celebration of life. We dare not just dream but work for the realization of this communion that enters and animates our ecclesiastical structures and pastoral programs. And we acknowledge that the frontier of such endeavor is the formation of future priests to become agents of communion.

On this note, I wish to share with you our humble experience. The experience of priests and seminarians who live a life of communion. The experience of priests and seminarians who choose unity not just as a way of doing but as a way of being. The experience of priests and seminarians who recognize that the priestly calling, with every vow and every sacrifice entailed to it, is meaningless - if not totally impossible - unless it starts and ends in communion.

I emphasize on the word *experience* because that is what we, priests and seminarians adhering to the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, have to offer. Let me clearly state though that our experience has a limitation in that it is an experience "outside" the confines of seminary structure. However, those seminarians who have made the experience of living the life of communion and are now assigned as formators, especially as spiritual directors find themselves doing or better to say, living the dynamics of spiritual direction in the life of communion. It is precisely the novelty of our experience that provides room for insights and discussion on seminary formation with particular emphasis on spiritual direction, that I earnestly wish to offer it. With utmost respect and admiration for the countless, nameless individuals and groups who have contributed greatly to the task of improving and renewing seminary formation, let me now present to you the dynamics of spiritual direction in the life of communion. But first, a bit of history...

Eighteen years ago, I was invited to attend a congress on spirituality at the Mariapolis Center in Tagaytay. Later on, I decided to stay at the nearby Priests' School for Asia to deepen my discovery of God-Love and God-Communion. This house, which we call "the school of communion", came into existence in 1983 upon the request of more than 30 Filipino Bishops and later joined in by other Asian Bishops to Chiara Lubich, the foundress of the Focolare Movement. The Bishops made this request so that Asian diocesan priests and seminarians can undergo a similar experience in the school of communion, which until then was only available in the International Priests' School in Italy. Chiara immediately understood that it was the Holy Spirit making the request through the Bishops and said, "Yes".

"Why is there a need for a school of communion?", you may ask. Still earlier, when the first Priests' Focolare was opened in 1956, Chiara sent an Icon as a gift. The Icon was the "Washing of the Feet" during the last supper. Chiara understood that the characteristic of the diocesan priests who live the spirituality of unity would be the availability of being always the first to serve the others. With Jesus as their model, they prefer to serve rather than to be served.

As priests of the Focolare, we do not feel as if we are doing something new that the others are not doing. The emphasis on being the first to love helps us to have the right attitude and to be open always to follow the voice within; the voice that gently and clearly confirms what we understood over the years of living unity with our brother priests. In our regular meetings we share our spiritual journey towards sanctity. In an atmosphere of mutual charity that is usually created in such meetings, we share our experiences as a gift to others. These experiences may be in pastoral work in the parish or in formation work in the seminary where one is assigned.

Against the background of this collective journey to priestly formation, ministry and sanctity, let me now lead you through a review of the essentials of spiritual direction, its evolution, and the challenges that the new millennium poses to us, formators in formation.

PART II:

THE TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The Nature of Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is an ancient ministry, a unique one-to-one relationship in which a trained person assists another person in the search for an ever-closer union of love with God. Both lay and ordained persons practice this ministry today, as in the past.

Traditionally, spiritual directors meet regularly (usually monthly) with those coming to share their journeys of faith. Directors do not impose their own wills or agendas on others; rather, they listen carefully to the unfolding of directees' lives, so as to help them discern the ways in which God is leading them.

Although the term "spiritual director" (SD) is used, it is a term with limitations. Other expressions, such as "spiritual companion," "spiritual friend" and "spiritual guide," highlight different aspects of this SD-directee relationship. Since "spiritual director" is the traditional term and the one most people use today, it is retained but in its fullest sense incorporating the nuances of its synonyms. A review of the literature in this field shows that most contemporary spiritual directors are *not* very directive.

Traditionally, those receiving direction are spoken of as "directees," and so this term is also retained.

What is Spiritual Direction?

A Contemporary Understanding

A. Spiritual Direction is not...

1. *"Spiritual"*

- a. Not just "soul" of a person
 - but the whole person: body, mind, and spirit
- b. Not Greek idea of person: dualistic
 - but reflects the Hebrew notion of a person: holistic
- c. "May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness. May he preserve you whole and entire, spirit, mind and body, irreproachable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:23)

2. *"Direction"*

- a. Not "directive" in the sense of telling a person what to do
- b. Not a dependency
- c. Not a relinquishing of personal responsibility
 - helps to retain and develop personal responsibility and freedom.
- d. Not primarily informative
 - although at times there are "teachable moments" when theological knowledge needs to be given.
- e. Not therapy or counseling
 - although deep-rooted feelings are surfaced and life experience is explored.
- f. Not primarily advisory
 - although some suggestions might be given.
- g. Not the sacrament of penance

- h. Not intended for an elite group
 - an avenue open to all who are serious about growing in relationship with God.

B. Spiritual Direction is...

1. Spiritual direction facilitates the growth of our relationship with God. It helps us to...
 - a. Be attentive to God's self-communication as we experience it affectively;
 - b. Savor, relive, and enjoy the richness and depth of this experience;
 - c. Respond to our self-communicating God in our lives, prayer, and relationships.

2. A Contemplative approach rather than a psychological approach:

In Barry and Connolly's *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (1982), spiritual direction is defined as:

- a. "help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her,
- b. to respond to this personally communicating God,
- c. to grow in intimacy with this God,
- d. and to live out the consequences of this relationship.

3. Focus: Experience and Religious Experience

- a. "The focus... is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience, i.e., any experience of the mysterious other whom we call God."

- b. "Religious experience is to spiritual direction what foodstuff is to cooking. Without foodstuff there can be no cooking. Without religious experience there can be no spiritual direction."
 - c. "The spiritual director is most interested in what happens when a person consciously puts him/herself in to the presence of God."
4. Other definitions stressing a contemplative approach to spiritual direction
 - a. "a gifted presence to help a gifted self emerge." (Shaun McCarty, S.J.)
 - b. "the help one person gives another to enable him to become himself in his faith." (Jean Laplace, S.J.)
 - c. "an interpersonal situation in which one person assists another to develop and come to greater maturity in the life of the spirit, i.e., the life of faith, hope and love." (John Wright, S.J.)
 - d. "a process carried out in the context of a one-to-one relationship which a competent guide helps a fellow Christian to grow in the spiritual life by means of personal encounters that have the directee's spiritual growth as their explicit object." (Sandra Schneiders, IHM)
 - e. "an interpersonal relationship in which one person assists others to reflect on their own experience in the light of who they are called to become in fidelity to the Gospel. (Katherine Dyckman and L. Patrick Carroll)

The Assumptions and Purposes of Spiritual Direction

We may ask the question, "What are some assumptions underlying spiritual direction?" Maureen Conroy, RSM (1987) offers seven. The first assumption is, God is present in all human experience. The second assumption is that one needs to experience that our God is a self-communicating God. The third assumption, if He is present in all human experience, God can be experienced in our hearts, minds, imaginations, psyches, and bodies. Then we also assume that He communicates Himself to us in a personal way. The fifth, we need to be aware that **God waits and** longs for us to respond. The sixth assumption, many times our brokenness, sinfulness, blindness, areas of unfreedom can prevent us from noticing and responding to God's self-communication. And lastly, God desires that we be healed, made whole and more completely alive and human.

What are some purposes of spiritual direction? Continuing her line of thought, Conroy says that the overall purpose of spiritual direction is to help individuals to grow in a personal relationship with God. She adds that some specific purposes are to assist people, i.e., a) to recognize God's specific self-communication in life, prayer, and relationship; b) to savor, relive, and enjoy the deep affective touches of God; c) to respond interiorly and exteriorly to God's self-revelation; d) to notice differences in oneself as a result of affective experiences of God; e) to recognize, explore, unpack areas of unfreedom that keeps us from responding to God's presence and desires for us; f) to grow in an affective and intimate relationship with God and; g) to experience greater interior

freedom, deeper joy, a more integrated life, and more intimate relationships with self and others.

Similarities and Differences between Spiritual Direction and Counseling

Many times spiritual direction and counseling remain a question. Am I doing spiritual direction or counseling? There is a need to see the similarities as well as the differences in order that we can have a focus on what we are doing. In her book *Growing in Love and Freedom*, Conroy (1987), presents some similarities and differences between spiritual direction and counseling.

The similarities are: a) both deal with a person's life experience; b) both move toward an attitudinal change, an improved outlook on life, inner peace, resolution of a crisis or conflict, inner healing, integration and wholeness; c) both help individuals make a free decision; d) both favor gradual and deep change, rather than quick and superficial change; e) the core relationship of mutual trust are essential to both; f) resistance occurs in both; g) similar dynamics such as projection, transference, and counter-transference, are operative; h) the same range of defense mechanisms are present; i) the freedom of the individual is developed and; j) both processes extend over a period of time, although spiritual direction may extend longer, sometimes for years.

The differences on the other hand are: a) Contemplation, that is attentiveness to and absorption in God which is its basic difference; b) Spiritual direction primarily focuses on growing relationship with God which leads to greater integration of one's inner being and outer life; c) Spiritual direction

seeks to help people to discover God's presence in life experiences, struggles, hopes, and dreams, to explore their interior reactions to God's presence, to share with God their reactions, and to pay attention to God's response; d) directees invite God to be more involved in their lived experience; e) Spiritual direction concentrates on the unfolding of a person's prayer life and particular experiences of God and; f) the director must always be mindful of a basic question: Are we being attentive to God in this matter, and am I helping the person to become more effectively involved with God?

In counseling, the relationship between the counselor and counselee leads to insight and healing. In spiritual direction, awareness and healing occur primarily through the relationship between God and the directee, and secondarily through the relationship between the director and directee. In spiritual direction God is the primary healer, and the director is an instrument of God's healing.

PART III: THE LIFE OF COMMUNION AS THE CONTEXT, THE CONDITION AND THE CONSEQUENCE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In the life of communion, spiritual direction takes on a collective path to holiness, or in this sense, wholeness. For example, the usual one-to-one conversation between SD and directee, which is largely recognized as the locus of spiritual direction, is just one of, though not exactly the same as, the so-called "instruments of unity".

The Context: Spiritual Direction in the Life of Communion

As the context of spiritual direction, the life of communion as lived by priests and seminarians adhering to the "spirituality of unity" is more of a shared companionship rather than shepherding. There is a dynamic and mutual enrichment, both human and divine, between **SD** and directee who journey along with the others in the life of unity.

In such a context of profound sharing of life and love that is Trinitarian in character, the SD assumes the role of the responsible and loving *Father* and the directee, the trusting *Son*. While the SD indicates direction for their collective journey to sanctity, he nevertheless recognizes constantly that the light of the *Holy Spirit* amplified by unity is the one that guides him.

The Condition: The Point of Departure

It is then already quite obvious that the point of departure is unity i.e., Unity of mind and heart. Unity that rests on the premise of the New Commandment of Jesus, "Love one another as I have loved you." Unity that generates the presence of Jesus, *The Spiritual Director* in the midst. Here again as in the context, the life of communion becomes the condition for spiritual direction. Unless the SD and the directee secure this condition, there is a great danger for spiritual direction to lose divine inspiration. If this happens, spiritual direction is reduced to mere interpersonal affair or therapist-client relationship. As a point of departure, the life of communion sets the appropriate climate of trust, openness and humility that are necessitated in every spiritual direction.

The Consequence: The Point of Arrival

Consequently, it is the realization of the will of God for the directee that is seen as the specific point of arrival of spiritual direction. In the light of Jesus made present by reciprocal charity among the members of the community where SD and directee both belong, the directee recognizes the gradual unfolding of God's design for his life. In pursuing God's will which is not necessarily priesthood, it is characteristic of the person living the life of communion to do so with great freedom and generosity.

On a wider perspective, the ultimate consequence is greater unity among those who are treading along this collective path to sanctity. This is the "*something more*" in terms of the goals of spiritual direction which the life of communion offers. The individual directee while being helped to see and follow God's will finds his specific place in the collectivity and discovers that his is just one of the many small and colorful tiles that make up the mosaic of God's plan for humanity. This is the "bigger" will of God as expressed by Jesus who yearningly prayed to the Father: "May they all be one as you and I are one so the world may believe it was you who sent me." (Jn. 17:23)

PART IV:

GROWTH IN THE LIFE OF COMMUNION: EXPERIENCES ON THE INSTRUMENTS OF UNITY

In livirj the life of communion at the Priests' School for Asia, part of our experience is to live the instruments of unity

in order to enhance our growth towards a more concrete oneness among us.

Since our life is rooted in communion, our experiences in this regard take their course towards the building of unity among us - with Jesus in our midst. If we have Him at the center of our lives as He promised when he said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst (Mt 18:20), He leads us into the very heart of holiness, of sanctity. Since He, the Saint is present among those who love one another; they too are made whole by Love.

So, in every endeavor or task during the day, all of our efforts are geared to this goal: "That all may be one (Jn 17:21)." But building unity is not a joke. It is never simple at that. Needless to say, we need the grace of God to accomplish such a magnanimous work. At the same time, our cooperation is needed to complete the picture of unity. Just as we need tools to make a house or use devices to build a brand new car, it is also necessary to have instruments in living the spirituality of unity.

Thus, in order for one to grow in the life of communion, one has to avail for oneself of the instruments of unity.

Pact of Mutual Love and Mercy

The pact of mutual love and mercy is an agreement of love. But it can never be likened to a promise made by a boy and a girl who are merely attracted with each other. This is done by two or more people who declare to one another that they are ready to die for each other, by giving their lives for each one just as Jesus did on the cross. We usually do this

before beginning a work or after ending a beautiful meeting or within the Eucharistic sacrifice sealing everything that we do with that readiness to love one another as Jesus has commanded.

But it is also a reality that we are humans inflicted with many weaknesses and limitations. Instead of being faithful to reciprocal charity, we make a lot of blunders by failing to love our neighbors. It may be a violation of that pact of mutual love we have made. Yet, we also have the pact of mercy where we not only understand the mistakes of the other but also to love the one who committed the mistake, above all, because we love Jesus in him. Thus, our relationship remains ever fresh and vibrant with the renewal of this pact.

Experiencing making the pact, one of us said: "For me, this does not become only a ceremony of the life of unity. I find it very essential because declaring or saying my readiness to love a brother is a way of strengthening the very life of communion we are trying to live. Whenever we do this, we are recharged to all the more love one another and live the ideal of unity better."

Communion of Souls

In this way of life, we are always encouraged to take God seriously. This makes us sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives, making evident the wonderful design or plan that He has in store for us. We seemingly acquire a new set of eyes that discover the golden thread that links everything to the immense love of God. Our journey with Him produces beautiful human and at the same time divine experiences. They become treasures of our spiritual life.

Since our life is communion, we cannot keep these "jewels" to ourselves. If kept in this way, they become "poisonous" to our growth as individuals and as a community. This will be very dangerous to our life of unity since no one contributes in building it through the very experiences of God one has lived during a span of time.

In the School, we do it on the first day of the week (usually Monday). All the members of the School of life gather in a circle and gives opportunity to each one to share his journey with God during the past week. It is not a detailed account of the activities. It is rather a sharing of the state of one's soul after the week is over, of how God manifested Himself to the person and how the person has grown in the spirituality. We practice the "communion of soul" among us in order to put in common the spiritual goods that we possess and in this way, to contribute towards the sanctity of the other as well as our own. We know that we "are" in the measure in which "we are for the other."

One can say that an individual who shares his soul may boast of the spiritual achievements he has made. Why do we let the left hand know what the right hand is doing? If a person does this kind of communion out of pride, it is not love. Therefore, it is not a true communion of soul. It becomes true when the individual puts in common his soul as an excuse to love the other. And putting everything in common, including one's spiritual goods is an act of love for Jesus in the other. When everyone, on the other hand, listens with much love, a deep sense of unity is created and Jesus is present in the midst. The communion then becomes a gift for each and everyone.

Asking one of them how this instrument, the communion of souls, is helping him, he said: "Personally, this instrument of unity gives me the opportunity to be empty and even detached of the beautiful experiences of God I had during the week. With this emptiness, I am all the more prepared to accept the "surprises" of love that God will give me in the next moment. If I will not put in common these treasures in me, they may become an attachment that would hinder me to be always ready in doing the will of God in the present moment. Furthermore, this kind of communion enhances the unity we are building together."

Communion of Experiences on the Word of Life

Like in any spirituality, the life of unity puts prominence in living the Word. Obviously, if we live the words of Jesus with much love and ardor, it produces a lot of fruits. This includes transformations in the way we deal with people and conversions in the way we view at life. For us, it is also very important to share these experiences.

We know that when we live His Word, we become another Jesus who is the Word Incarnate. So, when we put in common these fruits in living the Word as an act of love for the other, Jesus is the one put into evidence. Our experience of having him in our midst is intensified because we live his very words.

In the School, it is close to becoming normal that even in meetings or even just during meals that one freely shares his experiences in living the Gospel of the day. One of them shared: "At first, it became awkward for me to do this (maybe because I was never used to share my spiritual experiences).

Yet as I went on in this divine adventure, I realized the beauty of the communion of experiences on the Word. Not only am I enriched. I believe that my companions are also enriched of the life that living the Word possesses. This mutual enrichment leads to the strengthening of the unity among us."

Moment of Truth

This is one of the instruments of unity that is very hard at the beginning but very refreshing after the experience. Normally every month we gather together in an atmosphere of family renewing our love for one another and declaring our readiness to die for each other. We divide this moment into two parts: a) the Purgatory - where we tell to one another what is wrong about each other, pointing out concretely faults, behaviors, mannerisms, etc., which does not help the life of unity among us. And in the same serious and intent manner, b) the Paradise - where we say what is good about each other, and in what respect our behaviors had been of benefit to others. It needs a great amount of maturity in expressing oneself with freedom and delicacy. It is a learning process in itself and we discover all the more our maturity in the way we give the "purgatory" and "paradise" as we do constantly this instrument.

One of us explained: "it's very important for us. We feel that we have to say these things to each other, from time to time: if we don't, then little by little our relationships become impoverished, and they get superficial, or oppressive; it's like when dust gets into the gears of a car." Another shared after the experience: "What unites us isn't just a human friendship based on mutual affection, or common interests, or senti-

mentality. What unites us is a much stronger commitment, a total one. In fact, it's the ideal of Jesus, it's Jesus Himself; and we know that he is not in favor of individualism, but wants us to be a community^He wants us to walk together, to build together. He wants us - and I see no reason to be ashamed of saying it-to sanctify ourselves together."

Often a person is not aware of what one is like when seen from the outside: one hunts for imaginary defects in one-self, or even for imaginary gifts. One is not always aware of what pleases or upsets others. The truth used to come out before, too, but usually at the wrong moment; and although I would not go so far as to say we quarreled seriously, words do leave their mark especially for us Asians. We discover that this instrument is the best way to help one another; the fact that we are able to express this truth among ourselves is perhaps the most beautiful achievement of our mutual love. So then even truth, in relationships between people is made possible by charity. It is truth that is not just gossip, or argument, or lawsuit; nor it is just flattery or gallantry: truth must come from charity and be constructive; otherwise it is better to keep quiet. It is difficult. It is really an achievement. It is absolutely impossible for us to tell each other the truth, unless there is first very great charity, real trust and confidence in the love of the others. But afterwards we all breathe more freely in a spiritual atmosphere that is cloudless, transparent and free.

Not every moment is the "moment of truth," we usually say. But it is always the right moment to help each other build together our part of the living Church, in the myriad ways of expressing mutual love.

Colloquium or Private Talk

There are moments in our experience of unity where doubts, questions and even difficulties prop up. Sometimes we find not light but darkness in our journey towards sanctity together. One can consider this as an obstacle in one's growth in the life of communion. For us, this is not the case. Even these moments of suffering is an opportunity to choose and love God-Unity.

This is where private talks come into place. With a responsible who is mature already in the life of unity, the individual who lives also this lifestyle comes and shares his life. But before anything else, they renew the pact of mutual love and try to maintain the presence of Jesus among them by being love in front of one another. Obviously, this is not a mere case of spiritual direction because it is Jesus who lives among both of them who gives light to the situation.

Another one shared: "I have been in the seminary for almost eight years now. I was faithful in going to my spiritual director. But coming here to the School, I found a new way of growing in the spirituality with a brother-responsible who journeys with me. During the private talks, I could freely say anything out of love and I am very much assured that the responsible listens also out of love. I never felt inferior nor judged by him because of the readiness from both of us to love one another in this moment. Many times, this atmosphere of reciprocal charity brings about tremendous light and wisdom -but not from either responsible nor the individual who comes for the colloquium. It is created by Jesus who is present in their midst. In the long run, unity becomes strengthened."

PART V:
DYNAMICS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
IN THE LIFE OF COMMUNION

The aforementioned experiences on living the instruments of unity strongly suggest that the life of communion has its own specific communitarian spirituality and its own precise culture. The following is a brief presentation of the salient points of the so-called "spirituality of unity" which we believe possesses a fresh approach to the practice of spiritual direction.

Discovery of God-Love and the Choice of God

God-Love is the first point of the spirituality of unity. Though nothing new and regarded as a fundamental Christian teaching, those of us who participate in the life of communion see the rediscovery of God as Love to be the most decisive moment of our life. As soon as we have understood the overwhelming idea that God is love, God is perceived to be present everywhere with His love: in our everyday lives, in our enthusiasm, in our resolutions, in joyful and painful events, in situations that proved to be sad, awkward, or difficult, also in wonderful situations. The powerful experience of God-Love makes us see that everything is love; all that we are and all that regard us. We have understood that we are His children and He is our Father. We have understood that nothing escapes His love, not even the mistakes that we make, because He permits them and in His goodness, even makes use of them to teach us and continually brings ahead His plan of love for us. Suddenly, God is no longer distant, inaccessible or

foreign to our life. On the contrary, He reaches out and finds us with the immensity of His love. We see that God is close to us that He looks after us in everything and this is stronger than any other reality.

Believing in God-Love, we have learned to believe too in the love of the others. One primary struggle of many seminarians who are new in the life of communion is to see the seminary formators beyond their titles as Father Rector, Father Prefect or Father SD. This is particularly true for Asian seminarians who come from a common patriarchal culture where the acknowledged authority in the family is the father. The discovery then of God as a loving Father liberates a seminarian from such predicament and allows him to relate to his formators as brothers who share with him equal dignity as children of the one and the same Father in heaven.

The implications to spiritual direction of this liberated mindset to name a few are the following:

- Having found a new rapport with the seminary formators who are no longer seen as "superiors" to be pleased but as brothers who are there primarily to help, the seminarian ceases on trying to appear good in front of the SD and begins opening up to a mutually sincere and constructive dialogue of life and faith.
- Against the background of discovering God-Love, both seminarian and SD seek to discern God's will convinced that a loving Father couldn't will anything harmful for His children.
- As a consequence, a seminarian, for instance, who realizes through the help of the SD that the will of

God is not priesthood, leaves the seminary without feeling sorry for himself as what always the case is, and instead is thankful for being led towards the path marked out for him by his" loving Father.

It is therefore logical for us to choose God as the ideal of our lives, above our own personal plans, including priesthood. As a consequence of this choice, we started to view priesthood as only one of the many possibilities open to us. Indeed, in choosing God, what matters is His plan, not our plan. Such a fundamental choice instantly puts a candidate for priesthood face to face with his real motivations in entering the seminary, an area of great concern that often comes up during sessions of spiritual direction.

What has a candidate for priesthood truly chosen? Is entering the seminary motivated by the choice of God? If a seminarian fails to make this fundamental choice, what could possibly be the consequences for himself, for the seminary community, and for the Church? From our experience in living the life of communion, this choice of God-Love enables a seminarian to confront these questions with maturity, freedom and sincerity.

Commitment to Do the Will of God

To God who loves us immensely, we feel a great desire to love Him in return. How? By seeking to do His will. It was the way, the one and only way to love God. It's very concrete, far from sentimentalism. By living God's will in the context of the life of communion, we are aware of becoming more one not only with God, but also among ourselves. Thus we are

transformed personally - by living God's will - and collectively into Christ. From the earliest years of the spirituality of unity, we have used this image of the sun with its rays to illustrate how we want to live the will of God. As we follow individually the specific ray that represents God's specific will for each of us, we soon discover as we get closer to the sun that we are also getting closer to one another.

Again here, spiritual direction remains focused towards its end goal: the fulfillment of God's will. With preference to God's will over their personal interests and plans, both SD and directee see the light generated by the reciprocal love that binds them as well as the necessary strength to carry it out.

To Love Every Neighbor in the Present Moment

Seeking to do God's will as a way to reciprocate His love led us to prefer his most fundamental commandment: the commandment to love. From our love of God, our love of neighbor is born. This means to serve and make ourselves one with whoever is near us in the present moment. As priests and seminarians, it goes without saying that this is of infinite value in our on-going formation. In order to become people of communion and dialogue, we must give full attention to each person. In order to become builders of communities, we must first learn how to reach out to every individual because every person is a child of God.

This has a bearing in the practice of spiritual direction in that the SD treats a seminarian not as a "case" but as a person, someone to be regarded with love and respect and not merely to be assessed. This point of the spirituality of unity also serves as a reminder for the SD to exercise the art of listening in the

present moment, that is, listening attentively with his entire being, fully present to the "neighbor" in front of him. Such disposition on the part of the SD can go a long way to encourage a seminarian to be more open and trusting.

Living the New Commandment

Another point in the life of communion that offers a significant contribution to spiritual direction is the reciprocity of love, according to the New Commandment of Jesus, the *Pearl* of the Gospel: "Love one another as I have loved you." Here we have the true essence of Christianity, which opens to us the way to live the Trinitarian life here "on earth as in heaven." This is the fundamental law of the Church where all true members are called to be perfect in love. It is the law of every Christian community. It is the only law that can transform society and renew the Church. Indeed, only if we live mutual love are we known as the disciples of Jesus (cf. Jn. 13:25).

"No one has greater love than this; to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:22). With this commandment to be ready to die for one another, interpersonal relationships acquire a new quality. What are its implications on seminary formation especially on the SD-directee relationship? If earlier we said that discovery of God-Love empowers a seminarian to rise above human respect and cultural conditioning such that he can meet the seminary formator on a fraternal level, living out of the New Commandment challenges the formator to descend from his "elevated" status in order to "wash the feet" of Jesus in every seminarian. No matter how well a session of spiritual direction is conducted, for as long as the SD communicates himself outside the internal forum as "director" instead of a "companion", the prospect of change in

the functional rapport existing between them remains uncertain.

Keeping Jesus in the Midst

The disposition to give one's life one for another causes us to experience the presence of Jesus among us (Mt. 18:20). His presence in our midst becomes the norm of all norms. Beneath the daily activities, there lies this presence which is like a substance of a richly spiritual life, both personal and communitarian. Though deeply spiritual, this presence is very real, almost tangible in character, inspiring us to love, enlightening our minds, purifying our hearts, moving us to greater heights of unity. As a result, there is always that unmistakable joy that has become a natural mark for those who live the life of communion thereby allowing us to relive the experience of the first Christian community of whom was told: "The community of believers was of one heart and mind..." (Acts 4:32).

Joy. A sense of stability and peace. Youthful generosity that enables one to make a total self-donation. These are the fruits - just to name a few - that Jesus in the midst can bring about in the lives of those who walk along the path of unity. He is *the Formator, the Spiritual Director* who indicates the path to personal and collective sanctity. It is our conviction that every seminary formator should possess the ability to provide, if not create, a space for this sublime reality of Jesus in the midst, a reality that doesn't happen at will, not even through the most pious practices or the most organized seminary formation program, but one that can only be generated unless and until two or more are united in love.

The Choice of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken

As Jesus helped His disciples to an understanding and an acceptance of His passion, and crucifixion, we in the same way, in our own spiritual journey, are called to deepen our choice of God. At a certain moment our gaze becomes fixed on the abandonment of Jesus on the cross, on His cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Mt. 18:20) Here, Jesus reached the pinnacle of His spiritual, moral and physical suffering, and passed through the darkest night, experiencing the loss of the Father, cut off from Him, having made Himself "sin" for us as St. Paul says.

In the life of communion, the ultimate choice that one makes is that of choosing God in the greatest expression of His love for all people - in Jesus crucified and forsaken. In this way, one learns to recognize Him in the different faces with which He presents Himself in our neighbor and in every spiritual or physical agony. Because this "forsaken God" identified Himself with all those who suffer and are forsaken in our society; with those who are gripped with fear, loneliness, hatred and doubt; with those who have lost hope, joy, freedom and yes, those who have lost God - we have understood that a key has been given to us, a key to rebuild unity, a key to ending intolerance and division, a key to restoring love and solidarity.

Within the confines of seminary structure, where formation doesn't only mean developmental but also correctional, Jesus crucified and forsaken is the indispensable bridge that unifies the defragmented person in need of healing and wholeness. In the light of this cornerstone of the spirituality of unity, an SD journey with a director armed not just with coun-

seling skills and ability to empathize. More significantly, he journeys with his directee with a heart as broken as Jesus crucified and forsaken, who abandoned his divine majesty and soaked Himself in humanity's sin so He may pull us out of our irreparable condition. This kind of disposition on the part of the seminary formator has the capacity to restore in a candidate for priesthood a whole new sense of integrity.

With the increasingly challenging life that awaits future priests, there is an acknowledged need to guide and help seminarians during their formation years to possess a spiritual maturity that will equip them to face and value suffering, anxiety, dryness and moments of doubts, as integral to the priestly calling. The life of communion offers an answer: Jesus crucified and forsaken.

PART VI: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary, let me offer four diagrams to help us conceptualize the differences of dynamics between traditional psychotherapy, pastoral counseling, contemporary spiritual direction and spiritual companionship in the life of communion:

(A) TRADITIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

God

*
Therapist

4
Client

(B) PASTORAL COUNSELING

God
4 *

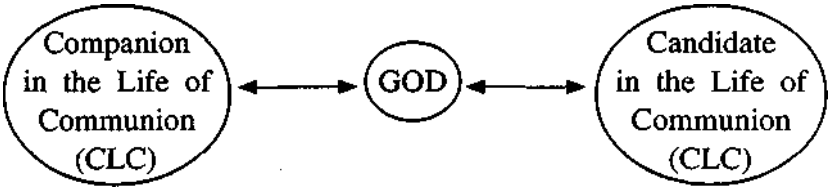
Pastoral Counselor Client

(C) CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

God

Soul Friend Directee

(D) SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN THE LIFE OF COMMUNION



THE FIRST DIAGRAM (A), depicts the relationship parameters of traditional psychotherapy. The dotted lines indicate that the therapist and the client may or may not have an awareness of a relationship with God. The vertical dotted lines indicate that issues of faith may or may not come up in

the therapist-client relationship. In traditional therapy there is no assumption that they will. (Indeed, many counseling psychologist would shy away from faith or spirituality issues.) The primary focus is the relationship between therapist and client.

THE SECOND DIAGRAM (B), the solid line between the pastoral counselor and God indicates that the counselor does have an ongoing relationship with God. Indeed, it is this relationship that helps define the pastoral counselor's attitude and presence with the client. The client may or may not have such a relationship, as the dotted line indicates, and issues of faith and spirituality may or may not come up in the counseling process (the vertical line). While issues of faith and spirituality guide the pastoral counselor, the relationship between the pastoral counselor' and the client is defined by the client's agenda, not by the counselor's agenda.

THE THIRD DIAGRAM (C), depicts the influences and relationship of spiritual direction. Both the *anamchara* ("soul friend" or director) and the directee have an on-going relationship with God - indeed, it is this relationship that is the focus of their time together. As the vertical line indicates, issues of faith and spirituality are the explicit focus of the relationship between the director and the directee. When in counseling the interaction involves dialog between the counselor and the client, in spiritual direction the interaction might be thought of as a "trialog" between director, directee, and God.

THE FOURTH DIAGRAM (D), in the life of communion the presence of God in the midst of the SD (more appro-

priately called "companion in the life of communion") and the directee (more appropriately called "candidate in the life of communion") is the norm of all norms, the point of departure as well as the point of arrival. The SD - directee relationship is rooted on a pact of unity and mercy, which is the foundation and guarantee of communion. Both must live the dynamism of emptiness (the death of God in oneself) in order to receive the fullness of God (the presence of God in the other). The SD can truly be one if he is totally empty because he is totally Love. Likewise, in the same manner the directee can truly be one if he is totally empty and only Love. In this way, both the SD and the directee become the amplifiers of that tiny voice of God present in their midst. Love amplified is God vivified! Living the presence of Jesus in the midst, to know the will of God does not become too expensive as shared to me by one of the religious sisters who need to pay P50,000.00 in a program of discernment to be able to know the will of God.

We have a dream. A dream that is an echo of the challenge made by Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Novo Millennio Ineunte* - "to make the Church the home and school of communion." The call is for us to believe in this dream, that it is possible, that it is doable. Starting in us, we hope to incarnate this dream in the seminaries where ordained disciples of communion will come from. The work has already begun. We only need to cooperate with the Spirit, the source of infinite communion.

Millennium Missionary Milestone: The Philippine Local Church Journey

JAMES KROEGER, M.M.

Pope John Paul II outlined his visionary and programmatic plan for the celebration of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 when he issued his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* in 1994. The pope noted: "The best preparation for the new millennium, therefore, can only be expressed in a renewed commitment *to apply*, as faithfully as possible, *the teachings of Vatican II to the life of every individual and of the whole Church*" (20). The Church is to develop "a new awareness of the salvific mission she has received from Christ" (21); the Second Vatican Council guides this mission awakening "in the Decree *Ad Gentes* on Missionary Activity" (57). This entire

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endeavor has a specific focus: "the Church must continue to be missionary: indeed missionary outreach is part of her very nature" (57).

The pope goes on to note that these initiatives for renewal are "*taking place throughout the whole Church, on the universal and local levels*" (21); this effort "*is aimed at an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and to the Churches (cf. Rev. 2:7ff.)*" (23).

OVERVIEW. This short presentation chronicles some key moments in the new millennium "missionary awakening" within the local Church of the Philippines. From the perspective of the first years (2000-2003) of the current millennium, one can note significant developments. While not an exhaustive presentation, some clear milestones can be identified. The presentation unfolds in a chronological manner; one paragraph is given to each event. Readers are encouraged to (1) see the large panorama of missionary activity unfolding in the Philippines, (2) note the mission commitment and generosity of many people, and (3) appreciate what the Holy Spirit is accomplishing within the local Church of the Philippines. The chronological panorama showing the mission pathways of the Spirit now follows.

[1] During the first month of the new millennium, mission became the focus of the special workshop (*January 20-22, 2000*) that was conducted for the CBCP (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines). Facilitated by Luis "Chito" Tagle, Daniel P. Huang, SJ, and James H. Kroeger, MM., the three-day workshop focused on mission in the document *Ecclesia in Asia* (released on November 6, 1999). Tagle captured the freshness of the Asian Synod and *Ecclesia in Asia*,

since he had attended the synod and served on the post-synodal commission. Over sixty bishops (two-thirds of the CBCP membership) attended this "voluntary" workshop.

[2] The annual gathering of the Pontifical Missionary Societies in the Philippines was held from *June 19-22, 2000* at the Mater Ecclesiae Retreat House, Cadlan Pili, Camarines Sur with the theme "Eucharist and Mission."

[3] As an integral part of the preparation for the National Mission Congress, the CBCP prepared a pastoral letter on mission and evangelization within the local Church. On *July 5, 2000* the CBCP released the document: *"Missions" and the Church in the Philippines: A Pastoral Letter on the Church's Mission in the New Millennium*. The letter is an inspiring overview of both the theological and pastoral agenda for mission facing the local Church; its aim was wide: the profound and thorough renewal of a living sense of mission within the Philippine Church. The full text of the letter appeared in several journals [see: *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas*, 11 (2001): 91-103; *Landas* 14 (2000): 239-251].

[4] The final week of *July 2000* witnessed the special academic convocation held annually at the Ateneo de Manila University. Noteworthy is the fact that in the year 2000 the *Bukas Palad* Award was given to the "Heroic Filipino Priests, Brother, and Nuns in East Timor" for their dedicated and selfless service to that newly independent nation. In the two subsequent years, this same award was granted to local and expatriate missionaries. The July 2001 awardees were: Francis Chapman, MSSC, Michel de Gigord, MEP, and Rhoel D. Gallardo, CMF (posthumous); the July 2002 awardee was Walter J.

Maxcy, MM. In the life of Philippine Church and society, mission commitment is gratefully recognized and appreciated.

[5] The Philippine bishops chose to make mission and evangelization central to the entire Jubilee Year experience. It was during the seventy-eighth CBCP Plenary Assembly held on January 27-29, 1999 that the bishops unanimously decided to hold a National Mission Congress. The five-day congress (*September 27 - October 1, 2000*), with its 2,300 delegates, proved to be a truly unique event for Asia's largest local Church. The elaborate history of the congress preparation as well as the main features of the congress itself were narrated by Bishop .Vicente C. Manuel, SVD as the congress convened [see: *Telling God's Story*: 3-12]. Two congress overviews capture the events of "Cebu 2000," as the congress was popularly called [see: Arevalo, *Telling God's Story*: 13-18; Kroeger, *Landas* 14 (2000): 231-238]. The "Message of the First National Mission Congress" expressed the commitment of the congress delegates to become a "Church-in-Mission" [see: *Landas* 14 (2000): 252-256]. Two books were published by the CBCP Commission on Mission in conjunction with the congress: *Tell the World... Catechetical Modules for Mission Animation* [Cebuano Translation: *Suginli ang Kalibutan*] and *Telling God's Story: National Mission Congress 2000*.

[6] Several Mission Orientation Courses are held annually, jointly sponsored by the Mission Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) and the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). These offerings are open to all congregations, diocesan, and lay missionaries; they focus on (1) Filipinos preparing for *ad gentes* mission, (2) Filipinos returning from *ad gentes* mission, and (3) expatriate missionaries arriving in the Philip-

pires. The first course to be held after the National Mission Congress (*December 9-16, 2000*) welcomed twenty-five *balik-bayan* missionaries; this was the eleventh time this program has been offered.

[7] The Philippine Catholic Lay Mission (PCLM), established in 1977 by Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, is an organization founded to encourage, recruit, form, send, and support Filipino lay Catholics in spreading the Good News of God's Kingdom to all the world. PCLM held its annual missioning ceremony on *December 10, 2000*; this group was the "26th Batch" of lay missionaries sent out.

[8] To continue the momentum of the National Mission Congress, Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Mission, wrote to all CBCP members on *January 8, 2001* concerning the "Recommendations of the National Mission Congress." Bishop Manuel noted the high expectations of the congress as well as the emphasis on the National Mission Plan that was to be "drawn up and implemented with determination and creativity."

[9] During the last week of January 2001 the CBCP sponsored the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (*January 22-27, 2001*). "*Behold I Make All Things New*" was the message of this ten-year evaluation of developments in the local Church since PCP-II (1991-2001). Among the various themes in the document, one finds a commitment to "renewed integral evangelization" and a variety of pastoral priorities which include "Animation and Formation for Mission *adgentes*" [see: *Landas* 14 (2000): 257-263].

[10] The Mission Orientation Course for Arriving Expatriate Missioners, coordinated by the SSpsS and SVD, was held *January 22 - February 2, 2001* at the Holy Spirit Sisters' Home (BF Homes, Quezon City); fourteen participants joined this program, the thirteenth of its kind.

[11] The CBCP President Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI wrote a letter to Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD on *March 12, 2001*; this letter approved the drafting of a National Mission Plan that would be later presented to a plenary assembly of the CBCP.

[12] On *April 6, 2001* Father Cipriano Mallari was appointed as the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Philippines. Sincere gratitude was expressed to the outgoing director Father Pete Mesiona, MSP for his dedicated service (1998-2001), especially for the role that he played in organizing diocesan mini-congresses on mission (e.g. Bicol, Bulacan, etc.) and the successful National Mission Congress in Cebu.

[13] The first in a series of meetings focused on the development of a National Mission Plan was held on *April 27, 2001* at the CBCP Headquarters in Intramuros, Manila. Initial ideas were garnered for the content of this mission plan, a response to specific recommendations of the 2000 National Mission Congress.

[14] The first "post-National Mission Congress" Orientation Course for Departing Filipino Missioners going on *ad gentes* mission [the twentieth of its kind] was held *May 6-16, 2001* at the Holy Spirit Sister's Home, Quezon City. Noteworthy is the increased number of participants - due, it is believed, to the impact of the Mission Congress. Seventy-nine

participants joined; they were departing for thirty-four different countries world-wide. This event was a cause for rejoicing and expressing gratitude to God for the mission vocation!

[15] The bishop-members of the various CBCP Commissions met on *June 15-17, 2001* for a Strategic Planning Seminar at the San Miguel Training Center in Alfonso, Cavite. One goal of the workshop was to assist the various commissions in appreciating how cooperation and interaction would help them achieve their mission and common goals.

[16] The forty-ninth annual mission assembly of the Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) was held in Davao City on *June 18-20, 2001*; the theme of the assembly was: "Deep Missionary Spirit Sets Impetus for Evangelization."

[17] Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD took the initiative on *July 10, 2001* to write a letter to all the Catholic Missiologists with Licentiate or Doctorate Degrees in Missiology within the Philippines; the bishop proposed a meeting in Cebu for three reasons: discussion of mission in general, suggestions for the National Mission Plan, and the exploration of possibilities for an association of missiologists.

[18] Twelve missiologists assembled in Cebu on *August 17-19, 2001* for an exploratory meeting with Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD; the fruitful meeting addressed various topics: response to the National Mission Congress, key ideas coming from *Cooperatio Missionalis*, formation of a National Mission Council, ideas for the National Mission Plan, and the formation of a missiologists association. Following an enthusiastic acceptance of the importance within the local Church of a professional association of missiologists, the Philippine Asso-

ciation of Catholic Missiologists (PACM) was inaugurated at this "founding assembly."

[19] As an echo of the National Mission Congress, the "Mission Symposium 2001" was held in Davao City on *September 4-6, 2001*. Coming from fourteen dioceses principally in Southern Mindanao, the 1,600 participants engaged in three days of mission renewal and animation.

[20] The fledgling PACM held its First Plenary Assembly at the Lorenzo Mission Institute (LMI) on *October 20-21, 2001*. The PACM augmented and refined the National Mission Plan for presentation at the January 2002 CBCP Plenary Assembly. In addition, the PACM developed and ratified its own Statutes; officers for 2001-2004 were elected. A special strategic planning session for the Second PACM Plenary Assembly was held on October 23, 2001 at the LMI.

[21] The Annual Mission Convention of AS AM (Association of School Animators for Missions) was held on *November 11, 2001* at Sienna College in Quezon City.

[22] The Philippine Catholic Lay Mission (PCLM) held its twenty-seventh mission sending ceremony on *December 8, 2001*.

[23] A two-day gathering was held on *January 4 & 8, 2002* by a small focus group to finalize the Strategic Plan of the Episcopal Commission on Mission (ECM) for presentation at the CBCP Plenary Assembly.

[24] On *January 26, 2002* at the CBCP Plenary Assembly, Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD presented the ECM Strategic Plan. Comments and suggestions were received. Within minor

nuances the plan was unanimously approved to become the National Mission Plan.

[25] The Second Plenary Assembly of the PACM was held in Tagaytay on *February 21-23, 2002*. The PACM accomplished its agenda; the group committed itself to implement the five specific PACM projects indicated in the National Mission Plan approved by the CBCP. On February 22, 2002 the PACM sponsored the "Mission Conference 2002" at the Divine Word School of Theology with the theme: "Is Dialogue Possible? Muslims and Christians in Mindanao." Speakers were: William J. LaRousse, MM, Lilian M. Curaming, FMM, and Antonio F.B. de Castro, SJ. The published papers appeared in *Landas* 16/2 (2002): 273-311.

[26] The Fourteenth Mission Orientation Course for Missioners arriving in the Philippines was held at the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Baguio City from *March 19-31, 2002*; fourteen new missioners from eight countries participated.

[27] From *April 16-18, 2002* the Philippine Catholic Lay Mission (PCLM) held its Grand Homecoming of Lay Missioners and Staff; the occasion was the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of Foundation (1977-2002). The festivities included the opening of the new PCLM Formation Center in Davao City (dedicated to Blessed Pedro Calungsod), the mission sending of renewing missioners, and the launching of the book *Stories of the Heart, Treasures of the Soul: 25 Journeys of Filipino Lay Missioners* [reviewed in *Landas* 16/2 (2002): 338-340].

[28] The Twenty-first Mission Orientation Course for Filipinos departing for *ad gentes* mission was held from *May 2-12, 2002*; forty-seven missioners representing sixteen

mission-sending organizations participated. These missionaries were destined to serve in twenty-one countries across the globe.

[29] *World Mission* magazine in its *July, 2002* issue (20-21) featured the history and growth of the PACM in the Philippines; the editorial (5) of the same issue noted the significance of the PACM for the local Church of the Philippines.

[30] The mid-year meeting of the PACM was held on *August 16-17, 2002* at the Lorenzo Ruiz Mission Institute. In addition to the ordinary PACM agenda, a special consultation was conducted by Msgr. Gilbert A. Garcera, CBCP Assistant Secretary General, on role and functions of the CBCP Mission Commission and the PMS in the Philippines.

[31] The Pontifical Missionary Societies of the Philippines published in late *2002* a handsome volume edited by Sister Ma. Nicetas P. Dael, RVM to commemorate its seventieth foundation anniversary (1932-2002) and its fiftieth mission assembly (1952-2002); the volume contains a wealth of historical and current information and photographs.

[32] The thirteenth Balikbayan Missionaries Enrichment Program was held-atJhe Convent of the Holy Spirit in Baguio City from *December 1-8, 2002*.

[33] The Philippine Catholic Lay Mission celebrated its Mission Sending Ceremony for "Batch 28" on *December 15, 2002*.

[34] On *January 23, 2003* the Institute for World Evangelization, an International Private Association of Christ's Faithful with Pontifical Right [directed by Sabina and Henry

Cappello and working in the Philippines since 1997], dedicated its new Philippine Center in San Antonio Village [5 General Lim Street], Pasig City.

[35] The PACM held its Third Plenary Assembly in Cebu on *February 20-22, 2003*. Integral to the assembly was the "Mission Conference 2003" held at the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos on the morning of February 21, 2003. The theme of the conference was "Inculturation in the Chinese-Filipino Context." Conference speakers were: Jose Vidamor B. Yu, LRMS, Catherine Cheong, FI, and Aristotle C. Dy, SJ. The published papers can be found in *Landas* 17/2 (2003), 196-241.

[36] Forty-one missionaries from fourteen organizations joined the Twenty-second Mission Orientation Course for Departing *ad gentes* Missioners held at the Holy Spirit Mission Center in Tagaytay City from *May 7-17, 2003*; these evangelizers will serve in sixteen countries.

[37] The fiftieth Pontifical Missionary Societies Annual General Assembly was convened at the Blessed Marelllo Retreat House in Tagaytay City from *June 9-11, 2003*; participants focused their discussions on the theme: "Revitalization of Mission Animation Works in the Philippines." There was also much discussion on the implementation of the National Mission Plan of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

[38] The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (*June 29, 2003*) witnessed the inauguration of the Remedios Jubilee Mission Exhibition at the Malate Church in Metro Manila. This permanent display, which creatively presents all dimensions of Church life in the Philippine context, celebrates "the coming

of age of the Filipino Church" - particularly in the areas of evangelization and mission. This "Museum of Mission - Past and Present" is open to the public daily, except Mondays.

[39] During the eighty-seventh semi-annual plenary assembly of the Philippine Bishops (CBCP) on *July 5-7, 2003*, Bishop Edwin A. de la Pena, MSP of the Prelature of Marawi was chosen as head of the Episcopal Commission on Missions. Bishop Vicente C. Manuel, SVD concludes his ten-year term of energetic, dedicated, and fruitful service of the Bishops' Mission Commission, the high-point of which was the successful National Mission Congress (and all its enduring fruits) held in Cebu City in the Great Jubilee Year 2000.

[40] A special Mission Sending Ceremony was held by the Philippine Catholic Lay Mission (PACM) movement on *September 8, 2003* in Digos, Davao del Sur. Bishop Guillermo Afafe presided at the event during which three veteran PACM missionaries were sent to open a new mission in Cambodia.

[41] Father Gilbert A. Garcera of the Archdiocese of Caceres was appointed on *October 1, 2003* the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Philippines for a five-year term (2003-2008); the appointment came from Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

[42] In preparation for World Mission Sunday, the Archdiocese of Caceres sponsored the "Caceres Mission Expo 2003" in Naga City on *October 16-19, 2003*. Employing the theme "Envisioning Mission Through the Eyes of Mary," Mission Office Director Father Andrew Recepcion organized sessions for adults (Thursday), children (Friday), and youth

(Saturday-Sunday); the combined attendance exceeded 4,000 participants.

[43] A festive joint celebration was held in the Manila Cathedral on *October 17, 2003* to give thanks for the October 5, 2003 canonization of Saints Arnold Janssen, Daniel Comboni, and Joseph Freinademetz. The religious sons and daughters of these missionary saints continue to give dedicated service to the local Church of the Philippines.

[44] Sponsored by the Episcopal Commission on Missions of the CBCP, an organization assembly of the National Mission Council was convened in Cebu City at the Talavera Retreat House on *November 17-20, 2003*; a smaller core group will have a second planning assembly at the Maryknoll Mission House in Davao City on February 10-11, 2004.

[45] The Fourteenth Balikbayan Missionaries Enrichment Program was held from *December 1-8, 2003* at the Convent of the Holy Spirit in Baguio City; Filipino missionaries returning from Bolivia, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Kenya, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Hong Kong participated in this program which processes mission experiences and facilitates re-entry into the Philippine setting.

[46] The mission sending ceremony of "Batch 29" of the Philippine Catholic Lay Mission was held on *December 14, 2003* at Saint Jude Parish in Davao City with Bishop Antonieto Cabajog of Surigao City officiating.

CONCLUSION. These foregoing events are, in fact, only a brief presentation of *some* of the mission initiatives of the Philippine local Church in the Third Christian Millennium.

The author is profoundly aware that this chronology needs amplification; no intentional oversight or biased selection process was operative in recording these events. The goal of the writer was to collate as much information as was available for the years 2000-2003, so as to raise Catholic awareness of the initiatives present in the Philippine Church - and to praise and thank God for the many generous mission responses being manifested in the local Church.

At heart, this compilation is certainly more than a simple chronological arrangement of meetings, gatherings, convocations, sending-ceremonies, seminars and congresses. In reality, all these events are "signposts and pathways of the Spirit" in renewing the local Church of the Philippines in her missionary vocation. The ordinariness and prosaic nature of these many activities belies the deeper significance they possess for the Church in these Islands to become a community-on-fire, a Church-truly-alive-in-mission, eager to give joyful witness to the gift of Christian faith, to the person of Jesus, to the love of the Trinity.

Pope John Paul II's vision of the Church's evangelizing mission in the Third Christian Millennium (briefly noted in the introduction of this piece) has been further enunciated in his *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. The missionary local Church of the Philippines can draw strength and encouragement from the pope's words (NMI 58): "A new millennium is opening before the Church.... Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt. 28:19). The missionary mandate accompanies us

into the Third Millennium and urges us to share the enthusiasm of the very first Christians: we can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew.... Many are the paths on which each one of us and each of our Churches must travel."

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, O.P.

WHO ARE THE LAY FAITHFUL IN THE CHURCH?

INQUIRY:

This is regarding canon 207 of the Code of Canon Law. This canon deals, in its two paragraphs, with the Christian faithful: in the first paragraph it states that there are only two kinds of christian faithful, namely, the clergy and the laity. And in its second paragraph, it speaks of those who make profession of vows.

Some religious Sisters confided to me that one of their professors told them that they are lay people. But I requested him to read the chapter IV of Lumen Gentium (n.31), where the term "laity" is understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. He replied that the Second Vatican Council contained some errors and that it was only a pastoral Council - something I had already heard before.

My question is this: Who are the laity according to the Code of Canon Law? It seems to me that this canon 207 should have been better explained!

ANSWER:

It is difficult to believe that the Second Vatican Council was wrong when saying in effect that the term "laity" means "all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church" (LG, n.31). But it is likewise difficult to believe that the Code of Canon Law (promulgated 17 years later, in 1983) is also wrong when stating "by divine institution, among Christ's faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics; the others are called lay people." (c.207 §1) Then, since there seem to be some discrepancies here, we may indeed ask which of the two is right: The Code of Canon Law that in its canon 207 §1 classifies the christian faithful in clerics and lay people, ... or the Second Vatican Council that classifies them in clerics, religious, and laity?

I would answer that both of them are right, each one from its own proper context and perspective. I do not understand, therefore, those who - like the professor mentioned in the inquiry - disqualify the Second Vatican Council by affirming that "it contained some errors" (*sic*) and that "it was only a pastoral Council"(!), neither those who disqualify the Code of Canon law censuring it as "purely legal" in this distinction. Both attitudes seem to me somehow mean, religiously speaking, and they not only reveal ignorance but also some prejudices that have not been overcome. Obviously, this does not mean that neither the question of the distinction between clergy and laity is easy nor that the issue is definitively solved. I will try to give an answer to your question.

The Second Vatican Council, which states that laity means "all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church" (LG, n.31), focuses the issue of the laity from two different although mutually complementary sides: the *sacramental* and the *apostolic* one.

(a) From the *sacramental* point of view, the laity are those faithful who, having been baptized, partake of the common priesthood (not of the ministerial one), thus sharing in the triple function of the Church of teaching, of sanctifying and of governing, but differently from the clergy; (b) From the *apostolic* perspective, the laity have the specific task "to imbue and to perfect the temporary order with the evangelical spirit," given their exclusive secular character.

In the Code of Canon Law we read the same things more or less about the laity, since some of the canons have been taken literally from the conciliar documents. Thus, for instance, canon 204 - taken from *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31 - defines the Christian faithful as "those who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."

Then, in the two paragraphs of canon 207, the Code makes some distinctions between "sacred ministers," "lay persons," and those "consecrated to God in their own special way" through professing the evangelical counsels:

a) The first paragraph states that "by divine institution, there are among the Christian faithful in the Church sacred

ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay people." This statement is not only correct, but also essential in Ecclesiology, given the hierarchical constitution of the Church. In fact, there are two fundamental states in the Church rooted in the sacraments of baptism and sacred orders. Accordingly, there are two fundamental categories of persons in the Church, namely, *clerics* (those who have received the sacrament of the sacred orders, that is to say, those who have been ordained as deacon, priest, or bishop), and *lay people* (those who have not received the sacred ordination, and therefore this category embraces broadly the "consecrated persons" who do not belong to the clerical state). This distinction is "by divine institution."

b) However, the second paragraph goes a little further and states that "drawn from both groups are those of Christ's faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels through vows or other sacred bonds recognized and approved by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and promote the salvific mission of the Church..." So, from a different perspective (not hierarchical, but rather functional) another category of persons is mentioned here: those popularly called "religious" or people consecrated in institutes approved by the Church. This *new* group, whose members come from either of the two aforementioned fundamental states, is not of divine institution (unlike the clergy-laity distinction) nor does it constitute a hierarchical state intermediary between the clerics and the laity ("in itself, the state of consecrated life is neither clerical nor lay," c.588). Yet, the Code of Canon Law acknowledges that this group is a "special one" within the Church, for it belongs to her life and sanctity, and as such it has a

proper juridical status (cf cc.662-672). That is why to this aggregate of persons the Code devotes an entire part of its second book, cc. 573-746.

Thus, in this canon 207, the term "laity" is ambivalent inasmuch as it is used both in a wide sense to designate generically all the christian faithful who have not received the sacrament of Sacred Orders, and in a strict sense to refer, within these last ones, to those who have not embraced any of the forms of consecrated life approved by the Church. In this last sense it coincides with the classification formulated by the Second Vatican Council.

Furthermore, it seems that the 1983 Code with this canon has substituted the threefold traditional classification of the faithful in *clerics*, *religious* and *lay*, by a new division, also tripartite, in (a) *secular clergy*, (b) *consecrated faithful* - members of religious institutes, secular institutes and societies of apostolic life, hermits, virgins, etc. - and (c) *laity*.

In conclusion, who are the lay faithful in the Church according to the Code of Canon Law? Based on all that has been said, that is, on the reception or not of sacred orders and/or of the assumption or not of a stable consecrated form of life, the lay faithful in the Church would be ***those christians who remain immersed in the earthly realities without having received a later characterization in their condition added to the baptismal one, be it a sacred ordination, a religious consecration, or a form of fraternal life in common.*** They are members of the People of God incorporated into Christ by baptism who, immersed in the earthly realities, carry out their priestly, prophetic and kingly office not through

the exercise of Sacred Orders but by virtue of the common priesthood of the faithful.

It is to this vast portion of the People of God that the Code of Canon law refers to when it deals with the "obligations and rights of the lay faithful" in its book II, part I, title II, cc. 224-231.

I should add that although this strict concept of laity (which is in the end the one adopted by the Code of Canon Law) is valid, it could still be subject to further refinement. No wonder there are experts with other opinions on this regard. For example, some think that the obligations and rights of the lay faithful are applicable also to the lay members of secular institutes and societies of apostolic life, if they are not contrary to the proper dispositions that constitute their peculiar canonical *status*. Others think that those obligations refer indistinctly to all the baptized who have not received the Sacred Orders, although some precepts won't be applicable to the lay members of the institutes of consecrated life for being incompatible with their proper law. Still someone could think that such a concept of lay faithful is negative inasmuch as these members of the People of God are described as those who are neither clerics nor members of a form of consecrated life; to this I will answer that, in my appreciation, it is not so; and I justify my answer by noticing that the special title that the Code of Canon Law devotes to the obligations and rights of the lay faithful is placed between the title regarding the duties and rights of *all* Christ's faithful and that of the sacred ministers or clerics. This alone already shows the high esteem the Church has for the laity, a regard that began with the latest Council (1962-1965) and was confirmed by the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for March-April 2005

EFREN RIVERA, OP

March 6, 2005



Lent IV (Laetare)

Readings (A) 1 Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Eph 5:8-14;
Jn 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Starting on Saturday, March 12, the practice of covering crosses and images may be observed.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). ***The Man Born Blind, o*** The purpose of this story is to show that Jesus is the Light of the world (9:5 see also Jn 8:12). Moreover, it also foreshadows the Christian sacrament of Baptism, since the blind man is cured upon washing at the pool of Siloam. The waters of this pool is sprinkled on the people at the Feast of Tabernacles to symbolize the blessings of the messianic age. Jesus himself is the pool of Siloam, the source of messianic blessings. He, the giver of sight to the blind, is the Messiah.

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

V. 3b, "It is so that the works of God may be made visible through him." - Value of God's work being made visible. - Value of being a means, an instrument, of God's work.

V. 4, "We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day." Day, symbolically, is the time when Jesus the Messiah is still doing his ministry of converting the Jews. Night will be the time when the Messiah is taken away from the Jews. - Value of the light of day (that makes it possible for people to do their work).

V. 5, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." - Value of Jesus enabling - "empowering" - people to accomplish their purpose in the world.

V. 7, "Pool of Siloam, which meant 'sent'." - Symbolic value of the Pool of Siloam as symbolizing Jesus, the Messiah who was "sent" by his Father to save the world.

V. 17, "He is a prophet" - A prophet is one who speaks in the name of God. There were prophets like Moses, Elijah and Elisha, who also worked great miracles. - Value of the prophetic ministry.

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

- (V. 5) Why did God make me? Have I discovered the purpose of my life?
- (V. 17) Am I aware that, because of my Baptism, I can share in the prophetic ministry of Jesus Christ?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - The Church is "the Light of the world" by educating people. Christian education should not only enlighten minds but also empower persons to make their contribution towards a better world.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Maybe it is time for us to harness sunlight to run the motors of our vehicles and to provide electricity for machines and for night work.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

LIGHT IS SILENT, LIGHT ACTS

A fire can crackle, but light is silent. Jesus is a Light. Touching on this, Fr. Al Schwartz says:

"Jesus, light of the world, loves what is simple, clear and concise. Jesus reflects this outlook when He says, 'Let your speech be yes, yes, no, no - anything in excess of this comes from evil.' Jesus had a personality that was attracted to silence and solitude. That is why He went into the desert and spent forty days and forty nights there. That is why He spent nights on the mountaintops. That is why frequently at dawn He went to a secluded place to be alone and to enjoy the silence and solitude... This is very much in the spirit of the Old Testament where it is written in the Book of Proverbs, 'Where there are many words, there are many sins.'"

In today's Gospel reading Jesus, Light of the world, also acts while his opponents simply discuss and debate. Fr. Al Schwartz did well to continue his reflection saying:

"When Jesus did open His lips to speak, His words were always words of life - that is to say, they were always a call to action. For example, upon concluding the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus did not say to His listeners, 'Wasn't that a lovely story?' On the contrary, He ends the parable with the admonition, 'You, too, go and do in like manner.' In a similar fashion, at the Last Supper, after Jesus washes the feet of His disciples, He does not sit down and exclaim, 'Wasn't that a touching gesture?' On the contrary, He says, 'As you have seen Me do to you, you also do to each other.'"

Venerable Fr. Aloysius Schwartz,
"To Live Is Christ," p. vi-vii.

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

March 13, 2005



Lent V

Readings (A) Ez 37:12-14; Rm 8:8-11; Jn 11:1-45 or Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

The Solemnity of St. Joseph will be on Saturday, March 19

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The Raising of Lazarus*, o At the time when the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was almost at its peak (see v. 8), Jesus raised the dead Lazarus, his friend, back to life. The purpose of this great miracle was "to give glory to God, and that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (v. 4).

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

V. 3, "The one you love is ill." See v. 35-36, "And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, See how he loved him." - In these verse the author is trying to touch the emotions of his readers.
- Value of giving our emotions an important role in our lives.

V. 16, "Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us go to die with him.'" - Value of loyalty to the point of being ready to give one's life.

V. 26, "Every one who lives and believes in me will never (really) die." - Value of a spiritual life that does not end with bodily death.

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

- (V 3) Do I give my emotions their proper role in my life?
- (V 16) Does my loyalty to Christ go to the point of being ready to die for him?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - The Church has to recognize the important role that emotions play in the personal life of people. A groups' spirituality should not be dismissed outright just for being "too emotional."

b) in relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us respect the privacy of people when they are moved by strong emotions.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

OUR FRIEND JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

Even little children among us know the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. But, with just a little effort, we can find something new in it. Suppose we focus on the word friend and friendship love? We find that Lazarus is the "friend" of Jesus (v. 11) and is called "the one you (Jesus) love" (v. 3). This is also affirmed when the text says, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus" (v. 5) and again "See how he loved (Lazarus)" (v. 36). It goes without saying that Martha, Mary and Lazarus also loved Jesus as their very dear friend.

It is not far-fetched then to direct our thoughts today to the love we - like Mary, Martha and Lazarus - should have for Jesus. Let us think of Jesus really present in the Eucharist, since we are still celebrating the year of the Eucharist. Let us, with Fr. Al Schwartz, learn from the example of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"St. Margaret Mary spent hours each day absorbed in adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist. The other sisters in the convent could see her in the evening kneeling in the chapel, as close to the tabernacle as possible, completely immobile, her face pale and emaciated, absorbed in adoration of her Eucharistic Lord. Her fellow nuns would come the next morning and see her still kneeling there in the chapel, as immobile and unchanged as a statue of marble."

"St. Margaret Mary liked to kneel as physically close to the tabernacle as custom at that time would permit. Once, her

superiors - for some strange reason - forbade her to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Although outside the church building itself, St. Margaret Mary felt herself irresistibly drawn to the Eucharist and leaning against the bricks of the church just behind the tabernacle, she continued to adore her Eucharistic Lord."

Venerable Fr. Aloysius Schwartz,
"To Live Is Christ" p. 9.

March 20, 2005 ◇ Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
Readings (A) Procession: Mt 21:1-11

Mass: Is 50:4-7; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14-27:66 or *Mt 27:11-54*

The Feast of the Annunciation (usually on March 25) will be celebrated on April 4

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *PASSION. The Death of Jesus (Mt 27:45-54)*. Even the "short form" is too long for our commentary, so we focus only on the death of Jesus. Mark (15:33-41) agrees with Matthew almost word for word. For both of them the death of Jesus was the ultimate revelation that he is the Son of God (Mk 15:39b; Mt 27:54b). For both of them, it was a centurion - a Roman - not a Jew, who proclaims Jesus as Son of God. Surprisingly, Luke is weak in this regard. For him, the centurion's words were, "Certainly, this man was innocent." But Luke points out that the people - mostly Jews, "returned home beating their breasts" thus showing that Jesus' prayer at the beginning of the crucifixion was answered for Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, they

know not what they do" Lk 23:34. All the three Synoptic Gospels mention a loud cry coming from Jesus when he breathed his last. Luke even quotes from Ps 31:5, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." By contrast, John simply says, "And bowing his head, he handed over the Spirit" (Jn 19:30). For John, the death of Jesus was his ultimate act of worship toward his Father. For the Synoptics, his loud cry showed that he had control of his life until the very last moment. No one took it from him. He gave it freely for the salvation of humankind (Mt 20:28, see Jn 10:17-18).

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

V. 45, "Three in the afternoon." - Value of three o'clock as the hour of Jesus' death. This still falls within the period when the Paschal Lamb was offered in the temple in preparation for Passover. If one does away with the symbolism, 3 o'clock simply gives ample time for the disciples to bury Jesus before the Sabbath began.

V. 48, "Immediately one of them went to get a sponge, he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink." - Value of kindness shown to a dying person

V. 54b, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" - Value of having faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

V 55-56, "There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene..."

- Value of womanly devotion and ministry to Jesus.

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

- (v. 45) Do I say the three o'clock prayer to unite myself to Jesus at the moment of his death on the cross?
- (v. 55-56) Am I a woman devoted to the suffering Jesus? Or: Do I admire women who are devoted to ministering to Jesus?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us point out to people that the drama of Holy Week should help us realize what Christ has done to save us.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us preserve our cultural tradition connected with Holy Week, but purge them from excesses like public flagellation and crucifixion.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

CHRIST AND THE CROSS

For the spiritual formation of the Sisters of Mary, a congregation he founded, Fr. Al Schwartz wrote a book, "To Live Is Christ." He dedicates chapter 13 to the topic, "Christ and the Cross." We only have enough space here to quote a few paragraphs.

"The goal of the spiritual life is to imitate Christ, resemble Him in every way, to follow Him, and to walk the way He walked."

"But who is Christ? What is He like? How does one follow Him? What is the way that He walked?"

"About seven hundred years before His coming, the Prophet Isaiah describes Christ who is to come in terms of suffering and pain. In the words of Isaiah, the Messiah who is to come is the 'suffering servant of Yahweh... a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief... in Him there is neither beauty nor comeliness. He is as one struck by God... He has the appearance of a leper... One cannot look at Him without immediately turning away in horror and revulsion.'"

"In one poignant scene from the Gospels, Jesus turns to James and John and asks, 'Can you drink of my chalice? Can you be baptized with my baptism?' They answer, 'Yes, we can.' Indeed they were baptized with a baptism of fire, and they drank the chalice of pain and suffering to the dregs - a Jesus, their Lord and Master."

"In the silence of our hearts, Jesus asks us the same question, 'Can you drink my chalice?' We answer, 'Yes, Lord, I can. I cannot by any strength of my own, but I can by your strength, power, courage, and patience.'"

"St. Paul sums up the essence of the mystery of the Cross when he writes, 'In the cross is salvation, life, and resurrection.' In the cross Christ is holiness; and outside the cross, there is no holiness. It is as simple as that. If we are serious about sanctity and truly wish to pursue perfection, we must believe in the cross, and love the cross, and have the courage to carry it everyday in union with Jesus."

Venerable Fr. Aloysius Schwartz,
"To Live Is Christ," p. 106 & 118.

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

March 27,2005



Easter

Readings (A) Acts 10: 34-43; Col 3:1-4; Jn 20:1-9

See Ordo 2005 on how to integrate the *Encuentro with the First Mass of the day*.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). **The Empty Tomb.** The earliest Christian traditions represented by the gospel according to Mark and Matthew do not tell us of appearances of Christ to the Eleven disciples in Jerusalem. Instead, they are told to go to Galilee where they will meet Jesus alive. His tomb was found empty, yes, and this was the first and most basic and even historical sign of his resurrection. It was found empty by women, led by Mary Magdalene. Then it was verified by Simon Peter (Lk 24:12 and Jn 20:3-7) and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 20:2-8). It seems that Peter needed an appearance of Jesus to him so that he would believe (Lk 24:34). But "the disciple whom Jesus loved" saw the empty tomb and the empty burial clothes, and without further ado, he believed in the Risen Christ (Jn20:8).

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

V. 1a, "On the first day of the week." This is what we call Sunday today. <> Value of Sunday for Christians.

V. 1b "Mary of Magdala (and other women: Mary, the mother of James, and Salome see Mark 16:1) came to the tomb early in the morning." <> Value of the discovery of the empty tomb by the women. <> Note: Catholic Christian piety, backed

by Pope John Paul II, holds that **Jesus first appeared to his mother before appearing to anyone else, and this is what Filipinos celebrate in the devotion called the *Salubong***. It is true that Mark 16:9 says, "he first appeared to Mary Magdalene" but in the context this means that the appearance to Mary Magdalene came before the appearance to the disciples. **The honor that cannot be taken away from Mary Magdalene is that she and her women companions were the first to see the tomb of Christ on Easter morning, and they believed in the Risen Christ before the men disciples did.**

V. 8, "He saw and believed." - Value of being quick in believing. We find this value in "the disciple whom Jesus loved" see v. 2.

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

- (v. 5-8) Have I experienced that Jesus is alive?
- (v. 8b) Has my heart disposed me to believe *quickly* in Jesus Christ?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us give more and more room to the traditional devotion called the *Salubong*.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us encourage people/society to shift from an exaggerated identification with the suffering Christ to a better identification with the risen, victorious Christ.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

NEW LIFE IN THE CHURCH THROUGH THE EUCHARIST AND MARY

The popular Filipino devotion called the *Salubong* can now be integrated with the first Mass on Easter morning (see Ordo 2005). This seems to be a providential development that allows our Easter Homily to touch both on the Risen Christ and Our Lady. Let us keep in mind that the Jesus in the Eucharist we receive is the Risen Christ. True, Holy Mass makes present the redemptive death of Christ on the Cross, and that is why we call it the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But this truth does not exhaust the richness of the Eucharistic mystery. Besides this aspect, we should also remember that the Eucharist brings us the Real Presence of Christ AS HE IS NOW-RISEN, GLORIOUS, IN HEAVEN.

"In one of his famous dreams, St. John Bosco - who died in January 31, 1888 - saw the Church as it exists in our present day and age. The Church was seen as a ship in a stormy sea, blown about by violent winds and battered by mighty waves. The ship looked like it was sinking. Then there arose from this storm-tossed sea two columns. On one column, John Bosco saw the Eucharist, Jesus-Host. On the second column, John Bosco saw Mary, the Mother of Jesus. John Bosco understood that the meaning of this dream was that the Church in our present day and age would undergo violent attack and experience a great crisis. But the Church would be saved by devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist and devotion to Mary, the Mother of Jesus."

Venerable Fr. Alpysius Schwartz,
"To Live Is Christ," p. 9-10.

For local Church that are in crisis and seem to be dying in many parts of the world today and also in some parts of the Philippines, devotion to the Eucharist and devotion to Mary constitute the sure hope that Resurrection will not be long in coming. For local churches that are not in crisis - which seem to be the majority in the Philippines - why wait for the crisis to come? During our Eucharistic and Marian year, let us do what we can so that the destructive storm would not come or will reach us only in weakened form.

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

April 3, 2005 <> Easter tl (Divine Mercy Sunday)*

Readings (A) Acts 2:42-47; 1 Pt 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31

* By Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship, 23 May 2000. The Decree says partly: *"Throughout the world, the second Sunday of Easter will receive the name Divine Mercy Sunday, a perennial invitation to the Christian World to face, with confidence in divine benevolence, the difficulties and trials that humankind will experience in the years to come."*

Tomorrow is the celebration of the Annunciation, since March 25 was Good Friday.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Appearance to the Disciples.*
o John and Luke have narratives about the appearance of the Risen Christ to his disciples in Jerusalem, but this is not the case with Mark (Longer ending) and Matthew. These two place the appearance to the Eleven somewhere in Galilee, and at the start Jesus rebukes their unbelief in his Resurrection (Mk 16:14; Mt 28:17 "they doubted"). For John, in our Gospel Reading for today, Jesus appeared to the disciples in

Jerusalem (at the upper room not too far from the Empty Tomb), on the evening of his resurrection day, vv. 19-23. It is only in v. 24 that the absence of the apostle Thomas in the first appearance is noted. The Second Sunday of Easter is presented as the anniversary of the great mercy shown to Thomas so that he would be included among the witnesses of Christ's Resurrection.

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

y. 19, "Peace be with you." - Peace is one of the core values of Christian life.

V. 20, "He showed them his hands and his side." - Value of the Five Wounds of Jesus. <> There is a devotion to these five wounds. In particular, there is a strong devotion to the "*Sacro Costato*" or *the wound marking the piercing of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* with the soldier's lance, Jn 19:34; 20:27.

V. 21b, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you... Receive the Holy Spirit... forgive sins." <> Values of BEING SENT... RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT... HAVING THE POWER TO FORGIVE SINS IN THE NAME OF JESUS. These are core values for missionaries/priests.

V. 29b, "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed." - Value of Blessedness - the happiness that comes to one's life.

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

- (v. 19 & 29b) Do I value the PEACE and or the BLESSEDNESS that comes from Christ?

- (v. 20) Do I value the Five Wounds of Jesus Christ... especially the wound on his Sacred Side ("*Sacro Costato*") or ory his Sacred Heart?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us promote devotion to the Divine Mercy. In particular let us present the Sacrament of Reconciliation as the Sacrament of Divine Mercy.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us value the blessings that come to human society because people believe in Jesus, the Risen Christ and/or appeal to his Divine Mercy.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

DIVINE MERCY OVER THE WHOLE WORLD

"(From our garden) I saw the Lord Jesus above our chapel, looking just as He did the first time I saw him and just as He is painted in the image (by the painter E. Kasimierowski). The two rays which emanated from the Heart of Jesus covered our chapel and the infirmary, and then the whole city, and spread out over the whole world."

St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Diary, n. 87.

"(Jesus said,) I desire that this image be displayed in public on the first Sunday after Easter. That Sunday is the Feast of Mercy. Through the Word Incarnate I make known the bottomless depth of My mercy."

St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Diary, n. 88.

"Strangely, all things came about just as the Lord had requested. In fact, it was on the first Sunday after Easter (April, 1935) that the image was publicly honored by crowds of people for the first time... At Ostra Brama (Shrine of Our Lady above the "Eastern Gate" to the city of Vilnius), it could be seen from a great distance... At Ostra Brama... (at that time) the closing of the Jubilee of the Redemption of the World was being celebrated marking the nineteen hundred years that have passed away since the Passion of our Savior. I see now that the work of redemption is bound up with the work of mercy (that is, devotion to Divine Mercy, etc.) requested by the Lord."

St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Diary, n. 89.

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

April 10, 2005



Easter III

Readings (A) Acts 2:14,22-23; 1Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus.* o The tradition of an appearance of the Risen Christ to two disciples "walking along on their way to a village" is kept both by Luke 24:13-32 and Mark 16:12-13 (Longer ending). Mark says that at first the Eleven disciples did not believe the story of these two disciples (Mk 16:13), that is, until Jesus also appeared to the Eleven and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart shortly before he commissioned them to "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:14-15). the longer story

in Luke (today's Gospel Reading) is embellished with names: the village is Emmaus, one of those journeying was Cleopas. It also has a summary of the women-disciples' story. Moreover, it clearly identifies Simon Peter as the first among the Eleven to see the Risen Christ (v. 34). Most of all, today's Gospel reading says: "he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread."

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

V. 27, "He interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures." - Value of an Interpretation of Scriptures by an expert/exegete.

V. 29. "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." - Value of a hospitable invitation.

V. 30 (& 35b), "While he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them." - Value of a symbolic meal (specially the Eucharist).

V 32, "Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" - Value of learning about Christ from Scripture.

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

- (v. 27 & 32) Has a Biblical expert or exegete helped me understand and love Jesus Christ?
- (v. 30 & 35b) Has the celebration of the Eucharist - a symbolic meal - helped me see (recognize the presence of) Jesus?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today^ - Let our priests preach homilies that will make the hearts of people burn with love for Jesus Christ.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us continue and enrich our tradition of bonding with one another by partaking of meals (*sa}u-salo*).

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

ST. DOMINIC'S NIGHTLY REFRESHMENT

"St. Dominic, founder of the Order of Preachers, urged his priests to, 'Preach the things upon which you have meditated.' His priests meditated especially on the words of Christ contained in the Gospels. Then they went out and preached with power and conviction that which they had meditated on."

St. Dominic himself found great spiritual refreshment in the slow, quiet, meditative reading of the words of Scripture. Exhausted by a day of struggling to convert the Albigensian heretics in the south of France, Dominic would go to the chapel at night, pick up the book of Scripture, and begin reading slowly and quietly. His spirit would be restored, renewed, and refreshed each evening by this simple pious practice."

Venerable Fr. Al Schwartz,
"To Live Is Christ," p. 21.

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

April 17, 2005

◇ Easter IV (Good Shepherd)

Readings (A) Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1Pt2:20b-25; Jn 10:1-10

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). The Good Shepherd, o John's Chapter on the Good Shepherd (ch. 10) is deemed appropriate for the Fourth Sunday of Easter A, B and C. Its suitability for this liturgical season is expressed in the Communion Antiphon of today's Mass: "The Good Shepherd is risen! He who laid down his life for his sheep, who died for his flock, he is risen, alleluia." Other references are found in the Antiphon for the Cantic of Mary in Evening Prayer I ("I am the gate, says the Lord, whoever enters through me shall fee saved and find pasture, alleluia), and in the Responsory of the Second Reading in the Office of Readings ("The Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep has risen from the dead. - For -the sake of the flock he willingly suffered death, alleluiai").

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

V. 3, "He calls his own sheep by name." - Value of loving personal attention towards those in one's care.

V. 4, "He walks ahead of them." - Value of being a *shepherd leader*, that is, one who walks ahead of his followers, *sharing the same "field conditions" they are in.* o Note: There is much need of this today. Generals are not in the frontline with their troops, because they are too busy in the "war

room." Presidents of corporations have a rich lifestyle totally different from that of the workers of the corporation who receive a much lower pay.

V. 9, "Whoever enters through me will be saved (from the wolf), and come in and out (of the shelter, that is, the sheep pen or the cave) and find pasture." - Values of SAFETY (from the enemy who kills)... having a SHELTER... having FOOD AND DRINK.

V. 10, "I have come so that they may have life and have it more abundantly." - Value of enjoying/looking forward to a *better life*.

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

- (V. 3) Was there any time in my life when Jesus "called me by name"?
- (V. 10) Has my relationship with Jesus given me a better life?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let all our Church leaders - Bishops, priests, religious Brothers and Sisters, lay ministers and association officers - 'be shepherd leaders.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us all work together so that everyone in our country will have a better life.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

A GOOD SHEPHERD SPEAKS

Legislative and ideological attacks on the family are increasingly stronger, said John Paul II when he received participants in the assembly of Italy's Forums of Family Association.

At the same time, the Pope encouraged this pro-life and pro-family mobilization endeavor, which, in Italy, embraces 36 organizations and 20 regional committees, representing millions of families.

"Unfortunately, attacks on marriage and the family are every day stronger and more radical, both from the ideological as well as the normative point of view," the Holy Father told his 150 guests.

"Whoever destroys this essential fabric of human co-existence causes a profound wound to society and often irreparable damages," he said.

The Pope continued: "The attempt to reduce the family to a socially irrelevant private emotional experience; of confusing individual rights with those proper to the nuclear family constituted on the bond of marriage; of equating-forms of living together with marital union; of accepting and, in some cases, favoring the suppression of innocent human lives with voluntary abortion; of altering the natural processes of the procreation of children by introducing artificial forms of fertilization, are just some of the areas in which the subversion of society is taking place.

"Civil progress cannot derive from the social devaluation of marriage and from the loss of respect for the inviolable dignity of human life. What appears as the progress of civili-

zation and scientific conquest, in many cases is, in fact, a defeat for human dignity and society."

"The truth of man, his vocation since conception to be received with love and in love, cannot be sacrificed to the power of technologies and the equivocation of desires on authentic rights," John Paul II warned. "The legitimate desire to have a child or health cannot be transformed into an unconditional right capable of eliminating other human lives."

"Science and technologies are genuinely at the service of man only when they protect and promote all human individuals involved in the process of procreation."

"Catholic associations," the Pope said, "together with all men of good will who believe in the values of family and life, cannot give in to the pressures of a culture that threatens the very foundations of respect for life and the promotion of the family."

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

April 24, 2005



Easter V

Readings (A) Acts 6:1-7; 1Pt 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). ***Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.*** <> The words of Jesus in Jn 14 are presented as his last words in the cenacle before inviting his disciples to go out into the night on their way to the Garden of Olives (see 14:31). See under n. 2 below the highlights of today's Gospel Reading.

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

V. 1a, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." - Value of serenity. <> Prayer for serenity: *Lord, give me the serenity to accepts the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

V. 1b, "You have faith in God; have faith also in me." <> Although Jesus and the Father are One God (see Jn 10: 30; 14:9b-11 a) - one in substance, that is, having one and the same nature - Jesus has a relationship with the Father that is distinct from the relationship of the Father to him: see v. 6, Jesus is the Way to the Father. <> See v. 7, "If you know me, then you will also know my father." Jesus is speaking of a knowledge of God that is superior to the knowledge of Adonai (Yahweh) that the ordinary Jew possesses. The ordinary Jew has faith in God but no faith in Jesus Christ. - *Value of the Christian faith.*

V. 6, *"I am the way, the truth and the life."* <> By having faith in Jesus, we start on earth - while we are still on our way to heaven - the enjoyment of Eternal Truth and Eternal Life. - *Value of following Jesus.*

V. 12, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father." - *Value of the Empowerment bestowed by faith.*

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

- (V. 6) Have I benefited from the Truth and the Life I have possessed by following Jesus, the Way?

- (V. 12) Have I ever sensed the empowerment given to me by my Christian faith?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us recapture the boldness of the early Christian missionaries in evangelizing people.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We have to insist that there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things like population control.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. I must train myself in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

DISCOVER SOMETHING IN CHRIST'S EYES

John Paul II, presiding over a Mass for 10,000 students who filled St. Peter's Basilica invited them to discover in Christ's eyes the full truth about man. The Holy Father focused his homily on the Year of the Eucharist and on preparation for World Youth Day 2005.

"One cannot remain indifferent when Christ says: 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven,'" the Pope said, quoting John 6:51 in reference to the Eucharistic mystery.

"You, dear university students, are in constant search of the truth. But one does not come to the truth of man only with the means offered by science in its different disciplines," he said. "You know well that it is only possible to discover the

whole truth about man, the truth about ourselves, thanks to Christ's look full of love."

"And he, the Lord, comes to meet us in the mystery of the Eucharist. Never cease, therefore, to seek him and you will discover in his eyes an attractive reflection of the goodness and beauty that he himself has infused in your hearts with the gift of his Spirit."

John Paul II added: "May this mysterious reflection of his love be the light that always guides your way!"

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