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MODULE-MAKING FOR
DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM:
CONCERN OF CHURCH IN ASIA

Virginia Saldanha

MESSAGE FOR THE 42ND WORLD DAY
OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

John Paul II



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Module-Making for Dialogue with Islam: Concern of Church in Asia*

VIRGINIA SALDANHA

On February 22-26, 2005 the FABC Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy in the Philippines organized a consultation on "Dialogue with Islam" to prepare awareness modules for students in schools and universities. Creating a greater understanding among the young people in Asia and particularly in the mainly Catholic Philippines is the need of our time. The very competent resource persons at the consultation, Fr. Thomas Michel S.J., Fr. Emilio Platti, OP and Professor Taha Basman, made us aware of how the attitudes of our Muslim brothers and sisters are being affected by the geopolitical events and religious currents around the world. With their backs to the wall, Muslims everywhere feel threatened and find it necessary to be in solidarity with each other.

* *Editor's Note:* The report on the meeting on Module-Making for the Dialogue with Islam serves as the editorial. The meeting was held with the hope that catholic schools would become venues of dialogue.

Professor Basman, who is the UNESCO Commissioner and President of the Philippine Islamic Council, pointed out that according to published statistics, the number of international militant and terrorist networks operating in more than 60 countries, are 550. Of these, only twenty plus are Muslim organizations. And again among these so-called "terrorist" groups only three are presently active. It is important to note that militancy and terrorism is not the monopoly of Muslims in the world and that a small minority of Muslims from three major networks have been active in recent years for various political, economic and social reasons. These networks of militancy and terrorism have captured the attention of the media and therefore all Muslims unfortunately get the label 'terrorist'. This is unfair to the majority of Muslims who are moderate and peace loving people.

Professor Basman also drew our attention to the fact that there are two types of fundamentalism. One is rational spiritual fundamentalism and the other is political activism fundamentalism. The first type attempts to return to the basic values in the Quran and follow Muslim interpretations of the revelations. It values tolerance and is against extremism. These people could be categorized as moderate groups. The political activism fundamentalism narrows the interpretation of the verses of the Quran and extrapolates on the definitions to include points that may not be contained in them. Misunderstandings are caused by altering interpretation of the revelations.

We got some insights into the various Militant Islamic movements in Indonesia, the Philippines and the Middle East, and the relationships between them. It is interesting to note

that while jihad is the ideological basis for achieving the objectives of militant groups, the true meaning of jihad is actually the personal spiritual struggle of a Muslim. Violence which could sometimes form part of a struggle is referred to as the 'lesser jihad'. Professor Basman proposed that instead of looking at all Muslims as 'suspect', the mainstream Muslim who constitutes 99 percent of Muslims worldwide should be trusted as partners in fighting terrorism.

Fr. Emilio Platti, OP dealt mainly with the Spirituality and Theology of Islam and contrasted common concepts with those in Christianity like the understanding of salvation, revelation, Will of God, monotheism, and mysticism in the Sufi movement.

Fr. Platti's talk on "Muhammad - His Message and Mission", clarified our understanding of Islam as a religion that strives to make human persons believe in one God who is their creator, whom they should trust and submit to in confidence. Just and right actions and following the right path are central to Islamic practice. Rooted in the tenet of the oneness of God, Islam affirms a universal principle that binds humanity in its entirety.

An expose on 'Women in Islam', by a Catholic convert to Islam, Hadja Salma Lourdes Mastura, came across as women's humble submission to patriarchy. Her presentation was complimented with Sr. Lilian Curaming's sharing on her experiences with Muslim women. It is interesting to note that Muslim women are content in their primary role as wife and mother. They firmly believe that if women discard this role, the well-being of society will be in jeopardy. So the working Muslim women have to struggle to balance being a

good wife and mother with being a good worker too. Jihad for her is to accept the hardships in fulfilling her primary role and accepting auxiliary roles in the 'battlefield' in times of need. One wonders if the Afghan women really wanted 'liberation' in the Western sense of the word.

Ms. Mastura said, "today Islam has to grapple with the conspiracies engendered by the former colonial powers in the name of education and culture. The distortion of Islamic values has put women into a very precarious situation." She felt that secular education was being used as a tool to undermine Islamic education which is integral to a Muslim's way of life. This brought to mind the struggle of Muslim women in Europe to retain their right to wear the hijab in schools. This created a sensitivity to their views on the ban on wearing their head-dress. The dedication to Islam of the two Catholic women converts present among the participants was impressive. They converted to Islam to marry Muslim husbands.

Fr. Tom Michel introduced the participants to Islamic Faith and Practice, Sufism, Questions of Islamic Law, the History of Islam in Asia and Current Issues. He clarified our understanding of many Islamic terms which we commonly read about like "Fatwa", Jihad, Sharia Law, etc. Through his presentation of the history of Islam in Asia we were surprised to note that Islamic communities predated the entry of Christianity into most of Asia. Many of us erroneously imagined that Islam is making a back door entry into Catholic Philippines with the funding of the richer Muslim nations. The linking of history to current issues also helped us understand better the 'why' of struggles of many of the militant Islamic groups.

All the inputs made us realize that through dialogue with our Muslim brothers and sisters, the Church could play an important role in making peace. Our concern would be to keep the Muslim moderates from feeling threatened and pushed into the networks of the terror groups. This is possible only when we go back to the teachings and directives of *Nostra Aetate* and take a stand against the violent solutions proposed to deal with the problems of terrorism in the world. We have to reach out to our Muslim brothers and sisters in compassion to make them an integral part of our human community. We need to draw them into dialogue to work out solutions to the problems that threaten them, so that they do not see methods of terror as the only way out. Fr. Michel presented us with a powerful image that brings this problem into focus - the image of the boys of the intifada hurling stones at Israeli tanks. When their 'enemy' controls all the centers of power, the only way open for them is that of terror. We have to become sensitive to their position and respond in the spirit of Christian concern and values of justice. Churches need to take up the challenge of becoming "Peacemaker" in the present time. Churches can offer to become mediators of peace and builders of human communities based on moral values and social justice. Can the Church in Asia fulfill her prophetic role in these volatile times?

John Paul II and the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception

FIDELIS STOECKL, ORC

Introduction

The year 2004 marks the 150th anniversary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the 50* anniversary of the very first Marian Year that was ever celebrated in the Philippines (December 8, 1953 to December 8, 1954). On December 8, 1854, with the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, Blessed Pope Pius IX defined the Immaculate Conception of Mary as a dogma of faith. The dogmatic formula was that "the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her Conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin" (DS 2803). Since our country has a particularly close relationship to Mary Immaculate - under the title of her Immaculate Conception Mary is the first patroness of the Philippines -, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) joined to the celebration of the year of the Eucharist - an

initiative of Pope John Paul II - a Marian year. And so this Eucharistic-Marian year which has been opened last August 15 and extends until December 8, 2005 should be fervently observed in our country so that we may be inspired to imitate Mary in her love for Jesus and to renew our entrustment to her Immaculate Heart.

Unfortunately, many Catholics, even those actively involved in the Church's pastoral mission, have only a superficial or insufficient knowledge of the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Very few know how to apply this dogma of faith to their daily Christian living. It is in this regard that Pope John Paul II stated that the 150th anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary "may be an opportunity to *renew the theological, cultural and spiritual endeavor to communicate to the men and women of our time the meaning and the genuine message of this truth of faith.*"¹ The present Holy Father — since the beginning of his pontificate - has presented the mystery of the Immaculate in a way that speaks to the heart of men and women of our time. Whereas in the past centuries the Catholic dogmatic theology has expressed this truth of faith at times in a rather impersonal and abstract way, John Paul II prefers to speak about Mary in a personal and concrete way. Thus the spiritual, historical and cultural meaning involved in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception can come alive for us and in this way, too, its close connection with the most fundamental mysteries of the

¹ John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Academies on Oct. 29, 2002; *Oss. Rom.* N. 46 Nov. 13, 2002, p. 5 (If not indicated otherwise, all the quotations of the papal pronouncements are taken from the English weekly edition of the *I'Osservatore Romano*).

Christian faith becomes apparent. Hence, if one wishes to communicate to the men and women of our time the meaning and genuine message of Mary's Immaculate Conception all we have to do is to explore the extremely rich and enlightening teachings of John Paul II on this truth of our faith.

Although the Holy Father so far hasn't dedicated any apostolic letter to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception,² we are fortunate that in the more than 25 years of his pontificate he has pronounced a great number of homilies, addresses and prayers in which he provided the Church with his deep and original insights on this mystery.³ It is from this rich mariological output that we will draw from in presenting John Paul II's thought on the Immaculate Conception. The Pope's teachings on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception are therefore extensively quoted so as to give the reader a taste of the originality of his thought.

1. *The dogma of the Immaculate Conception:
a marvelous doctrinal synthesis of the Christian faith*

Some contemporary theologians have referred to mariological doctrine as 'lower in the hierarchy of truth' and there-

² It has to be noted, however, that the mystery of the Immaculate Conception is present both in *Redemptoris Mater*, nn. 1. 7-11 and *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 11. Moreover, it is expected that John Paul II will dedicate an apostolic letter to this mystery in the latter part of 2004 on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the declaration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

³ Among the series of his Marian catechesis, the Pope dedicated the following general audiences to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception: Jan. 24; May 8, 15, 29; June 5, 12, 19, July 3, 1996; published as book: John Paul II, *Theotokos, Woman, Mother, Disciple, A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2000, p. 61-63, 87-111.

fore 'secondary'.⁴ For the Pope, however, Mariology is the meeting point of the great fundamental Christian truths where all the lines converge and where connections are established. Trinitarian theology, christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, anthropology, spiritual theology - all of these touch upon Mariology. Following in the footsteps of St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe who saw the close link of the mystery of the Immaculate with the other mysteries of our faith and wished therefore to write a book of dogmatic theology "*sub luce Immaculatae*,"⁵ John Paul II, too, sees the centrality of this mystery. He declares "that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is as *a marvelous doctrinal synthesis of the Christian faith*."⁶ In fact, this doctrine throws new light on the fundamental truth from which it has been derived showing new connections among them and thus strengthening the coherence of Christian faith.

The Holy Father stresses the profound link of the Immaculate Conception with the mystery of Christ and the Church, and with the mystery that is the very foundation of all other mysteries: the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Indeed, Mary Immaculate reflects the mystery of the Three Divine Persons

⁴ cf. John Macquarrie, "Immaculate Conception," in Albert Stacpole, OSB (Ed.), *Mary's place in Christian dialogue*, Middlegreen: St. Pauls Publications, 1982, p. 98-107.

⁵ cf. James Curry, OFM Conv., "The Mariology of Maximilian Kolbe," *Marian Studies* n. 36 (1985), p. 81-97; H.M. Manteau-Bonamy, O.P., *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of Father Kolbe*, trans, from French by Bro. Richard Arandez, FSC, Kenosha, Wisconsin: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1977.

⁶ Angelus on December 8, 1988, *Oss. Rom.* N. 51-52 Dec. 19-26, 1988, p. 4-5.

and their works in history: "The Immaculate Virgin... invites us not to fix our eyes on her but to pass beyond, and as much as possible, to *enter into the mystery in which she was conceived: the mystery of God who is One and Three*, full of grace and fidelity."⁷ She "is in an exceptional way born of God: of the heart of the Most Holy Trinity. She is spiritually "related" to God himself."⁸ When the Church greets Mary as *full of grace*, "she greets her *uniquely united to the Blessed Trinity*,..."⁹ This greeting highlights how deeply Mary is imbued with God's own life, with his profound and ineffable mystery from the first moment of her conception.¹⁰ She is the "dwelling place of the Most Holy Trinity."¹¹ She "therefore appears as *the place of the love and action of the Persons of the Trinity*."¹² On his pilgrimage to Lourdes for the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father said: "I have greatly wished to make this pilgrimage to Lourdes in order to celebrate an event which *continues to give glory to the Triune God*. Mary's Immaculate Conception is the *sign of the gracious love of the Father, the perfect expression of*

⁷ Angelus on December 8, 2001, *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 12, 2001, p. 2.

⁸ Homily on Dec. 8, 1984, *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 17, 1984, p. 16.

⁹ Reflection in St. Mary Major on Dec. 8, 1996, *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 11, 1996, p. 10.

¹⁰ cf. Prayer on Dec. 8, 1997, *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 10, 1997, p. 1.

¹¹ cf. Ibid.; Reflection in St. Mary Major on Dec. 8, 1996, *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 11, 1996, p. 10.

¹² Address to Mariological Colloquium on Oct. 13, 2000; *Oss. Rom.* N. 43 Oct. 25, 2000, p. 5.

*the redemption accomplished by the Son and the beginning of a life completely open to the working of the Holy Spirit."*¹³ On another occasion he wrote: "In her is manifested in a unique way the *marvelous initiative of the Father, the sanctifying action of the Spirit and the perfect redemption accomplished by Christ.*"¹⁴

Therefore, we can say that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception that originates in the Trinitarian Life of God is the most beautiful and perfect manifestation of the work of the Three Divine Persons in their unity and distinctiveness. It "introduces us into the *heart of the mystery of creation and Redemption* (cf. Eph 1:4-12; 3:9-11)."¹⁵ Hence, it is the "decisive point in the history of salvation"¹⁶

"which begins with the creation of the universe and our first parents, continues in their sinful rebellion against God and its subsequent involvement of all humanity, and finds its climax in the work of redemption, whose fruits are poured out upon all believers through the Holy Spirit until Christ's glorious return. The Immaculate Conception, therefore, rather than being something affecting Mary alone, concerns the whole Church and invites all of

¹³ Homily in Lourdes on Aug. 15, 2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 34 Aug. 25, 2004, p. 7.

¹⁴ Letter on the occasion of the international convention on "*Redemptoris Mater*" dated May 22, 1988, *Insegnamenti* Vol. XI/2 (1988) 1630-1634, (*the translation is mine*).

¹⁵ Letter for the 12th World day of the Sick dated Dec. 1, 2003; *Oss. Rom.*, N. 3, Jan. 21, 2004, p. 7.

¹⁶ Homily on Dec. 8, 1978; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51 Dec. 21, 1978, p. 3-4.

us to reflect deeply on God's creative and redemptive will."¹⁷

In order to summarize the Pope's teaching on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception in a coherent way let us consider it in the Trinitarian perspective of salvation history in relation to:

- O God the Father Creator who chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him (cf. Eph 1:4),
- O the Son who took on our human nature in order to redeem us, and
- O the Holy Spirit who completes the work of the Father and the Son by his sanctifying action.

2. Favored Daughter of God the Father: the "origin" of the Immaculate in the Father's Heart

When we reflect on the theological question of Mary's Immaculate Conception, we are not concerned how Mary was conceived in a biological sense. In fact, Pius IX's definition prescind from all explanations about how the soul was infused into the body, and attributes to the person of Mary, at the first moment of her existence, the fact of her being conceived without the stain of original sin. Indeed, conception in a theological sense refers to the coming into existence of a person. Since the ultimate origin of a person is in God and therefore going infinitely beyond her origin in time, John Paul II emphasizes that the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Angelus Dec. 8, 1991; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 16, 1991, p. 5.

is "that moment in which the gaze of the Church, fixed on Mary, arrives furthest, not only at the very "beginning" of her life on earth, but also at the "beginning" of man's history and of the history of salvation. Even further, in fact: *at the eternal Divine Thought and Love, in which Mary was conceived before, infinitely before, her conception on earth.*"¹⁸ Hence, before we consider Mary's conception in the womb of her mother, we have to consider her conception in the mind of God. This is her very first conception, her conception from eternity in God's design of salvation.

"Blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing" (cf. Eph 1:3)

In the Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:3-4). "These words - explains the Holy Father - refer to Mary in a particular and exceptional way. She, in fact, more than all men - and more than the angels - "was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," because in a unique and unrepeatable way she was chosen for Christ, she was destined to be His Mother."¹⁹

This great Marian mystery, with which man's redemption begins in history, was already foreseen in that eternal plan of God the Father, in which Mary, preserved free from

¹⁸ Angelus Dec. 8, 1980; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1980, p. 2.

¹⁹ Homily on Dec. 8, 1980; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1980, p. 2.

original sin in view of Christ's merits, was predestined to become in time the worthy Mother of the same Savior.²⁰

"Yes. The Eternal Father chose Mary in Christ; he chose her for Christ. He made her holy, rather, most holy. And *the first fruit of this choice and divine vocation was the Immaculate Conception. This is her "origin" in God's eternal thought: in the Eternal Word: and this too will be her origin on earth, her "birth in the splendor of the Immaculate Conception."*²¹

Not only does Mary originate in God's eternal thought of love, but all of us were conceived, so to speak, in the loving heart of the Father who chose us in his Son before the foundation of the world. Hence, Mary's "Immaculate Conception" sheds light on the mystery of election and predestination as it affects the whole human race:

God in his eternal love has chosen man from eternity: He has chosen him in his Son. God has chosen man, in order that he may reach the fullness of good by means of participation in his- own life, Divine Life, by means of grace. He has chosen him from eternity, and irreversibly. Neither original sin, nor the whole history of personal faults and social sins have been able to dissuade the eternal Father from this plan of love of his. They have not been able to cancel the choice of us in the eternal Son, the Word consubstantial with the Father.²²

cf. Angelus on Dec. 8, 1983, *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1

Homily on Dec. 8, 1983, *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 19, 1983, p. 2.

Homily on Dec. 8, 1978; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 21, 1978, p. 3-4.

"The Blessed Virgin saw shining upon her, as no other creature, the *face of the Father rich in grace and mercy*. "²³ As the Immaculate Conception, she bears in herself, more than any other human being, the mystery of the eternal destiny with which man has been embraced in God's chosen Son:

- the destiny to the grace and the holiness of divine sonship,
- the destiny to glory in the God of infinite Majesty.²⁴

In Mary's soul is "manifested, in a sense, *all the 'glory of grace,'* that grace which 'the Father... has given us in his beloved Son.'"²⁵ This statement of the Pope has an extraordinary depth. He asserts that every grace with which the Father has blessed us in Christ (cf. Eph 1:3) is condensed in her who is full of grace. Therefore "Mary's original holiness represents the *unsurpassable model of the gift and the distribution of Christ's grace in the world*. "²⁶

In fact, if all have been called by God to be "sons in His Son" (cf. Eph 1:5), this is especially true for her who, endowed with an exceptional holiness from the first moment of her existence, stands out as the "beloved daughter of the Father" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 53). As the "firstborn daughter" of God, she is also the first in whom the grace of Divine adoption reaches its eschatological perfection (cf. 1 Jo 3:2). To the *fullness of grace* at the beginning of her earthly exist-

²³ Homily Dec. 8, 1998; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1998, p. 4.

²⁴ cf. Homily Dec. 8, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 19, 1983, p. 8.

²⁵ *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 8.

²⁶ General audience of May 15, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 21 May 22, 1996, p. 11.

ence corresponds the *fullness of glory* at the end of her pilgrimage. Therefore "the two dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are *closely related*. Both proclaim the glory of Christ the Redeemer and the holiness of Mary, whose human destiny is even now perfectly and definitively realized in God."²⁷ What we admire already fulfilled in her is a pledge of what God wants to give to every human creature: fullness of life, joy and peace.²⁸

Indeed, "she is the proclamation of a merciful God who does not surrender to the sin of his children,"²⁹ - the Holy Father observes -, for "in Mary shines forth God's sublime and surprising tenderness for the entire human race: in her, humanity regains its former beauty and the divine plan is revealed to be stronger than evil, capable of offering ever new possibilities of life and salvation."³⁰ In Mary, "there is nothing that contrasts with the beauty willed by the Creator for the human being," in her, "the Creator has kept the *original beauty of creation* uncontaminated."³¹ "As she came from the Creator's hands, so she remained."³² Therefore, "*in Mary, the New Eve, Mother of the New Adam, the Father's original, wondrous plan of love was reestablished in an even more wondrous way.*"³³

²⁷ Homily in Lourdes Aug. 15, 2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 34 Aug. 25, 2004, p. 7.

²⁸ cf. Address on Feb. 11, 2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 7 Feb. 18, 2004, p. 1.

²⁹ Angelus Dec. 8, 1993; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 15, 1993, p. 1.

³⁰ Angelus Dec. 8, 1995; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 13, 1995, p. 5.

³¹ Prayer Dec. 8 on Piazza di Spagna, *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 11, 1996, p. 1.

³² Angelus Dec. 8, 1989; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51-52 Dec. 18-26, 1989, p. 15.

³³ Angelus Dec. 8, 2000; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50 Dec. 13, 2000, p. 3.

St. Anselm speaks of it in the Liturgy of the Hours: "God is the Father of created things, and Mary is Mother of re-created things. God is the Father of the constitution of all things, and Mary is Mother of the reconstitution of all things."³⁴ The Immaculate Conception therefore is the first sign and at the same time the proclamation of the renewal of all things in Christ. "She reveals salvation, brings grace closer also to those who seem the most indifferent and the most distant. In the world, which together with progress manifests its "corruption" and its "aging", she is unceasingly "the beginning of the better world" (*origo mundi melioris*), as Paul VI put it."³⁵

"Full of grace" (Lk 1:28)

In the Annunciation, the Angel greeted Mary as "full of grace" (*kecharitomene*). The Holy Father notes: "He does not call her by her proper earthly name: Miryam (Mary), but by this *new name*: "full of grace." What does this name mean? Why does the Archangel address the Virgin of Nazareth in this way?"³⁶

"The title *kecharitomene* has a very rich meaning and the Holy Spirit has never ceased deepening the Church's understanding of it."³⁷ If we want to understand in a correct and satisfactory way the words addressed to the Virgin at the

³⁴ St. Anselm *Oratio* 52; PL 158, 956 (in *The Liturgy of the Hours* Vol. I, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1975, p. 1229) quoted by John Paul II in his Homily on Dec. 8, 1984; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 17, 1984, p. 16;

³⁵ General audience of May 2, 1979; *Oss. Rom.* N. 19 May 7, 1979, p. 1; cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1985; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1985, p. 16.

³⁶ *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 8.

³⁷ General audience of May 15, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 21 May 22, 1996, 11.

Annunciation: "full of grace!" (Lk 1:28), it is indispensable to consider the Pauline explanation of the biblical expression "grace."³⁸ These words come to her, as the Letter to the Ephesians shows, from the eternal thought of God, they are the *expression of the eternal Love*, the expression of the election "in the heavenly places, in Christ" (Eph 1:4).³⁹

These words express a *singular election*. Grace means a particular fullness of creation through which the being, who resembles God, participates in God's own interior life. *Grace means love and the gift of God himself*, the *completely free gift* ("given gratuitously,") in which God entrusts to man his Mystery, giving him, at the same time, the capacity of being able to bear witness to the Mystery, of filling with it his human being, his life, his thoughts, his will and his heart.⁴⁰

Grace "flows from that love which, in the Holy Spirit, unites the consubstantial Son to the Father."⁴¹ Therefore, the angel's greeting "full of grace", which in the Greek text of Luke's Gospel reads *kecharitomene*, can be rendered as "particularly loved by God, entirely pervaded by his love, completely consolidated in it: as if entirely formed by it, by God's most holy Love."⁴²

³⁸ cf. Homily Dec. 8, 1994; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 14, 1994, p. 3.

³⁹ cf. Homily Dec. 8, 1985; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1985, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Angelus Dec. 8, 1978; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 21, 1978, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 8.

⁴² Homily Dec. 8, 1980; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1980, p. 1.

In the Apostolic Constitution, *Ineffabilis Deus*, by which Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, it is said that Luke 1:28 ("full of grace"), read in the light of Tradition, is the biblical text which furnishes the most sure scriptural foundation for this revealed truth.⁴³ Indeed, the *kecharitomene* indicates a reality that has already taken place, not an event that will take place in the future. The biblical text uses the passive form of the perfect participle indicating that Mary at the time of the Annunciation was already full of grace. Its meaning is that Mary has been *transformed by the grace of God*. The Pope suggests that to render more exactly the nuance of the Greek word *kecharitomene*, "one should not say merely "full of grace", but "made full of grace," or even "filled with grace," which would clearly indicate that this was a gift God gave to the Blessed Virgin."⁴⁴ From the first moment of her existence, Mary was entirely transformed by the grace of God. Hence, she is and has always been "full of grace" (*kecharitomene*). The Holy Father notes: "We can see that the expression sounds as if it were Mary's very name, the "name" given by the Father from the beginning of her existence. From the moment of conception, in fact, her soul was filled with every blessing, enabling her to live in outstanding holiness throughout her life."⁴⁵

⁴³ cf. Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant* trans. Bertrand Buby, S.M., New York: Alba House, 1992, p. 19-20.

⁴⁴ General audience of May 8, 1996, *Oss. Rom.* N. 20 June 15, 1996, p. 11.

⁴⁵ General audience on Jan. 5, 2000; *Oss. Rom.* N. 2 Jan. 12, 2000, p. 11.

Having a genuine interest in bringing to the fore the biblical meaning of "grace,"⁴⁶ John Paul II sees a significant echo of the expression "full of grace" in "the glorious grace he freely bestowed on us in his beloved" (Eph 1:6) of which Mary has received the fullness.⁴⁷ In fact, the verb "*charitoo*"⁴⁸ occurs only two times in the New Testament: in the text of the Annunciation (Lk 1:28) and in the Letter to the Ephesians that speaks of our eternal election in Christ (Eph 1:6 *echaritosen*: "glorious grace"). The Pope maintains that the greeting "full of grace" therefore "refers first of all to the election of Mary as Mother of the Son of God... If the eternal election in Christ and the vocation to the dignity of adopted children is the destiny of everyone, then the election of Mary is wholly exceptional and unique."⁴⁹ Before any other creature, Mary is the *first one who was chosen* "in the Beloved."

⁴⁶ In *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 8, the Holy Father explains that "in the language of the Bible 'grace' means a *special gift*, which according to the New Testament has its source precisely in the Trinitarian life of God himself, God who is love (cf. 1 Jn. 4:8). The fruit of this love is '*the election*' of which the Letter to the Ephesians speaks. On the part of God, this election is the eternal desire to save man through a sharing in his own life (cf. 2 Pt. 1:4) in Christ: it is salvation through a sharing in supernatural life. The effect of this eternal gift, of this grace of man's election by God, is like a *seed of holiness*, or a spring which rises in the soul as a gift from God himself, who through grace gives life and holiness to those who are chosen."

⁴⁷ cf. *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 8;

⁴⁸ "The verbs in "*do*" are causative. These verbs, then, effect a change of something in the person affected. Thus, the radical of the verb "*charitoo*" being "*charts*" (grace), the idea which is expressed is that of a *change* brought about by grace. Therefore "*Kecharitome*" signifies that *Mary has been transformed by the grace of God*. Cf. Ide La Potterie. "*Kecharitome* in Luc 1:28" *Biblica* 69 (1987), 357-382, 480-508.

⁴⁹ *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 9.

Hence, she is the *image of the Divine choice of every creature*, a choice which was made from eternity, and was totally free, mysterious, and loving: "In the mystery of Christ she is present even 'before the creation of the world,' as the one whom the Father 'has chosen' *as Mother* of his Son in the Incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness."⁵⁰ Mary is the creature in whom the Holy Trinity can fully manifest its *elective* love. She is God's masterpiece, because God, by choosing her, poured into her the fullness of his love and life making her "full of grace" (*kecharitomene*):

What distinguishes the Virgin of Nazareth from all other creatures is the fullness of grace that is found in her. Mary not only received some graces; in her, everything is ruled and directed by grace, from the very beginning of her existence. She was not only preserved from original sin, but she received an admirable perfection of sanctity. She is the *ideal creature that God dreamed about*; a creature in whom there was never the slightest obstacle to the divine will. Because she was entirely penetrated by grace, in the depth of her soul everything is harmony and the beauty of the divine being is reflected in her in the most moving way.⁵¹

Mary's fullness of grace is a consequence of God's gracious choice. Before Mary could gain any merit or excel in the practice of virtues, God had already chosen her because

⁵⁰ *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 8.

⁵¹ General audience of Dec. 7, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

he loved her in a singular way. In fact, "all that is granted to her is not due to any claim or merit, but only to God's free and gracious choice... Mary is the pure fruit of God's goodwill. He has so taken possession of her as to make her, according to the title used by the angel, 'full of grace.'"⁵² The Immaculate Conception means therefore that *in Mary "everything is mere grace and only grace ("sola gratia")* and that she is the first witness that "every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17). With our spiritual eye fixed on Mary Immaculate we, too, can proclaim the truth concerning ourselves that was so eloquently expressed by the Apostle: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain" (1 Cor 15:10).

3. *The Immaculate: the first marvel of Christ's saving work*

For many centuries theologians delved into the privilege accorded to Mary. Latin theology was firm on two things:

- every human being is infected with original sin and bears its consequences;
- this hereditary sin is remitted through the merits of Christ, Redeemer of the entire human race.⁵⁴

⁵² General audience of May 8, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 20, May 15, 1996, p. 11.

" Letter on the occasion of the international convention on "*Redemptoris Mater*" dated May 22, 1988, *Insegnamenti* Vol. XI/2 (1988) 1630-1634, (the translation is mine).

⁵⁴ See Aa.Vv. *Dictionary of Mary*, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co, 1985, p. 137.

St. Augustine who has strongly influenced the ulterior theological reflection stressed that Mary was perfectly holy and has not committed any personal sin: "The honor of Christ forbids the least hesitation on the subject of personal sin by His Mother."⁵⁵ Nevertheless, he could not understand how the affirmation of a total absence of sin at the time of conception could be reconciled with the doctrine of the universality of original sin and the need of redemption for all Adam's descendants. Around 1128, a monk of Canterbury, Eadmer, writing the first treatise on the Immaculate Conception, argued that Mary was preserved from every stain of sin because God explicitly willed it so. For God "was obviously able to do this and wanted to do so. Thus, if he willed it, he did it" (*Tract*, 10).

"With God nothing is impossible" (Lk 1:37)

John Paul II refers these words of the heavenly messenger not only to the virginal conception of the Son of God, but also to the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Thus he gives a biblical foundation to the scholastic formula "*Potuit, decuit, ergo fecit!*" (It was possible, it was fitting, therefore it was done) which is already found in the writings of Eadmer:⁵⁶

If today the Church recalls these words, then it is also necessary for us to seek in them the answer to the question about the mystery of the Immaculate

⁵⁵ Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, n. 42, cited by St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 27, art. 4.

⁵⁶ cf. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogmatic*, Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books & Publishers, Inc. 1974, p. 202.

Conception. Since the omnipotence of the Eternal Father and the infinite power of love operating with the might of the Holy Spirit bring it about that the Son of God becomes man in the womb of the Virgin of Nazareth, so *the same power*, in consideration of the merits of the Redeemer, preserves his Mother from the heritage of original sin.⁵⁷

Despite the insights of Eadmer, the great theologians of the 13th century made St. Augustine's difficulties their own, advancing this argument: Redemption consists in freeing those who are in the state of sin. If Mary had not contracted original sin, she could not have been redeemed by Christ and, consequently, this would lessen the universality of Christ's mediation as the Redeemer of mankind. It was only Bl. John Duns Scotus who found the key in overcoming these objections to the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception. He introduced into theology the concept of redemption by preservation.⁵⁸ According to it, Mary was redeemed in an even more wonderful way, not by being freed from sin, but by being preserved from sin. The Holy Father explains:

Mary *experienced salvation more than everyone; she experienced it in a particular way.*⁵⁹ Seen in the history and in the ways of the Redemption, Mary's Immaculate Conception signifies not only the first

⁵⁷ Homily Dec. 8, 1981; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 14, 1981, p. 1.

⁵⁸ cf. Stefano M. Cecchin, O.F.M., *L'Immacolata Concezione. Breve storia del dogma*. Vatican City: Pontificia Academia Internationalis "Studi Mariologici," No. 5, 2003, p. 61-73.

⁵⁹ Homily Dec. 8, 1980; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1980, p. 1-2.

person to be redeemed, therefore the dawn of the Redemption, but it also signifies that while for all the rest of the human race redemption means "liberation" from sin, for Mary, as much in need of redemption as all human beings, it means "preservation" from the same original sin, from the very first moment of her existence, in virtue of the merits of Christ, the one and only universal Redeemer.⁶⁰

"Where sin increased, grace overflowed" (Rm 5:20)

Mary is at the heart of this mystery. In her, redemption shows a saving power that is prevenient and permanent.⁶¹ She is - in the words of John Paul II - *"the greatest 'success' of the paschal mystery..., the most exquisite fruit of the seed of eternal life that God, in Jesus Christ, has sown in the heart of mankind in need of salvation after Adam's sin."*⁶² The exceptional manner in which Mary experienced redemption manifests in a singular way God's generosity towards the whole human race:

Christ, who is the author of divine life, that is, of grace, in every man, by means of the Redemption effected by him, must be *particularly generous with his Mother*. He must redeem her in an especially superabundant way from sin (*"copiosa apud eum redemptio"* - with him is plenteous redemption: Psalm 130:7). This generosity of the Son towards

⁶⁰ Angelus Dec. 8, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

⁶¹ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1993; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1993, p. 1.

⁶² General audience of April 17, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 17, April 25, 1983, p. 2.

his Mother goes back to the first moment of her existence. It is called the Immaculate Conception.⁶³

The Pope stresses that the Immaculate Conception does not obscure but rather helps wonderfully to shed light on the effects of Christ's redemptive grace in human nature.⁶⁴ Redemption does not only mean liberation or preservation from sin (*salvific grace*), but the seed of holiness (*sanctifying grace*) planted by the Redeemer in human hearts.⁶⁵ In Mary the effect of Redemption "was manifested with a total purity and a marvelous flowering of sanctity. The Immaculate One is the first marvel of the Redemption."⁶⁶ It is therefore in Mary and with Mary "that we can penetrate the meaning of the Paschal Mystery, allowing it to bear in us the immense richness of its effects and its fruits of eternal life."⁶⁷

"/ will put enmity between you and the woman" (Gen 3:15).

Tradition and the Magisterium have seen in the so-called Proto-evangelium (Gen 3:15) a scriptural source for the truth of Mary's Immaculate Conception: "I will put enmity between

⁶³ Angelus Dec. 8, 1978; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 21, 1978, p. 2.

⁶⁴ cf. General audience of June 5, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 24 June 12, 1996, p. 11.

⁶⁵ cf. *Redemptoris Mater*, n.10: "By virtue of the richness of the grace of the beloved Son, *by reason of the redemptive merits* of him who willed to become her Son, Mary was preserved from the inheritance of original sin. In this way, from the first moment of her conception - which is to say of her existence - she belonged to Christ, sharing in the *salvific* and *sanctifying grace* and in that love which has its beginning in the 'Beloved,' the Son of the Eternal Father, who through the Incarnation became her own Son."

⁶⁶ General audience of Dec. 7, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

⁶⁷ General audience of April 17, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 17, April 25, 1983, p. 2.

you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). Although the Latin version: "She will crush your head" does not agree with the Hebrew text, in which it is not the woman but her offspring who will crush the serpent's head, the depiction of the Immaculate crushing the serpent, not by her own power but through the grace of her Son, is consistent with the original meaning of the passage, since the biblical concept establishes a profound solidarity between the woman and her offspring.⁶⁸ Indeed, "the Son's victory is the Mother's victory, the victory of the Immaculate Servant of the Lord."⁶⁹ John Paul II declares:

The miracle of the Immaculate Conception is the *victory of Christ the Redeemer*. Sin, as Adam's heritage, original sin, is conquered at the very first moment of the conception of her who had been chosen to be the Mother of the Redeemer. This miracle of grace was wrought by the "right hand" and "holy arm" of him who was nailed to the Cross for the redemption of the sins of all mankind. She who was eternally chosen to be his Mother was redeemed in a privileged way!⁷⁰

Speaking of Mary's perfect redemption by Christ, the dogma states that the Blessed Virgin Mary, "in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the human race, was pre-

⁶⁸ cf. General audience of May 29, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 23, June 5, 1996, p. 11.

⁶⁹ Prayer on Dec. 8, 2000; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 13, 2000, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Angelus Dec. 8, 1984; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 17, 1984, p. 17.

served from every stain of original sin" (cf. *DS* 2803). When John Paul II presents the Immaculate Conception in relation to its opposite: sin, he prefers to speak of sin in its personal dimension rather than referring to it as "stain." Considering Genesis 3:15, he sees sin in its disastrous effect on man's relationship with God and creation. Sin causes *alienation* from God, because it consists in the refusal of his love and the denial of the truth about God and man. As complicity with the evil one, it entails a broken relationship, yes, in a certain sense "enmity" with God. "Christ, the Son of the Woman, reestablishes the grace of friendship with God. Human beings can leave their "hiding place" of sin for the "light" of divine adoption."⁷¹ Indeed, with the Immaculate Conception, sin is overcome and friendship with God is reestablished. "In Mary the reconciliation of God with mankind was effected, but in such a way that Mary herself had no personal need to be reconciled, since, being preserved from original sin, she has always existed in accord with God."⁷²

Since Mary lived from the first moment of her existence in perfect friendship with God, the enmity between the devil and the woman is expressed most completely in her. This enmity does not refer only to Mary, but accompanies the history of mankind on earth and the history of salvation itself as the Second Vatican Council recalled: History in its deepest reality, is the scene of "an arduous struggle against the powers of darkness, which started at the world's beginning and will continue, as the Lord tells us, until the last day" (*Gaudium et*

⁷¹ Angelus Dec. 8, 1990; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 10, 1990, p. 1.

⁷² General audience of Dec. 7, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

Spes, n. 37). Indeed, "the "enmity," foretold at the beginning, is confirmed in the Apocalypse (the book of the final events of the Church and the world), in which there recurs the sign of the "woman," this time "clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1). Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, is placed at the very center of that enmity."⁷³

The Holy Father emphasizes that the enmity between the Woman and the serpent points in two directions: to her Immaculate Conception, the total victory of God's grace in her over sin and Satan, and to her role in the work of redemption, her active collaboration in the eschatological struggle of her Son to destroy the works of the evil one:

We also observe that in Mary the enmity God put between the serpent and the woman is fulfilled in two ways. God's perfect ally and the devil's enemy, she was completely removed from Satan's domination in the Immaculate Conception, when she was fashioned in grace by the Holy Spirit and preserved from every stain of sin. In addition, associated with her Son's saving work, Mary was fully involved in the fight against the spirit of evil.⁷⁴

Therefore her Immaculate Conception does not mean that she has been transported outside of all those who have received the inheritance of the sin of our first parents. On the contrary, it entails her insertion into the very center of the spiritual combat, of this "enmity" that in the course of human

⁷³ *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 11.

⁷⁴ General audience of Jan. 24, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 5, Jan. 31, 1996, 11.

history places the "Prince of Darkness" and "the Father of Lies" in opposition to the Woman and her seed: "Through the words of the Book of Genesis we see Mary Immaculate in all the realism of her election. We see her at the culminating moment of this 'enmity:' at the foot of the Cross of Christ on Calvary. There 'she' will crush your head and you will strike her heel."⁷⁵ Since Mary was intimately united with her Son in crushing the head of the Serpent, she continues to be involved in this spiritual combat until the end of times supporting her children in their daily struggles to overcome evil and sin:

We must consider her as our sure support in the struggle against the powers of evil, as the most brilliant light of truth, as an invincible reason for hope and joy. Mary speaks to us of a total victory over evil whereby, by following her - and therefore following Christ - we can hope to be totally purified from sin and also to become " holy" and "without blemish."⁷⁶

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1)

John Paul II places Mary, as a human person, at the center of Redemption. Freedom is essential for a person to attain to its perfection and fullness. He sees therefore a profound relationship between her being conceived without sin and her perfect freedom as a human creature. Since the Immaculate Conception indicates freedom from the heritage of sin, that

Homily Dec. 8, 1985; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1985, p. 1.

Angelus Dec. 8, 1989; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51-52, Dec. 18-26, 1989, p. 15.

is, freedom from the effects of the disobedience of the first Adam, she "is *the only creature who is perfectly free.*"⁷⁷

He explains that God wanted to give life in fullness to the human creature (cf. Jn 10:10), on the condition, however, that his initiative would be met with a free and loving response. Unfortunately, man tragically cut off the vital dialogue with the Creator by placing his "no" in opposition to the "yes" of God, and thus exchanged his freedom in God for slavery to sin and Satan. While the entire human race was heavily involved in this closure towards God, only Mary of Nazareth, conceived without sin, was completely open to the divine design so that God was able to accomplish in her his plan of mercy: "The Immaculate Conception introduces the harmonious interlacing between the "ye*" of God and the "yes" that Mary pronounced without reserve when the Angel brought the heavenly announcement (cf. Lk 1:38). Her "yes" in the name of humanity re-opened the doors of Heaven to the world."⁷⁸

Moved by the Holy Spirit, Mary said "yes" to God. In Mary's heart there was no shade of selfishness, no trace of the original "*non serviam.*" The original temptation to become a "god in opposition to God" is totally alien to her.⁷⁹ It was precisely this freedom that enabled her to meet God's invitation with a perfectly free and loving response:

⁷⁷ Homily in Lourdes on Aug. 15, 2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 34, Aug. 25, 2004, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Letter for the 12th world of the sick, dated Dec. 1, 2003; *Oss. Rom.* N. 3, Jan. 21, 2004, p. 7.

⁷⁹ cf. Homily Dec. 8, 1994; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 14, 1994, p. 4.

In her there is total openness to God's power, which is love. She is completely transparent and shining in her faith: she is the one who is "blessed because she has believed." In her there is no stain of sin, not even of original sin. The redemptive love of her Son embraced her and imbued her from the first moment in which she was conceived by her earthly parents.⁸⁰

Thus Mary's "fiat" was both divine and human: human by nature and divine by grace. It is a response given by grace and in grace. The Holy Spirit, from the first moment of her existence, poured out God's love into her heart which directed all of her acts. He ensured that Mary's human response, as a conscious act of free will, was an answer of love in a perfect way, and thus became the shining model for every person's personal relationship with God.⁸¹ Mary's "fiat" was free even if it was prompted by God and was as mysterious as the ever-mysterious meeting point of grace and freedom. God doesn't force his will on us but he gives us his love. This explains Mary's surrender; she felt loved by God, and this love impelled her to give herself entirely to God.⁸²

Nowadays - observes the Pope - it is sometimes held, that each human being is free when he makes use of freedom as he wishes, and that this must be our aim in the lives of individuals and societies. In reality, freedom is a great gift

⁸⁰ Homily Dec. 8, 1991; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1991, p. 5.

⁸¹ cf. General audience of April 18, 1990; *Oss. Rom.* N. 17, April 23, 1990, p. 11.

⁸² cf. Raniero Cantalamessa. *Mary Mirror of the Church*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press 1992, p. 44.

only when we know how to use it consciously for everything that is our true good. This gift finds its full realization in the unreserved giving of the whole of one's human person, in a spirit of love, to Christ and, with Christ, to others by serving them with selfless love. For this "freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1) and ever continues to set us free.⁸³

In summary, the full truth about human freedom is indelibly inscribed on the mystery of the Redemption and shines forth in the creature who was able to correspond to God's gift with absolute freedom of love, not stained by sin. Hence the Virgin Mary is the model of perfect *human freedom* in responding to God's plan. She is the sign of what God can do when he finds a creature free to welcome his proposal. She reminds every human being, whatever his situation, that God loves him personally, that he desires only his good and follows him constantly with a plan of grace and mercy with which he must cooperate responsibly.⁸⁴ Therefore - declares the Holy Father - the Immaculate Virgin has a message for everyone:

Be men and women of freedom! But remember: human freedom is a freedom wounded by sin. It is a freedom which itself needs to be set free. Christ is its liberator; he is the one who "for freedom has set us free" (cf. Gal 5:1). Defend that freedom!

Dear friends, in this we can count on Mary, who, since she never yielded to sin, is the only creature who is perfectly free. I entrust you to her. Walk

⁸³ cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 21.

⁸⁴ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1999; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1999, p. 3.

beside Mary as you journey towards the complete fulfillment of your humanity!⁸⁵

"/ am the servant of the Lord"

"Besides being a sublime privilege that exalts Mary among all human creatures and the choirs of angels themselves, her sinless conception was the eminent condition of grace so that her whole person, from the very first instant, would be disposed *in the most complete freedom*, the freedom from original sin, to the service of Christ and his redemptive work, for all mankind,"⁸⁶ observes John Paul II. Consequently, he always relates the privilege of the Immaculate Conception to God's salvific plan: "We must above all note that Mary was created immaculate in order to be better able to act on our behalf. The fullness of grace allowed her to perfectly fulfill her mission of collaboration with the work of salvation... it is for sinners, that is for all of us, that she received-an exceptional grace... the unique privilege of her Immaculate Conception puts her at the service of everyone."⁸⁷

In fact, when God confers a privilege on one it is always for the benefit of all. Mary understood perfectly that the unique gift she received from God "is more than a *privilege*; it is a *duty* which obliges her to serve others with the selflessness proper to love."⁸⁸ Hence "she desires nothing for herself

Homily in Lourdes on Aug. 15,2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 34, Aug. 25,2004, p. 7.

Angelus Dec. 8, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

General audience of Dec. 7, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

Homily in Lourdes on Aug. 15,2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 34, Aug. 25,2004, p. 7.

except God's glory and human salvation. For her, the privilege of being preserved from original sin is not a reason to boast, but one of total service to her Son's redemptive mission."⁸⁹ Hence Mary - the Immaculate One - stood at the foot of the Cross: "United with the Son in suffering... she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring of supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a Mother to us in the order of grace" (*Lumen Gentium*, 61).⁹⁰

The Pope notes that "the prodigy of the Immaculate Conception reminds believers of a fundamental truth: it is possible to reach salvation only through docile participation in the project of the Father, who wanted to redeem the world through the death and resurrection of His only-begotten Son."⁹¹ Though salvation is God's gift, it is a gift which has to be accepted and corresponded to in order to bear fruit. Therefore, all Christians are called to cooperate with God's grace as did Mary. It makes us face the question, what have I done with God's grace? What am I doing with his gracious gifts? Mary who "strives to make all her earthly children sharers in some way in the favor with which she was personally enriched,"⁹² reminds us of our responsibility "not to accept God's grace in vain" (2 Cor 6:1), but rather to make it grow and bear fruit for the benefit of all (cf. 1 Cor 14:26).

⁸⁹ Angelus Dec. 8, 1997; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 10, 1997, p. 1.

⁹⁰ cf. Homily Dec. 8, 1985; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1985, p. 1.

⁹¹ Letter for the 12th World Day of the sick, dated Dec. 1, 2003; *Oss. Rom.* N. 3, Jan. 21, 2004, p. 7.

⁹² General audience of Dec. 7, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

4. *Mary Immaculate: the All-holy fashioned by the Holy Spirit*

John Paul II points out the Trinitarian character of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Mary is the perfect human creature that came unstained from the Creator's hands. Redeemed in the most perfect way, she is the masterpiece of Christ's saving work. But what is the Holy Spirit's part in Mary's fullness of grace?

The Holy Father declares that the Father and the Son entrusted her eternally to the Spirit of holiness.⁹³ The Holy Spirit as the Person-Gift between the Father and the Son, is at the same time the Divine Person by whom Father and Son enter into a real relationship with the world, especially with humanity. At the summit of this relationship stands Mary to whom the Holy Spirit communicates from the first moment of her existence through the power of God's gracious love the saving and sanctifying grace of Christ, her Son and Redeemer.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35)

The Pope draws a similarity between the eternal generation of the Son, his virginal conception in the womb of Mary and the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception. If the eternal generation of the Son by the Father is based on an indescribable love between two eternally co-existent Divine Persons, the generation of the Son in his humanity happens through the power of that same love that is the Holy Spirit in his Person. And if the virginal generation of the Son at the Annunciation through the power of the Holy Spirit is the cause and

Redemptoris Mater, n. 8.

model of man's regeneration in baptism, then Mary's "Immaculate Conception represents the most perfect result of the gratuitous action of the Holy Spirit who forms her and makes her a new creation, virgin soil, a temple of the Spirit, from her very first moment... [Thus] in Mary's conception, being born of man coincides with being reborn of the Spirit, and mankind is brought back to the beginning of creation."⁹⁴ Therefore Mary ideally embodies and brings to completion the holiness of the people of God. She "is the firstborn and the Mother of the Church of the Saints: of all those who, born of the Spirit and living in Christ, are children of the Father."⁹⁵

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35). These words of the Angel, referring to the virginal conception of the Son of God, recall, in a certain sense, also the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Mary at the moment of her conception:

In Mary, the Holy Spirit descended and acted, chronologically speaking, even before the Incarnation, that is from the moment of her Immaculate Conception... For her the Immaculate Conception constituted, in advance, a participation in the benefits of the Incarnation and Redemption, as the highpoint and fullness of the "self-gift" which God makes to man. And that is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶

Angelus Dec. 8, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 12, 1983, p. 1.

General audience of Nov. 1, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 45, Nov. 7, 1983, p. 3.

General audience of April 18, 1990; *Oss. Rom.* N. 17, April 23, 1990, p. 11.

As it is for the Holy Spirit who is uncreated love, consubstantial with the Father and the Son, to accomplish the mystery of the human birth of the Son of God because solely by this Power, who is Love, can He be born,⁹⁷ it is also by the power of the Holy Spirit that Mary, "at the moment of her conception in her mother's womb, is generated, in all fullness, by God."⁹⁸ Free from original sin, "she was filled from the first moment of her conception with the Holy Spirit: she was conceived "full of grace"... The Eternal Father sealed [her], with the power of the Holy Spirit,"⁹⁹ making her "the first heir to the holiness of her own Son."¹⁰⁰

"And so the child will be holy and called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). As the Spirit anointed the humanity of the Son with a unique fullness of holiness, in a similar way the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary (cf. Lk 1: 35) sanctifying her in a singular way. Hence, there is a deep communion between the holiness of Christ and of his Mother.¹⁰¹ "No one has been more like Him, not only with the natural likeness of mother and son, but with the likeness of the Spirit of holiness."¹⁰² The Fathers of the Eastern Church therefore see not only Christ "the Holy One," but also Mary "All-

⁹⁷ Homily Dec. 8, 1988; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51-52, Dec. 19-26, 1988, p. 4.

⁹⁸ cf. Homily Dec. 8, 1984; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 17, 1984, p. 16.

⁹⁹ Angelus Dec. 8, 1981; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 14, 1981, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Homily Dec. 8, 1978; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 21, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ John Paul II notes that Christ's and Mary's holiness entails nevertheless a substantial difference regarding their source: "Christ is holy by virtue of the grace that in his humanity derives from the divine person; Mary is all holy by virtue of the grace received by the merits of the Savior." (General audience of May 29, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 23, June 5, 1996, p. 11).

¹⁰² Homily Dec. 8, 1980; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1980, p. 2.

Holy" (*panhagia*)¹⁰³ as a transporence of the Holy Spirit, the "All-Holy" (*Panhagios*). Her "entirely unique holiness" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 56) originates in the perfect holiness of the Holy Spirit who fashioned and formed her as a new creature. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls Mary repeatedly "all holy" underscoring her closeness to the Holy Spirit, the author of holiness.¹⁰⁴

Blessed Pius IX stated in the Apostolic letter *Ineffabilis Deus* that Mary shows "such a fullness of innocence and holiness that one cannot comprehend greater, apart from that of God, and no one, apart from God, could grasp it."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, hers is the first and the highest realization of holiness in the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit who is the Holy One and Sanctifier.

On the day of Pentecost this ecclesial holiness shone forth not only in Mary but also in the Apostles and in the disciples who "were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 4). The Holy Father therefore refers the words of the Angel "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35) also to the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost: "In the light of these words..., does not the Mother of God appear as the model and figure of the Church? For the Church too was born into

¹⁰³ cf. Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, CMF. "La Panaghia." *EphMar* 44 (1994), 223-240.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Cat. nos. 493, 721, 829, 2677.

¹⁰⁵ Bl. Pius IX, Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, issued Dec. 8, 1854, see: *Our Lady: Papal Teachings*, trans. Daughters of St. Paul. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1961, p. 3If.; cf. the Latin text: "*innocentice et sanctitatis plenitudinem prce se ferret, qua maior sub Deo nullatenus intellegitur, et quam prceter Deus nemo assequi cogitando potest*".

the history of humanity through the coming of the Holy Spirit! She was born on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room together with Mary."¹⁰⁶ The Church looks therefore to Mary as her "model and figure" in the Holy Spirit. It is this ecclesiological dimension, proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, which is the itinerary that allows us to read and to understand in all its width and depth the mystery of Mary:

Considered in this dimension, the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God and our Mother acquires a richer ecclesial significance. With her, the masterpiece of God the Father and the purest reflection of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Church of Christ begins. *In Mary we see the immaculate conception of the Church*, the temple and the spouse without stain or wrinkle. It is *in her* that *the Church feels it has attained its highest perfection*, without a shadow of sin; and it is in her as the prototype, sign and help, that the ecclesial community, still a pilgrim on earth, is inspired and strengthened to advance in sanctity and in the struggle against sin.¹⁰⁷

As heir to the Second Vatican Council that has brought about "a great synthesis between Mariology and Ecclesiology,"¹⁰⁸ John Paul II realized that the renewal of the Church

¹⁰⁶ Homily Dec. 8, 1985; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1985, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Angelus Dec. 11, 1983; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51, Dec. 19, 1983, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Address to the Roman Curia on Dec. 22, 1987, *Oss. Rom.* N. 2, Jan. 11, 1988, p. 6.

in holiness¹⁰⁹ cannot be achieved but by looking at the most holy Virgin in whom she "has already reached that perfection whereby she is without spot and wrinkle" (cf. Eph 5:27). The Holy Father explains: "The Church today is called to make the Face of her Bridegroom shine forth with her *more radiant holiness*. In this far from easy effort, she knows she is sustained by Mary. From Mary she "learns" to be a "virgin," totally dedicated to her Spouse, Jesus Christ, and a "mother" of many children whom she brings forth to eternal life."¹¹⁰ Mary is the type (perfect realization) and model of the Church. "If the Church looks to the Blessed Virgin as to her "model," she does so because in Mary the Holy Spirit first accomplished those "mighty works of God," which from the day of Pentecost have become part of the Church, part of her awareness and her mission through faith."¹¹¹

At the beginning of the third Millennium after Christ, "the Church earnestly desires only one thing: to be the same Church that was born of the Holy Spirit, when the Apostles devoted themselves to prayer, together with Mary in the Upper Room in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 1:14). For from the very beginning they had within their community the One who 'is the Immaculate Conception'."¹¹² Mary is the model to which the Church looks, in order to become increasingly a community of Saints. She "is an icon of the Church, the symbol and anti-

¹⁰⁹ cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 30-31.

¹¹⁰ Message for 77th World Mission Day dated Jan. 12, 2003, *Oss. Rom.* N. 9, Feb. 26, 2003, p. 6.

¹¹¹ Homily on Pentecost, May 22, 1988. *Oss. Rom.* N. 24, June 13, 1988, p. 17.

¹¹² Homily Dec. 8, 1985; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1985, p. 2.

cipation of humanity, transfigured by grace, the model and the unfailing hope for all those who direct their steps towards the heavenly Jerusalem."¹¹³ In contemplating the Immaculate Virgin, the Church rediscovers herself as the work of God, called to fulfill, amid the ambiguities and temptations of the world, her sublime vocation as "the bride of Christ without stain or wrinkle, radiant with beauty" (*Preface of the Immaculate Conception*)¹¹⁴ Hence, John Paul II proposes Mary Immaculate as model of holiness and as guide in our pilgrimage to our heavenly homeland:

Mary is an inexhaustible model of perfection; however much we try to imitate her, she will always have something to teach us. Her holiness and purity absolutely transcend that of all the rest of the human race, which bears the effects of sin and must be freed from them through a path of conversion and penance... Mary certainly did not have to correct evil inclinations, as we have to do... Instead, she shows us the way to go from good to better, to surmount trials and temptations, and to progress in perfection. Mary teaches us how one advances in faith, hope and charity.¹¹⁵

The Virgin Mary stands before us as a model of our pilgrim way. It is not an easy way: as a result of the fall of our first parents, humanity is marked by the

¹¹³ Apostolic Letter *Orientate lumen* dated May 5, 1995, n. 6.

¹¹⁴ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1995; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 13, 1995, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ To friends of Focolare Movement on Feb. 11, 1988; *Oss. Rom.* N. 9, Feb. 29, 1988, p. 22.

wounds of sin, whose consequences continue to be felt among the redeemed. But evil will not have the last word! Mary confirms this by her whole life, for she is a living witness of the victory of Christ, our Passover.¹¹⁶

Tota Pulchra es Maria

When John Paul II reflects on the mystery of the Immaculate, he loves to contemplate the peerless beauty of Mary: "You are all beautiful, O Mary; in you there is no trace of original sin!" In the words of St. Gabriel "Hail, full of grace!," the greatest spiritual beauty, which has its beginning in God, is called by name: the beauty of God's grace.¹¹⁷

The mystery of grace and beauty which surrounds the Virgin Mother originates in the tenderness of God who preserved her free from original sin and its consequences from the first moment of her existence, preparing her to become the worthy Mother of his Son. In this way the Lord set Mary above all creatures, making her full of grace, the wonderful mirror of his holiness.¹¹⁸

Mary's beauty is fully known only to God, but at the same time appeals so much to man. Citing the Polish poet Cyprian Norwid who wrote that "The form of love is beauty..." (*Promethidion, Bogumul*), the Holy Father believes that

¹¹⁶ Homily in Lourdes on Aug. 15, 2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 34, Aug. 25, 2004, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1979; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 17, 1979, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Angelus Dec. 8, 1994; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 14, 1994, p. 2.

"beauty, the incarnation of love, is a source of the most powerful encouragement to work, to effort, and to the creative struggles for a better form of human life, it is an incentive to overcome the forces of death and to continual resurrection. Because love, beauty and life are intimately linked to one another."¹¹⁹

In fact, man is sensitive to visible beauty, which is perceived by the senses, but also to the beauty of the spirit. The renewed discovery of Mary's spiritual beauty can arouse in man new energies and new reasons to live, to work and to combat evil and sin and to rise again each day. "The vision of her human and spiritual beauty ought to be before our eyes, so ofte'n offended and blinded by profane images that assail us and even, in a certain sense, assault us. If we keep Mary before us - she who is blessed among women - we shall be enabled to align in ourselves both the plan and the structure of the new human being redeemed by her Son"¹²⁰ for Mary "is the human heart's immaculate sensitivity to all that is of God, all that is true, good and beautiful, all that has its source and fulfillment in God."¹²¹

In Mary humanity regains its former beauty and the divine plan is revealed to be stronger than evil, capable of offering ever new possibilities of life and salvation. What *great horizons are opened by the mystery of the Immaculate Conception!* - exclaims John Paul II. As true pastor, he always relates the mystery of the Immaculate to the various situations of human life:

¹¹⁹ Prayer Dec. 8, 1996; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 11, 1996, p. 1.

¹²⁰ General audience of Dec. 30, 1987; *Oss. Rom.* N. 2, Jan. 11, 1988, p. 3.

¹²¹ Angelus Dec. 8, 1991; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1991, p. 5.

- To the *women of our time*, who search, sometimes intensely, for their authentic dignity, she who is "All Beautiful" shows the great possibilities of the feminine genius when it is imbued with grace.
- She reminds *children and young people*, who look with anxious trust to the future, that the Lord does not disappoint deep personal expectations and he reaches out to all who want to build a world of greater brotherhood and solidarity.
- To *whoever is steeped in sin but knows that he longs for what is good*, the Immaculate shows the concrete possibilities for redemption in the sincere search for truth and in trusting abandonment into the Lord's hands.
- To *those suffering in body or spirit*, and to those laid low by history, the Virgin proclaims the God of life, who invites his children to joy and freedom, despite the heavy consequences of sin that disfigure the world.¹²²

The Holy Father encourages all of us to raise our hearts to Mary who reminds us with motherly yet demanding affection of the will of God, who calls us to accomplish his original plan for holiness, notwithstanding the difficulties caused by original sin:

May the mystery of the Immaculate Conception deeply influence our hearts, delighting us with her wonderful

Angelus Dec. 8, 1995; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 13, 1995, p. 5.

splendor, as in the case of St Maximilian Kolbe, the "Knight of the Immaculata"; on 12 May 1941, when he was already a prisoner bound for Auschwitz, he wrote to his confreres in Niepokalanow, "Let us be guided ever more perfectly by the 'Immaculata', wherever and however she wants us, so that, fulfilling our duties well, we may help all souls to be conquered for her love."¹²³

Conclusion

Pope John Paul II brings to the fore that Mary stands in a unique and exemplary relationship to the Three Divine Persons:

O Chosen from all eternity in Christ, she was first conceived in the heart of the Father as the perfect creature, totally formed by God's love in view of her role as Mother of God.

O Through the eternal Son made Man, the order of *creation* was linked for ever with that of *redemption*, that is, *grace*. Our Lady, totally preserved from the slavery of evil and the object of God's special favor, anticipates in her life the path to be taken by the redeemed, the people saved by Christ.¹²⁴ Mary is "*the first-fruits of humanity redeemed by Christ*,"¹²⁵ *the masterpiece of his saving work*.¹²⁶

¹²³ Angelus Dec. 8, 1988; *Oss. Rom.* N. 51-52, Dec. 19-26, 1988, p. 4.

¹²⁴ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1998; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 16, 1998, p. 4.

¹²⁵ Prayer Dec. 8, 2003; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 10, 2003, p. 1.

¹²⁶ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 1999; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 1999, p. 3.

O Fashioned by the Holy Spirit and made a new creature, Mary is "All fair," "All holy." The "fullness of grace," which is *her starting point, for all others is the goal*. For, as St. Paul says, we, too, are created to be holy and blameless before God (cf. Eph 1:4).¹²⁷

John Paul II affirms, that Mary's Immaculate Conception means that in Mary everything is grace from the first moment of her existence and that she corresponds to God's gift with the absolute freedom of love, not stained by sin. Since God's grace is at one and the same time gift and duty, it demands our free cooperation at the example of Mary who perfectly cooperated with God's plan of salvation. In her we see the great things God accomplishes when we render ourselves humbly available to doing His will. She is a marvelous sign of the victory of life over death, of love over sin, of the power of God's grace over human weakness.¹²⁸

By his profound and original reflections of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Father helps us to penetrate deeper into this mystery not only by relating it to the fundamental truths of our faith, but also by applying it to our daily lives. Mary Immaculate, a creature filled with Divine love, all goodness, all beauty, all holiness, continues to be the one who prays for us, who defends us from evil, but who also inspires and stimulates us to live our Christian vocation to be "holy and immaculate" (cf. Eph 1:4). Therefore the Pope reminds us:

¹²⁷ cf. Angelus Dec. 8, 2000; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 15, 2000, p. 3.

¹²⁸ cf. Address on Feb. 11, 2004; *Oss. Rom.* N. 7, Febr. 18, 2004, p. 1.

¹²⁹ Angelus Dec. 8, 1994; *Oss. Rom.* N. 50, Dec. 14, 1994, p. 2.

Mary Immaculate is the sign of God's fidelity, which does not yield in the face of human sin. Her fullness of grace also reminds us of the immense possibility for goodness, beauty, greatness and joy which are within reach of human beings when they let themselves be guided by God's will and reject sin. In the light of her whom the Lord gives us as "our advocate of grace and pattern of holiness," we learn to flee sin always. Let us pray to the Blessed Virgin to give us the joy of living under her maternal gaze in purity and holiness of life.¹²⁹

The Fallacies of the Two-Child Policy Bill*

SENATOR AQUILINO Q. PIMENTEL, JR.

The 2-child policy advocated by its proponents suffers from so many wrong premises that it might as well be called the "2-child fallacy" as suggested by some wags. Among the fallacious premises are:

1. that population rise is the cause of poverty of peoples;
2. that the country is now overpopulated or is in imminent danger of being overpopulated;
3. that the Church is to blame for the actual or threatened overpopulation of the country; and
4. that the advocacy of the 2-child policy is motivated by pure love of country.

There may be other erroneous postulates but for our discussion, let me just focus on what I have mentioned.

•Statement at the 1st Faculty's Philosophical Symposium on Population Issues, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, September 24, 2004.

Let us now tackle them one by one.

1. That population rise is the cause of poverty of peoples.

Not true at all.

Poverty is not caused by an exploding population.

Government mismanagement

It is caused by mismanagement of government. And government mismanagement may be evidenced, among other things, by widespread corruption, failure to deliver basic services, inability to create the climate for business to thrive that can help provide work for an impoverished people and bad maintenance of law and order.

In brief, poverty is an economic and social issue that must be addressed by economic and social means.

Unless poverty is understood in that context, deceptive argument will continue to blame a country's miserable economic situation on the proliferation of so many poor people.

And so, simplistically, the solution proposed is that we must curtail by law the right of the poor to propagate.

Comfort zone upset

Why are they saying those things? Well, I suggest that it is because the comfort zone of the wealthy is upset by the presence of so many who are poor.

Thus, in their mind, I suppose they believe that only the rich should have the right to propagate themselves freely.

Eugenics

The advocacy ominously echoes the theory of "eugenics" or the doctrine of the "superior race" that Hitler murderously espoused in Nazi Germany.

How is the theory of eugenics or the doctrine of the superior race to be brought about? Well, of course, by the elimination of the unwanted child of the less endowed in terms of wealth or physical attributes.

They don't say it that as bluntly now as they used to during the heyday of the eugenics movement in the U.S. in the second decade of the last century or when Hitlerism was on the rise in Germany in the 1930s.

If they were to be that blunt, the message would be too gruesome and anathema to Filipino ears. Thus, they talk of terminating "unwanted pregnancies" to curtail the unwanted rise of the country's population. Pregnancies, in their vocabulary, are more or less neutral in meaning. They try to blot out the idea that human lives are involved when they talk of terminating unwanted pregnancies.

That, obviously, is not possible when one advocates the termination of the life of "unwanted children". Because then the message becomes too bluntly bloody, too clearly cruel and too acoustically abominable for our people to accept.

Hence, the resort to semantical obfuscation.

//. ***That the country is now overpopulated.***

Again, the premise is incorrect.

Even the statistics the 2-child policy advocates use - that we have a 2.76% population growth - is wrong.

The country's population growth rate is 2.3%. Dr. Lito Sandejas, the president's population policy adviser, believes that it is much less than that. But we may still be over the threshold of the replacement birth rate that is statistically placed at 2.1% not only for us but for all countries.

It may be apropos of our discussion to mention that statistics emanating from the DOLE states that some 2400 of our countrymen and women leave the country everyday to work abroad. If that is correct, that means that 864,000 go out of the country for overseas employment in a given year. That circumstance - in addition to the 8 million or so of our people who are already gainfully employed as overseas Filipinos - should lessen the population pressure in the country.

Population density

Now, the population pressure or the population density of a country - not just the totality of its population - is probably the more accurate gauge of whether or not a country has a population problem.

If the density of a country's population is not acute, then it can be said that the country does not have any population problem.

Mere population densities, however, do not automatically translate into a population problem for nations.

Let me cite three examples to illustrate the point:

a) Monaco has a population density of 42,477 people per square kilometer. Its per capita GNP is \$16,000;

b) Singapore has a population density of 6,086 per square kilometer. Its per capita GNP is \$23,000;

c) Japan has a population density of 857 people per square mile. Its per capita GNP is \$34,000.

In contrast, our country has a population density of only 252 per square kilometer. And our per capita GNP is something like \$1000.

Bohol can hold 84 million

Now, I read somewhere that the entire population of the country can fit into the island of Bohol leaving the rest of the country free for food and other productive enterprises in the same manner that it is said that the total population of the world today may be accommodated in the State of Texas and leave the rest of the world for sustainable development purposes.

///. ***That the Church is to blame for the so-called exploding population of the country.***

This is completely untrue.

As a Catholic, I have yet to hear my Church tell the faithful that we have the right to propagate like rabbits.

Responsible parenthood

On the other hand, the Church has been teaching us that we ought to be responsible parents. That means we must bear children whom we can responsibly take care of.

That proliferation of population is not a Church-directed problem is demonstrated by the fact that in China and India, the two most populous nations of the world today, the Church has very minimal influence, if it has any, at all.

The advocates of the 2-child policy are simply looking for a scapegoat and they believe they have found one in the Church.

IV. That the 2-child policy is motivated by pure love of country.

To say that the advocates of the 2-child policy love our country and that is why they agitate for its adoption is at best a half-truth. Indeed, the proponents may love our country; who are we to question that. But the thing is that this whole effort to propagate a 2-child policy by all sorts of contraceptive methods and even abortion was born out of a desire of the United States to control the economies of the world to sustain their predominant economic and military status.

Threat to US security

This is not an empty rhetoric- of the left or the right or whatever else. It is, in fact, found in the U.S. National Security Study Memorandum 200 that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger commissioned in 1974 during the administration of President Richard Nixon.

In fine, the NSSM 200 conclusion was that the rapid population growth of third world countries including our own poses a threat to the national security of the US.

The rationale was simple. Growing populations of those countries would mean expanding the domestic demands for their indigenous resources. That would in turn mean reducing the availability of those resources for the needs of the US.

Reduce population growths

Thus, in the view of NSSM 200, the solution is to reduce the growth of those populations by offering them aid, contraceptives or even the know-how of so-called safe abortions which is an oxymoron especially in relation to the child being aborted. For the expulsion of a fetus from the mother's womb with the intent to kill him or her can never be safe for the fetus concerned.

In monetary terms, the last time, I heard, aid from the US for family planning purposes - aside from all-expenses-paid-international conferences and other inducements for the propagators of the family planning program in the country - was in the amount of \$5 million. The sum is reportedly targeted for reduction by the Bush administration.

Alarmed, then, that their US patrons would no longer continue with their generous support for family planning here unless they can show that their projects or program to curtail population growth is working or that, at least, they are still at it, the advocates of the 2-child policy decided to stir the pot, as it were, by filing the bill in question.

Before I end, may I point out that:

Demographic winter

1. Population reduction policies as practiced by Germany, Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, and other countries in Europe now threaten them with the so-called "demographic winter".

The Newsweek issue of September 27 states that for those countries, "the problem isn't having too many people but having too few."

In simple terms it means that their replacement birth rates no longer suffice to supply them with people to survive as nations.

In actual economic terms, it means that their production capacities and social security systems at some point, perhaps, in the next 4 or 5 decades, will no longer be viable as more and more elderly will have to be supported by less and less people of working age.

Distorted meaning of sex

2. What is wrong with condoms and contraceptives?

I think the main thing that is wrong with these devices is that they advocate "safe sex" instead of "responsible sex" as the basis of man-woman relationship.

Once the element of human responsibility in sex is removed, I am afraid that the sanctity of the sex act is demeaned and it is reduced to the category of pure animal instinct.

What to do?

3. Finally, what, then, should we do?

I submit that we should not allow the US or any other nation to dictate to us either directly or indirectly what our policies on family matters should be. We should formulate our own policies on population management that conform to our values as a people and as enunciated in our Constitution.

To support this view, let me say that the Constitution mandates that policies of population be defined by families -

who are to be consulted - taking into account their religious values.

Briefly, the basic postulates for the State to follow in the formulation of policies on the family are found in the Constitution:

ARTICLE II

STATE POLICIES

Section 12. The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the support of the Government.

And

ARTICLE XV

THE FAMILY

Section 1. The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development.

Section 2. Marriage, as an inviolable social institution, is the foundation of the family and shall be protected by the State.

Section 3. The State shall defend:

(1) The right of spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood;

(2) The right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development;

(3) The right of the family to a family living wage and income; and

(4) The right of families or family associations to participate in the planning and implementation of policies and programs that affect them.

Section 4. The family has the duty to care for its elderly members but the State may also do so through just programs of social security.

Since even the Constitution ordains that the family is the foundation of the nation, it behooves all of us to do everything in our power to strengthen the ties that bind the family and protect it from "all xxx conditions prejudicial to (its) development."

Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace

JOHN PAUL II

1. At the beginning of the New Year, I once again address the leaders of nations and all men and women of good will, who recognize the need to build peace in the world. For the theme of this 2005 World Day of Peace I have chosen Saint Paul's words in the Letter to the Romans: *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (12:21). Evil is never defeated by evil; once that road is taken, *rather than defeating evil, one will instead be defeated by evil.*

The great Apostle brings out a fundamental truth: peace is the outcome of a long and demanding battle which is only won when evil is defeated by good. If we consider the tragic scenario of violent fratricidal conflicts in different parts of the world, and the untold sufferings and injustices to which they have given rise, the only truly constructive choice is, as Saint Paul proposes, to *flee what is evil and hold fast to what is good* (cf. *Rom* 12:9).

Peace is a good to be promoted with good: it is a good for individuals, for families, for nations and for all humanity;

yet it is one which needs to be maintained and fostered by decisions and actions inspired by good. We can appreciate the profound truth of another saying of Saint Paul: "*Repay no one evil for evil*" (Rom 12:17). The one way out of the vicious circle of requiting evil for evil is to accept the Apostle's words: "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21).

Evil, good and love

2. From the beginning, humanity has known the tragedy of evil and has struggled to grasp its roots and to explain its causes. Evil is not some impersonal, deterministic force at work in the world. It is the result of human freedom. Freedom, which distinguishes human beings from every other creature on earth, is ever present at the heart of the drama of evil. *Evil always has a name and a face*: the name and face of those men and women who freely choose it. Sacred Scripture teaches that at the dawn of history Adam and Eve rebelled against God, and Abel was killed by Cain, his brother (cf. Gen 3-4). These were the first wrong choices, which were succeeded by countless others down the centuries. Each of these choices has an *intrinsic moral dimension*, involving specific individual responsibilities and the fundamental relationship of each person with God, with others and with all of creation.

At its deepest level, *evil is a tragic rejection of the demands of love*.¹ Moral good, on the other hand, is born of

¹ In this regard, Saint Augustine observed that "two loves have established two cities: love of self, carried to contempt for God, has given rise to the earthly city; love of God, carried to contempt for self, has given rise to the heavenly city" (*De Civitate Dei*, XIV:28).

love, shows itself as love and is directed towards love. All this is particularly evident to Christians, who know that their membership in the one mystical Body of Christ sets them in a particular relationship not only with the Lord but also with their brothers and sisters. The inner logic of Christian love, which in the Gospel is the living source of moral goodness, leads even to the love of one's enemies: *"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink"* (Rom 12:20).

The "grammar" of the universal moral law

3. If we look to the present state of the world, we cannot help but note the disturbing spread of *various social and political manifestations of evil*: from social disorders to anarchy and war, from injustice to acts of violence and killing. To steer a path between the conflicting claims of good and evil, the human family urgently needs to preserve and esteem that *common patrimony of moral values* bestowed by God himself. For this reason, Saint Paul encourages all those determined to overcome evil with good *to be noble and disinterested in fostering generosity and peace* (cf. Rom 12:17-21).

Ten years ago, in addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations about the need for common commitment to the service of peace, I made reference to the *"grammar" of the universal moral law*,² to which the Church appeals in her various pronouncements in this area. By inspiring common values and principles, this law unites human beings, despite their different cultures, and is itself unchanging: "it subsists

² Cf. *Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations for its Fiftieth Anniversary* (5 October 1995), 3: *Insegnamenti* XVIII/2 (1995), 732.

under the flux of ideas and customs and supports their progress... Even when it is rejected in its very principles, it cannot be destroyed or removed from the heart of man. It always rises again in the life of individuals and societies."³

4. This common *grammar of the moral law* requires ever greater commitment and responsibility in ensuring that the life of individuals and of peoples is respected and advanced. In this light, the evils of a social and political nature which afflict the world, particularly those provoked by *outbreaks of violence*, are to be vigorously condemned. I think immediately of the beloved continent of *Africa*, where conflicts which have already claimed millions of victims are still continuing. Or the dangerous *situation of Palestine*, the Land of Jesus, where the fabric of mutual understanding, torn by a conflict which is fed daily by acts of violence and reprisal, cannot yet be mended in justice and truth. And what of the troubling phenomenon of *terrorist violence*, which appears to be driving the whole world towards a future of fear and anguish? Finally, how can we not think with profound regret of the *drama unfolding in Iraq*, which has given rise to tragic situations of uncertainty and insecurity for all?

To attain the good of peace there must be a clear and conscious acknowledgment that violence is an unacceptable evil and that it never solves problems. "Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings."⁴ What is needed is a

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1958.

⁴ John Paul II, *Homily at Drogheda*, Ireland (29 September 1979), 9: AAS 71(1979), 1081.

great effort to form consciences and to educate the younger generation to goodness by upholding that *integral and fraternal humanism* which the Church proclaims and promotes. This is the foundation for a social, economic and political order respectful of the dignity, freedom and fundamental rights of each person.

The good of peace and the common good

5. Fostering peace by overcoming evil with good requires careful reflection *on the common good*⁵ and on its social and political implications. When the common good is promoted at every level, peace is promoted. Can an individual find complete fulfilment without taking account of his social nature, that is, his being "with" and "for" others? The common good closely concerns him. It closely concerns every expression of his social nature: the family, groups, associations, cities, regions, states, the community of peoples and nations. *Each person, in some way, is called to work for the common good*, constantly looking out for the good of others as if it were his own. This responsibility belongs in a particular way to political authorities at every level, since they are called to create that sum of social conditions which permit and foster in human beings the integral development of their person.⁶

The common good therefore demands respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental

⁵ The *common good* is widely understood to be "the sum of those conditions of social life which enable groups and individuals to achieve their fulfillment more completely and readily." Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

⁶ Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), 417.

rights, as well as respect for and the promotion of the rights of nations on the universal plane. In this regard, the Second Vatican Council observed that "the increasingly close interdependence gradually encompassing the entire world is leading to an increasingly universal common good... and this involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups and the common good of the entire human family."⁷ The good of humanity as a whole, including future generations, calls for true international cooperation, to which every nation must offer its contribution.⁸

Certain reductive visions of humanity tend to present the common good as a purely *socio-economic state of well-being* lacking any transcendent purpose, thus emptying it of its deepest meaning. Yet the *common good* has a *transcendent dimension*, for God is the ultimate end of all his creatures.⁹ Christians know that Jesus has shed full light on how the true common good of humanity is to be achieved. History journeys towards Christ and in him finds its culmination: because of Christ, through Christ and for Christ, every human reality can be led to complete fulfilment in God.

The good of peace and the use of the world's goods

6. Since the good of peace is closely linked to the development of all peoples, the *ethical requirements for the use of the earth's goods* must always be taken into account. The

⁷ Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

⁸ Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), 421.

⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 41: AAS 83 (1991), 844.

Second Vatican Council rightly recalled that "God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of everyone and of all peoples; so that the good things of creation should be available equally to all, with justice as guide and charity in attendance."¹⁰

As a member of the human family, each person becomes as it were a *citizen of the world*, with consequent duties and rights, since all human beings are united by *a common origin and the same supreme destiny*. By the mere fact of being conceived, a child is entitled to rights and deserving of care and attention; and someone has the duty to provide these. The condemnation of racism, the protection of minors, the provision of aid to displaced persons and refugees, and the mobilization of international solidarity towards all the needy are nothing other than consistent applications of the principle of world citizenship.

7. The good of peace should be seen today as closely related to the *new goods* derived from progress in science and technology. These too, in application of the principle of the universal destination of the earth's goods, need to be *put at the service of humanity's basic needs*. Appropriate initiatives on the international level can give full practical implementation to the principle of the universal destination of goods by guaranteeing to all - individuals and nations - the basic conditions for sharing in development. This becomes possible once the barriers and monopolies that marginalize many peoples are removed.¹¹

¹⁰ Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

¹¹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 35: AAS 83 (1991), 837.

The good of peace will be better ensured if the international community takes on greater responsibility for what are commonly called *public goods*. These are goods which all citizens automatically enjoy, without having consciously chosen them or contributed to them in any way. Such is the case, for example, at the national level, with such goods as the judiciary system, the defence system and the network of highways and railways. In our world the phenomenon of increased globalization means that more and more public goods are taking on a global character, and as a result *common interests* are daily increasing. We need but think of the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace and security, concern for climate change and disease control. The international community needs to respond to these interests with a broader network of juridical accords aimed at *regulating the use of public goods* and inspired by universal principles of fairness and solidarity.

8. The principle of the universal destination of goods can also make possible a more effective approach to *the challenge of poverty*, particularly when we consider the extreme poverty in which millions of people are still living. The international community, at the beginning of the new millennium, set the priority of halving their number by the year 2015. The Church supports and encourages this commitment and invites all who believe in Christ to show, practically and in every sector, a *preferential love for the poor*²

The tragedy of poverty remains closely linked to the issue of the *foreign debt of poor countries*. Despite significant

¹² Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42: AAS 80 (1988), 572.

progress in this area, the problem has not yet been adequately resolved. Fifteen years ago I called public attention to the fact that the foreign debt of poor countries "is closely related to a series of other problems such as foreign investment, the proper functioning of the major international organizations, the price of raw materials and so forth."¹³ Recent moves in favour of debt reduction, centred mainly on the needs of the poor, have certainly improved the quality of *economic growth*. Yet, because of a number of factors, this growth is still quantitatively insufficient, especially in relation to the millennium goals. Poor countries remain trapped in a *vicious circle*: low income and weak growth limit savings and, in turn, weak investments and an inefficient use of savings do not favour growth.

9. As Pope Paul VI stated and as I myself have re-affirmed, the only really effective means of enabling States to deal with the grave problem of poverty is to provide them with the necessary resources through *foreign financial aid* - public and private - granted under reasonable conditions, within the framework of international commercial relations regulated with fairness.¹⁴ What is urgently needed is a *moral and economic mobilization*, one which respects agreements already made in favour of poor countries, and is at the same time prepared to review those agreements which have proved excessively burdensome for some countries. In this regard,

¹³ *Address to Participants in the Study Week of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences* (27 October 1989), 6: *Insegnamenti* XII/2 (1989), 1050.

¹⁴ Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 56-61: AAS 59 (1967), 285-287; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 33-34: AAS 80 (1988), 557-560.

new impulse should be given to *Public Aid for Development*, and new forms of financing for development should be explored, whatever the difficulties entailed.¹⁵ Some governments are already looking carefully at promising mechanisms for this; these significant initiatives should be carried out in a spirit of authentic sharing, with respect for the *principle of subsidiarity*. The management of financial resources destined to the development of poor countries should also entail scrupulous adherence, on the part of both donors and recipients, to sound administrative practices. The Church encourages and contributes to these efforts. One need only mention the significant contribution made by the many Catholic agencies dedicated to aid and development.

10. At the end of the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, I spoke of the urgent need for a new *creativity in charity*¹⁶ in order to spread the Gospel of hope in the world. This need is clearly seen when we consider *the many difficult problems standing in the way of development in Africa*: numerous armed conflicts, pandemic diseases aggravated by extreme poverty, and political instability leading to widespread insecurity. These are tragic situations which call for a *radically new direction for Africa*: there is a need to create *new forms of solidarity, at bilateral and multilateral levels*, through a more decisive commitment on the part of all, with complete conviction that the well-being of the peoples of Africa is an indispensable condition for the attainment of the universal common good.

¹⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Message to the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: L'Osservatore Romano*, 10 July 2004, p. 5.

¹⁶ Cf. No. 50: AAS93(2001), 303.

May the peoples of Africa become the protagonists of their own future and their own cultural, civil, social and economic development! May Africa cease to be a mere recipient of aid, and become a responsible agent of convinced and productive sharing! Achieving this goal calls for a new political culture, especially in the area of international cooperation. Once again I wish to state that failure to honour the repeated promises of *Public Aid for Development*, the still unresolved question of the heavy foreign debt of African countries and the failure to give those countries special consideration in international commercial relations, represent grave obstacles to peace which urgently need to be addressed and resolved. Today more than ever, a decisive condition for bringing peace to the world is an acknowledgement of the interdependence between wealthy and poor countries, such that "development either becomes shared in common by every part of the world or it undergoes a process of regression even in zones marked by constant progress."¹⁷

The universality of evil and Christian hope

11. Faced with the many tragic situations present in the world, Christians confess with humble trust that God alone can enable individuals and peoples to overcome evil and achieve good. By his death and resurrection, Christ has redeemed us and ransomed us "with a price" (*1 Cor* 6:20; 7:23), gaining salvation for all. With his help, *everyone can defeat evil with good*.

¹⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 17: AAS 80 (1988)532.

Based on the certainty that evil will not prevail, Christians *nourish an invincible hope* which sustains their efforts to promote justice and peace. Despite the personal and social sins which mark all human activity, hope constantly gives new impulse to the commitment to justice and peace, as well as firm confidence in the possibility of *building a better world*.

Although the "mystery of iniquity" (2 *Th* 2:7) is present and active in the world, we must not forget that redeemed humanity is capable of resisting it. Each believer, created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ, "who in a certain way has united himself to each human being",¹⁸ can cooperate in the triumph of good. The work of "the Spirit of the Lord fills the earth" (cf. *Wis* 1:7). Christians, especially the lay faithful, "should not, then, hide their hope in the depth of their hearts, but rather express it through the structures of their secular lives in continual conversion and in wrestling 'against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of iniquity.'¹⁹

12. No man or woman of good will can renounce the struggle to overcome evil with good. This fight can be fought effectively only with the weapons of love. *When good overcomes evil, love prevails and where love prevails, there peace prevails*. This is the teaching of the Gospel, restated by the Second Vatican Council: "the fundamental law of human

¹⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

¹⁹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 35.

perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love."²⁰

The same is true in the social and political spheres. In this regard, Pope Leo XIII wrote that those charged with preserving peace in relations between peoples should foster in themselves and kindle in others "charity, the mistress and queen of all the virtues."²¹ Christians must be convinced witnesses of this truth. They should show by their lives that love is the only force capable of bringing fulfillment to persons and societies, the only force capable of directing the course of history in the way of goodness and peace.

During this year dedicated to the *Eucharist*, may the sons and daughters of the Church find in the *supreme sacrament of love* the wellspring of all communion: communion with Jesus the Redeemer and, in him, with every human being. By Christ's death and resurrection, made sacramentally present in each Eucharistic celebration, we are saved from evil and enabled to do good. Through the new life which Christ has bestowed on us, we can recognize one another as brothers and sisters, despite every difference of language, nationality and culture. In a word, by sharing in the one bread and the one cup, we come to realize that we are "God's family" and that together we can make our own effective contribution to building a world based on the values of justice, freedom and peace.

²⁰ Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 38.

²¹ Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *Acta Leonis XIII* 11 (1892), 143; cf. Benedict XV, Encyclical Letter *Pacem Dei*: *AAS* 12 (1920), 215.

Message for the 42nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations

JOHN PAUL II

"Called to put out into the deep"

*Venerable Brethren in the Episcopate,
dearest Brothers and Sisters!*

1. *"Due in altum!"* At the beginning of the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, I made reference to the words with which Jesus encourages the first disciples to let down their nets for a catch, which turned out to be a marvellous one. Jesus says to Peter: *"Due in altum - Put out into the deep"* (Lk 5,4). "Peter and the first companions trusted Christ's words and cast their nets" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 1).

This well-known Gospel scene can serve as the background setting of the coming World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which has the theme: *"Called to put out into the deep"*. This is a special occasion for reflecting on the vocation to follow Christ and, in particular, to follow him in the priesthood and the consecrated life.

2. *"Due in altum!"* The command of Christ is particularly relevant in our time, when there is a widespread mentality which, in the face of difficulties, favours personal non-commitment. The first condition for "putting out into the deep" is to cultivate a deep spirit of prayer nourished by a daily listening to the Word of God. The authenticity of the Christian life is measured by the depth of one's prayer, an art that must be humbly learnt "from the lips of the Divine Master", almost imploring "like the first disciples: 'Lord, teach us to pray!' (Lk 11,1). In prayer, a conversation with Christ develops and it makes us his intimate friends: 'Abide in me and I in you' (Jn 15,4)" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 32).

The link with Christ through prayer also makes us aware that He is also present in moments of apparent failure, when tireless effort seems useless, as happened to the Apostles themselves, who after toiling all night, exclaimed: "Master, we took nothing" (Lk 5,5). It is especially in these moments that one needs to open one's heart to the abundance of grace and to allow the word of the Redeemer to act with all its power: *"Due in altum!"* (cfr *Novo millennio ineunte*, 38).

3. Whoever opens his heart to Christ will not only understand the mystery of his own existence, but also that of his own vocation; he will bear the abundant fruit of grace. The first fruit will be his growth in holiness, in the course of a spiritual journey which begins with the gift of Baptism and continues even to the fullness of perfect love (cfr *ibid.*, 30). Living the Gospel without adding to it, the Christian becomes always increasingly capable of loving in the way that Christ loved, and welcomes the exhortation of Christ: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"

(Mt 5,48). He will commit himself to persevering in unity with his brothers within the communion of the Church, and he will place himself at the service of the new evangelization, to proclaim and bear witness to the wonderful truth of the saving love of God.

4. Dear adolescents and young people, it is to you in a particular way that I renew the invitation of Christ to "put out into the deep". You find yourselves having to make important decisions for your future. I still hold in my heart the memory of the many opportunities I have had over the years to meet with young people, who have now become adults, some of them your own parents perhaps, or priests or religious, your teachers in the faith. I saw them, happy as young people should be, but also thoughtful, because they were conscious of a desire to give full 'meaning' to their lives. I came to recognize more and more how strong is the attraction in young people to the values of the spirit, and how sincere is their desire for holiness, 'Young people need Christ, but they also know that Christ chose to be in need of them.

Dear young men and women! Trust Christ; listen attentively to his teachings, fix your eyes on his face, persevere in listening to his Word. Allow Him to focus your search and your aspirations, all your ideals and the desires of your heart.

5. Now I turn to you, dear parents and Christian educators, to you dear priests, consecrated persons and catechists. God has entrusted to you the peculiar task of guiding young people on the path to holiness. Be an example to them of generous fidelity to Christ. Encourage them to "put out into the deep" without hesitation, responding eagerly to the invi-

tation of the Lord. Some he calls to family life, others to consecrated life or to the ministerial priesthood. Help them to discern their path, and to become true friends of Christ and his true disciples. When adult Christians show themselves capable of revealing the face of Christ through their own words and example, young people are more ready to welcome His demanding message, stamped as it is with the mystery of the Cross.

Do not forget that today too there is need of holy priests, of persons wholly consecrated to the service of God! With this in mind, I want to repeat once more: "There is a pressing need to implement an extensive plan of vocational promotion, based on personal contact and involving parishes, schools, and families in the effort to foster a more attentive reflection on the essential values of life. These values reach their fulfillment in the response which each person is invited to give to God's call, particularly when the call implies the total gift of oneself and of one's energies for the sake of the Kingdom" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 46)

To you, young people, I repeat the word of Jesus: "*Due in ahum!*". In proposing His exhortation once more to you, I think at the same time of the words which Mary, his Mother, addressed to the servants at Cana in Galilee: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn* 2,5). Dear young people, Christ is asking you to "put out into the deep" and the Virgin Mary is encouraging you not to hesitate in following Him.

6. May an ardent prayer sustained by the motherly intercession of Mary, rise from every corner of the earth, to the heavenly Father to obtain "*labourers for his harvest*" (*Mt* 9, 38). May He give zealous and holy priests to every part

of his flock. Sustained by this awareness we turn to Christ, the High Priest, and we pray to Him with renewed trust:

Jesus, Son of God,
in whom the fullness of the Divinity dwells,
You call all the baptized to "put out into the deep",
taking the path that leads to holiness.
Waken in the hearts of young people the desire
to be witnesses in the world of today
to the power of your love.
Fill them with your Spirit of fortitude and prudence,
so that they may be able to discover the full truth
about themselves and their own vocation.

Our Saviour,
sent by the Father to reveal His merciful love,
give to your Church the gift of young people
who are ready to put out into the deep,
to be the sign among their brothers
of Your presence which renews and saves.

Holy Virgin, Mother of the Redeemer,
sure guide on the way towards God and
towards neighbour,
You who pondered his word
in the depth of your heart,
sustain with your motherly intercession
our families and our ecclesial communities,
so that they may help adolescents
and young people to answer generously
the call of the Lord.
Amen.

Message for the 39th World Communications Day

JOHN PAUL II

*"The Communications Media: At the Service
of Understanding Among Peoples"*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. We read in the Letter of Saint James, "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so" (*Jas* 3:10). The Sacred Scriptures remind us that words have an extraordinary power to bring people together or to divide them, to forge bonds of friendship or to provoke hostility.

Not only is this true of words spoken by one person to another: it applies equally to communication taking place at any level. *Modern technology places at our disposal unprecedented possibilities for good, for spreading the truth of our salvation in Jesus Christ and for fostering harmony and reconciliation.* Yet its misuse can do untold harm, giving rise to misunderstanding, prejudice and even conflict. The theme

chosen for the 2005 World Communications Day - "The Communications Media: At the Service of Understanding Among Peoples" - addresses an urgent need: to promote the unity of the human family through the use made of these great resources.

2. One important way of achieving this end is through education. The media can teach billions of people about other parts of the world and other cultures. With good reason they have been called "the first Areopagus of the modern age... for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families, and within society at large" (*Redemptoris Missio*, 37). Accurate knowledge promotes understanding, dispels prejudice, and awakens the desire to learn more. Images especially have the power to convey lasting impressions and to shape attitudes. They teach people how to regard members of other groups and nations, subtly influencing whether they are considered as friends or enemies, allies or potential adversaries.

When others are portrayed in hostile terms, seeds of conflict are sown which can all too easily escalate into violence, war, or even genocide. Instead of building unity and understanding, the media can be used to demonize other social, ethnic and religious groups, fomenting fear and hatred. Those responsible for the style and content of what is communicated have a grave duty to ensure that this does not happen. Indeed, *the media have enormous potential for promoting peace and building bridges between peoples*, breaking the fatal cycle of violence, reprisal, and fresh violence that is so widespread today. In the words of Saint

Paul, which formed the basis of this year's *Message for the World Day of Peace*: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (*Rom 12:21*).

3. If such a contribution to peace-making is one of the significant ways the media can bring people together, its influence in favour of the swift mobilization of aid in response to natural disasters is another. It was heartening to see how quickly the international community responded to the recent tsunami that claimed countless victims. The speed with which news travels today naturally increases the possibility for timely practical measures designed to offer maximum assistance. In this way the media can achieve an immense amount of good.

4. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: "If the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully" (*Inter Mirifica*, 4).

The fundamental ethical principle is this: "The human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication should be by persons to persons for the integral development of persons" (*Ethics in Communications*, 21). In the first place, then, the communicators themselves need to put into practice in their own lives the values and attitudes they are called to instill in others. Above all, this must include a genuine commitment to the common good - a good that is not confined by the narrow interests of a particular group or nation but embraces the needs and interests of all, the good of the entire human family (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, 132). *Communicators have the opportunity to promote a true culture of life by*

distancing themselves from today's conspiracy against life (cf. *Evangelium Vitae*, 17) and conveying the truth about the value and dignity of every human person.

5. The model and pattern of all communication is found in the Word of God himself. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (*Heb* 1:1). The Incarnate Word has established a new covenant between God and his people - a covenant which also joins us in community with one another. "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (*Eph* 2:14).

My prayer on this year's World Communications Day is that the men and women of the media will play their part in *breaking down the dividing walls of hostility in our world*, walls that separate peoples and nations from one another, feeding misunderstanding and mistrust. May they use the resources at their disposal to strengthen the bonds of friendship and love that clearly signal the onset of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin: The Forgotten Bishop from the North

ERICSON M. JOSUE¹

Introduction

Rarely is the name Alfredo Verzosa read in the annals of the Northern Luzon Church or in the history the Philippine Catholic Church. Unlike the names, Archbishop Miguel de Benavidez, Dionisio Cardinal Dougherty, Frs. Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, Jacinto Zamora and Gregorio Aglipay who are found in Church history books and articles, Bishop Verzosa's name is seldom found mentioned. Although, he was not as popular or as patriotic as the abovementioned names, popular testimonies and extant documents attest to the man as an admirable figure of exceptional piety and magnanimous obedience. The bishop is the Alpha of Ilocano Episcopology and as being so, he was able to lay a foundation that local bishops and priests would find worthy of emulation.

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Some years back, while on a visit to the Cathedral Crypt of Vigan, the writer's attention was arrested by the tombstone of a bishop which bore a title different from the common "*Dignissimo Obispo de Nueva Segovia*" (Most worthy Bishop of Nueva Segovia). Above the crypt of the great Archbishop Santiago Sancho, first Filipino Ordinary and first Archbishop of Nueva Segovia,² was another bishop's crypt marked thus: "*Obispo Titular de Capsa, Obispo Dimisionario de Lipa*" (Titular Bishop of Capsa, Resigned Bishop of Lipa). The title alone would lead one into thinking that this prelate did not serve as diocesan bishop in the venerable archdiocese. The writer asked, "*Why is a bishop from another diocese, so distant from Vigan interred in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Nueva Segovia? How is he linked to the Ilocos?*" These questions became the primordial point of the quest for the story of the man - **Most Rev. Alfredo F. Verzosa, D.D.**

One day in the college seminary,³ while scanning over the archives at the library, the author unintentionally found an old souvenir book on the Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee of the late Archbishop Sancho held in 1953. Here, he found a page wherein Bishop Alfredo Verzosa's greetings to the Archbishop appeared with picture above the message. The picture introduced to the writer how the late Alfredo Verzosa looked like. After some days, while looking at another souvenir book, the 150th Anniversary Book of the Vigan Major Seminary, the name Alfredo Verzosa was again found in the list of alumni. It was

² Most Rev. Santiago C. Sancho was the first Filipino Bishop to govern Nueva Segovia who became its first Archbishop when the ecclesiastical territory was elevated as an Archdiocese on 29 June 1951.

•* i.e. San Pablo Major Seminary - Regional College Seminary for Northern Luzon in Baguio City.

there where the author learned his connection with Vigan - the man was an Ilocano and native of the said town. In almost all the old journals that the writer opened, Verzosa's name appeared. Even in a recent newspaper his name was found in the headline.⁴ Later, a fellow seminarian came up with the writer a book about the alleged supernatural events in Lipa where the name Alfredo Verzosa was once again mentioned. This was a very curious experience that later led to this research.

The book⁵, which the fellow seminarian gave, provided an investigative and comprehensive exposition about the controversial Lipa Miracle that interested the writer to pursue the story of the late Bishop Verzosa as the focus of his research papers when he reached the Theological Seminary.

The Boy from Vigan

On December 9, 1877, a baby boy was born to the Catholic couple, Don Alejandro Verzosa and Dona Micaela Florentin, Chinese *mestizos* and residents of the *Gremio de Mestizos* (village of the half Chinese) in the Capital Town of Vigan. The baby was baptized on the day of his birth by Padre Don Apolinario Concepcion at the Vigan Cathedral and was given the name, Alfredo.⁶ He was the second of seven

⁴ News about the Lipa Miracle by June Keithley was published in the headline of the Philippine Daily Inquirer dated 8 September 1999.

⁵ It was the book by June Keithley, Lipa-with the original account of the events at Lipa Carmel in 1948 by Mo. Cecilia of Jesus, OCD. Thanks to Sem. Bernice Wynn P. Rio.

⁶ *Archivo Nueva Segovia (ANS) Libro de Bautismos de Vigan. Tomo XXX. Folio 290 vuelto (v).*

children.⁷ On July 11, 1878, seven months after his birth, the infant Alfredo received the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation from the Most Illustrious and Most Rev. Mariano Cuartero de la Virgen del Pilar, then Bishop of Nueva Segovia at the oratory of the Episcopal Palace.⁸

The young Alfredo started his education in the *Primera Enseñanza* or Primary Education. This was the first stage of Educational Instruction during his time which could parallel but not entirely comparable to today's Elementary Education set-up. Sources related to Alfredo Verzosa's *Primera Enseñanza* are scarce but the writer would like to present the set-up of this educational stage during Verzosa's time in order to give the readers a faint glimpse of his years in the Primary Education. In an issue of the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* in 1929, mention was made of Alfredo having his Primary Education in his *Ciudad de Natal* (City of Birth) - Vigan, Ilocos Sur.⁹

The Spaniards believed that the best government is founded on Christian Education. For this reason, to assure the best government in its colony, the so-called First Schools were established. These were parochial schools where the basics in Education were introduced. The curriculum included the

⁷ The late Mr. Damaso King, a local historian from Vigan provided the writer with the family tree of the bishop which he traced from the Vigan Parish Archives. The Verzosa Children were Socorro, ALFREDO, Caridad, Feliciano, Agustino Alejandro, Jose and Emilio (The youngest was a civil lawyer and later followed his brother, Alfredo to the priesthood. He was incardinated to the Lipa Diocese).

⁸ ANS, *Libro de Confirmaciones, Tomo XIII, Folio 170 v.*

⁹ "Jerarquía Eclesiástico de Filipinas - El Ilmo. Sr. Dr. D. Alfredo Verzosa, Obispo de Lipa", *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* (Mayo, 1929), 275.

Four R's (Religion, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) and skills in Arts and Trades.¹⁰ In 1871, Governor-General La Torre enforced in the Philippines the study plan used in another Spanish Colony, Cuba.¹¹ This was the plan in effect during the young Alfredo's Primary Education.

Alfredo probably started his *Primera Ensenanza* around the years 1883 or 1884. In his message in the Vigan Seminary Yearbook of 1940, he mentioned being 12 years old when he started his *Segunda Ensenanza* (Secondary Education).¹² That would mean he was 12 years old in 1889. Bazaco says that Filipino Children were obliged to enroll in the Primary School at age six or seven.¹³ If we count six or seven years back from 1889, we could rightly assume that he might have started his Primary Education when he was about the age of six or seven in 1883 or 1884.

In the Decree of 1863, it was emphatically mandated that Spanish Language be taught in the Primary Schools. Teaching started slowly from the local dialect then gradually taught as fast as the pupils could comprehend it.¹⁴ In the *Decreto del Superior Gobierno* issued on October 30, 1867, parents were ordered to send their children to school in order to learn

¹⁰ Fr. Evergisto Bazaco, OP, *History of Education in the Philippines*, (Manila: University of Sto. Tomas Press, 1953) 64. Hereafter Bazaco.

¹¹ Bazaco, 223.

¹² "*Mensaje del Excmo. y Revmo. Sr. Alfredo Verzosa, D.D.*", *Militae Sacrae Tirones-Seminario de la Inmaculada Concepcion* - Vigan, Ilocos Sur (Manila: Catholic Trade School, 1940), 27. Hereafter *Mensaje*.

¹³ Bazaco, 231.

¹⁴ *Escuelas de Instruccion Primaria de Indigenas de Archipelago de Filipinas* in Bazaco, 225.

Spanish. If one could not speak Spanish, he could not become a *Gobernadorcillo*, barrio head, member of the *Principalia*, or hold even the lowest offices of the state or in the courts.¹⁵ Penalties were imposed upon teachers and directors of schools who failed to follow the directives. Rewards were given to pupils who excelled in the language.

Fr. Amador Foz, who translated the message of Verzosa in the 1940 Yearbook, says that Verzosa's Spanish was excellent. Msgr. Gregorio Salvatus, PA, who was Verzosa's private secretary during the latter's retirement years, recounted that when the bishop gave his homily it was always in Spanish and he had a select group to do the translations for the people.¹⁶ Evidently, this early exposure to Spanish Language would later shape him to be a good Spanish speaker and writer.

The Young Alfredo in the *Segunda Ensenanza*

Secondary Education (*Segunda Ensenanza*) was the second ladder of education during the later years of the Spanish period. Like the *Primera Ensenanza* it was also distinct from the present educational system. It was closer to the European styles of education in that period. The course offered in this educational stage was above the concerns of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Here, grammar was given emphasis and students were taught the sciences and good customs.¹⁷ *Segunda Ensehanza* was the preparatory course for Higher

¹⁵ *Decreto del Superior Gobierno* in Bazaco, 226.

¹⁶ Interview with Msgr. Gregorio Salvatus, PA, Private Residence, Lucban, Quezon, 16 December 2002. Hereafter IMGS.

¹⁷ Bazaco, 293.

Education, which at that time can only be taken at the University of Sto. Tomas (UST). *Segunda Ensenanza* had five-year levels. After finishing the Secondary Course, the student was conferred with the *Bachiller en Artes* (Bachelor of Arts).

Bazaco says that in the period of 1865-1898,¹⁸ there was positive development in the Secondary Education in the Philippines. The course was offered in almost all provinces and there was the emergence of schools owned by lettered men who graduated from the colleges.¹⁹ In Vigan, there was the *Colegio de Padre Roman Ver* which according to the *Libertas*, a daily newspaper published by the University of Sto. Tomas was the school where Alfredo took the first two years of his *Segunda Ensenanza*?® This confused the researcher because in an issue of the *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* in 1954, a biography of Bishop Alfredo Verzosa was published and it mentioned that his classical or secondary studies were taken at the *Seminario Conciliar* of Vigan.²¹

¹⁸ The time when the young Alfredo took his Secondary Education was within this period.

¹⁹ Bazaco, 304-310. In Bazaco's book, he shows the following schools to have offered the *Segunda Ensenanza* in Vigan: *Seminario-Colegio de la Purisima Concepcion*, owned by the diocese, *Colegio y Escuela Normal de Nuestra Sra. Del Rosario*, managed by the Dominican Nuns, *Institute de Vigan* owned by a certain Don A. Jimenez", *Latinidad de Vigan* by D. Lusano Singson and the *Colegio de Padre Roman Ver* owned by a priest whom the school was named after.

²⁰ "Mon. Alfredo Verzosa y Florentino(sic), *Obispo de Lipa*", *Libertas*, 20 de Enero 1917, 1. Hereafter *Libertas*.

²¹ Alfredo Onabla, "In Memoriam - El Excmo. y Revmo. Sr. D. Alfredo Verzosa, DD - Officers return to Headquarters," *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas* (August 1954), 474. Hereafter Onabla.

It was providential that a 1940 Yearbook of the Vigan Seminary was found in the seminary archives and there, Verzosa as Bishop of Lipa, gave a message. In that message he affirmed the claim that he was an alumnus of the Vigan Seminary:

*It has been forty eight years when I was student of this beloved and unforgettable Seminary of Vigan; that is, at twelve years old I began to study on it, for a span of three years where I enrolled in the courses of 3rd year Latin, Philosophy and Physics, according to the prescribed and gradated subjects.*²²

The young Alfredo Verzosa enrolled in the seminary as an intern in 1890 when he was twelve. His mother strongly desired to see him become a priest. We can suppose that Alfredo's mother was a major instrument in his entrance to the seminary. At the *Seminario*, the young Alfredo, as aforementioned, took the first three years of his secondary education wherein he finished his Latin III, Philosophy III and Physics III;²³ these were major subjects during his time and important preparatory courses for Ecclesiastical Studies.

It was reported that files of the Vigan Seminary were burned when the old building was gutted down by fire in 1968. For this reason, no records about Alfredo's grades while in the Seminary of Vigan can be mentioned.

¹² *Hace cuarenta y ocho años que fui alumno de ese querido e inolvidable Seminario de Vigan; esto es, a mis doce años comencé a estudiar en el por espacio de tres años, que invertí en los cursos de 3.^{er} año de Latín, de Filosofía y de Física, según como estaban entonces dispuestas y graduadas las asignaturas. Mensaje, 27.*

²³ *Mensaje, 27.*

After his three years stay at the *Seminario* of Vigan, Alfredo decided to leave the seminary formation and proceeded to Manila to continue his studies for a Bachelor of Arts. He has the following words to say:

/ had not felt inclined to the clerical state, for which before I had a certain repugnance,²⁴ I then resolved with the blessing of my parents came to Manila to continue my studies.²⁵

Alfredo enrolled at the *Colegio de San Juan de Letran*²⁶ a Dominican Institution in Manila. This institution was next to University of Sto. Tomas in importance and prestige.²⁷ Letran is known to have produced numerous figures of Philippine Nationalism; among them, Padre Jose Burgos, Marcelo del Pilar, Emilio Aguinaldo, Sergio Osmefia and Manuel Quezon who would later become a close friend of Verzosa.

In Lejran he took the required examinations in order to accredit the subjects he had taken at the Vigan Semi-

²⁴ This repugnance might have been caused by the torture of the nine clerics of Nueva Segovia in 1896 (Alfredo's last year in the seminary) by the Spanish Friars, which was surely heard or witnessed by the young lad. These native clerics were accused of active involvement to freemasonry. The friars, with the knowledge of the bishop and his *provisor*, tortured the clerics at the seminary and later at the public plaza. The clerics were proven innocent and shortly reinstated to the ministry. The young seminarian might have been discouraged by this deplorable event which has also ignited an anti-Friar sentiment among the Ilocanos.

²⁵ *...inexperta no me sentia inclinado al estado ecclesiastico, antes bien le tenia cierta repugnancia, me resolví, con la bendición de mis padres, venir a Manila para seguir otros estudios. Mensaje, 27.*

²⁶ *Libertas* (20 de Enero 1917), 1.

²⁷ Bazaco, 312.

nary.²⁸ This was necessary step before his enrollment at the University of Sto. Tomas. He might have had plans of taking a secular course there. In his Third Year, Alfredo enrolled again at Letran.

The writer paid to visit the University of Sto. Tomas Archives, which still keeps files of its affiliate schools during the Spanish time. In the *Libro de Matriculas* (Book of Enrollments) of the Academic Year 1896-1897, the following data was found for Alfredo's *Segunda Ensenanza* in Letran (3rd year):

CURSO DE 1896 A 1897²⁹

Numero de Orden.	Nombre(s)	Pueblo de Naturaleza
2973-89-90-368	Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin	Vigan
Provincia	Domicilio	Colegio o Escuela en que Cursa
Ilocos Sur	Intramuros 1 Potenciana	Letran
Edad	3.^{er} Afio	
	<i>Analisis y Traduction Latina,</i>	
	<i>Rudimentos de Lengua Griega</i>	N.A
	<i>Y Moral Cristiana</i>	3. ^o
	<i>Historia Universal y de Espana</i>	M
	<i>Y Filipinos</i>	3. ^o
	<i>Aritmetica y Algebra</i>	S
		3.^o

²⁰ En Manila revalide todos mis estudios de Seminario para hacerlos academicos, como se decia entonces, a fin de poder cursor en la Universidad de Sto Tomas. Mensaje, 27.

²⁹ Univerity of Sto. Tomas Archives (USTA), *Libro de Matriculas - Segunda Ensenanza* - Colegio de San Juan de Letran, 3.^{er} Afio (LMSE- Letran), *Curso de 1896 a 1897*.

Numero de Orden refers to his number in the list of enrollees (refer to the entry). *Nombres* refers to the entry of names. We found his complete name in the entry: Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin. *Pueblo de Naturaleza* in English is "Town of Origin," which is Vigan. *Provincia* is "Province" and it names Ilocos Sur. *Domicilio* means "Domicile;" he resided at #1 Potenciana Street in Intramuros. The next data, which is *Colegio o Escuela en que cursa* refers to the college where he was studying: *Letran*. Under *Edad* or age, Alfredo was recorded as 18 years old.

The subsequent data presents the subjects he had taken and the grades given to each. The Spanish Grading System then was not the same as today. Subjects were marked as "S" - *Sobresaliente* (Excellent), if the student got the highest grade, "N" - *Notable* for Very Good. *Bueno* (B) or *Notablemente Aprovechado* (N.A) for Good, "M" - *Mediano* refers to Average, "A" - *Aprobado* means Passed and *Suspenso* for Failed. Alfredo had "N.A" mark in the subjects: Analysis and Translation of Latin, Rudiments of Greek and Christian Ethics. "M" was marked in the subjects: History of Spain and History of the Philippines. He got the highest mark "S" for his Arithmetic and Algebra.

After Alfredo's Third Year, the Philippine Revolution and Spanish-American War heightened. Schools had to be closed. There were two years of interruption in schooling.³⁰ Also, his home-diocese in Nueva Segovia was left without a bishop, the guerillas detained Bishop Campomanes and rest

of the Friars in Cagayan. Padre Don Gregorio Aglipay, a native of Batac, Ilocos Norte and alumnus of the Vigan Seminary became the Ecclesiastical Governor of the vacant diocese. It was said that Aglipay had ties with the revolutionaries and used his influence to convince Filipino Clergy to fight against Spain. The Archbishop of Manila accused him of usurpation of jurisdiction and after some acts of probing he was declared excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.³¹ The diocese fell into the hands of Fray Fidel Larrinaga, an Augustinian Friar, who was named the new Ecclesiastical Governor of Nueva Segovia. This period until the arrival of the new bishop in 1903 was a time of disarray in the Church of Nueva Segovia. These were the interim years in the history of this ecclesiastical jurisdiction.³²

Meanwhile, Alfredo returned to his studies after the interruption of schooling. He went back as a Fourth Year Student. In his Fourth Year files³³, the following information can be found:

Numero de orden	Nombre(s)	Pueblo de Naturaleza
301	Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin	Vigan
Provincia	Domicilio	Colegio o escuela en que Cursa
Ilocos Sur	Sta. Cruz Dulumbayan	Letran

³¹ Achutegui and Bemad, 89-90.

³² Fr. Friedrich Scharpf, SVD abridged by Sem. Valentin Dimoc, "The Church of Northern Luzon, A Nueva Segovia Perspective", *TUGOT* 1995 (Vigan, Ilocos Sur: Immaculate Conception School of Theology, 1995), 18-17. Hereafter Scharpf.

³³ USTA, LMSE-Letran (1897 a 1898).

Asignaturas:

Elementos de Retorica y

Poetica y Composicion

Castellana y Latina y

Moral Social

Sobresaliente

4.°

Geometrica y

Trigonometrica

Rectilinea

Sobresaliente

4.°

From this file, it can be seen that Alfredo had a new student number: 301, this was the number he bore until the end of his secondary education. He also changed residence: Sta. Cruz Dulumbayan. He earned *Sobresalientes* for his Elements of Rhetoric, Spanish Poetry, Spanish Composition, Latin, Social Ethics, Geometry and Trigonometry Rectilinear.

In March 1898, Alfredo entered as an intern at the *Colegio*,³⁴ There, he became an *agraciado*. Letran had four kinds of students during that time. First, the *Colegiales*, these were the orphaned boys of Spaniards or *mestizos*. This also included Spanish Children who were very poor and could not be supported by their parents. The *Agraciados* refer to Filipinos - these students paid token school fees or rendered services to the college. As aforementioned, Alfredo was in this class. The third type were the *Pupilos*, these were combinations of Spaniards, Filipinos or foreigners. They made up the rest of the intern group. The last type were the *Externos*, students who attended classes in Letran but not boarding and lodging in the college.³⁵

³⁴ *Libertas*, 1.

³⁵ "A College of the First Class", A tribute to San Vicente Liem de la Paz, Alumno y Martyr de Colegio de San Juan de Letran (NP:NY), 40.

When he reached his Fifth Year, he remained residing in Letran while taking his subjects at the University of Sto. Tomas, which was still then in Intramuros. In the *Libro de Matriculas* of that year, two subjects were entered - Notions of Natural History and English. He was again excellent in these subjects.

Asignaturas:

Nociones de Historia Natural

Sobresaliente

Lengua Inglesa

*Sobresaliente*³⁶

Looking at the data presented from his files as student in Letran, we can comment that Alfredo was an excellent student. He obtained *Sobresalientes* in almost all of his subjects. Msgr. Salvatus, says that Alfredo might have been a studious student, this was manifested in his being a talented superior.³⁷

In 1900, Alfredo Verzosa obtained his Degree in Bachelor of Arts. In 1918, the year after his ordination to the Episcopacy, the grateful Alumnus of Letran described his Alma Mater as:

*...a safe haven for the youth to avoid the spiritual shipwreck in these tempestuous times of passions.*³⁸

After finishing his course, he might have felt restless and confided his sentiments to a spiritual director.

³⁶ USTA, LMSE - Letran.

³⁷ IMGS.

³⁸ *Es para mi Colegio de Letran un asilo segu.ro de la juventud para evitar el naufragio espiritual en esta edad tempestuosa de los pasiones... fAlfredo, Obispo de Lipa. Colegio de San Juan de Letran - Alumni Directory, 1st Ed, 2 Vols. (Manila: Letran Alumni Ass. Inc., 1993) 1:185.*

*Having finished the task, I opened my heart to a Dominican Priest, a pious and holy one, and he decided on my lot: "that I should continue my clerical state". From then on, in line with my eternal salvation, he helped me so that all the openings to the brilliant faculties of the university could be closed to me, and that only one door could be opened and fulfilled to find peace and assure my eternal destiny - that of Theology.*³⁹

This opened for Alfredo the way back to his "First Love"
- Ecclesiastical Studies.

Ecclesiastical Studies

When the young Alfredo left the seminary in Vigan and pursued his studies in Manila, Alfredo's mother was disappointed, *"...to such affliction of my mother who wanted to see me become a priest."*⁴⁰ But with his sudden turnabout, back to ecclesiastical studies, he has the following words to describe his mother: *"Needless to say, my mother won and was so happy and above all, she had the joy of seeing me a priest and finally bishop."*⁴¹ His elder sister reported to him

³⁹ *Terminado este trabajo, confie mi corazon aunP. Dominico, muypiadoso y santo, y el decidio de mi suerte: "Que habia de seguir el estado ecclesiastico." Desde entonces, en orden a mi salvacion eterna, pqracione que todas las puertas de las brillantes facultades universitarias se me cerraran y que solo una me permanecia abierta y expedita para encontrar la paz y asegurar mi porvenir eterno, la de Teologia. Mensaje, 27.*

⁴⁰ *Pew con tantd afflixion de mi madre que mi queria ver sacerdote. Mensaje, 27.*

⁴¹ *Excurso decir que mi madre triunfo y se alegro mucho, sobre todo cuando ella tuvo la dicha de verme sacerdote y hasta Obispo. Mensaje, 27.*

that she saw their mother waking up at the middle of the night praying ardently. Here were Alfredo's very words:

*My elder sister told me that she (their mother) wakes up at the middle of the night, when I was still studying in Manila, she saw our mother kneeling, praying with tears...*⁴²

Alfredo enrolled at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Sto. Tomas in 1901. The Faculty of Sacred Theology was one of the earliest department of the institution. Passing the Degree in Bachelor of Arts was a requirement for enrollment in the said faculty. The enrollee was supposed to have adequate knowledge of Spanish and Latin.⁴³ The official text they used was the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Dominican Friars were the administrators and professors of the said Faculty.⁴⁴ After finishing the course and passing the required examinations, the student obtained the Bachelor of Theology.⁴⁵

Alfredo remained to stay in Letran as resident while taking his ecclesiastical studies at the university. The campus of UST was still then in Intramuros. In the *Libro de Matriculas* of the University of Sto. Tomas - Faculty of Theology for the School Year 1900-1901, the following data were registered:

⁴² *Mi hermana mayor me refirio, que cuando ella se despertaba a media noche, mientras yo estudiaba en Manila, veia a nuestra madre arrodillada, orando con muchas lagrimas... Mensaje, 27.*

⁴³ Bazaco, 391.

⁴⁴ Bazaco, 390.

⁴⁵ Bazaco, 392.

CURSO ACADEMICO DE 1900 A 1901⁴⁶
Alumnos Matriculados en la Facultad de Teología 1.º Año

Asignaturas:	Catedrático
<i>Propedentica ad S. Theologiam</i>	M.R.P. Fr. Ricardo Ma. Vaquero
<i>De Locis</i>	M.R.P. Fr. Manuel Alonso
<i>Hermeneutica y Exegesis Biblica</i>	

Numero	Nombre(s)	Edad	Pueblo	Provincia
1	Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin	22	Vigan	Ilocos Sur

Calificaciones Ordinarios

Asignaturas:	
<i>Propedentica ad S. Theologiam</i>	<i>Notable</i>
<i>De Locis</i>	<i>Sobresaliente</i>
<i>Hermeneutica y Exegesis Biblica</i>	<i>Notable</i>

Alfredo was first in the list. The chronology of alphabetical listing in the file is based on the first letter of the given name. Again his full name was written: Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin. He was twenty-two years old, from the town of Vigan, Province of Ilocos, Sur. He had *Very Good (Notable)* grades in *Propedentica ad Sacra Theologiam* under Fray Ricardo Ma. Vaquero and Biblical Hermeneutics and Exegesis. He earned an excellent grade in his *De Locis* from his professor Fray Manuel Alonso.

In the *Libro de Matriculas* of 1901-1902, the information below can be found:

⁴⁶ USTA, *Libro de Matriculas - Facultad de Teologia (LMFT), 1900 a 1901*.

CURSO ACADEMICO DE 1901 A 1902 ⁴⁷
Alumnos Matriculados en la Facultad de Teologia 2.º Afib

Asignaturas:

Tractatus de Deo
De Ultimo Fine, et Act. Humanis
Introduct. Critica ad S. Scripturam

Catedratico:

M.R.P. Fr. Manuel Alonso
M.R.P. Fr. Jose Ma. Ruiz

Numero	Nombre(s)	Edad	Pueblo	Provincia
75	Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin	23	Vigan	Ilocos Sur

Calificaciones Ordinarios

Asignaturas:

Tractatus de Deo
De Ultimo Fine et Act. Humani
Introduct. Critica ad S. Scripturam

Bueno
Bueno
Notable

Alfredo is found in this file to be number "15" in the list. He had *Buenos* in the subjects, *Tractatus de Deo* (Treatise on God) and *De Ultimo Fine at Actus Humanis* (On the Ultimate End and Human Acts), Frays Manuel Alonso and Jose Ma. Ruiz were his professors respectively. He also had *Notable* in his *Introduccion Critica ad Sacra Scripturam* (Introduction to Scriptural Criticism).

On January 4, 1902, Seminarian Alfredo received his Cassock, Tonsure and Four Minor Orders⁴⁸ from Bishop Martin Garcia Alcocer, then Bishop of Cebu and Apostolic

⁴⁷ USTA, LMFT, 1901 a 1902.

⁴⁸ In the Pre-Vatican II days, prior to the ordination of a seminarian as a subdeacon he must first receive the so-called Four Minor Orders. These Orders were as follows: Porter, Exorcist, Lector and Acolyte. These were conferred in a solemn ceremony presided over by the bishop.

Administrator of Manila at the Palace of the Archbishop.⁴⁹ This period was a critical moment in the history of the Philippine Church - this was the time when the schism initiated by Isabelo de los Reyes, Sr., a native of Vigan and alumnus of the diocesan seminary of Vigan, was about to erupt. This was the schism that greatly affected Alfredo's home-diocese in Nueva Segovia and would, later, pose a great challenge to him as a priest.

Seminarian Alfredo continued his stay at Letran where he was given the responsibility of the College Chapel, Physics Laboratory, Museum of Natural History and other services of the *Colegio*.⁵⁰ On June 1902, through the recommendation of Fray Agustin Roca, Alfredo's particular protector, he transferred residence at the university. There, he was made to take charge of the education of orphans^which the printing press of the university supported and sponsored.⁵¹

Speaking of Alfredo's Third Year academic record, below were the data from the *Libro de Matriculas*:

***CURSO ACADEMICO DE 1902 A 1903*⁵²**
Alumnos Matriculados en la Facultad de Teologia 3.^{er} Aflo

Numero	Nombre(s)	Edad	Pueblo	Provincia
	<i>Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin</i>	24	<i>Vigan</i>	<i>Ilocos Sur</i>

Calificaciones Ordinarios

⁴⁹ ANS, *Libro de Ordenes Sagradas* (LOS), Tomo II, Folio 2.

⁵⁰ Libertas, (20 de Enero 1917) 1.

⁵¹ Libertas, (20 de Enero 1917) 1.

⁵² USTA, LMFT, (1902 a 1903).

Asignaturas:

<i>De Creationes</i>	<i>Notable</i>
<i>De Legibus</i>	<i>Notable</i>
<i>Institutiones iuris Canonici</i>	<i>Notable</i>

Here, Alfredo was now 24 years old. He had three subjects in the file: *De Creationes* (On Creation), *De Legibits* (On Laws) and *Institutiones iuris Canonici* (Institutions of Canon Law). He obtained *Notables* in all these subjects. In the same compilation, it was found out that Don Manuel Quezon was a student in the university and at that time he was in his First Year. This shows that Alfredo and Manuel were contemporaries and their friendship might have started in their student days. When Manuel became Senate President of the American sponsored Government, he invited Alfredo, as Bishop of Lipa, to lead the Opening Prayer of the Constitutional Convention of 1934.⁵³

It was also within this School Year when the schism led by Isabelo de los Reyes reached its apex. On August 2, 1902, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* was founded. Because of the aim to establish a national church, some civil officials supported it. Later, Fr. Gregorio Aglipay, former Ecclesiastical Governor of Nueva Segovia joined the schism and became the first *Obispo Maximo* of the new church. This worsened the situation in the north (Nueva Segovia). Priests of Ilocos Norte, then part of Nueva Segovia's jurisdiction, followed the schism. Almost the whole Catholic populace of the said province joined the schismatic church.⁵⁴ Only one priest

⁵³ Henry S. Totanes, ed. *Kasaysayan: Story of the Filipino People, Timeline of Philippine History*, 10 Vols. (Manila: Asia Publishing Co. Ltd., 1998) 10:192.

⁵⁴ Achutegui and Bernad, 228.

remained steadfast to the Catholic Faith: Padre Roman Ver, then assistant priest in Laoag.⁵⁵

While all these commotions were happening in Nueva Segovia, Seminarian Alfredo went on his way to become a cleric. On March 28, 1903, the Ilocano seminarian was ordained a subdeacon. Bishop Alcocer conferred him the order at the chapel of the *Palacio Arzobispal*. According to his register in the Book of Holy Orders of Nueva Segovia, Alfredo was 25 years old when he received the Subdiaconate.⁵⁶

When Alfredo reached his Fourth Year he had the following in his file:

*CURSO ACADEMICO DE 1903 A 1904*⁵⁷

Alumnos Matriculados en la Facultad de Teologia 4.º Aflo

Asignaturas:

Catedratico

De Incarnatione Verbi

De Sacramentis

Teologia Moral 1^{er} Curso

Numero	Nombre(s)	Edad	Pueblo	P
15	Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin	25	Vigan	II

Calificaciones Ordinarios

Observaciones

⁵⁵ Achutegui and Bernad, 217. This priest according to Fr. Danny Laeda, the well-known Historian of the North, is the same priest who established a school in Vigan. Fr. Laeda further said that the priest also served as professor at the Vigan Seminary. Surely Alfredo had encounters with this priest who is recognized as a hero of Catholicism in Ilocos Norte.

⁵⁶ANS, LOS, *Tomo II, Folio 2*.

⁵⁷USTA, LMFT, *(1903 a 1904)*.

Asignaturas:*De Incarnatione Verbi**De Sacramentis**Teologia Moral 1^{er} Curso**Premio en Dogmatica*

Here, he is listed as 25 years old. No grades were written although three subjects were entered. They were as follows: *De Incarnatione Verbi* (On the Incarnate Word), *De Sacramentis* (On Sacraments) *Teologia Moral Primer Curso* (Moral Theology I). He had *Premio en Dogmatica* (Dogmatics) meaning, he excelled in this subject and he received a reward for it.

In his Fifth Year, Alfredo has the following academic data:

CURSO ACADEMICO DE 1904 A 1905*⁵⁸*Alumnos Matriculados en la Facultad de Teologia 5.º Ano****Asignaturas***Suma Theologica parte Dogmatica**Suma Theologica parte Moral**Teologica Moral 2º Curso**Historia Ecclesiastica***Catedratico***M.R.P. Fr. Jose Ma. Ruiz**M.R.P. Fr. Manuel Alonso**M.R.P. Fr. Mauel Palacios**M.R.P. Fr. Joaquin Recoder***Numero****Nombre(s)****Edad****Pueblo****Provincia**20 *Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin*

26

*Vigan**Ilocos Sur***Calificaciones Ordinarios****Asignaturas:***Suma Theologica parte Dogmatica**Suma Theologica parte Moral**Teologica Moral 2º Curso**Historia Ecclesiastica*⁵⁸ USTA, LMFT, (1904 a 1905).

He was number 20 in the list and was now 26. He took his *Suma Theologica parte Dogmatica* (Dogmatic part of the *Summa Theologica*) under Fray Jose Maria Ruiz. Fray Manuel Alonso was his professor in the *Suma Theologica parte Moral* (Moral part of the *Summa Theologica*). In his *Teologia Moral 2.º Cur so* (Moral Theology II) he had Fray Manuel Palacios as his mentor and Fray Joaquin Recoder as his professor in *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Church History). No grades were marked in the file.

On September 24, 1904, the young subdeacon was ordained to the Order of Deacons. The new Archbishop of Manila, Most Rev. Jeremias J. Harty, conferred the order on him. The ceremonies were done at the chapel of the Archbishop's Palace.⁵⁹ A month after his ordination to the Diaconate, Alfredo the Deacon was summoned by the new bishop in Nueva Segovia, Most Rev. Dennis Dougherty, to be ordained priest.⁶⁰ The ordination rites were held at the grandiose Cathedral of Saint Paul in Vigan on the 24th of December of the same year 1904.

Seemingly, the bishop was in a hurry to ordain Padre Alfredo to the Order of Presbyters. This might have been his response to the enormous lack of priests in Nueva Segovia, a problem caused by the defection of native clergy to the schismatic church. This caused orphaned mission areas, closed seminary and the non-immediate counteraction of the Aglipayan schism in Ilocos Norte.⁶¹

⁵⁹ANS, LOS, *Tomo II, Folio 2*.

⁶⁰Libertas (20 de Enero 1917), 1.

⁶¹Scharpf, 17.

Even as an ordained priest, Padre Alfredo continued his studies at the university until he finished the school year and started his mission as a priest in the Diocese of Nueva Segovia.

The Young and Zealous Priest of Nueva Segovia

The Deacon Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin was ordained priest on December 24, 1904 by Bishop Dennis Dougherty. The register of his presbyteral ordination can be found in the Book of Sacred Orders Volume 2 of Nueva Segovia. The following were the data:

*On the 24th of December 1904, the Most Illustrious and Most Rev. Dennis J. Dougherty, Bishop of this Diocese of Nueva Segovia, conferred the Sacred Order of the Priesthood in the Holy Cathedral Church of Vigan, to **Don Alfredo Verzosa**, 27 years of age, born in Vigan on the 9th of December 1877, legal son of Don Alejandro Verzosa and Doha Micaela Florentin.⁶²*

Padre Alfredo was the first *ordinandus* of the new bishop. If we try to examine, Padre Verzosa was a sign of hope for the chaotic diocese. Despite the defection of some priests to the schismatic church and despite the aged priests who were left steadfast in the faith, a young presbyter was raised who would ensure Nueva Segovia of continued vitality and a pro-

⁵² *En 24 de Diciembre de 1904 el Ilmo. y Rmo. Fr. Doctor D. Dionisio I. Dougherty, Obispo de esta Diocesis de Nueva Segovia confino el sagrado orden de Presbiterado en la Santa Iglesia Catedral de Vigan, a D. Alfredo Verzosa, de 27 años de edad, el cual nació en Vigan el día 9 de Diciembre de 1877, hijo legítimo de D. Alejandro y de Dona Micaela Florentin. ANS, LOS, Tomo II, Folio 2v.*

missing future. It is also interesting to note that the ordination took place on the day preceding the Birth of the Lord; it seemed it heralded a new beginning to the disordered diocese.

On January 3, 1905, the young Padre Alfredo was given the faculty to hear confession, celebrate and administer the sacraments and granted extraordinary faculties.⁶³

Padre Agustin Rosario, the Parish Priest of the Cathedral was transferred to another parish and while waiting for the new parish priest, Padre Alfredo became the *Cura Encargado* (Priest-in-charge) of the Cathedral Parish. He administered his first baptism there on January 3, 1905.⁶⁴ As the *cura encargado*, he baptized three children. In the Book of Marriages Book 20, he could be found to have solemnized three marriages.

On January 9, 1905, he was transferred as *cura encargado* in the Parish of St. Catherine of Alexandria in Santa. The parish was vacated by Padre Bonifacio Brillantes, the newly appointed Parish Priest of the Cathedral.

From Santa, Padre Alfredo was appointed assistant priest to Padre Eulogio Alcid in Bantay. Padre Eulogio Alcid was the priest who exhorted the Ilocos Sur Clergy not to give allegiance to any foreign bishop but not to cut ties with Rome. With the arrival of Bishop Dougherty armed with his charitable bearing, the bishop won back their loyalty.⁶⁵

⁶³ ANS, *Libro de Registros* (LR), Tomo I, Folio 14.

⁶⁴ Archives of the Vigan Parish (AVP), *Libro de Bautismos* (LB), Tomo XXXIX, Folios 96-97v.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Scharpf, SVD, "A History of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia (Vigan)," *The Ilocos Review* XXV (1993), 127. Hereafter IR XXV

As assistant in Bantay, the young Padre Alfredo was assigned to take his residence in the *visita* of San Ildefonso. This town, at that time, was on its preparatory phase for its erection as a parish. San Ildefonso had been a *visita* of Bantay since 1709. It was originally called Bantaoay. It became a separate town in 1769 but remained a *visita*. A convent was built there in 1803 and a church in 1821. Filipino Secular priests during the Spanish regime worked with the Augustinians in San Ildefonso. These seculars were the assistants of the Spanish Parish Priest of Bantay. The Secular Assistant had spiritual and juridical supervision over the town of San Ildefonso. This was the situation until San Ildefonso's inception as a parish in 1906.⁶⁶

Padre Verzosa administered his first baptism in San Ildefonso on June 28, 1905.⁶⁷ The first marriage he solemnized was on June 26, 1905.⁶⁸ Throughout his 11-month stay, he baptized 81 individuals and solemnized 12 marriages - a good sign of the recovering faith in this period of religious turmoil.

On September 25, 1905, Padre Alfredo was granted the permission to publish a book which he entitled "*Ni Apo Santa Maria*." A book that is difficult to find now, it was a manifestation of Padre Alfredo's zeal and persistence in propagating the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁶⁹ Padre Verzosa was also a brilliant writer and orator. He was a con-

⁶⁶ "Parish of St. Ildephonse," Nueva Segovia Bicentennial Souvenir (Manila: UST Press, 1958), 33.

⁶⁷ Archives of the Parish of St. Ildephonse (APSI), LB, *Tomo IV, Folio* 92v.

⁶⁸ APSI. *Libra de Casamientos* (LC), *Tomo II, Folio* 53.

⁶⁹ ANS, LR, *Tomo I, Folio* 17v.

tributor to the Jesuit Publication *Biblioteca Ilocana*.⁷⁰ Among his translations were the articles: "*Maysa a Raay a Sabsabong*" (A Dozen of Flowers)⁷¹ and "*Ti Zapatos a Balitoc*" (The Golden Shoe).⁷² Old write-ups would describe him as an eloquent orator and homilist.⁷³

After sometime, the young priest Alfredo Verzosa was named Parish Priest of Bantay - the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Charity⁷⁴ - in 1906 to succeed Padre Eulogio Alcid. His first baptism there was on May 13, 1906.⁷⁵ According to some notes, Padre Alfredo was a zealous and active priest. Fr. John Thompkins, SJ, a formator of the old Vigan Seminary who frequently wrote reports to his superior in Woodstock, Maryland in the United States, mentioned that Bantay was a bastion of Aglipayanism. But with the efforts of the young and zealous priest, he was able to re-establish the place.⁷⁶

The *Libros de Bautismos* within Padre Alfredo's stint in Bantay show that there were 3,228 individuals baptized.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ "El R.P. Jose Clotet, SJ," *Cultura Social*, **XII**, No. 135, (Mar 1924): 152. Hereafter CS.

⁷¹ "*Maysa Raay a Sabsabong*," *Biblioteca Ilocana*, No. 1, (Enero 1913): 3-45. Hereafter BI.

⁷² "*Ti Zapatos a Balitoc*," BI No. 11, (February 1913): 28-38.

⁷³ "*Las 'Bodas de Oro de Mons. Padilla'*", CS, 1, No. 6, (June 1913): 273.

⁷⁴ The Our Lady of Charity in Bantay is believed to be the oldest extant Marian image in Northern Luzon.

⁷⁵ Archives of the Parish of St. Augustine - Bantay (APSAB), LB, *Tomo XVII*, *Folio* 162.

⁷⁶ Achutegui and Bernad, 211.

⁷⁷ APSAB, LB, *Tomo XVII*, *Folios* 162-399 and LB, *Tomo XVIII*, *Folios* 2-171.

This was promising data for the recovering faith in Bantay. Padre Alfredo was also able to solemnize 583 marriages.⁷⁸ To have baptized and solemnized so many marriages in a period of 10 years, at a time of turmoil and chaos was a very laudable achievement.

Another notable project of Padre Alfredo was the changing of the Bantay Church roofing into galvanized iron. Originally, the church roof was of splitted bamboo and nipa. Unluckily, the galvanized roof was destroyed by bombs during the battle for the liberation of Ilocos Sur in 1945.⁷⁹

In 1908, after the verdict of the Supreme Court on the return of churches and properties taken by the Aglipayans to the Catholic Church, Bishop Dougherty started the offensive against the schismatic Ilocos Norte. He appointed native priests of Ilocos Norte who had remained steadfast to the Catholic faith to undertake a mission of reviving Catholicism in their respective hometowns. The situation was difficult because the loyalty of the people in Ilocos Norte had already been won by the schismatic priests. They had to endure being shouted upon, having with doors slam in their faces to the extent of being killed like the case of Padre Mariano Edralin of Sarrat, a contemporary of Padre Alfredo.

On August 18, 1910, he was granted to publish another book, *"Catesismo ti Sursuro ni Apotayo a Jesucristo"* (Cate-

⁷⁸APSAB, LC, *Tomo VI, Folios* 124v-215v.

⁷⁹ "History of the Statue of Our Lady of Charity," Souvenir Book of the Canonical Conation of Our Lady of Charity - Bantay, Ilocos Sur, (Baguio: Catholic School Press, 1956), 15.

chism on the Teachings of Our Lord Jesus).⁸⁰ This could have been an offensive move against the schism and a manifestation of his love for catechetics.

In the *Libertas* issue of January 20, 1917, a short biography of Padre Alfredo was written. It was mentioned in the article that in 1909, he together with a priest named Melanio Saro (sic)⁸¹ went to help in the mission for the schismatic Ilocos Norte. The following year, he was left alone in the Ilocos Norte Mission. He continued the work there till he had visited all the towns of the said province.⁸²

In a marriage register in St. Nicholas Parish in San Nicolas Town in Ilocos Norte, it can be found that Padre Alfredo solemnized a marriage there in 1909.⁸³ An interesting account on the mission to the schismatics was provided by the late Fr. Senen Encarnacion, Padre Alfredo's confidant when he was already bishop in Lipa. Fr. Encarnacion said:

He converted barrio people to the faith that is why without his meaning to; he incurred the anger of leaders of other sects who warned him not to go to barrios. He did not heed those threats and one time, a leader of another sect threw a spear at him

⁸⁰UANS, LR, Tomo I, Folio 51.

⁸¹ Such name is not found in the list of Nueva Segovia Clergy covering this period, instead Padre Melanio Lazo was the one listed*

⁸² *Libertas* (20 de Enero 1917), 1.

⁸³ *Archivo Diocesano de Laoag* (ADL), San Nicolas - LC, Tomo VIII, Folio 19.

*on his way to the barrios. The spear missed Fr. Verzosa but killed his horse.*⁸⁴

Bishop Dougherty was transferred to the Diocese of Jaro in 1909. He received his appointment in 1908 but remained in Vigan until the ordination of his successor, Bishop James Carroll.⁸⁵ Bishop James Carroll was one of the priests brought to Vigan by Bishop Dougherty from Philadelphia. He served as Chancellor, Vicar General and Financial Secretary to Bishop Dougherty. His term in Nueva Segovia was short. He resigned in 1912 after inflicted with an injury during a visit to Abra.⁸⁶ Bishop Carroll convoked the Diocesan Synod for Nueva Segovia in 1911 as a response to the Synod of Manila of 1907. Here, Padre Alfredo was named one of the *Consultores* of the Synod.⁸⁷

After Bishop James Carroll resigned as Bishop of Nueva Segovia, the Holy See sent a replacement in the person of Bishop Peter Joseph Hurth. The new bishop was from Nittel in Germany but had migrated to the United States. Before he was named for the see of Nueva Segovia, he had already been a bishop in Dacca in East Bengal. He belonged to the Congregation of the Holy Cross.

At this time, vocations were already fast rising. Priestly Ordinations were becoming frequent. In some parishes visited

⁸⁴ Fr. Senen Encarnacion, "For his God and Queen - A Bio-sketch, Most Rev. Msgr. Alfredo Verzosa," Lipa: Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart, Photocopied. Hereafter Encarnacion.

⁸⁵ IR XXV, 148.

⁸⁶ IR XXV, 149.

⁸⁷ ANS, *Libro de Gobierno* (LG), Tomo I. Folio 92v.

by the writer during the search for archival sources, it was found out that pastoral visitations during Bishop Hurth's term were very frequent. Padre Alfredo Verzosa could be found in these files to be one of the secretaries whom the bishop would bring in his visits. The Bishop also gave Padre Verzosa various posts in the diocese.

The 1914 Synod in Nueva Segovia was convoked by Hurth. Padre Alfredo again played important role in this assembly. The *Libertas* has this data to present:

*Msgr. Hurth, the current Bishop of Nueva Segovia, particularly manifested his confidence in him (Verzosa), entrusting some businesses and important commissions of the diocese to him and confirming him on his office as consultor in the last synod of Nueva Segovia.*⁸⁸

Looking closer into the early assignments given to Padre Alfredo, it can be gathered that the Bishop of Nueva Segovia had a great hope and expectation in the young priest. He was assigned to parishes that challenged him. The Cathedral, for example, was a big job to take on. Though his stint there was short, it was obvious that the bishop had trusted him, by naming him the *cura encargado* of the Cathedral a month immediately after his ordination. San Ildefonso was also a challenge as Padre Alfredo had to prepare it for its erection as a parish. Bantay - the bastion of Aglipayanism in Ilocos Sur was the greatest challenge. Padre Verzosa gave all he could, his zeal and youth to fulfill the demand of his vow and to defend the Catholic Faith.

⁸⁸ *Libertas* (20 de Enero 1917), 1.

The Youthful Bishop of Lipa

On September 6, 1916⁸⁹ - Anniversary of the Coronation of Pope Benedict XV, P. Alfredo Verzosa was named by the aforementioned pope as Second Bishop of Lipa⁹⁰ to succeed Bishop Giuseppe Petrelli.[^] Bishop-elect Alfredo Verzosa was the fourth Filipino to be elevated into the Episcopacy. The first being Bishop Jorge Barlin (1850-1909) of Nueva Caceres who became a bishop in 1905, second was Bishop Juan Bautista Gorordo (1862-1934) of Cebu in 1909 and the third was Bishop Pablo Singzon (1851-1923) of Calbayog in 1910. Monsignor Alfredo Verzosa was the first Filipino Bishop to be elected at a young age - 38 years and 9 months - and the first from the Northern Luzon Region.

The late Fr. Senen Encarnacion had this comment:

In 1917 (sic)⁹², the year the Blessed Virgin Mother appeared in Fatima, Padre Verzosa was named Bishop of Lipa... Padre Verzosa was named to the post without exerting any Church political influence but on the basis of his personal conduct and merits and the way he managed the affairs of the parishes he had been assigned at.⁹³

⁸⁹ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS), VIII, Num. 10 (Die 5 Octobris 1916): 358.

⁹⁰ The diocese was originally comprised by the Civil Provinces of Batangas, Tayabas (now Quezon Province), Laguna, Marinduque and Mindoro.

⁹¹ CS IV, no. 18, (Oct. 1916):566.

⁹² Bishop Verzosa was preconized on September 6, 1916. He started his ministry as Bishop of Lipa on January 20, 1917.

⁹³ Encarnacion, 1.

A more substantial description from an eyewitness to the bishop's election would come from the late Monsignor Bonifacio Brillantes, the then Vicar for Ilocos Sur. He had the following sentiments to describe the bishop-elect:

...such kind of papal decree (election as bishop) presupposes the idea of a valuable recompense for the virtue and rightful esteem to the merit of one of the most respected Filipino priests (Padre Verzosa); who although he made it a point to live unknown always, hidden from the glance of the world, the pulpits of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, the mission at the entire province infected by the schism, the arena of the press, the heavy and important matters of the diocese realized with brilliance in the early and long position in the curia started from the early years of his priestly ministry have brought his name to be known and brought him to the heights of fame up to the feet of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV, who as just and wise Pontiff has wished to reward him now... we feel deeply the separation of Monsignor Verzosa from our community, because his transfer will also be the loss of our brilliant orator, our veteran journalist, our zealous missionary, our intelligent Episcopal Adviser and our gentle brother.⁹⁴

"...que tal conducta papal envuelve la idea de un valiosa premio a la virtud y justa estima del merito de uno de los mas preclaros sacerdotes; el cual si bien trato siempre de vivir desconocido, ocultandose a las miradas del mundo; los pulpitos de la Diocesis de Nueva Segovia, las Misiones en toda una provincia infestada del cisma, la palestra de la prensa, los graves e importantisimos asuntos del Obispado realizados con lucimiento en una

In a preparation for the Bishop-elect's consecration, Verzosa received the title: Doctor of Sacred Theology from the Rector of the University of Sto. Tomas on January 17, 1917.⁹⁵ The elevation of Bishop Alfredo Verzosa to the Episcopacy was the pride of the Filipino clergy. The late Monsignor Bonifacio Brillantes elaborates it well:

*With this act of the Holy Father, electing a Filipino in order to occupy one of the Episcopal Seats... reveals his high esteem and sincere affection for the Filipino Clergy, demonstrates his special and pure predilection to the interests of the religious Philippines, contributing with depth and generosity to the moral and spiritual upliftment of our nation.*⁹⁶

prematura y larga carrera curial, iniciada desde los albores de su ministerio sacerdotal, se han encargado de publicar su nombre de S.S. el Papa Benedictino XV, quien como sabio y justo Pontifice ha querido ahora remunerarle... que sentimos hondamente la separacion de Monsignor Verzosa de nuestra comunidad, porque en el perdemos nuestro brillante orador, nuestro aguerrido periodista, nuestro celoso misionero, nuestro inteligente consejero episcopal y nuestro dulce hermano. "Brindis - pronunciado por El M.R.P. Bonifacio Brillantes, Vicario de Ilocos Sur en el banquete con motivo de la Consagracion del Obispo de Lipa Mons, Verzosa." CSV, no. 11, (February 1917): 86.

⁹⁵ Ericson Josue, *Presbyteral Ministry of Bishop Alfredo F. Verzosa* (Term Paper, Immaculate Conception School of Theology, 2003), 18.

⁹⁶ *...con este acto del Sumo Pontifice, eligiendo a un Filipino para ocupar una Silla Episcopates...revela su alta estima y sincero afecto para con el Clew Filipino, muestra su especial y acendrada predileccion a los intereses religioso-filipinos, contribuyente con amplitud y genemsidad al engradecimiento moral y espiritual de nuestra patria. CS V, no. 11, (February 1917): 86.* (We have to note that one of the issues that triggered the schism was the demand for the Filipinization of the governance in the Philippine Dioceses. Schismatics claimed that Rome will never listen to this pleading which became contributory to the

Bishop-elect Alfredo Verzosa's consecration was held in Lipa. He was consecrated by Archbishop Giuseppe Petrelli, his predecessor and the then new Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines. The Co-consecrators were Bishop Maurice Foley of Jaro and Bishop John Bernard McGinley of Nueva Caceres.⁹⁷

The *Libertas* provides the events in Lipa during the Consecration of the new bishop. The festivities started on the 19th of January in the year 1917. At 8:00 in the morning the Bishop-designate together with the Apostolic Delegate Petrelli and Archbishop Michael O'Doherty of Manila boarded a car from Manila to Lipa. They went in a convoy of the Most Reverend Bishops who took part in the solemn celebrations.

Meanwhile in Lipa, at 7:00 in the morning, Cathedral bells were rung thrice with an interval of fifteen minutes for each ringing while four musical bands went around the principal streets of the city. At around 10:15, the Very Reverend Vicars Forane of the diocese, the Reverend Parish Priests and other priests from the secular and regular clergy together with the seminarians of Lipa waited for the arrival of the Bishop-designate and his entourage at the *Colegio de Ninas* of the Franciscan Sisters (the present MCSH Motherhouse). It can be said that the first step the new bishop took in his jurisdiction was in front of the said *colegio*. At the chapel of the said *colegio*, the Bishop-elect together with the Most Reverend Bishops and Clergy vested themselves in their respective garbs. The Bishop-elect, accompanied by a *Pallio* (canopy), processed

rupture of the schism. Somehow, the election of the Ilocano Bishop Verzosa to the Episcopate was a refutation to this Aglipayan claim).

⁹⁷ "Philippine Episcopology (II) - 1900 - 1940," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinos* 64 (March-April 1989): 226. Hereafter PE.

towards the Cathedral together with the bishops and priests. Before them were religious groups holding their respective *standartes* and a musical band of two. When the bishop-elect arrived at the cathedral,, the same musical bands played occasional songs and were accompanied by a musical organ. This was followed by a procession inside the cathedral by the bishop-elect. Led by the Apostolic Delegate, the bishop-elect was made to take possession of the governance of the diocese after which the clergy rendered their obedience and respect to their new bishop. As a sign of the happy arrival and taking over of the diocese, the *Te Deum* was solemnly sung. At 4:00 in the afternoon, there was again the ringing of Cathedral bells and the parade of musical bands along the main streets of Lipa.

January 20, 1917, Saturday, saw the peak of the festivities; it was the day of the solemn consecration of Bishop-elect Alfredo Verzosa y Florentin. At 6:00 in the morning, bells were rung and the musical band passed through the main streets of Lipa. It was at 7:00 AM that the solemn Episcopal Consecration took place inside the Cathedral of Saint Sebastian the Martyr. The new bishop was consecrated by Archbishop Giuseppe Petrelli, the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines together with Bishops Maurice Foley and John Bernard McGinley. At 12:00 high noon, a banquet was prepared for the new bishop and the cathedral bells were rung again accompanied by the musical bands passing through the principal streets of the city.

There was solemn Vespers at 4:00 in the afternoon in honor of St. Sebastian whose feast was being celebrated that day. There was a procession of the Holy Patron around the city led by the new Bishop Alfredo Verzosa and at 8:00 in the evening, there was a display of fireworks.

The third day of the festivities (21st of January) was another day to note. The celebrations started with the ringing of bells and the musical bands that paraded around the city. At 8:00 in the morning, a solemn pontifical mass was celebrated by the newly consecrated bishop. At 12:00, a banquet for the poor was served led by the new bishop. Again, bells were rung and the playing of musical pieces followed to grace the gathering. To honor the new prelate, a banquet was prepared at the *Colegio de Ninas* at 4:30 in the afternoon. At 6:00 in the evening, another banquet was served at the *Palacio Episcopal* and the festivities ended with fireworks at 8:00 in the evening.⁹⁸

It is interesting to end this portion with the prophetic words of the Vicar from Nueva Segovia as he, representing the Clergy from the north, was handing over Northern Luzon's loving son to the Southern Tagalog Faithful:

...the efforts and good qualities of the new Bishop of Lipa will be dedicated solely for the good of the Lipa Diocese... it is done, compensated with the sweet and noble hope that Monsignor Verzosa will make the fulfillment of his community and will contribute to the common good and the desired prosperity of our Church and the Filipino Nation.

⁹⁸ "Programa de las fiestas en honor del Illmo. y Revmo. Sr. Dr. Don Alfredo Verzosa y Florentino(sic) en la Ciudad de Lipa con motivo de su Toma posesion del Obispado y de su Consagracion Episcopal," *Libertas*, (18 de Enero de 1917), 1.

"...las energias y revelantes prendas del Nuevo Obispo de Lipa se consagran solamente al bien de la Diocesis Lipense; quedan... compensados con la dulce cuanto nobilissima esperanza de que Mgr. Verzosa labrara la felicidad

The Great Builder and a Religious Revival in Lipa

In the 50th Anniversary Book of the Diocese of Lipa, it was said in the "Dedication" that Bishop Alfredo Verzosa was tagged as the *Great Builder* of the Diocese. He was described with the following words:

*The Most Rev. Alfredo Verzosa, whose saintly dedication spurred the effective catechetical' movements of the diocese and who, having been instrumental in the building of seminaries, churches, convents and schools, has earned for him the name of the Great Builder.*TM

Bishop Verzosa according to Fr. Senen Encarnacion, had shown his concern to both spiritual and temporal needs of his people. Here are Encarnacion's very words:

The second Bishop of the Diocese of Lipa, Most Rev. Monsignor Alfredo Verzosa believed that the role of the Church is for its priests to direct the spiritual salvation of mankind and to utilize its resources for the temporal welfare of its faithful.

It was widely acclaimed by the people that the bishop was a very holy man. His spirituality was deep that he almost overlooked his personal concerns. Oftentimes the money that was due him went to priests in the poor parishes and his

de su pueblo y contribuira al bienestar comun y a la suspirada prosperidad de nuestra Iglesia y Patria Filipina. CS V, no. 11, (February 1917): 87.

¹⁰⁰ 50 Years of the Diocese of Lipa, (Lipa City: NP, 1960), 5.

¹⁰¹ Encarnacion, 1.

beloved poor in the barrios.¹⁰² Undoubtedly, in this period of Lipa's history, there was a sort of religious revival.

Fr. Senen would further say that the Bishop managed the affairs of the Diocese well. He led priests by setting his personal conduct and simple lifestyle as an example. Other bishops regarded him in high esteem because of his humility and simplicity and they admired their comrade for his sincerity and purity of vocation. A manifestation of this can be found in his close friendship with then Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop William Piani. The Delegate would often go to Lipa for retreats with Bishop Verzosa.¹⁰³ Bishop Verzosa was also the most sought-after co-consecrator in the consecration of Bishops in the first quarter of the 20th Century. The bishops whom he assisted in their consecrations were Bishops Santiago Sancho, Sofronio Hacbang, Jose Clos, SJ./Francisco Javier Reyes, William Finnemann, SVD, Cesar Maria Guerrero, Gabriel Martelino Reyes, and Luis del Rosario, SJ.¹⁰⁴

Bishop Alfredo Verzosa arrived in Lipa enriched by his ministry as a priest of Nueva Segovia. In Bantay, he saw to it that far flung areas of his parish were reached by the catechetical apostolate. When he became Bishop of Lipa, he continued his zeal in catechetical work. He was aware that the parish's main need was catechism. With the growing number of the clergy, the bishop introduced the Sunday *catequismo* in

¹⁰² Golden Jubilee 1946 **May** 31 1996 - Carmel of Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace, (Quezon **City: ADRIANA PRINTING CO. INC,** 1996), 24. Hereafter GJLC.

¹⁰³ Encarnacion, 2.

¹⁰⁴_{PE>} 226-230.

the parish churches and mandated the establishment of catechetical centers in the frontiers. He also ensured the teaching of the Catechism in public schools and established catechetical centers and institutes in Lipa, San Pablo and Lucena to which all parishes were mandated to send catechists for training. The Bishop's enthusiasm for Catechism spread like wildfire so that catechetical work became the order of the day.¹⁰⁵ Bishop Verzosa in his pastoral visitations would go around the towns and celebrate mass for the children, personally distributing the Eucharistic Communion for them. It was reported that 4,361 persons and 678 first communicants attended the catechetical instructions. Three thousand five hundred sixteen other Communion were distributed in 1935.¹⁰⁶

The bishop initiated the organization of the Confraternity of the Catholic Doctrine in his diocese in order to meet the increasing needs in the catechetical program. This started the involvement and consciousness of the laity in the apostolate of the local Church. The catechetical work was geared for the formation of the laity to strengthen the spiritual fiber of the people and make them active in their participation in religious revivals.¹⁰⁷

Catholic Schools were established by the zealous bishop. This was to ensure the passing on of the Catholic faith to the young. The Immaculate Conception College was established in

¹⁰⁵ Msgr. Marciano Dailo, "Evangelization in Southern Luzon: Origin and Development," in Archdiocese of Lipa Diamond Jubilee as a Diocese (Lipa: NP, 1986), 18-22. Hereafter ALDJB.

¹⁰⁶ Rolando S. de la Goza, CM and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, CM, *Vincentians in the Philippines 1862-1982* (Manila: NP, 1985), 340. Hereafter VP.

¹⁰⁷ ALDJB, 19.

1935 managed by the Augustinian Sisters.¹⁰⁸ The St. Theresa's Academy was founded in 1940 in Bauan and the newly organized school was turned over to the Good Shepherd Sisters.¹⁰⁹ The Our Lady of Caysasay Academy was also started in Taal under the Benedictine Sisters¹¹⁰ (now under the MCSH). It was in Tuy, Batangas that the Our Lady of Peace Academy was founded.¹¹¹ And the Our Lady of Fatima Academy was established in 1948 in Tanauan.¹¹² In the Province of Tayabas, a school founded by a certain Hermana Fausta was turned over to the Daughters of Charity. This school is now the famous Sacred Heart College of Lucena. A school in Sariaya was turned over to the Franciscan Sisters.¹¹³ In Binan, Laguna, a School was also given to the Dominican Sisters.

According to Msgr. Gregorio Salvatus,¹¹⁴ it seemed that one of the pastoral obsessions of the bishop was building seminaries. Before his arrival as Bishop to Lipa, there had been an existing college-seminary in Bauan, Batangas. This was originally located in San Pablo. This seminary catered to lads who were undergoing formation to the priesthood and also to externs who were taking classical courses but not having formation to the presbyterate.

¹⁰⁸ALDJB, 64.

¹⁰⁹ALDJB, 66.

^{U0}ALDJB, 68.

^{U1}ALDJB, 71.

¹¹²ALDJB, 72.

¹¹³ALDJB, 19.

¹¹⁴ He was the very priest assigned by Bishop Obviar of Lucena to take care of Bishop Verzosa during his old age. He is now 92 years old and the moments he had with Bishops Verzosa and Obviar are still fresh in his memory.

Upon his arrival, Bishop Verzosa immediately worked for the return of the seminary to San Pablo, Laguna. For him, it was the most accessible site for the five provinces of the diocese. He entered into an agreement with the Vincentians and on April 23, 1917, the seminary started to operate in San Pablo. This would be marked as the seminary's inception date. It was named *Seminario de San Francisco de Sales*. A team of six Padres Paules and a religious brother manned the seminary. There were around a hundred Minor and Major Seminarians.¹¹⁵ The development and advancement of the seminary was largely due to the zeal and interest of Bishop Verzosa. The bishop's zeal prompted him to follow what was done to the Manila Seminary which was separated from the College of Santa Mesa in 1920. The result was the closure of the College for externs and the conversion of the institution into one that solely focused on the formation of clerics. Notwithstanding the economic odds of the diocese, the bishop successfully accomplished this in 1923. It started with 40 seminarians but increased to 100 in 1926.¹¹⁶

In 1941, a new seminary building was constructed in Brgy. Antipolo, Lipa. The building was intended to house the minor seminarians from San Pablo. The new building was finished in time for the Silver Episcopal Jubilee of Bishop Verzosa. But the turmoil of the war interrupted the formation program from December 1941 to May 1942. The seminary

¹¹⁵ Rt. Rev. Msgr. Gregorio Salvatus, PA, Tayabas, Quezon to Ericson M. Josue, Vigan City, Ilocos Sur, 13 September 2002, transcript in the hand of Ericson M. Josue, Verzosa Files, Immaculate Conception School of Theology, Vigan City, Ilocos Sur. Hereafter, Salvatus.

¹¹⁶ VP, 291.

operated again from June 1942 to 1945. The School Year 1944-1945 proved to be difficult because of the chaotic situation. In February 1945, classes had to stop. After some weeks the new seminary would become the site of the treacherous killing and holocaust of about 12,000 to 14,000 Lipenos by the Japanese.¹¹⁷ The seminary fathers and a group of people miraculously escaped from the massacre and the doomed City of Lipa until they reached American-liberated lines. In the face of this disaster, Bishop Verzosa had to move his major seminarians to the University of Sto. Tomas - Central Seminary and the thirty-four minor seminarians to the care of the Diocesan Clergy at the *Palacio Episcopal*. This was the first seminary in the Philippines to be manned by an all-Filipino team of Formators.¹¹⁸ In 1945, the faithful service of the Vincentians to the Diocese of Lipa ended after a period of 30 years.

In 1931-32, another seminary was, put up in the City of Lipa. Spurred by the Apostolic Delegate's suggestion and moved by the desire to have his Major seminarians during Liturgical Celebrations at the Cathedral, Bishop Verzosa decided to bring the Theology and Philosophy Departments of the Seminary from San Pablo to Lipa. This seminary was named *Seminario Mayor de San Alfonso Maria de Ligorio*. Since there was no suitable building to house the seminarians, Bishop Verzosa gave up his palace and converted it into a house of formation. He then had to look for another house within the city for his residence. The blessing of the new seminary on June 9, 1931 was attended by Archbishop

¹¹⁷ In 1946, Bishop Verzosa invited the Carmelite Nuns and established the Lipa Carmel in this former site of the seminary.

¹¹⁸ VP, 401.

Michael O'Doherty of Manila and Bishop James McCloskey of Jaro.¹¹⁹ A decade after, this seminary had to close because of the atrocities of the war.

In 1939, another minor seminary was built in Tayabas, Province of Tayabas. This time, the seminary was handed over to the Filipino Diocesan Clergy. The seminary functioned only for two years because it was forced to close due to the war.¹²⁰

From 1920 to 1942, Bishop Verzosa had ordained no less than 60 Diocesan Priests and another three Ilocanos who went to Lipa to study Priesthood.¹²¹

Misioneras Catequistas del Sagrado Corazon

On May 10, 1920, a certain widow, Dona Laura Mendoza of Lipa was asked by Bishop Verzosa to establish a Catholic School for Girls in the Town of Bauan. But prior to the foundation of the said school, there was already an existing educational institute under Dona Aquilina Contreras. Together with five women - Rufina Palacios, Isabel Padua, Rosa Siscar, Marcela Maralit and Claudia Macasaet - Dona Laura continued managing the school. In 1921, more women signified their interest to join Dona Laura in her mission. Two of them were Bibiana Labboris of Cebu and Escolastica Edralin y Quevedo of Sarrat, Ilocos Norte.

The Bishop saw the fast development of this community of women until he decided to ask them to wear a habit. On

¹¹⁹ "Baro a Seminario Mayor, Lipa," *Amigo del Pueblo* VII no. 7 (July 1931), 187-188.

¹²⁰ Salvatus, 3.

¹²¹ Salvatus, 3.

June 1922, Bishop Verzosa handed over to them a religious habit in a solemn ceremony in the convent. These became the pioneers of this religious institute which was named *Religiosas de Maria de la Enseñanza Cristiana*. On September 1923, after six months of preparation the members of the religious group became postulants. Madre Laura (the title she used after the group's establishment), taught the Spanish Language to the postulants.

They started the day by rising at 5:00 in the morning. They offered prayers and meditation at 5:30 and heard mass at 6:00. This was followed by the breakfast after which they all went to their assigned tasks like teaching, laundering, cooking, marketing and cleaning the house. Each member was given time for personal encounter with the Blessed Sacrament. At 11:30, after the Grace before Meals they took their meals listening to readings from the Roman Martyrology. After taking their meals they walked to the chapel reciting the Miserere and upon reaching the chapel they prayed the Stations of the Cross and visited the Blessed Eucharist. From 1:00 to 1:30 they had their siesta then returned to their respective works. At 3:30, they had *merienda* followed by the Spiritual Reading from a chapter of the book of Thomas Kempis. At 7:00 in the evening, they had their supper and followed by half an hour of recreation. They then had their examination of conscience and were given a point for reflection for the following day.

The month would end with a recollection given by some of the well known Jesuit Spiritual masters of the time: Fr. Jose Siguion, a certain Fr. Aguila and Fr. Luis del Rosario (later Bishop of Zamboanga). During these Spiritual Conferences,

they would have some consultations or special confession. The Recollections were ended with a Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and Prayer in Preparation for a Happy Death.

On May 10, 1923, the eight pioneers had their profession of vows at the Bauan Church in front of Bishop Verzosa which was followed by a *Te Deum*¹²² In 1925, Bishop Verzosa asked the help of the Augustinian Sisters to initiate the religious women into the Augustinian Rule.¹²³

Madre Laura later contracted Malaria and found much difficulty in leading the new religious congregation. For this, Bishop Verzosa interpreted it as a sign that their mission was not yet due. The bishop asked Madre Laura to return to Lipa to have a rest there. Madre Laura became an active leader of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in the Cathedral Parish. The active and energetic young priest, Padre Alfredo Obviar was then Parish Priest of the Cathedral. In line with their Catechetical work, Madre Laura together with the Franciscan Sisters and some catechists worked ardently in spreading the Word. Padre Obviar strongly supported them. Later, Madre Laura decided to put up a house for the catechists naming it *Asilo del Sagrado Corazon*. Many young women were attracted to join them in the apostolate. They expanded their mission by giving spiritual retreats to young women.

In 1941, the atrocities of World War II reached Lipa. The Bishop and his flock - which included the Sisters -

¹²² Sr. Gerarda Honrade, MCSH, "Madre Laura Mendoza - Fundadora ng Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart" 7-9, Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart, Lipa City. Hereafter Honrade.

¹²³ Journey through the Years - Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation (Manila: Dantotsu Technical Management, 1996), 146.

evacuated to a far-flung area to save their lives. Despite the turmoil caused by the chaos, there came an interesting event - the formal petition for the establishment and recognition by Rome for the new congregation. Bishop Verzosa, with the aid of another priest, sent the petition to Rome through Archbishop William Piani, his close friend and Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines. It was here that they decided that the name of the congregation would become *Misioneras Catequistas del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus* or Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart (MCSH). After sometime, Archbishop Piani brought back to Rome's response Lipa - the approved rule and constitution of the new congregation.

It was on October 7, 1947 that the first profession of religious vows was made in front of the Father-founder, Bishop Alfredo Verzosa.¹²⁴

The Apostolic Administrator of Nueva Segovia

At this point of Nueva Segovia's history, there were already signs of recovery from the schism that occurred at the start of the 20th Century. A number of religious had been working in some mission areas. Bishop Hurth, the then incumbent bishop, was able to ordain 47 priests from 1914 to 1925.¹²⁵ There remained churches to be repaired and moreover, the spiritual repair of the faithful. Nonetheless, it is good to note that the Church had already regained the confidence of people.

¹²⁴Honrade, 9-39.

¹²⁵ IR XXV: 161.

However, Bishop Peter Joseph Hurth had to resign as Bishop of Nueva Segovia because of a serious illness. In February 1926, RonreTaccepted his retirement and he was made Titular Archbishop of Bosra.¹²⁶ The governance of the diocese fell into the hands of the Bishop of Lipa, Alfredo Verzosa as Apostolic Administrator.

While Bishop of Lipa, Msgr. Verzosa served as Apostolic Administrator of Nueva Segovia. As the Administrator, he expressed his desire that local seminarians should resume their studies in Vigan instead of in Manila and Lipa. After the Jesuits left Vigan, they never renewed their contract with the seminary there - a reason for the former bishop to send seminarians to other dioceses for their studies. In March 1926, a contract was signed for the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) to take over the job in the Vigan Seminary. Fr. Henry Buerschen, SVD became the rector.¹²⁷

He also started the negotiations for the separation of the vast province of Pangasinan which resulted to the erection of the Diocese of Lingayen (now Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan) in 1928.¹²⁸ This was the result of one of his pastoral visits in this large territory.

The Bishop-Administrator invited the Carmelite Sisters to open a monastery in Vigan. This was an influence of his very deep devotion to St. Therese of Avila, which began in his

¹²⁶ IR XXV: 163.

¹²⁷ IR XXV: 163.

¹²⁸ IR XXV: 165.

seminary years.¹²⁹ The bishop assured pecuniary help, house, his friends, his family's support, among others, but his request was difficult to realize; the number of sisters was not enough to build another monastery.¹³⁰

Bishop Verzosa remained Apostolic Administrator of Nueva Segovia until the arrival of the new bishop, the Most Rev. Santiago Sancho, D.D. in 1927.¹³¹

Bishop Verzosa at the Constitutional Convention of 1934

On July 1934, Senate President Manuel Quezon, the bishop's contemporary during his academic years invited the good bishop to lead the invocation that opened the 1934 Constitutional Convention which drafted the provisions of the 1935 Philippine Constitution. A writer commented: *"This high officer in God's army spoke then and there for his dear people and country. He asked God to illumine the minds of the delegates in their gigantic task of framing the Organic Law of the Philippine Republic. And God deigned to hear his humble servant."*¹³²

It was also reported that Quezon regarded him in very high esteem even calling him: *"Mi obispo!"* (My-bishop!). Bishop Verzosa was a close family friend of the Quezons.

¹²⁹ "Bishop Alfredo Verzosa's letter to V.R. M. Theresa of Jesus - 18 March 1946" in GJLC, 11.

*30 Sr. Mary Teresa Sideco, OCD, *The Roots of Teresa's Nuns in the Philippines* (Manila: Adriana Printing Co. Inc., 1993), 283-284.

¹³¹ IR XXV: 163.

¹³² Onabla, 475.

Bishop Alfredo Ma. A. Obviar:¹³³
A Beloved Son and Helper in Tending the Flock

When Bishop Verzosa found himself in need of a help in the governance of the vast diocese, he petitioned the Holy See to appoint an Auxiliary Bishop to assist him. His Vicar General and well-known protegee, Monsignor Alfredo Aranda Obviar was named to take over the work.

Alfredo Aranda Obviar was from the Barrio of Mataas na Lupa in the western part of Lipa. He was ordained as a priest by the Most Rev. Alfredo Verzosa on March 15, 1919.

Bishop Verzosa trusted Padre Obviar very much and named him Parish Priest of the nearby Luta (now Malvar) - at that time, a newly created town. He became the bishop's protegee and like his bishop, Padre Obviar was zealous and enthusiastic, particularly in the work of catechetics. With his thundering voice and fiery sermons, he brought the Good News from the parish church to the barrio chapels. This became clear to his Local Ordinary who soon gave the young and holy Padre Obviar a larger task - that of being a parish priest of the Cathedral.

Padre Alfredo Aranda Obviar became Parish Priest of his hometown - Lipa. As pastor, he continued the catechetical work. He would convene children at the cathedral for the Sunday *Catequismo*. Thousands of children attended the

¹³³ His Cause for Beatification was introduced to the Vatican by the Diocese of Lucena. Through Protocol Number 2398-1/01, the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints gave *Nihil Obstat* (Nothing Opposes) to the process of the Alfredo Obviar Beatification. The title "Servant of God" is now being used for the candidate.

catechetical classes which he himself supervised. He helped h> the formation of the Sisters of the Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart - the religious congregation founded by his bishop in 1923. These missionary sisters were also his helpers in catechetical works.¹³⁴

Due to the strong confidence of Bishop Verzosa, Padre Obviar was made a *Prelado Domestico de Su Santidad* (Domestic Prelate of His Holiness) in 1930 and was appointed Vicar General of the Bishop. Bishop Verzosa wrote the following words to Bishop Sancho of Vigan regarding the event of Msgr. Obviar's investiture:

*Yesterday afternoon, we celebrated the solemn Investiture of Msgr. Obviar, in which the Superior Apostolic Delegate with his Secretary, some from Manila, a good number of our clergy and the faithful parishioners of the honoree assisted, and we had splendid sharing. I thank Your Excellency for your detail of congratulating us.*¹³⁵

In 1944, Pope Pius XII named Msgr. Alfredo Obviar as the Auxiliary Bishop of Lipa.¹³⁶ He was consecrated bishop

¹³⁴ This congregation might have inspired Bishop Obviar to found also, patterning it, his own religious institute - Missionary Catechists of St. Therese (MCST). Both MCSH (Foundation: 1923) and MCST (Foundation: 1958) have the same charism. "Bishop Alfredo Maria Aranda Obviar - Priest of the Archdiocese of Lipa..." Most Rev. Alfredo Ma. Obviar, DD, (Lipa City: Pater Putativus Publishing House, 2002), 19-21. Hereafter Obviar.

¹³⁵ Bishop Alfredo F. Verzosa, Lipa City to Bishop Santiago C. Sancho, Vigan, Ilocos Sur, 15 May 1930, transcript in the hand of the *Archivo Nueva Segovia*, Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia Chancery, Vigan City, Ilocos Sur.

¹³⁶ AAS XXXVI (1944), n. 4: 212.

on June 29 of the same year in the war time at the St. Sebastian Cathedral of Lipa.¹³⁷ He was called by priests and the people, "*Ang Batang Alfredo*" (the younger Alfredo) to distinguish him from his -residential bishop who was called "*Ang Matandang Alfredo*" (the older Alfredo).

Atrocities of War

Towards the end of World War II, Lipa was bombed, almost gutted to ruins. Thousands of innocent Lipahos were mercilessly massacred by the Japanese Imperial Army. Lipa was second after Manila to be the most ravaged by the war. Many churches including the Lipa Cathedral were badly destroyed in the bombings. It was said that Bishop Verzosa had already surrendered himself to any eventuality. While bombs were on fire, he remained in the chapel of the Episcopal Palace praying and preparing himself for death. But when some people found an opportunity to escape, they convinced the bishop that they had to leave the doomed city of Lipa.¹³⁸ Bishops Verzosa and Obviar evacuated their flock - clergy, nuns and lay people - to a far barrio for safety. They were compared to the Israelites in the Exodus - the bishops and the people walking as a caravan amidst the precarious and difficult conditions. After two days and two nights of wandering, they finally settled in the American-liberated city of Batangas. The old Bishop Verzosa preferred to remain in Batangas while Bishop Obviar returned to Lipa and stayed in a *barong-barong* (improvised shelter) to attend to the spiritual

¹³⁷ Obviar, 22.

¹³⁸ Interview with Bishop Salvador Quizon, Parish Rectory, Taal, Batangas, 26 October 2004.

needs of the people. Rebuilding these edifices was one of the main concerns of the old bishop in his last years in Lipa. Bishop Verzosa was able to collect some assistance from the Philippine War Damage Fund but this was hardly sufficient - a reason which led him to use even his personal inheritance to finance the projects.

After their reconstruction, the bishop requested the Holy See to elevate two of his churches into the status of a *Basilica Minore*. The Church of Batangas was granted the privilege on February 18, 1948 and was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception.¹³⁹ On October 22, 1948, the Church of Taal was elevated and also given to the honors of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Martin of Tours.¹⁴⁰

"Miracle" in Lipa

On July 4, 1948, a young lady named Teresita Castillo entered the Carmel of Lipa.¹⁴¹ She entered the monastery against the wishes of her parents. Her parents and siblings did all they could to bring back Teresita to their home. The sisters were harassed to force them to return the lady to the family.

¹³⁹ "Pius P.P. XII, *Litterae Apotolicae - Templum in honorem B. Mariae V. sine Peccati labe concepta dicata in oppido, quod (Batangas) appellatur, intra fines Lipensis Dioecesis, titulo ac privileges Basilicae Minoris honestatur*" in AAS XLVIII (1951), n. 14:665.

¹⁴⁰ "pius pp xil, *Litterae Apostolicae - Templum in honorem B. Mariae V. et S. Martini Ep., in Pago (Taal) intra fines Lipensis Dioecesis Deo dicatum, titulo Basilicae Minoris condecoratur*" in AAS XLVIII (1951), n. 4:201.

¹⁴¹ Bishop Verzosa established the Carmel of Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace in 1946 at the very spot where the holocaust of about 17,500 Lipéfios happened.

But the young Teresita stood by her decision to stay in Carmel.¹⁴²

On the 31st of July, she heard knocking at her cell and smelled a foul odor. She heard a hoarse voice that did not seem to come from a human being. The voice tried to discourage her from pursuing her stay in Carmel. Later, she discovered a footprint on the floor, which did not look like that of a human foot. The unidentified entity seemed to be an adversary trying to stop the young lady from entering Carmel. The postulant reported this to the mother prioress; Mo. Mary Cecilia of Jesus, and the latter mentioned this to the Auxiliary, Msgr. Obviar. Bishop Obviar brought the newj to Bishop Verzosa and the residential bishop advised them to feed the postulant well and allow her enough rest.¹⁴³

On August 18, 1948, the Carmelite Postulant was allegedly surrounded by an overpowering fragrance. While entering her room, she saw that there was somebody inside her cell. She described the person as a very tenderly beautiful Lady in a bright white robe seated on her bed. The Lady admonished her not to fear for she came with a message. That evening the Lady advised her to take courage for her adversary would no longer disturb her. August 20 on that same year marked the first fall of petals which formed a cross on the floor. This phenomenon would later attract multitude of people.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²Keithley, 23.

¹⁴³ Keithley, 26.

¹⁴⁴Keithley, 34-35.

While reciting the Holy Rosary in the garden on the afternoon of September 12, 1948, Teresita heard a Lady's voice saying that she should not fear but kiss the ground and follow all that she would be told to do. Suddenly, the young postulant again saw a Lady robed in white amidst the clouds with hands clasp over her breast with a golden rosary hanging on her right hand. The Lady introduced herself as the mother of Jesus. Her message centered on the necessity for prayer and penance for priests and nuns: *"Pray for them as you have never prayed before. The Sacred Heart of my Son bleeds anew for every fallen priest or nun."* In the Lady's succeeding apparitions, the messages would focus on this matter. The Lady promised to give messages in the next fifteen days.¹⁴⁵

On September 16, Teresita again saw the Lady being accompanied by two angels. The Lady asked the postulant to have her image (the Lady's) carved in the way she manifested herself to Teresita. The Lady requested that the postulant describe her to Bishop Obviar, the monastery's chaplain. Some months later, this statue would become an object of public veneration and inquiry.¹⁴⁶

On September 26, the last day of the 15-day promised apparitions; the Lady encouraged that the virtues of simplicity, humility and obedience be practiced. Before she totally vanished from the firmament, the Lady identified herself as, *"Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace"*. From then on, petals would shower on the monastery. A Mass was celebrated at the site where the Lady appeared and the nuns consecrated them-

¹⁴⁵Keithley, 43.

¹⁴⁶Keithley, 48-49.

selves to Mary patterned in the devotion proposed by St. Louis Grignon de Montfort.¹⁴⁷

The Lady appeared for the last time on November 12. She mentioned that there would be a lot of persecution and the Church will suffer much. She further admonished that there should be intense prayers for the conversion of sinners; penance for priests and nuns and the propagation of the devotion to her Immaculate Heart. She further stressed that the rosary be prayed sincerely and devotedly for it will be the instrument of peace in the world. Before she disappeared she repeated: *"I am Mary, the Mediatrix of All Grace"*¹⁴⁸

A couple of days after the last apparition, petals fell outside the monastery. People saw the phenomena and the news spread. People from different places began to flock to the monastery in great numbers.

Bishop Alfredo Verzosa was not delighted with what was happening at the Carmel. The Bishop mandated the withdrawal of the statue from public veneration. At first, he did not believe in the alleged apparition. The bishop went to Carmel ready to rebuke his auxiliary who obviously supported the alleged apparition and to stop the whole thing. It is said however, that when Bishop Verzosa arrived at the Carmel, petals of roses fell on him after opening the door. Bishop Verzosa knelt down and was speechless. The old man prayed.¹⁴⁹ According to source, that was not the only account

¹⁴⁷ Keithley, 55 and 59.

¹⁴⁸ Keithley, 61-62.

¹⁴⁹ June Keithley-Castro, "Shower of Petals 'I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace' ", Philippine Daily Inquirer, 8 September 1999, 1, 16. Hereafter Shower of Petals.

of Bishop Verzosa's encounter with the petals. One day while dressing after mass, some petals of roses were discovered inside his shoes. His sacristan asked if he was keeping petals in his shoes but the bishop denied and this was astounded.¹⁵⁰

The skeptical Bishop Verzosa soon changed his mind and gave permission for the public veneration of the statue. He even gave petals as a personal gift to the Pope in Rome, reporting the happenings in Lipa. On December 1948, a written account of the apparition was circulated with Bishop Verzosa's approval.¹⁵¹

With the bishop's shift of conviction, people increased in number. Foreign and local media covered the events. Private and public personalities came to Carmel. A movie was even produced to portray the Lipa Story. Novenas were distributed with the *imprimatur* of Bishops Verzosa and Obviar. A national novena to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace was done and culminated with a great communion throughout the country. Later, a chapel was built dedicated to the Mediatrix.¹⁵²

Subsequently, images of Jesus, Mary and the saints were found to be imprinted in the petals. Reports about cures also spread. The petals and the waters where the petals had been dipped were reported miraculous. People with sicknesses and physical defects were claimed to have been healed from their infirmities. The petals and a replica of the statue were flown abroad for further dissemination of the events in Lipa. It reached as far as Spain and New York.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰Keithley, 73-74.

¹⁵¹ Shower of Petals, 16.

¹⁵²Keithley, 75.

¹⁵³Keithley, 90-91.

On the 23rd of January 1950, Bishop Verzosa was suddenly relieved from his post. He remained in Lipa but he was now only the residential bishop in name. The authority of governance was transferred to the Apostolic Administrator *sede plena*, Most Rev. Rufino Santos.¹⁵⁴ The Auxiliary Bishop, Most Rev. Alfredo Ma. Obviar was also relieved from office. He stayed in his family residence for a time until he received his appointment as Apostolic Administrator of the new Diocese of Lucena.¹⁵⁵ A month after the replacement of Bishop Verzosa, the prioress was removed from her position and was transferred to the Carmel of Jaro. The subprioress was moved to the Carmel of Laoag.¹⁵⁶

Through the request of the conservative Papal Delegate, Most Rev. Egidio Vagnozzi, a special commission was set up to investigate the issues. Interrogations were conducted with Teresita by a Dominican Psychologist and by a notable-Psychiatrist. A Carmelite priest was sent by the Carmelite Generalate to investigate the whole affairs.¹⁵⁷ Teresita never made it to the contemplative life; she left the monastery unable to fulfill the sufficient days required for postulancy because of the times spent on the interrogations. She remains an ordinary citizen to this day.¹⁵⁸

On April 11, 1951, a six-member commission of Bishops issued a verdict. The member bishops declared that the Lipa

¹⁵⁴Keithley, 92.

¹⁵⁵Keithley, 99.

¹⁵⁶Keithley, 96 and 135.

¹⁵⁷Keithley, 120-121.

¹⁵⁸Keithley, 145, 146 and 135.

alleged miracle was hoax and *"excludes any supernatural intervention."* The signatories were Archbishop Gabriel M. Reyes of Manila, Bishop Cesar Ma. Guererro of San Fernando de Pampanga, Bishop Mariano Madriaga of Lingayen, Bishop Juan Sison - Auxiliary of Nueva Segovia, Bishop Vicente Reyes - Auxiliary of Manila and Bishop Rufino Santos - the Apostolic Administrator of Lipa. And on April 12, 1951, Bishop Santos issued a decree to prevent the veneration of the statue of the Mediatrix and the dissemination of petals and water.¹⁵⁹

Bishop Verzosa's Retirement Years

After his untimely retirement, Bishop Alfredo Verzosa remained for a time in Batangas City then returned to his residence in Vigan where he lived a destitute life. He became *"practically a pauper."* On February 25, 1951, he was given the honorary title: Titular Bishop of Capsa.¹⁶⁰ Msgr. Obviar, who was then Apostolic Administrator of Lucena appointed one of his priests to take charge of the spiritual needs of the old bishop. Fr. Gregorio Salvatus was chosen for the noble task. He recounted that Bishop Verzosa became *"a broken man: a sickly old man, nervous. He was depressed. But he never complained."* He further said that it was the deepest point of the bishop's life. He was suffering interiorly: economic poverty, old age, abandonment and a nervous breakdown. He was sustained only by his prayers. The bishop's confessor added: *"Without his prayers, his life would be despairing!"*

¹⁵⁹ "Decree" in Keithley, 206.

¹⁶⁰ *"Bula de S.S. Pio XII, Preconizado A S.E. Mons. Alfredo Verzosa, Obispo de Capsa,"* in *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos XXV*, (1951): 547.

Furthermore, the bishop followed the Church decision on the "miracle" with prudence and kept his silence. The bishop wrote a letter to his dear nuns at the Lipa Carmel and below is an excerpt:

*Continue praying for me as I continue praying for the Carmel of Lipa, so that the Virgin may give us the strength and constancy to carry the cross of love that she has placed on our weak shoulders.*¹⁶¹

On a Sunday, June 27, 1954, he asked his chaplain to give him the last anointing. Some moments after receiving the last sacrament and the apostolic blessing from Fr. Salvatus, the good bishop finally joined his Creator.¹⁶²

In a circular letter released by the Archbishop of Nueva Segovia on Bishop Verzosa's death, it was mentioned that his confessor had reported that the bishop died a peaceful and saintly death. He expired in tranquility and was conscious till the end.¹⁶³ Fr. Encarnacion concluded: *"Still, he died happily with the thought that he had served God and his queen, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and His Church with all his heart and might."*¹⁶⁴ The bishop's remains were buried on June 30, 1954 at the mausoleum intended for Bishops of Nueva Segovia at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Vigan.

¹⁶¹ GJLC, 25.

¹⁶² Salvatus, 1.

¹⁶³ Most Rev. Santiago Sancho, D.D., *"Circular sobre la muerte del Excmo. Mons Alfredo Verzosa,"* 7 September 1954, Archivo Nueva Segovia, Vigan City, Ilocos Sur.

¹⁶⁴ Encarnacion, 2.

Conclusion

In most fields of specialization, the "firsts" are given importance and prominence. For instance, Abraham in Israelite Tradition is highly revered as the first to respond to God's invitation of believing after the fall. Tradition says Peter is the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, a reason for him to be much esteemed in Church History. Natural Science is proud of Neil Armstrong as the first man to set foot on the moon. Philippine History counts as the first President of the Republic, Don Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy. In Philippine Episcopology, the name Bishop Jorge Barlin is well respected for being the first Filipino and first Bicolano Bishop.¹⁶⁵ Cebuans and Warays are proud of their first native bishops: Bishop Juan Bautista Gorordo and Bishop Pablo Singzon respectively. The Manila Archdiocese also honors its first Filipino Archbishop in the person of the late Most Rev. Gabriel Martelino Reyes and its first Cardinal and the first Filipino ever, His Eminence, Rufino Cardinal Santos. The "firsts" are of unique value and importance. Somehow, they are seen as embodiment of the community and culture they come from. If for instance, we refer to the pope, we call him Peter. If we are men of Faith, we can say we are Abraham. The "firsts" are always looked upon at as the ones who lay the foundation and those who come after them pattern their ways according to their ways and life. When people on the road are at a loss, they trace the markings of those who had gone ahead of them as guides.

¹⁶⁵ There is even a proposal to change the name of his birthplace, from Baao Town into Barlin Town.

For the Ilocano, who then is the first? Who is the first Ilocano Bishop?

Bishop Alfredo Verzosa seems to have become as distant as his time. Ask any Ilocano faithful about his first native bishop and chances are he would end up thinking and guessing. No name in the Episcopacy was ever passed on by local tradition as the first Ilocano or even the first from the Northern Luzon Region. It is strange for the Ilocano who is known to have a strong sense of history to be ignorant of such a significant person as his first native bishop. Hence, this article was undertaken in an attempt to document the life of the first Ilocano Bishop for people... for the future generations to be proud of and own up as their progenitor.

Alfredo as a priest was a builder of both temporal and spiritual edifices. As a parish priest in Bantay, he changed the bamboo roof of the Church into a galvanized one - mark of a dedicated custodian of Church patrimony. Padre Alfredo was zealous as manifested in the efforts he had undertaken in propagating the faith. Also, at a time that the schism was at its worst, Padre Alfredo was able to win people back to the Catholic fold. As Fr. Thompkins had written in his report: *"...Bantay across the river from Vigan was for a time an Aglipayan stronghold, which however, capitulated upon the arrival of a young, zealous Catholic Priest as pastor."* He even risked his life during the "spear account," when he was warned not to go for barrio mission, he insisted on going even if it could have cost him his life. Padre Verzosa's courage led him to make a lot of breakthroughs in his ministry. When the bishop sent him to the schismatic Ilocos Norte to help revive the faith, he could have been intimidated by the murder of

his contemporary, Padre Mariano Edralin in Sarrat. Instead, he conscientiously worked there in obedience to his bishop and his Presbyteral vow.

Padre Alfredo was obedient and faithful to the hierarchy. He never went against the directives of his superiors. This might have led Bishop Carroll to appoint him as consultor of the Synod of Nueva Segovia. Bishop Hurth appointed him to various commissions in the diocese - responsibilities which the young priest heartily managed. He must have been one of the most trusted priests in the diocese for his bishops took him as secretary during their pastoral visitations.

We have read how Alfredo, as bishop sacrificed, sweat and blood, to meet the primary duty of his office - bringing souls to the Faith. He forgot himself to give people what they needed in their daily lives. Above all, his endurance in the face of his "humiliation" due to his relief from office allowed the bishop to accept his untimely removal and without any complaint. He could have mobilized people to fight for him and his companions; he could have adapted the idea of defiance to authority from the schism that he had witnessed when he was a young cleric of Nueva Segovia. But he kept things silently... in his heart... and displayed a magnanimous kind of obedience to the will of God in the will of the Church.

He was also generous in sharing his giftedness; his protegee is a testimony of the bishop's generosity to develop people who could later become heir to the work of serving the faithful. Bishop Alfredo Obviar is a manifestation of this. Bishop Verzosa invested much for the development of this faithful son.

At this time when there is great demand for Christian witnessing, there is a need to gaze at the "ancestors of faith" - those who were able to exemplify the challenge of their baptism. For this, the faithful may look at the lives of those who showed exemplary devotion in responding to the call for authentic witnessing.

History is giving us Bishop Verzosa to look up to - a portrait of magnanimous obedience, firm commitment and humble service, which today are very much demanded of our clergy and our faithful.

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, O.P.

COUPLES FOR CHRIST (CFC): WHAT IS ITS PRESENT STATUS?

Question:

It is a known fact that the ecclesial movement "Couples for Christ" started in the Philippines some years ago and soon spread to many other countries. My question is: What is its present status? Has "Couples for Christ" been officially recognized by the Church?

Answer:

Indeed the ecclesial movement "Couples for Christ" (CFC) started in the Philippines a number of years ago - specifically in June 1981, in Manila, which now functions as the center for its global work. Since then, this association of faithful has been committed "to the work of global evangelization and renewal, with the goal of winning the world for Jesus Christ." As it is written in its statutes, "CFC is a missio-

nary body, and the families throughout the world that make CFC are to be families that will be instruments of the Holy Spirit in renewing the face of the earth."

Regarding its legal status, I know that the statutes of the Association were first approved by the CFC Council in March 1996. Then, they were approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), in July 1996. And finally, the statutes were amended in January 2000, before receiving official approval by the Apostolic See.

To the question formulated on what *Couples for Christ* (CFC) is at present, I answer briefly: **It is *a private international association of faithful of pontifical right recognized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity***. Such can be read in its Vatican "Decree of Approval" dated 11 March 2000, which contains the following statements:

"Having examined attentively the petition for recognition and approval by this Dicastery of the statutes of *Couples for Christ* (CFC) as a private international association of the faithful submitted by Mr. Frank Padilla, International Mission Director;

Considering the number of members belonging to CFC and the apostolic works in more than seventy countries all over the world which serve the family based on the plan of God and which assist those who are struggling to be Christian in the modern world (cf. n. 2.1 CFC Statutes);

Valuing the commendatory letters received from various dioceses of the world which reflect the positive appreciation of local Ordinaries for the presence

of *CFC* members and for the activities developed to benefit the whole Church;

Having examined the Statutes presented and having assessed that there is no obstacle (*nihil obstat*) to the recognition of the *Couples for Christ* as an Association;

In light of art. 131-134 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* for the Roman Curia, the PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY DECREES the recognition of *Couples for Christ* as a private international association of the faithful with a juridical personality, approving their statutes *ad experimentum* for five years, according to Canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law."

This is so far what can be said concerning the legal status of this international community that seeks to be a servant to and lay arm of the Catholic Church in the work of evangelization and family renewal.

INVALID DELEGATION OF A RELIGIOUS SISTER TO ASSIST AT MARRIAGES?

Question:

It has come to my knowledge that a non-ordained person, specifically a Religious Sister, while working as a catechist and parish pastoral administrator in a diocese of the Philippines, was delegated by the diocesan Bishop to solemnize some marriages. This is something, I believe, that the present law of the Church allows. However, the same law requires "the prior approval of the Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Apostolic See." Since apparently such requirements were not fulfilled in this particular case, can we still consider that delegation (and therefore the marriages by her solemnized) valid? Thank you for your enlightenment.

Answer:

There are some points in this inquiry which I wished to comment on before formulating my personal answer to the question of validity or invalidity of the Sister's delegation and of the marriages by her solemnized.

1. A Religious Sister... Parish Pastoral Administrator?

Yes, there is nothing wrong about it, as far as the present law of the Church is concerned. In fact, one way of coping with the pastoral problems arising from a shortage of priests is to entrust a parish to an individual, or to a group of persons who lack priestly orders, for example, a deacon, a religious Sister or Brother, a catechist or a community of such individuals.

The norm states that "If, because of a shortage of priests, the diocesan Bishop has judged that a deacon, or *some other person who is not a priest, or a community of persons*, should be entrusted with a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish, he is to appoint some priest who, with the powers and faculties of a parish priest, will direct the pastoral care" (c. 517 §2).

Pastoral care means providing at least the minimal services to the people so as to maintain the parish open. This includes all kind of services except those requiring priestly ordination (for which some priest must be assigned). Thus, those persons who are not priests could be deputed, for instance, to preside Sunday celebrations (cf. c.1248 §2), to proclaim the gospel and preach the word (cc. 758-759), to baptize (c. 861 §2), to assist at marriages (c. 1112), to preside at funeral services, etc.

The fact that non-ordained persons can function in such significant parish leadership roles - be they called "Parish Pastoral Administrators," "Parish Ministers," etc. - depart from a recent legal tradition in the Church and is a significant step in the direction of providing continued pastoral service for the people of God as well as recognizing the role of religious and lay people in pastoral ministry by virtue of their baptismal consecration.

2. A Religious Sister... Assistant at Marriages?

Why not? To start with, the Religious Sister mentioned in this case was working as a catechist and parish pastoral administrator. And we have said that one of the pastoral services that could be deputed to a non-ordained parish pastoral

administrator is the solemnizing of canonical marriages or assisting at marriages. This function, however, given its legal implications, requires a specific delegation that only the diocesan Bishop can grant.

But this particular pastoral service of assisting at marriages is not an exclusive prerogative of parish pastoral administrators; actually any qualified member of the People of God could be delegated by the diocesan Bishop to do it. The Code of Canon Law is very explicit about it: "Where there are no priests or deacons, the diocesan bishop can delegate lay persons to assist at marriages with prior approval of the Episcopal Conference and permission of the Apostolic See." In such cases "a suitable lay person is to be selected, capable of giving instruction to those who are getting married, and fitted to conduct the marriage liturgy properly" (c. 1112).

Apart from possessing a specific delegation and using a liturgical rite approved for the occasion, the lay [= non-ordained] person delegated to assist at a marriage will have to carefully record it by filling up the usual formal document of the act performed, that is, of the celebration of marriage, with the signatures of the spouses, of the witnesses and of the assistant himself/herself. Likewise, he or she will see to it personally that all the necessary civil and ecclesiastical formalities are observed.

(At this point two clarifications should be in place: First, that the term "assistant" in the expression "to assist at a marriage" has a technical meaning defined in the Code of Canon Law, namely, it refers to the *official representative* of the Church or *public official* in charge of asking and receiving the manifestation of the consent of the contracting parties *in*

the name of the Church. And second, that the term "lay person" in the context of canon 1112 stands for anyone who is neither a priest or deacon; in other words, anyone who has not received the sacrament of Sacred Orders; in this sense the canon is perfectly applicable also to religious Sisters.)

In the Philippines, very little use of the prerogative granted to the diocesan Bishop by canon 1112 has been made so far, due among other factors to the reluctance of the local Bishops' Conference to act on this matter. The reasons alleged have been mainly cultural, such as the difficulty for the people to distinguish a marriage solemnized by a lay person from the civil marriages or those solemnized by other religious sects; the likely people's lowering esteem for the sacrament of marriage; the people's lack of preparation to accept them, etc. Concerning delegation to solemnize marriages, it goes without saying that in the Philippines, besides the internal ecclesiastical delegation, the 1988 Family Code (cf Article 7, 2) requires to any religious minister the authorization to solemnize marriage from the office of the Civil Registrar General.

3. Are the prior approval of the Episcopal Conference and the Permission of the Apostolic See necessary for validity?

The prescription of the law of the Church on this point reads thus: "Where there are no priests or deacons, the diocesan bishop can delegate lay persons to assist at marriages with prior approval of the Episcopal Conference and permission of the Apostolic See." (Canon 1112 §1)

Now the question bluntly formulated would be the following: "Can lay [= non-ordained] persons be *validly* delegated

to assist at marriages by the diocesan bishop without the approval of the Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Apostolic See?" Or in equivalent terms, "Do lay persons assisting at marriages with the delegation of their diocesan Bishop, but without the prior endorsement of the Local Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Holy See, *act validly*, in view of the prescriptions of canon 1112 §1?"

I know that answering to these questions is entering into a somehow slippery ground, yet it cannot be avoided since this is the main point of the question formulated in the inquiry. Anyway, I consider myself feel enough as to express my opinion on the matter; an opinion that, although shared by other members of the Philippine hierarchy, however, I subject to the better judgment of all concerned, and of course to the authentic interpretation of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

In order to elaborate an answer - since there is not a ready-made answer in the Code of Canon Law - we have to answer first other questions:

a) Can a delegated faculty be sub-delegated?

The answer, based on the general norms of canon 137 and on an authentic Interpretation of 1928, is the following:

- 1) If the faculty has been granted by the Apostolic See, either in a *general* or *special* manner, the faculty *can be sub-delegated*, unless one of the following circumstances are present:
 - a. that the specific competence of the person had been chosen; or

- b. that sub-delegating had been expressly forbidden.
- 2) *If the delegation has been granted by another authority* - in matter of canonical form of marriage the diocesan Bishop [c. 1112], the local Ordinary or the parish priest [c. 1108])-we distinguish:
- a. if it is a *general* delegation, the faculty *can be sub-delegated, but only for each case*;
 - b. if the faculty has been delegated *in a special manner*, it cannot be delegated, except by the express grant of the person delegating.

b) Is the delegation granted to lay persons to assist at marriages an exceptional case?

Absolutely. The delegation granted to lay persons represents an exceptional case, since the canon expressly says that lay persons can be delegated "where there are no priests and deacons." (It is to be noticed that the original Latin term *laicus* of this canon is not accompanied by the term *vir* - unlike in cc. 230 §1 and 1024 where the term *vir* is used. Therefore, it includes *men* and *women*.)

The norms regarding such delegation are:

- 1) It is not the local Ordinary neither the parish priest who can grant the faculty to the laity, but the *diocesan Bishop*;
- 2) The delegation of the faculty to the lay person to assist at marriages can be granted *only if there are not priests and deacons* to be delegated; and

3) The diocesan bishop, before granting the delegation to a lay person, must obtain the *favorable vote* of the Episcopal Conference and the *licencia* of the Holy See.

Accordingly, the power to delegate this particular faculty to assist at marriages is not open to local Ordinaries or to parish priest, but it has been "reserved" to the diocesan Bishops.

Besides, this delegation to a lay person can only be considered *if there is lack of priests or deacons*. Now, several questions can be raised here: What does "lack" of priests and deacons mean? Who will judge about its existence or not in a particular region? And if ever a lay person is duly delegated while such "lack" of priests or deacons is doubtful or inexistent, will such delegation still be valid? I answer briefly to these three questions by saying, first, that the lack of priests or deacons mentioned in the canon must not be understood only *materially* (i.e., absolute or physical lack of them), But also *morally* (e.g., if they could be found only with grave difficulty or inconvenience on their part). Second, that it is up to the diocesan Bishop to judge about the availability or not of priests/deacons. Would the actual lack of priests/deacons affect the *validity* of an eventual lay delegation? In my opinion, the diocesan Bishop, by virtue of his episcopal authority, enjoys the faculty to delegate the laity. Therefore, even in the case the lack of priests or deacons was doubtful or inexistent in a particular region, the delegation granted by the Bishop would always be valid.

Finally, the diocesan Bishop is required to obtain the prior approval of the Episcopal Conference with the subse-

quent permission of the Apostolic See. Again the question has been raised: What would happen if these last two conditions were not fulfilled, mainly because the local Episcopal Conference had not acted on canon 1112? Would it affect the validity of the delegation? That is the question addressed in the next subtitle.

c) *Are the prior approval of the Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Apostolic See required 'ad validitatem'?*

To the Code legislator's mind, the diocesan Bishop, before granting the delegation to a lay person to assist at marriages, must obtain the *favorable vote* of the Episcopal Conference and the permission (*licencia*) of the Apostolic See.

However, both things -> the prior approval of the Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Apostolic See - are not required *for each case*, but the Episcopal Conference studies the particular situation of a territory and, after verifying the lack of priests/deacons, gives its favorable approval. Subsequently, the Apostolic See grants likewise its permission through the approval of the Acts of the Episcopal Conference.

Are the two requisites *ad validitatem*? My opinion is *in the negative*, i.e., that the approval of the Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Apostolic See do not affect the validity of the delegation.

The main reason is because the diocesan Bishop, by virtue of his episcopal consecration, *has* the power to delegate the laity - obviously on matters that do not require the sacrament of Orders. Therefore, in the hypothetical case that he

had delegated *without* having first obtained the approval of the Episcopal Conference and/or the permission of the Holy See, such delegation would be *unlawful*, but still *valid*. (N.B. The understanding here is not a defiant attitude on the part of the Bishop, but simply that the local Episcopal Conference has not acted on canon 1112).

Another solid reason to hold this opinion is the fact that canon 1112 does not state that those two previous acts are needed *ad validitatem*. (Canon 10 provides: "Only those laws which expressly state that an act is null or that a person is incapable of acting are to be considered as invalidating or incapacitating.") Besides, "ecclesiastical laws are to be understood according to the proper meaning of the words considered in their text and context," as reads the general norm of canon 17, which adds that "if the meaning remains doubtful or obscure - something that in our case is to be proven - there must be recourse to parallel places, if there be any, to the purpose and circumstances of the law, and to the mind of the legislator." I do believe the problem we are contemplating can be placed in *the purpose and circumstances of the law*, since the purpose and circumstances of the law coincide in canon 1111 and 1112 §1.

I have my solution counter-checked with the opinions of some respectable Filipino canonists. To the same question one answered in this vein: "*While there are some authors [...] who pronounce that without the required 'voto favorabili' and 'obtenta licentia' marriages thus held would be ab initio null and void, I venture to disagree. The same marriages would be illicit but not invalid by way of 'benignior interpretatio'.*" Others expressed similar opinions, which they justified

by bringing forward elements such as the unique factor that in the sacrament of marriage the spouses are the ministers; the specific witnessing function of the assistant at marriages; the canonical form being a requirement of merely ecclesiastical law; the fact that the Code does not provide that the prior endorsement of the Episcopal Conference and the approval of the Apostolic See be conditions for validity; and even that the *"ecclesia supplet"* of canon 144 is applicable in this case...

In conclusion, with due respect to other dissenting opinions, to the question on whether *"can we consider valid the delegation by the diocesan bishop of a lay [= non-ordained] person to assist at marriages without the previous approval of the Episcopal Conference and the permission of the Apostolic See prescribed in canon 1112,"* my answer is Yes, that is, such delegation can be considered valid and so will the marriages solemnized by that person assisting at them - a Religious Sister in our case. In the last analysis, the celebration of those marriages might be illicit or unlawful but certainly not invalid.

Such is my opinion, which however is always subject, as I said, to the better judgment of all concerned and of course to the authentic interpretation of the competent Church authority.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for May-June 2005

EFREN RIVERA, OP

May 1, 2005



Easter VI

Readings (A) Acts 8:5-17; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-21

The Sunday takes precedence over the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker except where he is the Patron Saint.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). ***The Paraclete and Jesus' Return*** <> After Good Shepherd Sunday, which is the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the liturgy turns its attention to Christ's Ascension and Pentecost and takes Gospel Readings from the Farewell Discourse of Jesus in Jn 14. This was already done last Sunday, and it is continued now. The Advocate 1) will be given in a special way after the disciples prove themselves to be true lovers of Jesus because they follow his commandments; 2) He will be given as a result of Jesus' petition to the Father; 3) He will be given as someone who will remain

with the disciples; 4) He will dwell with the disciples together with Jesus and the Father, and the disciples will gain an understanding of the relationships of Father-Son-Advocate among themselves.

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

V. 15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." - Value of love and obedience. See also v. 21.

V. 16, "He will give you another Advocate..." - Value of having the whole Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - involved in our life in this world.

V. 17, "The Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept..." - Value of saving truth as a special possession of believers.

V. 18, "I will not leave you orphans..." - Value of having Jesus, who is not only a Brother but also a Father to us.

V. 19, "You will see me, because I live and you will live." - Value of experiencing the presence of Jesus.

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

- (V. 15) Have you loved Jesus to the point of making sacrifices in order to obey his moral law? / Have you preferred to love and obey Jesus rather than do a wicked thing, like for example, aborting a baby?

- (V. 16) By developing a devotion to Jesus (Sacred Heart, Divine Mercy, etc.) have you experienced gaining insights into the life of the Most Holy Trinity?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - We have to remind people that Christian life requires adherence to a Moral Law sanctioned by Jesus Christ. For example, one cannot be a good Christian if one practices abortion.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - We have to counteract the propaganda of people promoting artificial birth control or the use of condoms, claiming them to be more effective than Christian methods of responsible parenthood.

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

HAPPY ENDING

Oscar Wilde had a reputation as a homosexual debauchee who preached the sordid gospel of decadence. Yet, in his deathbed he converted to Catholicism. This meant, according to his biographer, Joseph Pearce, his rejection of decadence and the homosexual lifestyle.

Digging into Oscar Wilde's background, biographer Pearce found out that, in fact, Oscar Wilde had "a lifelong love affair with the Catholic Church. At times the love affair became warfare as Wilde sought, never entirely successfully, to break away from the Church's influence upon him... he wrestled all his life with the fundamental facts of faith."

Source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZE04061723>

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

May 8, 2005



ASCENSION

Readings (A) Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mt 28:16-20

Today is MOTHER'S DAY.

It is also WORLD COMMUNICATION SUNDAY.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *The Commissioning of the Disciples* o If one uses visuals for the ending of Matthew, Jesus does not "ascend" to heaven but simply meets with his disciples in a mountain in Galilee (28: 7 & 16) and promises to remain with them "until the end of the age." This warns us not to think of the Ascension too simplistically in terms of Jesus - like a balloon - rising to the big blue yonder. Theologically, we should think of the Ascension 1) as the end of the earthly apparitions of Jesus to people chosen to be witnesses of his Resurrection; and 2) as the enthronement of Jesus as the Incarnate, Crucified and Risen Son of God to whom "all power in heaven and on earth" has been given. <> Correctly, Christian tradition has called this passage the "Commissioning" of the first disciples to "make (other) disciples of all nations..." As "Commissioners" of Jesus they will do his work of evangelizing while Jesus remains as the unseen "power" working in them.

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

V. 16, "The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus ordered them." - Value of prompt obedience.

V. 17, "When they saw him, they worshipped, but they doubted." - Value of popular religiosity, even when it still has to be purified to get to the level of saving faith.

V. 18, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me." - This is the "heart" or "core" of the mystery of the Ascension. Hence we have here the value of experiencing Jesus as a *powerful Savior*.

V. 19-20a, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." - We share in the *power* of the Risen and Ascended Savior when we give the sacrament of Baptism to believers, and when we teach or evangelize them before and after their Baptism. This is how we show *pastoral care* to people. Hence we have here the value of doing pastoral work.

V. 20b, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." - Jesus remains with Church workers as the *Power* behind their work. Hence we have here the value of working *in the name (or in the person) of Jesus*.

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

- (V. 18) Have you experienced the Power of Jesus working in you?

- (V. 19-20) Have you experienced touching the lives of others by means of the Power of Jesus given to you at your Baptism?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - **Let** us be a *powerful Church* but not with political nor economic

power - let us be *powerful spiritually*, that is, powerful in saving people body and soul, *because we wield the power of Jesus*.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us evangelize the cultural, economic, political and social lives of people, remembering that Jesus, who works through us, was given ALL POWER IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. <> In particular, let us evangelize the media of social communications.

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

SACRAMENTS MAKE CHRIST PRESENT

As this guide is being written (in February 2005), an Entertainment page columnist in one of our newspapers tells his readers that the daughter of a Senator and air entertainment celebrity has been "dedicated" to the Lord at the Ballroom of a certain big hotel by a certain pastor. This is certainly a purely human invention. What the Gospel of Matthew tells us is that people are to be "BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT." The ballroom affair was a successful social event. But is that what counts for Christians? The Bible tells us that it is through the Sacraments that Jesus becomes present with us "until the end of the age." That, for us Christians, is what really counts.

May 15, 2005



PENTECOST

Readings (A) acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor 12:3b-7,12-13; Jn 20:19-23

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *The Risen Lord Gives the Holy Spirit to the Disciples, o* In John the story in today's Gospel Reading is the first appearance of Jesus to his men disciples "on the evening of that first day of the week" (that, is on the Sunday) when he rose from the dead. Jesus came 1) to bring Peace to his disciples; 2) to show them the wounds in his hands and his side; 3) To send them as a continuation of the mission he received from his Father; and 4) to breathe the Holy Spirit to them.

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

V. 19, "Peace be with you!" - Jewish "SHALOM" is not just a wish for tranquility. It is a wish for ALL THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS PROMISED BY GOD FOR A HAPPY LIFE ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN. The closest Filipino word is "MABUHAY". When Christianized, this cheer should mean: MAY YOU HAVE THE FULLNESS OF LIFE GIVEN BY JESUS!

V. 20, "The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." - It's a joyful reunion after a sorrowful dispersal. It's like being "born again".

V. 21, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." - Value of sharing in the mission that the Father entrusted to Jesus.

V. 22-23, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'" - Value of that forgiveness that comes with the holy Spirit is setting free the one forgiven.

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

- (V. 19) Have I experienced Biblical/Christian SHALOM?
- (V. 20a The Disciples rejoiced...) Have I found true happiness in Jesus Christ, as a gift of the Holy Spirit?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us continue emphasizing what makes the church a happy place or a happy community for people.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us treasure all those things that contribute to make our people happy in spite of many challenges in life.

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

A HAPPY PEOPLE

Christian Pentecost is the Birthday of the Universal Church. It is a happy event and in fact it is the key to the happiness of people.



After researching about happiness for 25 years, Ruut Veenhoven, a professor at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, Netherlands, concluded that happiness is "how much you like the life you are living."

For about two or three decades, a number of psychologists have focused their research on happiness. They have found out that happiness is not based on wealth, nor on education, nor on youth, nor on a successful marriage, nor in watching TV. On the positive side, RELIGIOUS FAITH and FRIENDS do give a big boost to happiness.

Source: Time (Asia) Magazine, February 28, 2005



Filipinos are the happiest among Asians and one among the happiest people in the world despite the many problems they have to face every day, according to a survey done among 50 countries worldwide by the World Values Survey. Filipinos are number six among the top 10 happiest nations in the world. (No other East Asian country is in the top 10; in fact among the bottom five are Japan, China and South Korea.)

Venezuelans came out the happiest with a rating of 55 percent, followed by Nigeria, 45 percent; Ireland, 42 percent; Iceland 42 percent; the Netherlands, 40 percent; the Philippines, 40 percent; Australia, 39 percent; the United States, 39 percent; Turkey, 39 percent; and Switzerland, 38 percent.

The least happy people are the Bulgarians, 7 percent; Armenians, 6 percent; Romanians, 6 percent; Russians, 6 percent; Ukrainians, 5 percent; Belarussians, 5 percent; Moldo-

vans, 4 percent; Lithuanians, 4 percent; Estonians, 4 percent; Slovaks, 4 percent; and Latvians, 3 percent.

Source: The Manila Times, February 24, 2005



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

May 22, 2005



TRINITY

Readings (A) Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *God Sent the Son to Give Life*, o Today's Gospel Reading is a "Comment" by the author of the book about the mission of the Son. The comment is attached to Jesus' teaching about receiving eternal life. If we only look at the explicit words we find only the Father (God) and the Son. Where is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity? He is there, but He is not yet "explicitated". We have to wait for the Ecumenical Councils of the Church in the fourth century of the Christian Era for the explicitation.

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

V 16. "For God so loved..." - Value of God's love. God's love makes us good. We do not have to be good first, and then God will love us. Without any merit on our part, he loves us. We should be grateful.

V. 17, "(God sent his Son into the world) that the world may be saved through him." - Value of salvation offered to all people if they believe in/accept Jesus Christ.

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

- (V. 16) Have you been converted to a fervent Christian life because you came to realize how much God loves you?
- (V. 17) When did you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us give more importance to relationships than to measurable achievements (more buildings, more money, etc.).

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us give more importance to making people happy than to material wealth.

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

HAPPINESS IN RELATIONSHIPS

The inward-directed (*ad intra*) life of the Most Holy Trinity consists of the Relationships of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is good to keep in mind that the Perfect Life consists of relationships. This is where Ultimate Happiness is found.

The happiness of the Most Holy Trinity is reflected in the happiness of people. Ask Filipinos.

"The World Values Survey published by the University of Michigan in November 2004 ranked 82 countries and terri-

tories according to feelings of "subjective well-being" (SWB) - which combined its happiness and "life-satisfaction" scores - and the Philippines had one of the highest ratings in Asia, above far richer locations such as Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. A few years back, A Hong Kong ad agency (AC Nielsen) found the Philippines to be the happiest place among a group that included Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and China."

"For Filipinos, happiness isn't material - it's social. We're happiest in a group: family, friends, immediate community, even strangers: as soon as Philippine travelers drift in, they gravitate toward one another and soon form a boisterous crowd, exchanging jokes and mobile phone numbers."

"The small group is our bastion against life's unfairness. Hundreds of years of bad government have taught us to expect little from impersonal institutions. We know that our leaders are corrupt, that our country is marred by inequality, that here's plenty of injustice. We just try not to let it get in the way of enjoying life."

Source: Alan C. Robles, "It Doesn't Take Much," (Abridged) Time (Asia) Magazine, February 28, 2005, p. 37.

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

May 29, 2005 ◇ BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST
Readings (A) Dt 8:2-3,14b-16a; 1 Cor 10:16-17; Jn 6:51-58

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *The Bread is Jesus' Flesh.*
<> The Discourse on the Bread of Life has a "sapiential" part,

namely, verses 22-40, where the person of Jesus is the bread from heaven. To eat this bread, it is enough to believe in Jesus, God's Eternal Wisdom. The other part of the Discourse is the "sacramental" part, namely, verses 51b-59, where the sacramental bread of the Last Supper is the bread from heaven. To eat this bread, one has to be in the company of Jesus, that is to say, in the Church, and do what Jesus said is to be done to commemorate his death until he comes again - that is, take and eat the bread, his flesh... take and drink from the cup of his expiatory blood.

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

V. 51, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven..." - Value of a person over and above the value of any material thing.

V. 54, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life..." - Value of eternal life over and above earthly (temporary) life.

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

- (V. 51) Do you think of the Eucharist as bringing you the person of Jesus (and not just bringing you a holy thing)?
- (V. 54) Has the sacrament of the Eucharist taught you to look at everything from an eternal perspective rather than from a merely temporary one?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us keep our traditions connected with the celebration of Corpus Christi.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us continue to be reminded, in our Sunday after Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, that Mass does not end in the church - we have to bring the Eucharist with us wherever we are going after the Mass.

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

740TH CELEBRATION OF CORPUS CHRISTI

June 17, 2004 was "the 749th celebration of Corpus Christi. Carrying on a tradition he began many years ago as archbishop of Krakow, Pope John Paul II accompanied the Blessed Sacrament in an hour-long procession along the Via Merulana from the basilica of St. John Lateran, to that of St. Mary Major."

"The establishment of the feast is traditionally attributed to the Miracle of Bolsena which recounts how in 1263, Peter of Prague, a German priest doubted the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. During a pilgrimage to Rome, he stopped to say Mass on the altar of St. Catherine in Bolsena and as he spoke the words of consecration, the Host began to drip blood onto his hands, the corporal and the altar."

"The priest then went to the nearby city of Orvieto, where Pope Urban IV was residing, and brought him the relic of the miracle. The bloodstained corporal is still on display in the cathedral of that city."

On Sept. 8, 1264, Urban IV issued the papal bull, "Transiturus" establishing the feast of Corpus Domini. The date was set on the first Thursday after Pentecost to remind the faithful of the institution of the Eucharist on Maunday Thursday, without diminishing the solemnity of the Lord's Last Supper through festivities."

"The feast was extended to the universal church in 1311, and was celebrated in many towns and villaged throughout Europe with processions from the mid-1300s. Xxx (In Rome) the processional route developed over the years, settling on the present itinerary in 1575, when the road from St. John Lateran to St. Mary Major was opened by Pope Gregory XIII. Where once the emperor has distributed bread to the citizens in times of famine, now the Pontifex Maximus would bring the Bread of Life."

"The custom continued until 1870, when the unification of Italy ceased the papal processions. In 1979, to the astonishment of the city, John Paul II announced that he would be reviving the usage. Twenty-five years later, it has regained its status as Roman tradition."

"In one of the glorious moments when Rome remembers her past, many people joined in the singing of the "Tantum Ergo," one of the hymns composed by St. Thomas Aquinas at the request of Pope Urban IV for the feast."

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

June 5, 2005 ◇ TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Readings (A) Hos 6:3-6; Rom 4:18-25; Mt 9:9-13

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *The Call of Matthew the Tax Collector*, o Fittingly, as we resume the "continuous reading" of Matthew, our Sunday Gospel for year A, we turn our attention to Matthew (Levi) the tax collector who becomes an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was a man classified as a "sinner" in the Jewish community. But Jesus came, a spiritual Physician who healed him and made him a preacher of the Kingdom of God.

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

V. 9b "Follow me..." - Value of getting a call or vocation.

V. 11 "Why does your teacher (Jesus) eat with tax collectors and sinners?" - Value of being a "comrade" of despised people.

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

- (V. 9b) Do you believe, as a lay Church worker, that you also have a vocation?

- (V. 11) Have you experienced being a comrade of despised people?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(Bibliarasal Step Six).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us give value to people's vocation, whether it be for the priesthood or religious life, for raising a Christian family, or for being a lay worker in the Church.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us not be blind to the potentials of people we might be tempted to despise like disabled people, prisoners who have been pardoned, rehabilitated drug dependents, etc.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above 4n,_2).

TO FIND HAPPINESS, FOLLOW JESUS

Matthew-Levi was a rich man. He was in the employ of the Roman empire. He collected taxes for the emperor - he was a publican - and in return he got a generous percentage. He got more when he cheated people to pay more taxes than they should.

But was he happy? Certainly not! Modern research shows that "once your basic needs are met, additional income does little to raise your sense of satisfaction with life."

What about the pleasure that money can buy? Psychologist Martin Seligman, in his 2002 book, *Authentic Happi-*

ness, found three components of happiness: 1) Pleasure, 2) Engagement (the depth of involvement with one's family, work, romance and hobbies) and 3) Meaning (using personal strengths to serve some larger end). Of those three roads to a happy, satisfied life, PLEASURE IS THE LEAST CON-SEQUENTIAL. And Seligman says, "This is newsworthy because so many people build their lives around pursuing pleasure."

Source: Time (Asia) Magazine, February 28, 2005, p. 35

Jesus gave happiness to Matthew-Levi because he gave MEANING to his life. He made him an announcer of the Good News of God's Kingdom.

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

June 12, 2005 <> ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Readings (A) Ex 19:2-6a; Rom 5:6-11; Mt 9:36 - 10:8

Philippine Independence Day: An intention for our country and our people may be inserted into the General Intercessions.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *The Twelve Sent on Mission (A Few Laborers to Gather the Harvest)*. <> Literary critics start Matthew's "Mission Discourse" at ch. 10 v. 1. But the pastoral concern of those who chose this passage for today's Gospel reading led them to include Mt 9:36, which speaks of the heart of Jesus being moved with pity at the sight of the crowds. <> Jesus is the Sower and the Seed is his teaching and his works of mercy. He has done his part. Harvesters have to do their part too. These harvesters are few but their number

will increase if the Church "begs the harvest master to send out laborers to gather the harvest."

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

9:36, "His heart was moved with pity for (the crowds) because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd." - Value of compassion for people (in great numbers) who are troubled and abandoned.

9:38, "Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for the harvest." - Value of praying for vocations.

10:6-8a, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel... (Proclaim the Kingdom)... cure the sick..." - Value of prioritizing one's work.

10:8b, "Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give." - Value of service without pay.

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

- (V. 6) Have you experienced evangelizing the "lost sheep"?

- (V. 8a) Have you experienced doing volunteer work (for the Church) without pay?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us look for the "lost sheep."

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us promote the idea of voluntary service for the good of poor people.

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

RAPID DEVELOPMENT

John Paul II in a new apostolic letter entitled "The Rapid Development," calls the entire Church to a pastoral and cultural "revision" of its presence in and attitude toward the media.

In the letter, made public February 21, 2005, the Pope says that ecclesial dynamism in the "global village" depends on this revision. The media, he observed, can be used "to proclaim the Gospel or to reduce it to silence within men's hearts."

"The current phenomenon of communications impels the Church towards a sort of pastoral and cultural revision, so as to deal adequately with the times in which we live," states the Pope.

"The Church is not only called upon to use the mass media to spread the Gospel but, today more than ever, to integrate the message of salvation into the 'new culture' that these powerful means of communication create and amplify," he explains.

"Pastors, above all, must assume this responsibility. Everything possible must be done so that the Gospel might permeate society, stimulating people to listen to and embrace its message," writes the Pontiff.

"The appreciation of the media is not reserved only to those already adept in the field, but to the entire Church community," the Holy Father writes. "If, as has already been noted, the communications media take into account different aspects of the expression of faith, Christians must take into account the media culture in which they live."

"Such is the importance of the mass media that, fifteen years ago, I considered it inopportune to leave their use completely up to the initiatives of individuals or small groups, and suggested that they be decisively inserted into pastoral programs."

Source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZE05022103> (Abridged)

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

June 19, 2005 ◇ TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Readings (A) Jer 20:10-135 Rom 5:12-15; Mt 10:26-33

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). *Exhortation to Fearless Witness, o* In the New Jerome Bible Handbook, this passage is entitled "Appropriate and inappropriate fear" of disciples of Jesus. What is appropriate is the reverential fear of God "who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna." What is inappropriate is fear of human persecutors. It is actually a lack of faith in one's covenant with God. By this covenant God has bound Himself to take care of his chosen ones who have value "more than an entire flock of sparrows." It is also a lack of faith in Jesus tantamount to "disowning" him.

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

V 26 "Do not be afraid (of those who oppose the preaching of the Good News)." - Value of trusting in the Lord's promise of protection of his disciples.

V 28 & 32-33, "Be afraid... (of disowning God or Jesus Christ)." - Value of reverential fear of God or Jesus Christ.

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

- (V. 26) Have you experienced evangelizing people - NPAs, Prisoners, Drug Users, etc. - others have told you to be afraid of?

- (V 28 & 32-33) Have you ever been in danger of disowning Jesus Christ?

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

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us not be afraid to evangelize armed rebels, prisoners, drug dependents, etc.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us find ways of getting "marginalized people" to join the mainstream of society.

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

BEING POSITIVE MAKES YOU HAPPIER

Psychologist David Lykken- together with other psychologists who were doing research on human happiness tried to answer the question: can we get happier? Eight years ago, he answered the question negatively, saying, "It may be that trying to be happier is as futile as trying to be taller." Today, he says, "I made a dumb statement... It's clear (to me now) that we can change our happiness levels widely-up or down."

There are numerous ways of being happier, but three have been specially recommended. First, do some "gratitude exercises." Start a diary. Once a week, write down things for which you are thankful. This method was tested by psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky of the University of California at Riverdale. She found that subjects who took time to count their blessings conscientiously once a week significantly increased their overall satisfaction with life over a period of six weeks, whereas a control group that did not keep journals had no such gain.

Secondly, perform acts of altruism or kindness - visiting a nursing home, helping a friend's child with homework, mowing a neighbor's lawn, writing a letter to a grandparent. Doing five kind acts a week, especially all in a single day, gave a measurable boost to Lyubomirsky's subjects.

Thirdly, connect with other people. "Almost every person feels happier when they're with other people."

Source: Time (Asia) Magazine, February 28, 2005, p. 35-36

June 26, 2005 < THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Readings (A) 2 Kgs 4:8-11,14-16a; Rom 6:3-4,8-11; Mt 10:37-42

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three). ***Conditions of Discipleship; Rewards of Discipleship.*** o Today's Gospel passage is the conclusion of the "Mission Discourse" in Matthew. Jesus challenges us, his disciples, to love him more than our father or mother, son or daughter. After this comes the reminder that by welcoming the cross and the message of Jesus, we welcome Jesus himself. He is here to stay with us through thick and thin. He indeed is our reward.

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

V 37 "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me..." Value of putting the our love for Jesus above any other love.

V. 38 "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." - Value of Christian cross-carrying.

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

- (V. 37) Share how you have placed your love of Jesus above your love of father, or mother, etc.

- (V 38) Share whether you have been successful or unsuccessful in taking up your cross to follow Jesus.

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us keep reminding ourselves that we have to put the love of Jesus above any other love.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Christians in the Philippines should have no trouble looking for crosses to carry to be true to Christ's invitation to carry a cross and follow after him.

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

THE POPE STICKS TO HIS MOTTO, "*TOTUUS TUUS*"

Pope John Paul II's first written words after his tracheotomy surgery (Feb. 24, 2005) had a jovial quality - but he then quickly recalled his longtime Marian motto.

The Pope, back in his 10th-floor room in the Gemelli Polyclinic on Thursday night, signaled for a writing paper and then wrote (jokingly): "But what have they done to me?"

Reported Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro Valls.

The Holy—Father then added: "But I continue to be always '*totus tuus*'" - "all yours" - a reference to the motto of his pontificate and the entrustment of his life and ministry to The Virgin Mary.

John Paul II underwent a successful tracheotomy Thursday night (Feb. 24, 2005) to ease his breathing problems, after having been rushed to the hospital for congestion and

fever linked to the flu. He has been advised by his doctors not to speak for several days to favor a speedy recovery.

The Holy Father discovered the formula "*totus tuus*" when he was a worker in a Polish factory during World War II, under Nazi occupation, he revealed in his 1994 book, "Crossing the Threshold of Hope."

On Jan. 13, 2004, he explained in an address that those words - taken from the "Treatise of True Devotion to the Most Holy Virgin" of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort -changed his life.

"I found the answer to my perplexities due to fear that devotion to Mary, if excessive, might end by compromising the supremacy of worship due to Christ," he said. "Under the wise guidance of St. Louis-Marie I understood that, if the mystery of Mary is lived in Christ, such a risk does not exist," he clarified.

"Totus tuus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt," wrote St. Louis-Marie (1673-1716) - "I am all yours, and all that is mine is yours." The words are placed in the hands of Mary but they are actually offered to Jesus Christ. Mary is with her devotee in acknowledging Jesus as the Number One in his or her life.

Source: <http://www.zenit.org/ZE05022505> (Abridged)