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Immortal Sin

Jaime Cardinal Sin was a sign of contradiction. He stood like a cross, questioning, denouncing, and at times shattering, our porcelain beliefs and china creeds.

Many times, Cardinal Sin came up with contradictory statements. Many people equated this with inconsistency. Perhaps he was not inconsistent. He was just being himself: *thoroughly and relentlessly unpredictable*. His Chinese ancestry must have fatefully turned him against any form of determinism. Cardinal Sin had the genius of canceling out deliberately whatever determinations imposed on him by his previous decisions. He had openly endorsed politicians, only to disown them at the next press interview. He fulminated against gambling, yet admitted allowing suspected gambling lords to give donations to the poor. When he spoke, he gave the impression that nothing is withheld, though in the end his listeners would realize that nothing had been revealed.

Cardinal Sin was a sign of contradiction for religious leaders who are obsessed with security, comfort, and mediocrity. Unlike some clerics who are obsessed with the easy life, he

blossomed in adversity. For him, the best situation is one where struggle is not only necessary but also unavoidable. We witnessed his prime during the Martial Law era and the spate of revolutions, rebellion, and coups that ravaged the country. It was during those upheavals that Cardinal Sin showed himself at his best. He proved through strategic and inspired moves that he was not a sword cutting daisies. He acted decisively during crises. He hated inertia and middle of the road rhetorics. For him, it is better to be worked up about everything, than about nothing. This attitude, interpreted by many as imprudence or too much politicizing, was actually his best indictment to armchair reformists who refuse to be truly involved in anything.

Cardinal Sin also embodied the contradiction inherent in the church's proclamation of the gospel. For how can the Church, perched on a position of immense power preach against the futility of power? How can the Church, perceived as wealthy and scandal-laden, preach against the opulent phoniness of the rich, the blatant hypocrisy of politicians, and the ubiquitous media? Cardinal Sin must have wrestled with this paradox all those years as Archbishop of Manila.

He surely had one consolation, though. St. Paul, in one of his letters must have written for Cardinal Sin the passage that says: "Where Sin reigns, grace the more abounds." Truly, there are many things we enjoy today which are signs of God's abiding grace, which were obtained through the prayers and actions of this man, whose hands, like the cross, had always been outstretched in prayer, as he interceded for us, sinners. We miss you, Cardinal Sin.

THE EDITOR

Missing Sin

ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, OP

The July 10 CBCP statement has been praised for its commendable restraint. It has succeeded in arresting the build-up of protests into unwanted violence. To Filipinos desperately seeking for clarity and certainty, the CBCP's offer of moral and religious guidance came as a promise of hope. Still, something seems lacking in the document, something that could have aroused sufficient moral indignation in us.

Consider this: the statement cites *not a single Gospel verse*. This is strange, since our Bishops claimed to have been looking at our political situation "from the point of view of the Gospel of Jesus". More startling still, the CBCP pastoral letter, a statement on moral values and issues, *never* mentioned the words "*sin*" and "*conscience*". This is not a trivial case of semantics.

If the CBCP statement is any indication, it seems that our moral discourses have lost a working theological language that defines the framework within which we carry out our moral discernment. When bishops themselves refrain from talking

about sin and conscience, will they wonder why those people whom they want to "discern" would rather go to lawyers and spin doctors, than approach the confessional?

A few years back, a paid advertisement was published in the New York Times. It went: *"When was the last time you had a good conversation about sin?"* Strangely, the ad was placed not by any religious group, but by the editors of the Wall Street Journal. A part of it reads: *"Sin isn't something that many people, including (priests and bishops), have spent much time talking about or worrying about through the years... But we will say this for sin; it at least offered a frame of reference for personal behavior. When the frame was dismantled, guilt wasn't the only thing that fell away; we also lost (our sense) of personal responsibility."*

Bringing back to our moral discourse the reality of human sinfulness does not mean finger-pointing, or engaging in an orgy of guilt, remorse, and despair. It means making us fully aware of the depth of the moral crisis in which we find ourselves. It means looking beyond the Constitutions and other political structures for the solution of our problems. It means making decisions not based solely on valid legal constraints and limits, or on mathematical calculation of unwanted consequences, or on obsessive predictions of worst-case scenarios.

The Bishops had the golden opportunity to jolt us out of our complacency, reminding us of the destructive consequences of the loss of our sense of sin. Sin and shame are correlative. Both *sin* and *shame* seem to have vanished from our political landscape. Has a politician done a shameful act? He will hire powerful image-makers for a quick make-over. Has

he committed a sin that cries to heaven for justice? He will hire a battery of lawyers who will make sure he is acquitted.

In his book, *Whatever Became Of Sin?* Karl Menninger pointed out how our view of sin has changed over the years. Priests used to talk about sin, because it was considered the root of all moral and religious problems. Then sin was equated with "*crime*", a civil problem, so it was put solely in the hands of the police and unscrupulous lawyers. Society began to hold the view that anything that was not illegal was moral. Soon, sin was identified with "*choice*", which was supposed to be a product of many forms of conditioning. Finally, psychologists and psychoanalysts relegated sin into the realm of the unconscious. We are no longer held responsible for the sins we commit. After all, sin is no longer a conscious act, but a disease which can be cured by medication or therapy.

If Menninger were here today, he would have told the Bishops what he had written in his book: "Preach about the ugliness of sin! Tell it like it is. Say it from the pulpit. Cry it from the housetops." Menninger believes that the loss of our sense of sin is slowly eating away at our nation's ethical foundation, like unseen termites.

Sin is deceptively subtle. We are too prone to forget that sin rarely presents itself to us in its true colors, saying, "I am here to destroy you." Sin comes to us, like Judas, with a kiss; like the serpent, with a luscious, forbidden fruit; like a crony, offering a blank check worth millions as a gift; like a friend promising instant victory in an election.

It is when we recognize the destructiveness of sin that the movement of 'grace', the first stirrings of repentance, often

begins. Without this recognition, we are prone to make excuses and minimize our sense of guilt and responsibility. One of the manifestations of sin is self-deception. If a person has convinced himself that he has done nothing wrong, he would probably conclude: "The problem is not me; it is THEY."

A person who has lost his sense of sin is prone to believe that the wrong he has done is a private matter between him and God. He thus invokes the law of privacy to appease his conscience. In truth, there is no such thing as a private sin. In the body of Christ, we belong to one another, we affect one another, and we cannot escape one another. St. Paul wrote, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (ICor. 12:26). Whether we like it or not, for better or for worse, we are all connected. *Sin, even the most private, destroys society.*

The indomitable Jaime Cardinal Sin, always outspoken and direct, had always situated within the context of human sinfulness the political ills he wished to denounce. Let us listen to him once again: *"Sin is not just isolated deeds, but the evil that these build up in our hearts, the hardness of spirit that selfishness creates within us. As the hold of sin grows in us, it separates us more and more from God, and from people around us, and from the good that is in others, and finally even from our own true selves. This sets up barriers of self-seeking, envy, distrust, and estrangement, and hatred between people. It poisons human relationships, builds up walls of distrust, and raises up what have been called sinful social structures - vested interests, behavior patterns, laws, institutions, which make collective selfishness incarnate in society. These in turn give permanent shape to*

injustice, corruption, exploitation, oppression and other social wrongs. And as these multiply and endure in our midst, we become more and more used to them, and do not even advert to their existence.

The President, in her SONA talked about the two Philip-pines. In the moral realm, we can also talk about the two Filipinos. The loss of our sense of sin has led us to DUPLICITY. We have become two persons, the authentic self suppressed by the other self in whom pretense has become a habit, in whom lying has become a way of life. The essence of sin is separation, division, and fragmentation. Having become oblivious to sin, we have allowed the light of truth to dissipate, giving rise to extreme divisiveness and factionalism in our country. We cannot seem to agree on anything, and unity appears a distant reality.

Reflections on the CBCP Pastoral Statement - Restoring Trust: A Plea for Moral Values in Philippine Politics

†LEONARDO Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.

1. It is with great relief and deep gratitude to God that we read and heard the many positive reactions of the public, the columnists, the politicians, and even some assertive religious congregations and civil society - to our pastoral statement: *Restoring Trust: A Plea for Moral Values in Philippine Politics*.

2. But as those who labored in its writing know only too well, the task to reach a collective consensus on its wording and tone was not an easy one. We were like a ship (not of fools) but of novice sailors entering uncharted waters. We sailed forward to a coast lined with hidden rocks of political controversies that was threatening to sink the nation.

3. Should we face another critical political crisis, and judging from our propensity to rehash one crisis after another, this is most likely to recur, it would profit us to reflect on the process we adopted to produce a good Statement.

4. It might help if we begin our review by noting those parts of the Statement which elicited positive reactions and praise. Before we issued our Statement, there were great expectations and anxiety from many quarters on whether the CBCP will opt to ask the President to step down. Thus when we did not demand the resignation of the President, there was a sigh of relief from many sectors. We had stopped the momentum towards social chaos. We had given more time for the contending forces to design more workable and acceptable options. We no longer supported the EDSA formula for changing political leadership. We had strengthened the constitutional process. The reputation of the CBCP as a positive conservative force in preventing a swift slide into social disorder was enhanced.

5. But our Statement made an important qualification to our collective consensus not to ask for the President's resignation. This we did neatly by immediately asserting that the President should not blithely dismiss the people's call for her resignation. We went on to add specific examples of other non-violent political strategies which the beleaguered President should consider seriously, such as a Truth Commission and an impeachment process. We pointedly asserted, to what by now must be a disappointed Malacanang resident, that such political acts were not against the Gospel.

5.1 It was the addition of this qualifying statement that occasioned some sharp criticisms. The general public and even seasoned commentators and political observers mistakenly concluded that the CBCP was pushing for the establishment of a Truth Commission. Subsequent press statements from CBCP offices further supported this error. (As someone remarked - this strengthens the case for translations of our CBCP statements into Pilipino etc..)

5.2 But many who otherwise would be sharply critical of us, were mollified by our inclusion of this qualifying statement. It silenced some of those who labelled us as pro-GMA; it mystified those who felt we were moral cowards. For gentler critics, it was a master stroke that the author of *The Prince* would have envied since it subtly indicated that there were bishops who favored the President's resignation to save the country.

5.3 In view of the sharp criticisms that our Statement received when it mentioned a Truth Commission and an Impeachment case, it might be useful for us to reflect on this for our future statements. The critics focused on the essence of what a Truth Commission can achieve in the countries where it was applied. It seems that it is not the proper legal instrument for our case since this kind of commission is not used to try single cases but rather, to judge patterns of human rights abuses over time of a dictatorial regime. Thus, the lesson we could derive from this *faux pas* (if it can be termed thus) is to do our homework in studying a political measure before proposing it as a viable solution to a political problem.

6. As I re-read and reflect on our Statement, I feel a growing uneasiness about its conceptual framework. It straddles two spheres: the political and the pastoral; the pertinent Pilipino saying for this ambivalent posture is: *namamangka sa dalawang Hog*. Thus, our arguments tend to glide swiftly from general statements about our lack of moral values into recommendations of how to restore them in our economic and a political life based on a thin mixture of principles taken from the Gospel and Papal teaching. Accordingly, after reading or hearing our

statement, one does not get any clear impression of a document that differs from other statement coming from secular society and commentators. We seem to be echoing their views. Thus, they can tear our arguments apart by showing our amateurish knowledge of legal and political matters, or they could unctuously welcome us for agreeing with their logic.

7. If I were to write a second version of our Statement, after considering the various reactions to its message, my revision would consist principally in making cohesive statements where one idea reinforces another to produce a more emphatic effect because there is a clear unifying ecclesiological framework. What framework? This would depend on our discernment of the *Signs of Times*. My personal opinion is that the greatest malaise we face is our lack of unity as a people. National disunity has devastating effects in our private and public lives. It weakens our culture, surrenders our resources to alien interests, widens the gap between rich and poor, prolongs our armed conflicts, uproots our families, adulterates our politics, mires us in pits of suspicion, rivalries and hatred - an endemic disunity that nullifies all political efforts to build a moral order. The human existence of the Filipino is a spiritual question and cannot be confined within the political.

8. Frankly, any reading of or listening to our Statement does not give our people a sense of pride and belonging to a nation striving for oneness; it does not give our people inspiration and a firm conviction that the CBCP has produced a document that tells them of the ways and means to renew our politics and bring sanity and order in our lives - based on Christ's teaching and example. Instead, the salient point that our Statement produced were confined to the merits or demerits of political strategies like a Truth Commission or an

Impeachment process or a resignation decision. What we came out by way of a Statement was largely seen by our people as but another document dealing with political issues in a political manner to produce a political effect. But our unique evangelization task is to renew our society by transforming it into a communion where justice, peace, love, and forgiveness are defined not according to secular perspectives but of the Gospel.

9.-Time was of the essence when we wrote the Statement - time whose brevity pressured us to come up with a Statement within two days when, because of the importance of its message, we would have preferred more consultations before its issuance. But no. 8 in our Statement where we urge our people, especially among our grassroots and basic ecclesial communities to pray, dialogue, discern and act together in the light of Gospel values is already a recommendation that will correct and enrich future church documents on complex social, economic and political issues. The Spirit-informed and inspired graces that animate the faithful's *sensus fidelium* will come to play and enter into our official church documents. It is a comprehensive process which was praised by a number of commentators since it brings the discussion of national issues from the center to the periphery among our grassroots communities.

10. The above critique I share is merely an expression of my personal opinions. As such, it has the possibility of misreading the real effects which our Statement actually produced among our people. Your views will correct these limitations and indubitably prepare us better when we draft yet another Statement in yet another political crisis.

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The Nature of the Relationship between CBCP, Individual Dioceses and Bishops

†LEONARDO Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.

As the nation faces yet another political crisis, the pressure for church authorities, either at the level of the dioceses or the conference, to state their position will increase. In view of this situation, any sign, authentic or not, of divergence of views among bishops will be inflated into exaggerated conclusions regarding our unity. To provide a context for a discussion on the relationship of the CBCP with individual dioceses, it might help to reflect on the nature of this relationship.

The juridical nature and authority of Episcopal conferences (EC) have been debated for some time now. These studies were partly occasioned by 2 fears: namely, that the authority of individual diocesan bishops is threatened by the size, organization and prominence of ECs; and that the locus of the church's self-realization could tend to shift away from the diocese to a national center.

But recognition is also given to the pastoral benefits of conferences, such as the sharing of information and the possibility of collaboration on issues transcending diocesan capacities. Thus the EC, far from diminishing the diocesan bishop's autonomy, enhances and supports them in their pastoral ministry and gives him the ways and steps to deal with national issues. The existence of an Episcopal Conference strengthens and manifests the collegiality among bishops. Collegiality is the key to defining the nature and purpose of ECs.

With the election of Pope Benedict XVI, we have another weighty perspective to consider. As Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), then Cardinal Ratzinger stated in a widely circulated report which he gave on 15 August 1984 to Vittorio Messori (The Ratzinger Report, *Ignatius Press, San Francisco*, 1985) that: *"Wo Episcopal conference, as such, has a teaching mission; its documents have no weight of their own save that of the consent given to them by the individual bishops."* Understandably, this statement occasioned many debates on the role and function of ECs. The distinction between doctrinal teaching and pastoral action was recalled to defend the usefulness of ECs. Although not engaged in doctrinal teaching (which belongs to an ecumenical council united with the Pope), still ECs are needed to work on prudent courses of pastoral action.

Among the other caveats which Cardinal Ratzinger noted in the 1984 interview was the danger of *"conformism which leads the majority to accept positions of active minorities bent upon pursuing clear goals."* He continues: *"there is a tendency on the part of many bishops simply to depend on drafts prepared by commissions or staffs. A desire for agreement can*

also produce flat statements" and truth is not something that can be "created through ballots... truth can only be found, not created..."

As a theologian in 1964, Joseph Ratzinger proposed an antidote to the tendency to invest pragmatic concerns with theological status and ultimate significance which exempted them from criticism. He stated his view thus:

"The correct attitude must rather be to let the pragmatic remain pragmatic and clearly to see how narrow the real sphere of divine law is in the Church and how wide the space left to opinion. Not least of all, it should also attempt to hinder an ideologizing of the pragmatic, a problem under which we suffer today, by which the past covered all possible practical givens with the slogan Sanctum and so removed them from discussion and from the play of pragmatic forces." (Ratzinger, *Konkrete Formen*, 155-56).

On the question of dissent by the bishops from a conference position, the *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* (1973) dealing with this problem stated:

- a) *The bishop accepts with loyal submission the decisions legitimately taken by the conference and reviewed by the apostolic see, for they have the force of law through the church's highest authority, and he puts them into practice in his diocese although he may not previously have agreed with them or they may cause him some inconvenience.*
- b) *There are other decisions and regulations of the conference which do not have a juridical binding force; and as a rule the bishop makes them his own*

with a view to unity and charity with his brother bishops, unless serious reasons which he has carefully considered in the Lord prevent it...

But shortly after the issuance of the 2003 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, the revised Directory included this emphasis:

Under certain conditions established by law, the Bishops assembled in the Episcopal conference also exercise a doctrinal function, since they are authoritative teachers and instructors in the faith for their people. In fulfilling this doctrinal role, especially when they have to address new questions or shed light on new problems emerging within society, the Bishops should be conscious of the limited scope of their pronouncements, inasmuch as their Magisterium is not universal, even though it is authoritative and official.

Although there is at present no solid unanimity regarding the nature and extent of the teaching authority of ECs, still we must take into account the status and function of the CBCP in our Philippine society. During the dark days of martial rule, the main voice which articulated and represented the Church was, in the perception of the public here and abroad - that of Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila. The CBCP was marginalized in this situation. But subsequent leaderships in the conference clarified to the public that it is the CBCP which represents the collective voice of the Church in the Philippines. At present, surveys show that its credibility is higher than that of the Supreme Court, the government, the military, and the Congress. Inevitably, in the mind of the Filipinos, any statement labeled by the media as coming from the CBCP,

represents the official line of the Church. This is quite a weighty responsibility to bear.

But in the Philippines, the problem is not solely the impact of the actions and statements of the CBCP but also, in more and more instances, the effects of the statements and actions of individual diocesan bishops on the public's perception of the CBCP. Take for example the recent statements of 3 bishops calling for President Gloria M. Arroyo to step down. The local media slanted this item to give the impression of dissent and disunity within the CBCP. Or the commendable crusade against *jueteng* of the archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan which spilled out from that diocese to involve several other unsuspecting dioceses who had to hastily defend themselves from media-generated innuendoes of accepting *jueteng* funds. Again, the reputation of the CBCP as a living and affective *communio* might suffer in the process.

In this connection it is important to recall a much forgotten provision of the DPMB:

The members of these different commissions should realize that their competence is not to direct or coordinate some particular aspect of the Church's pastoral work in their country, but something more modest, but no less effective: it is to assist the plenary assembly - that is the Conference itself - in attaining its objectives and to provide the Bishops with sufficient resources for the fruitful exercise of their ministry and their particular Churches.

This fundamental criterion should remind those in charge of the commissions to avoid any action based

DOCUMENTATION

John Paul IPs Message to the Youth of the World on the Forthcoming 20th World Youth Day in Cologne

Castel Gandolfo, 6 August 2004

"We have come to worship him" (Mt 2:2)

My dear young people!

1. This year we have celebrated the 19th World Youth Day, meditating on the desire expressed by some Greeks who had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover: *"We wish to see Jesus"* (Jn 12:21). And here we are now, making our way to Cologne where, in August 2005, the 20th World Youth Day is to be celebrated.

"We have come to worship him" (Mt 2:2): this is the theme of the next World Youth Day. It is a theme that enables young people from every continent to follow in spirit the path taken by the Magi whose relics, according to a pious tradition, are venerated in this very city, and to meet, as they did, the Messiah of all nations.

on a false sense of independence or autonomy, as for example, the publication on their own initiative of guidelines in a particular pastoral area, or a way of dealing with diocesan structures and commissions that bypasses the essential role of their respective diocesan Bishop. (#32)

Thus the need for clarifying or improving the communication procedures between the diocesan bishops and the CBCP as well as among the bishops themselves. If a bishop senses that an initiative he plans to take will also affect other dioceses, then, it is his responsibility to discuss with his brother bishops as to the possible repercussions this might have on their dioceses and on the CBCP as well.

/ .! .^ 'F 'I' 'to .!*

It is true to say that the light of Christ had already opened the minds and the hearts of the Magi. "They went their way" (Mt 2:9), says the Evangelist, setting out boldly along unknown paths on a long, and by no means easy, journey. They did not hesitate to leave everything behind in order to follow the star that they had seen in the East (cf Mt 2:2). Imitating the Magi, you young people are also making preparations to set out on a "journey" from every region of the world to go to Cologne. It is important for you not only to concern yourselves with the practical arrangements for World Youth Day, but first of all you must carefully prepare yourselves spiritually, in an atmosphere of faith and listening to the Word of God.

2. *"And the star... went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was"* (Mt 2:9). The Magi reached Bethlehem because they had obediently allowed themselves to be guided by the star. Indeed, *"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy"* (Mt 2:10). It is important, my dear friends, to learn to *observe the signs* with which God is calling us and guiding us. When we are conscious of being led by Him, our heart experiences *authentic and deep joy* as well as a powerful desire to meet Him and a persevering strength to follow Him obediently.

"And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother" (Mt 2:11). There is nothing extraordinary about this at first sight. Yet that Child was different from any other: He is the only Son of God, yet He *emptied Himself of His glory* (cf Phil 2:7) and came to earth to die on the Cross. He came down among us and became poor in order to reveal to

us His divine glory, which we shall contemplate fully in heaven, our blessed home.

Who could have invented a greater sign of love? We are left in awe before *the mystery of a God who lowered himself* to take on our human condition, to the point of giving His life for us on the Cross (cf *Phil 2:6-8*). In His *poverty*, - as Saint Paul reminds us - *"though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich"* (2 *Cor 8:9*), and came to offer salvation to sinners. How can we give thanks to God for such magnanimous goodness?

3. The Magi found Jesus at "*Beth-lehem*" which means "*house of bread*". In the humble stable in Bethlehem on some straw lay the "*grain of wheat*" who, by dying, would bring forth "*much fruit*" (cf *Jn 12:24*). When speaking of Himself and His saving mission in the course of His public life, Jesus would later use the image of bread. He would say "*I am the bread of life*", "*I am the bread which came down from heaven*", "*the bread that I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh*", (/*n 6: 35.41.51*)

Faithfully pursuing the path of our Redeemer from the poverty of the *Crib* to His abandonment on the *Cross* we can better understand the mystery of His love which redeems humanity. The Child, laid by Mary in the manger, is the Man-God we shall see nailed to the Cross. The same Redeemer is present in the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the *stable at Bethlehem* He allowed himself to be worshipped under the humble outward appearances of a newborn baby, by Mary, by Joseph and by the shepherds; in the *consecrated Host* we adore Him sacramentally present in his body, blood, soul and

godhead, and He offers himself to us as the food of eternal life. The *Mass* then becomes a truly loving encounter with the One who gave himself wholly for us. Do not hesitate, my dear young friends, to respond to Him when He invites you "*to the wedding feast of the Lamb* (cf *Rev* 19:9). Listen to him, prepare yourselves properly and draw close to the Sacrament of the Altar, particularly in this Year of the Eucharist (October 2004-2005) which I have proclaimed for the whole Church.

4. "*They fell down and worshipped Him*" (*Mt* 2:11). While the Magi acknowledged and worshipped the baby that Mary cradled in her arms as the One awaited by the nations and foretold by prophets, today we can also worship Him in the Eucharist, and *acknowledge Him as our Creator, our only Lord and Saviour*.

"Opening their treasures they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (*Mt* 2:11). The gifts that the Magi offered the Messiah symbolised true worship. With gold, they emphasised His Royal Godhead; with incense, they acknowledged Him as the priest of the New Covenant; by offering Him myrrh, they celebrated the prophet who would shed His own blood to reconcile humanity with the Father.

My dear young people, you too offer to the Lord the gold of your lives, namely, *your freedom* to follow Him out of love, responding faithfully to His call; let the incense of your fervent *prayer* rise up to him, in praise of His glory; offer Him your myrrh, *that is your affection of total gratitude to Him*, true Man, who loved us to the point of dying as a criminal on Golgotha.

5. Be worshippers of the only true God, giving Him pride of place in your lives! *Idolatry* is an ever-present temptation. Sadly, there are those who seek the solution to their problems *in religious practices that are incompatible with the Christian faith*. There is a strong urge to believe in the facile myths of success and power; it is dangerous to accept the fleeting ideas of the sacred which present God in the form of cosmic energy, or in any other manner that is inconsistent with Catholic teaching.

My dear young people, do not yield to *false illusions* and *passing fads* which so frequently leave behind a tragic spiritual vacuum! Reject the *seduction* of wealth, consumerism and the subtle violence sometimes used by the mass media.

Worshipping the true God is an authentic act of *resistance to all forms of idolatry*. Worship Christ: He is the Rock on which to build your future and a world of greater justice and solidarity. Jesus is *the Prince of peace*: the source of forgiveness and reconciliation, who can make brothers and sisters of all the members of the human family.

6. "*And they departed to their own country by another way*" (Mt 2:12). The Gospel tells us that after their meeting with Christ, the Magi returned home "by another way". This change of route can symbolise the *conversion* to which all those who encounter Jesus are called, in order to become the true worshippers that He desires (cf Jn 4: 23-24). This entails imitating the way He acted by becoming, as the apostle Paul writes, "*a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*". The apostle then adds that we must not be conformed to the

mentality of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds, to *"prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect"* (cf *Rm 12: 1-2*).

Listening to Christ and worshipping Him leads us to make *courageous choices*, to take what are sometimes heroic decisions. Jesus is demanding, because He wishes our genuine happiness. He calls some to give up everything to follow Him in the priestly or consecrated life. Those who hear this invitation must not be afraid to say "yes" and to generously set about following Him as His disciples. But in addition to vocations to special forms of consecration there is also the specific vocation of all baptised Christians: that is also a vocation to that "high standard" of ordinary Christian living which is expressed in holiness (cf *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 31). When we meet Christ and accept His Gospel, life changes and we are driven to communicate our experience to others.

There are so many of our contemporaries who do not yet know the love of God or who are seeking to fill their hearts with trifling substitutes. It is therefore urgently necessary for us to be *witnesses to love contemplated in Christ*. The invitation to take part in World Youth Day is also extended to you, dear friends, who are not baptised or who do not identify with the Church. Are you not perhaps yearning for the Absolute and in search of "something" to give a meaning to your lives? Turn to Christ and you will not be let down.

7. Dear young people, the Church needs genuine witnesses for the new evangelisation: men and women whose lives have been transformed by meeting with Jesus, men and women who are capable of communicating this experience to

others. The Church needs saints. All are called to holiness, and holy people alone can renew humanity. Many have gone before us along this path of Gospel heroism, and I urge you to turn often to them to pray for their intercession. By meeting in Cologne you will learn to become better acquainted with some of them, such as *St. Boniface*, the apostle of Germany, the *Saints of Cologne*, and in particular Ursula, Albert the Great, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) and Blessed Adolph Kolping. Of these I would like to specifically mention *St. Albert and Teresa Benedicta of the Cross* who, with the same interior attitude as the Magi, were passionate seekers after the truth. They had no hesitation in placing their intellectual abilities at the service of the faith, thereby demonstrating that faith and reason are linked and seek each other.

My dear young people as you move forward in spirit towards Cologne, the pope will accompany you with his prayers. May Mary, "Eucharistic woman" and Mother of Wisdom, support you along the way, enlighten your decisions, and teach you to love what is true, good and beautiful. May she lead you all to her Son, who alone can satisfy the innermost yearnings of the human mind and heart.

Go with my blessing!

The World of Youth Today: Who are They and What do they Seek?

FR. TONY ANATRELLA

Introduction

I have been asked to present, within a very short time, a profile of today's youth from a sociological and psychological point of view, and to point out how they can be affected by ideological movements and where they stand in relation to the Church. This is a vast and ambitious programme that I shall try to synthesize as much as possible.

I shall speak of youth by drawing on my experience of psychoanalysis and psychiatry in the Western world. One must always beware of making hasty generalisations when talking about young people, and you can confirm or add to my remarks according to your cultural backgrounds. However, we can identify common traits in the psychology and sociology of young people all over the world. The impact of the economic model presented by liberalism, that of globalization, of changes in marriage unions and families, of projections of sexuality,

the impact of music, television, cinema and the internet, all influence and standardize juvenile mentality considerably in most countries.

These young people have weak points, but they are still receptive, ready to help, and generous. They are not burdened by ideologies like previous generations were. They seek authentic relationships and are in search of truth. However, when they do not find it in reality, they hope to find it within themselves. This kind of attitude predisposes them to depend on feelings and on individualism and to put social ties and their sense of what is in the general interest at their service. The social context is not conducive to the development of a real spiritual dimension. However, they are ready to dedicate themselves to any demanding causes that may arise.

1. Who are they?

The young people that concern us in this study are between the ages of 18 and the early thirties. They are at the post-adolescence stage and want to become psychologically autonomous by trying to affirm their *self*. More precisely, they all have a need to be themselves and to stand back in order to assess their education and social influences. These young people might be relatively integrated socially in their studies or professional life, whereas some of them might be in precarious professional and personal situations: unemployment, psychological instability, disruptive behaviour and numerous life problems. They often express a desire to become more confident in themselves, and they wish to free themselves of doubts regarding existence and to lose their fear of the idea of emotional commitment. They sometimes request help from

their parents but they feel awkward about it. Most of them continue to live with their parents,¹ and others who move away remain dependant on their families. They often feel the need for support when faced with reality so that they can accept themselves, accept life and set to work² in the real world.

They also search for reasons for living in order to construct their existence. Most of them are relatively detached from religious concerns and they often acknowledge that they have not been informed or educated in this respect. Nevertheless, they are affected by the phenomenon of sects, terrorism and war, and that gives them a troubled and conflictive outlook on religion, in particular on Islam. Religion is attractive, but at the same time it is a cause of concern when it is represented as a source of conflict in the world. This, however, is an error in interpretation because these conflicts are of political and economic origin. We still have much to learn about living in harmony with others. In short, their knowledge of the Christian faith and of the Church remains at the level of cliches and the intellectual reconstructions going around in society in television dramas and in the cinema.

In a society that, for various reasons, fosters doubt and cynicism, fear and helplessness, immaturity and childishness,

¹ 65% of young Europeans continue to live with their parents, according to a report published by Datamonitor, a British market research company. *Quotidien du Medecin* (France), p. 17, N. 7302, Wednesday 26 March 2003.

² Mentoring of young professionals is something new. Those involved are between 25 and 40, and especially the single people in this age group that might be considered as "young". It responds to a need, but it sometimes holds them in a kind of affective infantilization.

some young people tend to stay at the level of primary gratification. They find it hard to be grown-up and mature. Maturity usually defines personalities who have managed to put in place the basic functions of their psychological selves and who are able to differentiate between their inner lives and their surroundings. Many young people who remain psychologically immature often have trouble making this distinction. What they feel and imagine often takes the place of the facts and reality of the outer world. This state of affairs is amplified and fed by the media psychology that stirs the contemporary mind, and by the virtual world created by video games and the internet. These things predispose them to living in an imaginary and virtual world without having learned to be in contact with reality. Reality tends to disappoint and depress them. They have a "play" approach to life and a need to celebrate, especially at the weekend, without being sure of what they are celebrating. They seek out places where they can mix with others and have sensations that give them the feeling that they are really living. It remains to be seen if these experiences create true relationships and contribute to the emotional and intellectual improvement of their personalities. They are relatively ambivalent in this regard because they want to enter reality and yet escape from it.

Young people today are just like those of previous generations: they are capable of generosity, solidarity and loyalty when faced with causes that motivate them. However, they have fewer social references and a weaker sense of belonging than their elders had. They are individualistic and they want to make their own choices without holding to any system of values, ideas or common laws. They want to borrow refer-

ences from all over the place and to experiment with them in their way of life. They easily adapt to egalitarianism and tolerance, and are steeped in discourses and fashions from the media which actually serve as norms on which they build their characters. They can easily conform to fashion like sponges that soak it all up, rather than build their freedom upon reasons for living and loving. This explains the emotional fragility and the self-doubt with which they struggle.

Their emotional lives display numerous doubts beginning with identity, sexual and family doubts. They are often confused about their feelings and cannot yet distinguish between an attraction of friendship and a homosexual tendency. The coeducational system that they have experienced since their childhood can, at the post-adolescent stage, complicate the man-woman relationship. Moreover, the large number of divorces today does not help them to have trust in others or in the future.

These personalities are the result of an education, a schooling and sometimes a catechesis that does not adequately form their intelligence. They were trained to use their emotions and feelings to the detriment of reason which embraces knowledge, memory and reflection. They are close to all possible sensations just like those experienced through drugs. Instead of saying, "I think, therefore I am", they, through their behaviour, say, "I have feelings, therefore I am reassured".

When they come across adults who really are adults, who remain so in their behaviour and know how to transmit life values, as does Pope John Paul II, then they listen to what they are being told about Christian experience in the hope that they will receive insights from it.

2. A social context that fosters psychological dependence

We are in a very paradoxical environment that penetrates most areas of culture. We try to make small children autonomous beginning from the creche and pre-school, and at the same time we have adolescents, and particularly post-adolescents, who have trouble dealing psychologically with letting go, although, when listening to them, you realise that this is something they want to do. In order to free themselves from this handicap, they look for support so that they can lean on psychological, social and spiritual resources.

2.1 A society that infantilises

Contemporary education produces individuals who are too attached to people and things. Even though they deny it, they are dependant people. During childhood, their desires and expectations were given such importance to the detriment of external reality and objective needs, that they end up thinking that everything can be manipulated according to their own subjective interests. Then, at the onset of adolescence, if they lack sufficient resources and inner stability, they try to develop dependant relationships in their group or couple relationships. If I have invented the term "baby couples",³ it is to describe their affective economy which does not always differentiate between infantile sexuality and objective sexuality. They pass from attachment to parents to sentimental attachment while maintaining the same affective economy.

Education, with its legitimate concern to attend to the quality of relationships with the child, has been too centred

³ Op. cit.

on emotional well-being sometimes to the detriment of facts, knowledge, cultural codes and moral values, and this does not help young people to build their characters. It is more of a narcissistic expansion than real personal development. It often produces personalities that are certainly amiable and congenial, but sometimes also superficial and even trivial and that do not always have a sense of limits and reality. They can be brazen and sometimes over familiar, confusing private codes with social codes, forgetting all sense of hierarchy, authority, the sacred, and the standards and rules of "correct discourse". Some of them have not learned the rules for living with others, beginning with the rules of the road and including the ritualisation of family and social life.

The adults who have always gone out of their way to make sure they lack nothing are the cause now of young people thinking that all their desires must be satisfied, confusing them with needs. Desires are not there to be fulfilled: they are a source of inspiration. As these individuals have not had the experience of doing without, a situation in which desires are formed, they are undecided and unsure. They also have difficulty in allowing themselves to be different and in detaching themselves from their early points of reference in order to make their own lives. Growing up implies psychological separation, leaving one's childhood and adolescence behind. But this separation is difficult for many because the psychological space between parents and children are confused.

This testimony from Laurent, twenty-eight years old, married, father of one, is significant:

"I am classified as an adult but I don't recognise myself as such and I don't feel any concern for the

world of adults. I have difficulty in accepting this dimension. For me, adults are my parents. I am in contradiction with myself. In my mind I am like a child or adolescent with terrible anxieties, while at the same time, the outer me is an adult and considered as such in the workplace. There is nothing in society to help us become adults."

It is also true that in idealising childhood and adolescence, society leads us to understand that there is no pleasure in growing up and becoming adults. In this case, it is difficult to free oneself from childhood means of gratification in order to reach for higher levels of fulfilment.

2.2 Longer life expectancy

Longer life expectancy would lead one to suppose that an individual had time to prepare and engage in life. Life expectancy now, more than in the past, creates equitable conditions for the possibility of remaining young, understanding this as a time of indecision, and even as a time when there is no clear distinction between oneself, others and facts, and there is also an absence of sexual differentiation while believing that most possibilities are still open. This hazy concept of life is inherent in adolescence, and it is even more worrying when it continues in post-adolescents who are so unsure of their motivations that they have no self confidence. Some of them suffer as a result and are even afraid of a measure of depersonalisation in their relations with others. Many just put it off and live in a provisional way not knowing if they will be able to continue what they started in different areas of their lives. Others continue to live their youth as an end in itself and as an enduring state.

In fact, the youth of today are engaged in processes of maturing that demand more time and that are characterised by a "moratorium" condition, that is, a suspension of deadlines and obligations connected to the passage into adulthood. Some are not particularly interested in becoming adults,⁴ and they do not live their youth as a propaedeutical or introductory period before adulthood, but rather as a time that has its own inherent value. In the past, on the other hand, youth was a period lived in function of the future and of an autonomous existence: youth was a time of preparation. Nowadays, such a long drawn-out youth brings about some uncertainty in making life choices. Some prefer to postpone final decisions, to delay their entry into adult life and decisive commitments. As they do not question their independence problems, they do not feel obliged to make important choices. Moreover, a strong tendency to experiment can be seen in many spheres of life. Thus young people can easily leave their families, but they return and settle in after a failure or a difficulty. The main difference between this and preceding generations (who made precise choices with priorities) is the tendency to live various aspects of life at the same time, sometimes contradictory, and without prioritising their own need and values. Some young people today are very dependant on the need to experiment because, as things have not been passed down to them, they think that nothing is known about life and that everything has to be discovered and invented. This is why they often seem to be susceptible and to bend to the many requests being made today, regardless of whether they are negative or enriching.

⁴ Op. cit.

2.3 *Childhood shortened to give a longer adolescence*

One of the paradoxes, and not the least, of our western societies is that while children are made to grow up too quickly, at the same time they are being encouraged to remain adolescents as long as possible!⁵

Children themselves are rushed into adolescent behaviour before they have the psychological ability to behave in this way. They become precocious - and that is not a source of maturity - by skipping over the "psychic tasks" of childhood. This can be a handicap to their future independence. The numerous states of depression among many young people is one of the symptoms.

Post-adolescents themselves complain of a lack of inner and social support, especially those who have completed their lengthy studies and have arrived with their diplomas into firms where they have to hold responsibilities. There are 26-35 year-olds with a succession of periods of existential depression because they lack role models in adult life with which to try to shape their lives in harmony with reality.

The period of youth has always been characterised by a certain amount of immaturity. This is not new. There was a time when this could be compensated by society which was placed more in the world of adults and encouraged youth to grow up and join the realities of life. Today, on the contrary, not only does it give less support and let each one find their own way, but it also lets one think that it is possible to remain permanently in the early stages of life without having to work them out and to have certain experiences too early. We should

⁵ T. Anatrella, *Interminables adolescences, les 12/30 ans*, Paris, Cerf Cujus.

know how to tell an adolescent who is adopting certain types of behaviour prematurely that these acts are not suitable for their age group and thus place them within the historic perspective of evolution and growth in maturity. This is how they acquire the maturity suited to their age.

3. "Psychic tasks" to be attained

Over the past number of years we have witnessed some shifts in the way the juvenile personality develops. Except for some exceptions, most adolescents⁶ pass through puberty and adolescence itself fairly well without undergoing real difficulties. On the other hand, the situation for post-adolescents from 22 to 30 years of age is often more delicate, being subjectively conflictive and wrought by psychological confusion that was seen and confronted during the preceding period of adolescence (18-22 years of age). Inner conflict is added to this tension between self-image and life.

3.1 Self-confidence

The need to know oneself and to have self-confidence is expected at this stage in life. However, under the pressure of

⁶ Studies show that among the entire adolescent population, 10% of the 15-19 year-olds have psychological difficulties. Cf. Higher Committee for Public health, *La souffrance psychique des adolescents et des jeunes adultes* (Psychological suffering among adolescents and young adults), ENSP Publications, February 2000. The increasing number of radio and television programmes that deal with problems that affect some individuals, lead people to think that most adolescents have difficulties. This is not at all true. There is a tendency to make isolated cases sound like the general situation. On the other hand, there are questions dealing with education and post-adolescence that should be addressed in particular.

questions not answered and of failures, they can feel challenged, and they suddenly realise that they are weakened because they are no longer sure that they are capable of being coherent with their past. They try to be themselves and become very sensitive to the part of themselves that is not genuine.

Post-adolescence psychological development depends mainly on the link between the psychological life and the environment. The latter can provoke and reactivate anxieties and inhibitions sometimes connected to a feeling of powerlessness that is translated into fear of not being able to grasp reality and, because of this, to show aggression towards themselves or towards the parent figures out in the adult world. This can also give rise to an anti-institution or anti-social attitude and can also present the problem of the ability to gauge oneself (to esteem or undervalue oneself), and of the need to be recognized by one's parents, particularly by one's father. The person can also remain very centred on his/herself while external reality, at times badly or scarcely interiorised, is avoided. They dread being confronted with reality. When they come up against the limits of real life, there is a risk they will feel they have failed and will fritter away the time with depressing ideas without being able to identify objects of interest or love. One of these limits is time.

Catechesis can help them to learn to love life in the image of Christ who became incarnate in this world to reveal to us that we have been called by God to life and to love.

3.2 The relationship to time

Post-adolescents are often involved in a "psychic task" that will allow them to reach temporal maturity. However, this

can also be a difficulty between the ages of 24 and 30. Sometimes, instead of linking their present existence with the past and future, some of them live in the here and now that endures. They go from instant to instant, episode to episode, from situations and choices decided at the last minute until the moment when they wonder if there is a connection between all these experiences, that is unless they split up their lives in such a way that it will be difficult to see any correlation.

Temporal immaturity does not always allow one to project into the future. The future can cause post-adolescents to be anxious, not because of social and economic uncertainty, but because psychologically, they do not know how to anticipate and evaluate projects and the consequences of their actions and gestures because they live only in the present. When certain post-adolescents have not yet reached temporal maturity, they have difficulty developing a historic mind. They do not know - or are scared to know - how to see their lives within a time scale, and so to have a sense of engagement in many domains. They live more easily at the contingency level and with the intensity of specific situations than in constancy and continuity of a life that develops over time. Ordinary time is seen as a period of waiting for special experiences instead of being the space given to them in which they are to engage their lives.

Learning the meaning of engagement is begun by developing solidarity and projects within the Christian community in the service of others. This apprenticeship in engagement as a way of entering into history can be stimulated by a discovery and a reflection of the story of salvation in Jesus Christ.

3.3 Filling their interior space

Many young people have difficulty in filling their psychological life and their interior space. They can feel uneasy about having different sensations that they cannot identify within themselves or, on the contrary, they search for them outside human relations and activities.

More and more, we come into contact with impulsive personalities, always in action, and in most cases not realizing that action needs to be accompanied by reflection. As they do not have the inner and cultural resources and their minds do not work realistically, these young people often complain of a lack of concentration and of finding it hard to do intellectual work over a long period. They betray inner poverty and poor intra-psychic exchange. Reflection disturbs them. They need to train their will as it risks becoming fickle and fragile.

They are dispirited when confronted with questions or problems that have to be dealt with, like the use of drugs with which they try to find stimulation, control or high-performance. They prefer to find refuge in action, and they repeatedly take the "passage to action", not in order to find some kind of pleasure, but to discharge their inner tension and come back to zero. In this way they no longer feel their inner tensions. It is a way of emptying themselves of all that goes on within, and also of the inner functioning itself.

Post-adolescents can often be seen to lack reliable valid objects of identification in order to develop mental materials with which to build their inner selves. Here we come up against the problem of transmission in the contemporary world: cultural, moral and religious. The lack of interior life brings about anxiety-provoking psychologies that are quicker

at responding through primitive impulse than at engaging in working it out in their minds.⁷ The large majority of them, if they search for anchors in their existence to nourish their inner selves, do so more from what they perceive subjectively than from the great religious and moral traditions from which they remain quite distant.

They think in a narcissistic way where each one must be self-sufficient and draw everything to oneself, which responds to the current fashion of the "psychological whole". This is the dominant idea nowadays and it leads us to believe that we can "make" ourselves by being inspired by our emotions and sensations rather than principles of reason, intelligible words like those of the Christian faith and life values. The least existential difficulty is coded in psychopathological terms and has to be helped out by psychotherapy. It is an error of perspective that filters into psycho-spiritual help or healing rituals. It is perverse, to say the least, to try to handle the two areas,

⁷ Weakness in inner processes produces psychological make-ups that are more superficial and split, and that have difficulty using rational thinking. As for the language they use, it is too poor to grasp reality. The formulas used, like slogans, indicate panic and suffering at the thought of having to think. Some of their expressions imply that thinking produces migraine. They lack real intellectual training, and literature is one of the ways in which it is taught. Comprehension and reflection on works and authors is a default way of leading an intellectual life. The teachers in the schools should be aware of the subjectiveness of the pupils and teach them to learn from what they perceive. There is a constant increase in the number of those who complain of difficulties in concentrating their mind and in self-control. The concept of law is learned by first acquiring the language and rules of grammar. This is no longer the case where linguists have replaced grammarians in drawing up school curricula. These global methods that still reign in schools are the cause of illiteracy, dyslexia and a broken up view of reality.

psychology and religion from the point of view of psychotherapy. The concept of "resilience" is also a new illusion of narcissistic personalities. Besides, it is a confused notion that tends to explain the fact that certain individuals get by better than others, while Christianity has long shown that the individual is not confined by determinism. In a world in critical need of moral and religious values, "resilience" will soon be old-fashioned. In order to bounce back, you need a certain inner strength that cannot be built and sustained without help from outside. A person cannot establish an inner life without interaction with an objective dimension. It cannot be done alone face to face with oneself.

Likewise, catechesis as religious education is in danger of being filled with the prevailing subjectivism, especially when it is claimed that there is no "objective revelation" of the word of God but that it can only be revealed through faith lived subjectively. In this context, Jesus is no more than a "prophet" or "sage" among others and thus removed from his role as mediator as the Son of God between his Father and humankind. Young people who are subjected to this immanent and subjective vision of God that is like a pagan divinity, may become involved in various school and university chaplaincies in interreligious dialogue (confused with ecumenism) without having a clear idea of their own Christian faith. They confuse all the ideas from the various confessions as if it were the same representation of God. As they have not absorbed their faith in the God of the Trinity, the All-Other, they invent a religious discourse based on the mechanics of fusion and call for tolerance, removal of dividing lines, egalitarianism so there will be no distinctions and a sensory means of expression. However, according to the religious confessions, all ideas on

representations of God do not give the same meaning of man, life in society and faith.

Most western societies have stopped transmitting to the point of putting into doubt the foundations on which they were developed. The Christian dimension is often excluded even though it is part of the social bonds and the constitution of people's interior life. The crisis of contemporary interior life begins with this lack of initiation and gets bogged down in individualism and psychological subjectivism. The ideological psychologising of society causes it to be de-structured. Individuals spend their time describing and analysing themselves to the point of exhaustion. This kind of subjective thinking can be necessary in some cases, but it is not exclusive. They should also be able to build their existence by including another dimension besides themselves that will give light and energy to each individual: a social, cultural, moral and religious dimension. One should be able to see one's life with all these realities and not enclose oneself in the only psychological approaches in fashion nowadays.

Catechesis, education in the meaning of prayer and liturgical and sacramental life have a role to play in helping young people to take control of their interior life, their mental space and their bodily space. Christian rites, symbols and signs can play a part in this work of inner construction and that is why they are accepted by young people to the surprise of their elders. The inner life thus relates to external realities and presence. The Word of God, transmitted by the Church, plays this role by relating youth to God who can be found through instances of human mediation, initiated by Christ, and that become signs of his presence. With the assurance of prayer, guided and led by the Church, a privileged relationship

develops between God and those whom He calls to know Him. Prayer experience is the crucible of human interior life. WYDs have seen this many times. An educational effort in this direction should be continued.

4. The emotional life of young people

4.1 The general state of emotions

Contemporary psychology is influenced by the portrayals in society that emphasise a volatile emotional and sexual life. The expression of emotions has to be immediate, like a telephone call or an internet connection, without having to wait for delays and the building up of relationships. Casual sexual expression that is fusional and instantaneous has an impact on the images in the media and cinema.

Young people can be equally strongly conditioned by the separation and divorce of their parents. They can be deeply affected psychologically and permanently marked by breakdown, lack of trust in the other and, at times, little faith in the future. Personalities today demand autonomy while at the same time they are incapable of separating themselves from their childhood points of reference. This problem falls on people with whom a relationship can be brought to an end at the first outbreak of a difficulty. Paradoxically, they are also afraid of being rejected and need to be reassured about the image of themselves as seen by others. This attitude is the result of the type of broken family life that is developing in the western world.

Finally, they are relatively influenced by the sexual exhibitionism that is rampant through pornography and the

spread of an impulsive and anti-relational kind of sexuality. Recent studies have shown that 75% of films watched on cable television channels are pornographic in which the scenes are becoming more and more violent and aggressive. The percentage reaches 92% in hotels where clients are on trips away from home. The growth in sexual visual media demonstrates that we are in an erotic society that persistently provides sexual excitement for individuals and that influences the unfolding of juvenile sexuality. Many young people access pornographic websites. When they receive this kind of input, some of them become enclosed in an imaginary and violent sexuality where masturbation is an experience of failure due to the lack of a partner, and this can complicate the development of sexual drives. When masturbation continues to be practised, it is always a symptom of an emotional problem and a lack of sexual maturity. Conjugal life can then suffer in its sexual expression as a result of this dependence on a narcissistic sexuality.

Nevertheless, most young people want to hear about the meaning of human love, of married life and of family. This demonstrates the need to learn to love and to form relationships and bring life.

4.2 From coeducation to unisex relations

Youth have been raised with a form of coeducation that does not contribute as hoped to the development of equality and a better quality of relationships between men and women. On the contrary, it has brought about confusion in sexual identities and relational doubts. Here we feel the effects of the ideological influences of feminism that confuse equality of the sexes - a

thing that does not exist - with the equality of people. Some kinds of feminism (North-American and Beauvoirian) have promoted a hatred of men and a rejection of procreation. This has encouraged a kind of puritanism and new inhibitions by interpreting the slightest glance, word or gesture as an attempt at aggression and open harassment and even rape. In addition to these aberrations that are increasingly being written into laws in Europe, procreation has been presented as a handicap for women and a dimension that should not enter into the definition of femininity. Coeducation has been conditioned by this kind of feminism that has not prepared young people to learn to live a couple relationship between a man and a woman. It is a coeducation that alternates between unisexuality (sexual confusion) and the sidelining of individuals (bachelorhood and loneliness).

Most post-adolescents have lived their childhood in a co-educational environment. It was foreseeable⁸ that coeducation, that was never thought out in terms of differential psychology and educational methods, would be the source of new inhibitions between boys and girls and distortions in social ties. There is an effort now to try to understand the questions it raises and to escape from the moralism that gave rise to it. Coeducation is more suitable at certain ages than at others. Once again experience proves that it is restricting and stunts development of the intelligence, emotions and sexuality during adolescence. It often means going through movements of seduction and sexual aggression or, on the contrary, young

⁸ France Rollin, *La mixite a l'ecole*, ETVDES, Volume 367, n. 6 (3676), December 1987. Tony Anatrella, Coeducation, ETVDES, Volume 368, n. 6 (3686), June 1988. Cf. Tony Anatrella, *La difference interdite*, Flammarion.

people want to withdraw from there and tend towards staying with friends of the same sex. This change in direction corresponds to the need for assurance and confirmation of their respective identities, while coeducation confines them to the non-separation of the genders. Coeducation can cause relational doubts between men and women at the post-adolescent stage, celibacy and a kind of reactive homosexuality in order to, paradoxically, differentiate themselves from the other sex and to reassure themselves about their sexual identity. Children and adolescents need to work put their fusional tendencies, but coeducation closes them in and prevents them from attaining a sense of the difference between the sexes and relations between two individuals.

Thus there are also those who have sentimental attachments, dating relationships and even sexual experiences as soon as they reach adolescence. Their emotional-sexual awakening begins with sentimental attachments that usually do not continue for long or that continue in fraternal relationships without sexual expression. Then at post-adolescence when they can engage in emotional-sexual relations, the opposite happens. They feel the need to be with other "singles" and to have social companions of the same sex in order to share specific activities and pastimes. After having sentimental attachments that led nowhere but that came apart in an oedipal way, during post-adolescence they try to socialise their emotional lives and to keep a distance from the other sex. This is to make up for what they did not experience and accomplish during their adolescence.

There are young adults* and also even younger, who are in the process of discovering the necessary separation of the

sexes. For example, women who have a need to be with other women to converse, to go out or to share activities "with the girls" independently of their companion. Men do the same by going to specifically male places and activities. We find this phenomenon happening in the new situation of co-tenants where young professionals of between 25 and 35 years of age share rented apartments, boys together or girls together, but rarely mixed.

It is important that both men and women establish their identities. Education should take care of this from childhood.

4.3 Fear of commitment

It is typical of juvenile couples to be uncertain and temporary when it depends solely on the need to be protected and reassured, and on instability of emotions without integrating them in a life project and on love.

Present day portrayals do not simplify the task for young people when break-down and divorce are presented as the norm when dealing with emotional and relational problems of couples. In France, the law on divorce by mutual consent of 1974 has only amplified and normalised divorce which now remains as a plague on society. A society that loses the meaning of commitment and conflict solving and of stages of development is a society that has no sense of future and continuity. Divorce has become one of the causes of emotional insecurity of individuals that has repercussions on social ties and on the vision of a sense of commitment in all the domains of life that are transmitted to the young. By wanting to simplify divorce, the public authorities play with the symptoms

but do not see the causes that need attention and even less the consequences of these laws that threaten social ties.

Fear of emotional commitment controls the juvenile psychological make-up. They are doubtful, uncertain and sceptical about the meaning of lasting relationships. Young people feel they will be free if they do not commit themselves, but they are actually repudiating freedom. It is in commitment that one finds freedom and can act with freedom. Single people who are used to living alone and planning their own lives sometimes have difficulty sharing living space with others for a prolonged period. They feel anxious and sense a lack of freedom. They alternate times in their lives of being together with others with periods when they are more alone. They still think, at 35 years of age, that they are not ready for commitment and should wait a little longer. However, the more time passes, the less their minds will be prepared to share life with a person whom they otherwise think they love.

Yet surveys show that most young people want to marry and start a family. They do not yet know how to build up a relationship. They want it to be established immediately and all questions concerning the present and future be settled. They certainly need to learn to experience fidelity in daily life, a value supported by young people but not favoured in contemporary media. Fear of marriage and fear of conceiving children are the topics of social discourse. This hardly encourages self-confidence, and even less in a life that, according to this trend, should be limited to oneself and go no further.

In fact, society and laws do not favour continuity and commitment. On the contrary, they foster emotional uncertainty

and fragile social ties and give no special support to marriage. Yet many young people need to be able to carry on in spite of a short and broken up concept of time.

We are in a society that sows doubt at the idea of commitment in the name of love. Young people long for it and should be helped to find ways for this kind of fidelity.

4.4 Psychological bisexuality

The post-adolescent also has to deal with psychological bisexuality which is the result of identification with the two sexes - not a case of being a man and a woman at the same time - so as to internalise their sexual identity and to move towards heterosexuality. Psychological bisexuality is the ability to relate with the opposite sex and to be consistent with one's sexual identity in one's emotional life and not only in one's social life. As we said above, post-adolescence is a time when one's psychological life begins to integrate with exterior reality. Modern society tends to confuse the only two sexual identities that exist, male and female, with sexual tendencies that are multiple, and sexual practices that are unconnected with drives. We should not confuse identity with sexual orientations, especially when they are in contradiction with sexual identity. In this context it is not easy to be at one with oneself and to be sexually consistent especially when homosexuality is valued and presented as an alternative to heterosexuality. The working out of psychological bisexuality could be compromising. As relations between men and women become complicated to the point of encouraging each one to remain single, the social model of homosexuality becomes commonplace.

Many adolescents and post-adolescents are too nervous and unsure of themselves to deal with psychological bisexuality. Young people sometimes encode their passing ambivalence, common during adolescence, in clichéd terms of homosexuality. They think they are homosexual although they do not want or desire it, and they sometimes take the "passage to action" that shakes them psychologically. Of course, all individuals have gone through an experience of homosexual identification in order to confront their sexual identity, beginning with the parent of the same sex. When these identifications suffer failure, they risk being eroticised and led into homosexuality. We must remember that the choice of homosexual object, which is inherent in the mind, is not to be confused with the homosexuality to which a person can possibly be oriented.

Homosexuality is not a "variant" of human sexuality that can be put on an equal footing with heterosexuality. It is the expression of unresolved conflictive tension in a tendency that is separate from sexual identity.

Education in the meaning of other and the differences between man and woman is at the heart of the discovery of the real meaning of otherness.

5. Youth and new ideological influences

The collapse of political ideologies in favour of liberalism in market societies and the increase in individualism have fostered a decrease of trust in politics and the democratic system of representation. It is the subjective and sector-based demands that have taken the place of the major social challenges.

On the other hand, it is noticeable that politics are of less interest to younger generations when it no longer shows concern for the general interest. Respect for marriage, a family composed of a man and woman with their children, school and education, instruction in civics and the moral law, the social and professional insertion of the new generations, the quality of the ecological environment, the meaning of justice and peace are, among other things, the projects to promote in order to hold their interest in political life. We shall examine the influence of some movements of thought on youth.

5.1 *The gender theory*

As we have mentioned above, present societies are influenced by sexual confusion. The theory of *gender* leads us to understand that sexual differences, that is, the fact of being a man or a woman, is secondary in the setting up of social ties and the emotional bonds entered into in marriage and that consequently have a role in the forming of a family. It favours and recognises sexual gender that does not depend on the masculine or feminine gender but on that which each one builds subjectively and that orients towards heterosexuality, homosexuality, transsexuality, etc. In that way one could speak of heterosexual and homosexual couples and families. In other words, sexual difference is replaced by difference in sexualities.

The *gender* theory is largely diffused by the UN Populations Commission and by the European Parliament in order to oblige countries to modify their legislation and to recognise, for example, homosexual unions or "omoparente" (same-sex parenthood) for the adoption of children. This new ideology actually represents semantic manipulation by applying the

notion of marriage and parenthood to homosexuality. Yet marriage implies sexual dissymmetry and is based on no other relationship than that of man and woman. Besides, homosexuality cannot be at the origin of conjugality and parenthood. It has no social value. If homosexuality is a matter of an individual problem, it cannot be a social norm and be recognized as a value on which it is possible to educate children.

Education should be about renewal of a civilisation based on marriage which is formed between a man and a woman. It is not by chance that the Bible begins with the existence of a couple whose relationship is in the image of that of God with humanity. We are to enter into a culture of alliance and not into the intrigue of a powerplay between the sexes.

5.2 The market society and liberalism

Most young people are subject to the norms of a market society. The immediate satisfaction of desires is largely encouraged by advertising. The political organisation of society depends on this market mentality that transforms a citizen into a consumer. The laws of economics take over from the moral laws. They make the law and impose their system of references and evaluation in every domain of existence with the consent of the political powers: education, teaching, health, work and aging are regulated in function of the norms of economics to the detriment of life values. It is not the person and the common good that are at the centre of this set-up, but cost and financial profit. The dictatorship of money and the economy uses advertising to create a vision of existence where a thing has no right to exist if it is not profitable. This contri-

butes to changing the meaning of the human person, social ties and the common good.

5.3 Secularism and exclusion of the religious

Christianity originated the idea of the separation of religious from temporal power. Throughout the course of history, there have been times of non-separation, and political power has often tried to rule over the Church and to interfere, for example, on the decisions of the councils. It is not so much religious power that wanted to extend its hold over temporal power, even if, sometimes in certain societies, the Church had to organise public life before returning this power to those who should exercise it, but it is the political powers who have been, many times, jealous of religious power. They had to control it, enclose it, contest it and sometimes neutralize it.

Secularism, when it bypasses the line that separates the powers, raises various problems and influences the concept of the religious dimension inherent in existence. In this way secularism developed against the role and influence of the Church. They wanted to exclude religion from the social field and to limit it to the status of a private affair that comes from the individual conscience. This is a way of mutilating it. It is a phenomenon that has been carried out by the secularisation of morality brought about by separating it from the universal principles discovered by reason in order to confuse it with democratically voted civil law. In this way the legal takes the place of the moral and confusion remains in the heart of many young people who think that whatever is legal has moral value. Yet civil law does not say what is moral. It organises the life of the population, but that organisation, or regulation

by the rights and duties of the citizens, cannot but be based on principles that respect the dignity of the human person and the life values⁹ that transcend all laws.

After having secularised society and then morality, it is the turn of religion to be secularised. Spiritual life is confused with intellectual and poetic life, the Bible is translated by unbelievers or by writers from different schools of thought. Some also advocate a secular reading of the gospels. Pope John Paul II has often underscored the contradiction with which the Bible is approached: *"contemporary people, disappointed by so many unsatisfactory answers to the fundamental questions of life, seem to be opening themselves to the voice that comes from Transcendence and is expressed in the biblical message. However, at the same time, they are growing more and more intolerant of requests for behaviour that corresponds with the values the Church has always presented as based on the Gospel. So we are faced with the most varied attempts to separate biblical Revelation from the more binding proposals of life."*¹⁰ According to some, we should restore the word of God to a "worldly discourse" that will be in harmony with moral standards and religious intelligence. These are presently secularised and reduced to their lowest common denominator in the name of "modernity" and a "moderate religion". It is a case of the fashionable standards in a society serving as regulators of religion and Christian faith in particular, with a vision that includes eliminating from the social field the religious dimension and its ensuing demands.

⁹ See John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993) and *Evangelium Vitae* (1995).

¹⁰ Address of John Paul II to the members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, 29 April 2003.

The refusal to recognize the religious and Christian heritage as being, among others, at the basis of the development of civilisation in Europe and the western world, as in other cultural areas, testifies to this rampant secularisation. Secularization conceived in this way does not respect the religious dimension of human existence. Those who adhere to this way of thinking are ready to recognise freedom of belief, which they would consign simply to private life, but refuse to accept the religious reality, the right of religion, which implies a social and institutional dimension. At best, it is important that religious power as institution be represented in the ententes of Europe and of the nations for the service of the common good and interests beyond the human conscience. God cannot be absent from the social field.

The younger generations need to be educated in this social and institutional dimension of the Christian religion and not be made experience the Church simply as a closed and private group.

6. Youth and the Church

6.1 Youth without religious roots

Most surveys on youth and religion confirm what we already know. Youth are the children of adults who were adolescents themselves from 1960-1970 and who, in their turn, chose not to always transmit what they had received from their education. They left their children to work things out for themselves at the moral and spiritual level and they had no other educational concern than to take care of their emotional development. At times this has produced lost souls

left to find their own way. They wanted them to be happy, but they did not teach them the rules of social life, the customs that are the treasures of a people and the Christian life that has been the matrix for diverse civilisations. It is necessary to recognise that we owe to the message of Christ brought to us through the Church the meaning of the human person, the meaning of conscience, the meaning of freedom, the meaning of fellowship, the meaning of equality. These values have been trivialised, cut off from their source, and at the risk of no longer being transmitted when their origin is no longer known. In this anti-educational mentality, children have not been baptised or instructed in the faith. It was felt that a clean slate was needed to free us from tradition. That attitude has created cultural handicaps. They have little culture and even less religious culture. They are incapable of understanding entire sections of the history of our civilisation, even art, literature and music. They are not allergic to dogmas, that is, to the truths of Christian life, and they are not even against the Church. They do not know anything about it. That is why responses in larger surveys demonstrate this deficiency in the great majority of young people. They reveal ignorance, indifference and simply a lack of religious education. They are dependant on all the cliches and all the conventionalities that are diffused concerning the Christian faith. Briefly, they are distant from the Church because, for lack of education, they have not entered into this religious tradition.

6.2 Confusion between the religious and the para-normal

We must recognise that many young people are relative strangers to any religious dimension. Even so, this is just

waiting to blossom forth. How can it be otherwise in this world that eliminates all that is religious? They confuse it with parapsychology, the irrational and magic. They are attracted by phenomena "at the far reaches of reality" that provoke emotional responses and make them feel that another dimension exists. However, in this case, they only find themselves, their feelings and their imagination. Fashionable spirituality is one without words, reflection or intellectual content. There are currents of philosophy and wisdom without God that have come from Asia and the East that are interesting as such, but they are not religions, and they are being put forward and distorted at the present time. Nevertheless, they do not represent a large movement. With this mentality, youth have to be "cool", "zen" and quiet, that is, feel nothing and be in a muffled torpor. All kinds of mistakes are possible because there is no institutional or intellectual control. Anything at all can be put in the place of God. This attitude is light-years away from Christianity which is the religion of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It transmits a message of truth and love with which we can construct our lives and fight against all that spoils and destroys it. Young Christians feel that this presence of God and his message bring immense hope. It opens up paths of life for them. But when religious feeling, which is inherent in human psychology, is not educated and enriched by an authentic message, it remains simplistic and imprisoned by a superstitious and magical mentality. The lack of religious education fosters sects and false prophets who proclaim themselves in order to speak in the name of a divinity created in their own image. The human person has a need to be introduced to a dimension beyond oneself and which the Creator

has inscribed in the heart of each one. In this way it is conveyed by God to others, to history and especially to a life project that brings self-knowledge and that humanises and enriches. This is the meaning of the Word of the Gospel transmitted by the Church.

6.3 The WYD youth are in search of the spiritual life

Most young people who come to WYD breathe well-being and *"joie de vivre"*. They surprise all by their calm, smile, courtesy, kindness, cooperation and openness. There is no need to despair of these young people who prepare a silent spiritual revolution, but one that is very active. Like others of their age they undoubtedly have their own problems. Some may have experimented with drugs or may not behave in ways that take Christian morality into account. They have had experiences and failures. However, they thirst for something else and are in search of hope. They are looking for an ideal for their lives and a spirituality that rests on someone, on God. European society is getting old, sceptical and without hope, and it is being shaken up by young people who believe in God and wish to live accordingly. Most of them have come from Christian communities that have invited young people who are searching. They know that life is not easy, but they have hope within and do not give up. Christians and non-Christians approach the Church to find answers to their immense spiritual need. Each country that holds WYD benefits from its influence. It overthrows simplistic images of youth, because every time they are spoken about it is to mention impulsive sexuality, drugs, delinquency, etc.- If some of them live in this way it is because they have been left to themselves.

Society is childish with young people by making them serve as role models even though they themselves are in need of references. They are adulated by society, yet society does not love its children to judge by all the abdication of educational responsibility of which they are the victims. Local pastoral work is also responsible to the extent that educational tasks are sometimes relinquished and abandoned by religious orders and priests who had this vocation. We must, however, recognise that their work in a period of break-down (1960-1970) was not easy. Great numbers of youth rejected all religious thought. Nowadays they are ill-equipped in the religious sphere and they can come out with astonishing statements. Recently, one of them asked a priest, "Why do you mix Christmas up with religion?" He did not know that Christmas is the day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus! Christmas is thus reduced to a commercial family celebration. Thanks to the success of WYD, this frame of mind can change when young people engage in a spiritual search and discover that an overall vision of humanity and whole sections of social life were fashioned by the message of the Church and generations of Christians.

6.4 Why does John Paul II attract all these young people when the Christian message is demanding, especially as regards sexual ethics?

The question is often asked and it answers itself. It is the message of Christ brought by the Church and has always been demanding. But it is also a source of joy. It is no easier to live it in the sexual domain than in other spheres of life. Nothing that is true, consistent and lasting is easily built. John Paul II shows the way to live a Christian life in the name

of the love of God. This love is a way of searching for the good and for life for oneself and for others. We shall always be answerable to this love that is not just a feeling nor emotional well-being. Above all it is a desire to find in God that which gives life. Young people are sensitive to this language and to the person of John Paul II who calmly affirms this in spite of criticisms and sarcasm. He speaks to them of life. Others only speak to them of death by drugs and suicide, of failure in love that leads to divorce, of unemployment, but they never mention that society does not reach out to them.

John Paul II trusts them and gives them confidence in life. He tells them that to live and succeed in life is possible and he tells them how. The previous generation did not always transmit convictions, nor teach them how to live certain values except to repeat the boring ones of the consumer society. What do young people do? They turn to the very old to obtain what they did not receive. The elderly, with the Pope, are the ones who pass on history to them and a religious and cultural memory, over the heads of their parents. There is no break between the Pope and youth. When young people hear true words, they feel respected and appreciated: "at last, we are taken seriously; he confides in us".

They say that the Church is obsessed with sexual ethics. This topic occupies no more than 9% of the Pope's writings and discourses. However, the media only remember this aspect while they remain silent about the rest. The history of the condom¹¹ is significant in this disinformation and in the

¹¹ Tony Anatrella, *L'amour et le préservatif*, Paris, Flammarion, Republished under the title, *Uamour et VEglise*, Paris, Champ Flammarion.

manipulation of the Pope's speeches. What Pope John Paul II says is quite different. He stresses the Gospel and does not rely on those passing ideas that are now in fashion. He calls on a sense of love and responsibility. He prefers to speak to the human conscience, like Christ, so that each one can question themselves on their behaviour so they will know if they have lived with authentic love, being loyal and honest to themselves and to others. He follows his mission. Reflection on sexuality cannot be reduced to a talk on health especially when this neglects the moral responsibility of people. Moral judgements also concern sexuality and not only social life if it is not to become perversely divided. Christians are invited to find inspiration in a clear evangelic conscience that will guide their behaviour.

Conclusion

Post-adolescents want to **enter into** life. In spite of a certain cultural, religious **and moral uprooting**, **they try to find** ways of passage because **they have often worked things out** for themselves with invasive **narcissism and capriciousness**. The fragility of the *self*, **a temporal vision reduced to the** desires of the **moment, to circumstances and to an inwardness** limited to psychological **vibes, confines them to individualism**. That is why some of **them are anxious about engagement and** institutional relations **in spite of wishing to marry and start a** family. They prefer **to maintain intimist and ludic relationships, seemingly with several individuals, avoiding social ties**. Their psychological profile is one of the results of an education centred on the emotional, on immediate pleasures and on parental separation through divorce. Divorce is caused by

emotional insecurity, self-doubt with -respect to others and the understanding of commitment in our society. It is possible to promote a more realistic education that does not confine young people to remain in the psychological attitude and the narcissism of adolescence but stimulates their interest in becoming adults.

Young people of the present generation are conducting a silent but determined religious revolution. They question Christians and are not afraid to declare themselves as such. They do not want to allow themselves to be intimidated or obliged to be silent, and even less to be insulted. Young Christians from Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Far East live their faith as an emancipation and a freedom in God, sometimes in martyrdom, that should inspire the older Christian communities.

Each WYD is always a stage in history for the young people who take part. We can no longer speak of religion in the same way as before. In fact, it can be clearly seen from the media coverage. Most broadcasters and political commentators, prisoners of a certain number of sociological categories and cliches, are unable to evaluate what is happening. For the past number of years Church gatherings of youth have had very significant numbers of participants. However, we hear very little about these young people on a spiritual quest. That does not take the number one spot on the television news. Could it be that gatherings of youth for religious reasons is a non-event for the media? The news is often on a different wavelength from life and from what goes on quietly in society, until the day comes when they wake up and ask "what's happening?" The young people's thirst for

the ideal and the spiritual and the challenges that entails, are not taken seriously by society.

The Church is not dying as some claim. It encounters the same problems as all other institutions who are feeling the effects, of individualism, subjectivism and a kind of "desocialisation". In a society where the individual sees him/herself as the victim of others, in a consumer mentality, in a time frame with a "this minute" rhythm, where life is presented in virtual and media terms, it has become urgent to let the meaning of reality be discovered, to develop places for socialization and transmission between generations so as to acquire a sense of institution. The Christian spiritual experience involves this dimension. It is this that makes up the richness that unfolds in the various traditions throughout the ages.

It is up to the Church to ensure a follow-up to WYD and to put in a more active and renewed catechesis. The intellect of faith needs to be nourished. Pastoral action should take care to awaken families to the importance of religious education and particularly of the catechism. Families pose another question for a society emptied of the religious dimension of life as a result of direct policy. Secularisation, as we have said, is the separation of the political and religious powers and not the exclusion of religion from the social field. In schools there should be time assigned to religious instruction. While each individual is free to decide whether to adhere to a religious faith, society cannot give religion a place of secondary importance limiting it to the hidden and private domain, due to the consideration that religion should not influence life and society. The religious dimension is a social fact that cannot be reduced to the private sphere. Besides, it is a source of

social ties and remains inserted in the calendar. In answer to this privatisation of religious life, young people, through their attitude and actions at World Youth Day, have replied with an overwhelming "no!". Spiritual life is a human need that political powers should recognise, respect and honour because it belongs to each person and is also one of the essential components of social reality.

In his message on the occasion of the 18th World Youth Day in 2003, the Holy Father reminds us of the role that young people can have: *"Humanity is in urgent need of the witness of free and courageous young people who dare to go against the tide and proclaim with vigour and enthusiasm their personal faith in God, Lord and Saviour".*

FEATURES

OFW's: Called to be the New Philippians

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

I am grateful to the good Lord for giving me this unique opportunity to be with you, that is, for you to celebrate with me this Eucharist and for me to share the good news of the Lord with you.

I feel like Saint Paul in his missionary journeys to the different churches which he visited along the way. Given the apostolic mandate by the Lord, he was able to found new churches. On my part, I come not to found churches but to visit the churches which are already well-founded and solidly established. For me, it is more to find you, my fellow Filipinos and countrymen, in a foreign land alive in your faith and to be able to proclaim the gospel and to celebrate the Lord's Eucharist with you.

Homily delivered by His Eminence, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, during the mass held at the St. Ann's Church, Washington, D.C., last September 16, 1992 at 6:00 p.m.

I must confess that I feel proud for you, my *kababayans* here living in the States. Many of you have lived here for more than a decade or two. I understand that not a few have struggled their way to the top at the ladder of success. And so, here you are enjoying the fruits of your toil and labor. This is one thing that you need to thank America for, the land of freedom and countless opportunities. How truly proud are we from the Motherland, the Philippines, when we hear stories of your success as you find your rightful place in this vast land of promise. I constantly pray to the Lord that you remain firm and steadfast in the word of the Lord. I know that there are equally strong temptations that you encounter in this society. One major temptation is the expected quest for recognition and affirmation of one's worth. Through the media, one's worth is seen in terms of the amount of dollars he keeps in his bank account or the number of flashy cars that he can store in his garage or even the quantity of vacation houses he can add in his check list. These things can give feelings of confidence and self-worth. At times, there are even awards for those who made it to the top by their enterprising skills. That is the so-called American way.

However, it is unfortunate to hear that among these stories of success, one is said to have become alienated from others and from God by circumstances or by his choice. Such kind of success was acquired at the expense of others, and in oblivious of the true source and origin of these blessings. This is not the Christian way to happiness. Real success lies in the fidelity to the word of the Lord even at the expense of one's ambition for fame. It lies in one's readiness to be of selfless service to the Lord and to others. It is to understand that

friendship with the Lord and his children remains a far more important value to pursue than material goods and money. Instead of being "MAKASARILI", the Christian aims at being "MAKAKAPWA" and above all, "MAKA-DIYOS".

Remembering our history lessons, we think of our name "FILIPINO" or "PHILIPPINE", as having been derived from King Philip of Spain, after whom our country was named over four hundred years ago. I ask you, starting today, at this mass, to join me in thinking of ourselves as also being named after Philip, one of the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his apostles. Let us think of Philip as a special Patron Saint of Filipinos, for we carry his name. Next to Peter, it was to Philip that Jesus addressed many of his statements. In the Gospels, we are told of how Jesus called Philip, and how the latter then talked to Nathaniel about Jesus. We recall Jesus, almost exasperated, telling Philip: "Philip, after I have been with you for all this time, you still do not know me? When some Greeks wanted to speak with Jesus, it was Philip they approached, asking him for an introduction. It was Philip who was transported by the Holy Spirit to teach the Ethiopian Eunuch about Jesus and to baptize him on the spot. Let us, Filipinos, each consider our self to be, like Philip, an apostle of Jesus. We, Filipinos, belong to the only Christian country in Asia. God has called us to a special mission. We are to know Jesus intimately, we are to make him known. We are to bring him to others: we are to bring others to him: we are to welcome others into his church. Let us , my friends, recognize this mission, let us live up to it. Let us do so, fully aware, that what we are called to do is ... simply and truly, to love; to be caring, to be concerned, to be patient and kind, to

reach out in humble and generous service, to be forgiving never to be indifferent, never to seek revenge; to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us; to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile.

As we do, my friends, we will walk with Jesus... In the Philippines, in the United States, in whatever part of the world we may someday find ourselves in. We shall truly be his friend. As Jesus had said: "you are my friends, if you do what I command you... I call you my friends because I have told you everything that my father has taught me... It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you, to go and bear much fruit.

Perhaps, there have been times when you have been anxious about our country, when you have wondered about the fate of your loved ones - in the midst of reports on insurgency, crimes, violence, immoralities, economic difficulties. I ask you to remember this: you need never be anxious. Rather, rejoice in this thought: That even though you are thousands of miles away from home, you can do your part in bringing about peace and prosperity in our country, simply by your prayers, and by doing your work well each day. You can work miracles. Only one thing is required: That all you do, you do with Jesus. "Through him, with him, and in him", as we say at mass. The key, always, is that we be united with Jesus. Without him we can do nothing, nothing we do is of any value. With him, and in his name, we can ask our father for peace, and we can be sure that in time, our prayers will be answered. This, too, is part of our great heritage as brothers and sister of Jesus.

Days, faces, and places, come and go. Jesus remains forever. In all that we do, we must have him in mind. We must live as he taught us to. We must love one another as he loves us.

Someday,' my friends, you will look back to your time in America and you will ask yourself: Did I make this place better by my having been here? Did I bring joy to those who were part of my life in this country? I am confident that your answer will be "yes". I look forward to the day when the various people of the countries where Filipinos have lived will say to us, Filipinos, what Paul, apostle to the gentles, said of the Philippians long ago: "I thank God every time I think of you."

I shall be praying for you. And, like Paul, every time I pray for you, I shall pray with you!

God Bless you!

From Murmuring to Hope

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

When God intervened in history to free the Israelites from slavery, when He parted the waters of the Red Sea to frustrate the Pharaoh, destroy his horses and chariots, and give His People passage to the Promised Land, when He led His People in the desert by an awesome pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, when He fed them with manna and quail, all these did not stop their complaints and murmuring, all these did not stop their doubts and fears. In fact, in our first reading for today,¹ the people, thirsty, are close to rebellion. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt with our children and our herds to let us all die of thirst?"

It is reminiscent, I think, of God's intervention in our own history, when He thwarted the tanks and helicopters of the dictator who had arrogated all political power to himself

Homily of His Eminence, Jaime Cardinal Sin, D.D. Sixth Anniversary, People Power Revolution, 25 February 1992, Based on *Exodus 17:1-7*; *Romans 5:1-5*; *Matthew 14, 22-33*.

¹ Exodus 17:1-7.

and had no intention to die. God overwhelmed his military minions by the faithful millions who had long suffered under the corruption, the avarice, the ruthlessness, and the violence of his regime, the millions who had prostrated themselves to beg God for liberation. The magnificent power of these millions was not in any amassed instruments of war, nor in any pragmatic coalitions of compromise, but rather in the rosaries they clasped in prayerful hands and the statues of Jesus and Mary they bore on their shoulders, silent symbols of their vibrant, unifying faith, which impelled them to reject what was wrong, and stand for what was right. God acted. He routed the tyrant's forces. He gave His People in the Philippines privileged passage to a new Promised Land.

The dreams our liberated people had six years ago of this Promised Land were varied. But they were certainly dreams of a more humane, socially-just, participative, people-centered, moral, God-fearing, united society. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines described this Promised Land as:

...a **free** nation:
where **human dignity and solidarity**
are respected and promoted;
where **moral principles** prevail in socio-economic
life and structures;
where **justice, love and solidarity** are the ituiier
driving forces of development.²

Unfortunately, however, as the wandering Israelites in the desert, we seem to have lost sight of this Promised Land. We have lost sight of the graced vision of our future society that

² Conciliar Document, PCP II, page 48.

impels us to make the sacrifices demanded by that future. With the pseudo-realism of the world, we have cynically dismissed the idea of a society of equality and love as a romantic illusion of bleeding hearts, and have been mesmerized rather by Utopian visions of material plenty, pockets of plenty for the selfish few, heartlessly won by bleeding the many. In darkness, we have ignored His pillar of fire; in pride, we have turned away from His guiding cloud. We have wandered directionless in an arid desert because partisan interests are again confused for the common good, because might is confused for right, because money and power are confused for substance, because image is confused for truth. In searing confusion, we have ceased to believe in morality and truth, because the stolen millions of our impoverished people have neither been returned in repentance nor recovered in law, because the murderers of our national heroes as well as the murderers of our children on the streets have not been brought to justice, because instead of rejection and punishment for thieves, our society incredibly delivers them accolade and glory. In the desert, we murmur in our confusion. For lack of insight into our root problem, we curse the very day of our deliverance. "Why have you brought us out Egypt with our children and our herds, Lord...?" Why have you delivered us from the dictator, Lord? Why all this freedom, when we were better off eating from the fleshpots of slavery?

Thus, are we not now gripped by this undeniable sensation of sinking, by this dreadful fear of drowning? God once parted waters to secure our delivery. Today we seem to be thrashing about helplessly in those waters, overwhelmed by their mysterious power, unsure whether we belong to the

fleeing Israelites or the pursuing Egyptians. It is like the potent narrative of the encounter between Jesus and Peter in our gospel for today.³ It is impossible to walk on water. But Jesus did. He approached the apostles, frightened in their boat, and said: "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid." It is impossible to walk on water. Yet Peter called out and said, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you over the water." It is impossible to walk on water. Yet, when Jesus said, "Come," so long as Peter's gaze was fixed on Jesus, Peter did the impossible. He walked on water! In the unfortunate days of the dictator, when this nation was being plundered, when fighters for reform were being imprisoned and tortured, when threats to the reigning powers were murdered, it seemed impossible to dethrone the dictator. Jesus came, however, doing the impossible. Many thought he was a ghost. A figment of wishful thinking. An illusion. He and the nation rallied together, rose as one, did the impossible! It rejected the dictator from its midst. It began anew. A new constitution was penned. Democratic institutions were restored.

But just as Peter began to sink "when he saw the strength of the gale and was seized with fear," it seems to me we too today are sinking. We too have become aware of the strength of the forces that militate against our dream of a just and humane society. We have come to realize that the challenges of social transformation are not met merely with good intentions. We have become more aware that knowing what is right and doing what is right are two different realities. Too

³ Matt: 14:22-33.

often, knowing what is right, we fall short of doing it. Doing what is wrong, we rationalize wrong into right. We confuse ourselves, so as not to condemn ourselves. We are shocked by the power of the demons that drive others to money, power, and fame, but are more shocked that we ourselves are vulnerable victims of these same demons. Giving in repeatedly to their promptings, we become less sensitive, less shocked. Then, sin abounds. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, we know. Sinning, we sink. Talking our gaze off the Lord, we sink. Thinking we can overcome our nature, our folly, our sinfulness alone, we thrash about in wicked waters and cry out, "Save me, Lord!"

Save us, Lord! That itself is a powerful grace: should we be able in our national depression and confusion sincerely to call to the Lord for help! Should we be able through our Blessed Mother to ask Him to intervene once again in our history to galvanize our scattered selves into a unified people! For clearly, it is ultimately not this or that constitution, not this or that ideology, not this or that administration, not this or that program of action, not this or that personality that saves us from drowning. Only Christ, in pulling ourselves to himself, saves us from our selves. Only in Christ, is our abundance of sin outdone by his superabundance of grace: "where sin was thus multiplied," St. Paul says, "grace immeasurably exceeded it!"⁴ Only in Christ is our present suffering a true foundation for hope. In Christ, St. Paul urges:

let us even *exult in our present sufferings*, because we know that *suffering trains us to endure*, and

⁴ Rom. 5:20.

endurance brings *proof that we have stood the test*, and this proof is the *ground of hope*. Such *hope is no mockery*, because *God's love has flooded our inmost heart* through the Holy Spirit he has given us.⁵

... For I reckon that the *sufferings* we now endure bear no comparison with the *splendour*, as yet unrevealed, which is *in store for us!*⁶ ... Indeed, *if God is on our side, who can be against us?*⁷

My sisters and brothers, our celebration, our celebration of liberation from a dictator means nothing if within us we cannot celebrate liberation from our own mediocrity and sin. Our condemnation of the sins of a past regime means nothing if we continue to condemn ourselves to sin. Our constitutional freedoms mean nothing if we still constitute ourselves within as slaves of sin and freely refuse to heed the call to moral uprightness.

But there is hope. There is hope in our Lord, who stretches forth his hand. There is hope in every man and woman who clasps that hand, and never lets go.

Allow me to recount an important story.⁸ Last February 7th, a 34 year old airport taxi driver from Capiz, named Christopher Talamburon, found twenty-three thousand US Dollars in his taxi. That was the dollar equivalent of some

⁵ Rom. 5 1-5.

⁶ Rom. 8

⁷ Rom. 8 **32**.

⁸ Reported in *Inquirer*; February 8, 1992, page 1, and other dailies.

six hundred thousand pesos! With the money the driver could have bought his own taxi. He could have built a new modest house. He could have invested the money and lived comfortably with his family off its interest alone. He would never have had to work again! But Christopher Talamburon said, "I could not take it because it wasn't mine. It would have been against my conscience. So I returned it immediately." In the eyes of the world, he was crazy, he failed to seize the moment, he was a fool. But, in the eyes of God, he was blessed. He did the right thing. He respected and obeyed his conscience. For many, he is a stumbling block. For us all, he is a moral hero. Is he not reason for hope for all?

Is he not reason to hope that those who today position themselves to be helmsmen of our country might ever more be guided by conscience, not expediency; that in office, or even now on the campaign trail, they may effect what is right, and not merely what is convenient? Is he reason to hope that every candidate, blessed with so much more than he, might begin each campaign speech with the words, "In conscience, I vie for public office. I will neither insult you nor myself with my bribe money; I will neither terrorize you nor others with my goons. I will not tamper with your sacred votes"? Is not Christopher a reason to hope that justice can be restored to this country, that money stolen from the people can be returned, that murderers can be punished, not in vindictiveness but in justice? Is he not reason to hope that conscience, justice and human dignity can propel us to the national excellence for which we all yearn?

My sisters and brothers, let us therefore take heart! Let us continue to journey towards our Promised Land, to which

the Lord himself leads us, despite our murmurings, complaints, and discouragement. Despite our rebelliousness, the Lord draws water out of stone; out of hearts of stone he fashions human hearts, hearts of love, compassion and concern for the poor. Let us fix our gaze on the Lord. Let us look in his eyes, and brave the impossible. Let us clasp His hand, and never let go!

O God bless this country Philippines
It is the land of our birth
It is the home of your people!

Have We Become So Callous?

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As I stand before you here this evening, I am reminded of the joke which, I am sure, all of you have heard before. If I repeat it now, it is because it is so applicable to my case.

The patient was being wheeled into the operating room. He looked at the surgeon and said, "Please be gentle with me, Doctor. I'm so nervous, for this is my first operation."

The surgeon looked down at his patient and said, "That makes us even; this is my first operation also."

Why do I say this joke is relevant? Because, like the patient in the story, I am nervous also. This is the first time that I will address a group of distinguished surgeons. And, like the patient, I ask you likewise, "Please, be gentle with me."

It would be most unwise of me, my friends, if I were to talk to you about medicine in general, or surgery in particular. I am not a healer or to be more precise, I am not a healer of sick bodies so it would be highly imprudent of me to venture

into a field I know almost nothing about. If I dare to talk to you about healing, it will be only in relation to the healing of a sick society, the society that we live in.

Let me preface my remarks with a few words about the way I regard surgeons. As a layman, I look upon surgeons as the superstar of medicine, the glamour boys and girls of the healing profession. I look upon them as dashing figures with fine, delicate fingers and steely nerves, men and women eternally engaged in a race against time, literally snatching patients away from the jaws of death. It is possible that my doctor-friends involved in other fields of specialization will not love me for saying these things, but it happens to be the truth.

My dear officers and members of the International College of Surgeons, Philippine Section: We are now in the season of Advent, that particular time in the year when we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. Some two thousand years ago, a man named John the Baptist was born, and he spent his whole life being the herald of the glad tidings. His cry has echoed and reverberated through the centuries: "Prepare yourselves for the coming of Christ. Clear a path for Him."

During this advent season, with the birth of Christ barely nineteen days away, we should pause from our labors and reflect on the words of John the Baptist. How do we prepare ourselves for the coming of our Savior? How do we clear a straight path for Him?

First, we must look into ourselves and at the society in which we live. If we are brutally and sincerely honest in our

appraisal, we will have to admit that our way of life leaves much to be desired. We will have to admit likewise that the state of our society, economically, politically and morally, is even worse off.

Let us try to be honestly introspective. Let us subject ourselves to a searching scrutiny, to the agonizing reappraisal that our leaders like to talk about. What do we find?

I cannot, of course, answer for anyone of you. For you and you alone can best answer the questions that, in a supposedly Christian society, demand to be asked in preparation for Christmas.

Since being Christian means being a person for others, how much of your time do you spend, not in self-service, not in personal aggrandizement, but in the service of others? If, as a wise theologian once asked, you are accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Is there anyone in this wide, wide world, who will come forward and testify, "This man loves his neighbor as he loves himself? Have you given of your time, your effort and your substance to help others, without expecting anything in return? If God - tonight, tomorrow or the next day - were to call you and demand an accounting of how you lived your life, can you honestly and truly say that you left the world a better place than when you found it?

These question, my friends, are serious ones, not lightly asked and not lightly to be answered. They strike at the very core of our Christianity. And if we have difficulty in answering them, or we find ourselves sadly deficient in our answers, then it behooves all of us to do drastic surgery, to excise the

diseased tissues of selfishness and materialism so that only the healthy, Christian flesh remains.

This is the only way we can prepare ourselves for the coming of the Savior. For He must find us worthy of saving; He must see that we are not irretrievably lost, that we can be saved because we want to be saved.

Now let us look at the society we live in.

Economically, the national community is in desperate straits. It seems that if the economy has not collapsed completely, it is only because of the constant injections of new capital obtained through foreign borrowing that have to be paid back someday. It seems to me that because of them, our future - and the future of our children and our children's children - has been mortgaged.

Government statisticians like to say that the per capita income has almost quadrupled in the last nine years, that it was \$210 per annum in 1972 and that it is now \$780 this year. But if we ask the question, "are the poor really that much better off in our country today?," we might not find those figures so consoling. We might even conclude that it is just the rich who have gotten richer while the poor continue to grovel in poverty and want.

Politically, the picture is just as discouraging. Many of our fundamental human rights are still being suppressed. Freedom of the press, despite the repeated protestations of my good friend, the Minister of National Defense, remains a travesty. For instance, has the whole story about the recent collapse of the Cinema Center been told? Were there really

only eight fatalities, or is the figure much higher? It would be interesting to know the right answers.

How do we clear a path for the Lord when we know that, in the hinterlands, there are constant armed clashes, that there are abuses constantly being committed by law enforcers against helpless civilians? When, actually, was the last time that we had free and clean elections, when the true will of the people was allowed to be expressed?

Now let us talk about morality in public office. Was there ever a time in our national history, when graft and corruption reached the awesome dimension that we find today? Millions, even hundreds of millions - perhaps as much as billions - of pesos are funneled into the dirty hands of a selected few at the expense of the people. Everyday, we hear stories about this or that official buying another condominium on the West Coast of the United States, or salting untold amounts of dollars in a secret bank account in Switzerland.

Do you know, my friends, why I find this low state of public morality so frightening? Because we, as a people, seem to have accepted it as part and parcel of our way of life. Because, despite all the stories that we hear of official avarice and crookedness, we no longer seem to feel a sense of outrage.

There was a time, not too very long ago, when the people were scandalized because their President bought a bed costing five thousand pesos. It was because of that bed that the people voted him out of office in the next election.

Today, the foreign press carries stories of antique being purchased for six million dollars, and the people no longer react. This is what frightens me, my friends. Have we become

so callous, have we become so unfeeling, that no story of official misspending can offend our sensitivities? If that is so, what does that speak of our moral fiber?

My dear officers and members of the College of Surgeons: During this season of advent, during this period of taking stock of ourselves, we have an obligation - a solemn duty, even - to use whatever charism we have to remedy this sorry state of affairs in our country. At this point, you may be prompted to ask, but our charism is surgery, so what can we do to help?

My reply to your question is this, and it is similar to something I said last week before another group of doctors: Politics is too important to be left exclusively in the hands of politicians; economics is too important to be left exclusively in the hands of economists. Likewise, morality is too important to be left in the hands of professional moralists. If this country is to achieve greatness, if our people are to reacquire the durable and enduring values that energized us of old, if we are to clear a path for the Lord this Christmas, then we should all join hands, each one using his particular talents, to cure whatever ills may be besetting the Philippines.

You, my dear friends, are surgeons. But, before that, you are community leaders. You are looked up to and admired, your words carry weight, and your influence is far-reaching. In a very real sense, you are trend-setters. The example you set can easily become the norm in your respective communities.

Thus, if you exercise your leadership in social action, if you take time out from your busy schedule to help the less fortunate in your respective areas, people will follow where

you lead. If, on the other hand, you express your dissatisfaction and disgust over the way the government leadership is conducting public affairs, yours will be a voice that will be heard and listened to. You can thus help to form public opinion. And if, through your example and leadership, that public opinion should snowball, then the wrongdoers in public office will pay attention and, hopefully, will change their ways.

Remember, over and above all, that you are Christians, that you must love others and must do all you can for others. Remember that, during this Advent season and throughout the year, you must dedicate all your energies towards preparing yourselves for Christ, towards clearing a path for His coming.

This is my message to you tonight. Let me wish you - and all the members of your families - a Christ-filled Yuletide and a new year that will see you growing richer in God's choicest graces.

Thank you very much. God bless you and remember, I love you all very dearly.

(Speech during the XXXIIIrd Convention of the International College of Surgeons, Philippine Section, Silahis International Hotel, December 6, 1981, at 7:00 p.m.)

The Church and the Political Realm

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

It is a great honor and privilege for me to share with you some of my thoughts on the topic "*The Church and the Political Realm*". In the letter of invitation that I received from Linn Caraway, she told me that you are going through a spiritual enrichment program for this week and that you might be interested in knowing my own spiritual journey that led me to be more involved in political issues. This I will try to do, as best I could.

I am always thrilled to be with young people like you. I look at you and I cannot help but be filled with great hope. I look at your faces and I cannot help but be assured of a bright promise for the world/ In a few years, you will all leave the portals of the Southern: Methodist University, and you will see how much the world expects from your competence and youth. In you there is hope that problems your elders neither addressed nor solved, you will address, and with God's help, finally overcome.

I remember that when I was as young as you are, I too was blessed with awesome responsibilities for which I often

felt unworthy at my young age. After my ordination, my Bishop wanted me to continue my studies in Rome. But I fought to work for the poor in the hills of the Diocese. When finally I was assigned to a remote mountain parish, I remember the thrill of being responsible for my first parish community, and my joy at traveling the mountains on horseback to bring the mountain people the strength and solace of the Sacraments. I was young when two years later they appointed me to the seminary of Roxas City to care for the formation of young men aspiring to be priests.

Today, as Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, I certainly do not consider myself old! The old tend with age to resign themselves to the way things are. The old fear to tread areas that are not tried and tested by familiar routine. The old resist risking name, comfort and prestige for "the impossible dream." If this indeed is what "old" is, though I have lived twice as long as most of you, I do not consider myself old.

As a not-yet old cardinal, you may not mind hearing from me that I still feel a young and burning love for my country, a deep gratitude for the treasure that our Lord has given us in our mountains, our lakes, our rivers, our forests, our plains, and most of all in the people who call themselves Filipinos. I still feel a yearning that the bounty the Lord has granted us on this world may be enjoyed by all the people he has privileged with life. I still feel the desire that all our energetic men and industrious women who wish to invest time and talent in harnessing nature for the welfare of our people would be able to find work that is humanly creative and personally satisfying. I still feel an impelling passion to help enable our people to see their truth: That in the Philippine Islands God has spoken a word of love to the Filipino people,

and in the Filipino people God continues to speak a word of love, first of all, to ourselves, then to the people of Asia, then to the world. In this light, I feel when our people rise and take collective responsibility for their treasure: When they deepen their commitment to God in worship and obedience, and when they subdue the earth in loving service of each other and in social justice.

You see, I do have the sentiments of a young man! I feel impelled to oppose my institution, any cultural pattern, any ideology that distorts or destroys our truth - our **Human Truth in God** - or denigrates our treasure. I feel privileged to applaud any person or event or movement that brings us closer to our enjoyment of the reality that we are...

Of course, the sentiments of the young are different from the sentiments of the old. And in our youth we have all much to learn from the lessons of History, the counsels of tradition, and the wisdom of the elderly! But I confess to increasing impatience when a relentless dichotomization of things spiritual and things material in our world is called wisdom. I confess to increasing frustration when people who are not given to prayer insists incessantly that men of prayer confine themselves to prayer, and when personages who have no concern for the kingdom of God presumes to define the limits of God's Kingdom for those who do. For, in fact, it is the depth of one's prayer and the intensity of one's yearning for the kingdom of God that refuses to concede any corner of God's creation to the cold darkness of godlessness and the evils that result there from: Hatred, violence, revenge, pride, greed, the shallow ostentation of the haves, and the horrible destitution of the have-nots. Was it not Saint James who said that our faith is dead if in our plenty we warmly wish our hungry

brothers well, but send them away starving (cf. Ja. 2:16-17)? How, therefore, can we celebrate the sacred sacraments of God's love spiritually if we have no effective concern for the victims of our own national disorganization, the victims of our own social injustice, the victims of our own failures at just management of the vast resources our Lord has blessed us all? I mean effective concern: a concern that is not limited merely to the affairs of the Church because social injustice exists; nor content to merely feel that things should be different from the way they are; nor content to merely hope in vain that others of questionable competence would correct the perceived ills. I call concern effective when concern effects change - change for the better, change that more truly incarnates God's Kingdom in our world, change that more truly allows men and women to recognize in each other the dignity of the children of God!

People who have never felt this sort of concern presume themselves competent to neatly dichotomize in their minds the spiritual from the material, the ethereal from the earthly, the word from the world, and so presume themselves able in reality to forbid women and men of the spirit from engaging themselves in the stink and squalor of this world. I am convinced it is these people who unwittingly provide the ideological underpinning of godlessness in our world affairs today! It is those people who have never exposed themselves to the truth and depth and challenge of our redeemer's incarnation, namely, that our Lord did not take on human flesh merely to lock himself up in a bizarre spiritual tower, he did not call human followers to himself to numb them to their humanity and deaden them to their actual responsibilities in human society today. He called man rather to divinize the human,

spiritualize the material, and sanctify the worldly through a redeeming love that took on the demons of darkness and death and won! In this triumph, he challenges us to divinity in increasingly realized humanity with which he is now one.

When people therefore ask me why the Cardinal Archbishop of Manila with all of his limitations and all of his fallibility, does not shy away from the risks and vicissitudes of involvement in the political controversies of our world today, and confine himself to the non-contentious sanctuary of sacred solemnity, one plausible answer is that this Cardinal is young! He is not retired. He is not dead. He lives in this world. The peace he lives to impart to the people is not the peace of the non-controversial graveyard. It is rather the peace in Christ, who is alive. The Cardinal Archbishop of Manila does not shy away from controversy in the world ultimately because of his belief in the relentless redemptive will of the incarnate Lord, whose redemptive grace we know must touch and transform every aspect of Philippine life: The sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the carnal, the public and the private. The message he proclaims, a message of love and service, against a world of hatred and violence, is essentially controversial. Indeed, it increases in controversiality to the degree it contradicts the evil it targets in our world today. "I have come to set fire on the earth". Our Lord declared, "and would that it were already kindled". In mere fidelity to his priestly and prophetic mission, how is the leader of the Christian community in our society to avoid controversy? This Cardinal Archbishop of Manila will cease to be controversial only when he is decrepit and dies!

When the Lord sent his Spirit into the world, he did not exempt the realm of politics. As a collaborator with the Spirit,

it is my conviction, that the realm of politics urgently needs renewal in the light and strength of the Lord's Spirit. I believe, therefore, that good Catholics must get involved in, must get into politics, and do well. Good Christians must be able to evangelize politics. Call its sinners to repentance, convert it, baptize it, reorient it, so that ultimately it glorifies not power and politicians but the Lord. The Lord. The Father was glorified we recall, when Christ's ultimate celebration of worldly power was in stooping to wash the feet of his disciples! When in this light enough lay Christians sincerely compete with each other to better wash the feet of the poor and the oppressed, to harness the productive energies of our people, to provide rice for the hungry and water for the thirsty, to insure dignity for the laborers and shelter for the homeless, then I would be happy to confine my political opinions to my bedroom. Meanwhile, be assured - or forewarned - that when well-meaning people like yourselves ask me what my political opinion is, I will tell them, convinced that in doing so I violate no principle of separation of Church and state, but contribute to an atmosphere of mature political discernment and discussion.

In this connection, it is important to note that when the Cardinal Archbishop of Manila teaches on matters concerning faith and morals, he teaches with the authority of his office, and can be disregarded only with negative repercussions to one's soul. When he teaches that Jesus Christ commands love and service, or that it is seriously sinful to kill people for political gain, these are statements based on infallible revelation. When the Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, however, shares a political opinion, it is precisely that: A political opinion, not an *ex-cathedra* infallible statement. Here our faithful, I am convinced, are wiser than many give them credit

for. They know that in listening to an opinion they can agree, or disagree, and give another opinion. But listening to an opinion of a respected person, especially if it is rationally founded, is always helpful towards arriving at truth. For discussing an opinion often results in a revision of the same. There is no need, therefore, to perpetually presume that when a Bishop has an opinion, the people will cease to think. We know they do not. And when they do not, we do not excommunicate them. We do not exclude them from the Christian community. As far as I know, no one has been sent to hell simply for not agreeing with my political opinion.

The final point I wish to share with you today I consider rather important. For those who revel in dichotomizing the world into a material realm and a spiritual realm, and seek to imprison persons of the spirit in the latter, with the result of course that persons of the world would reign supreme over the material, it should, on the contrary, be appreciated that politics is an **eminently spiritual** human activity. It is only the crassest distortions of politics that associates it with dirt, decay, corruption, bribery, brutality, fraud and demeaning human manipulation. But politics is ideally about the common good, about the human spirit intellectually grasping the necessity of social collaboration and freeing itself consequently from the pull of private interest in order to pursue the good that benefits all. Politics is the human spirit offering intelligence, talent, self-discipline, will, and organizational prowess to the organization of people towards their common goal. Politics is the human spirit that makes decisions based on key spiritual values: values associated with human being, values associated with human being **before God**, values that define the good. The integral human good, and only to enable com-

petent judgment between the necessary and the contingent, between the important and the petty, between the "ought" and the "perhaps." In this light, politics is certainly not merely for the image makers, the population technicians, the mesmerizing voices and the plastic telegenic smiles. Politics is not about image, it is not about manipulation. It is about **actual human good** and propounded human **betterment**, it is about human communities struggling to achieve this in freedom, despite all real limitations. It is a dreadful mistake, then, to seek to bar women and men of the spirit from engagement directly or indirectly in politics. For politics is a profound manifestation of the human spirit. It succeeds, that is, redounds to the common good, only when its proponents are women and men of the spirit, and when women and men of the spirit, whatever their station in life, can sensitize and determine it according to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

I dream of the day when there shall be enough such women and men of the spirit willing to risk personal fortune and comfort to achieve a genuine transformation of politics in the world. In toppling the dictatorship, restoring constitutional democracy, and carrying through relatively peaceful and clean elections, the Filipinos have made a good beginning towards the transformation. But only a beginning.

Please join us in the pursuit of this dream. In the spirit of God, may you commit yourselves to a bright future for the world.

(Speech delivered at the Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas, September 24, 1992.)

On the Separation of Church and State

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

For the last ten days, I have been receiving a lot of criticism for meddling in politics because of my Easter pastoral letter and my recent public statements. Probably, you yourselves are at a loss to explain the active role that I have taken in the last few weeks prior to our elections. With your kind indulgence, I would like to explain my understanding of Church and State relations.

I accept the inviolable separation of Church and State but we also believe that separation should not mean isolation, that the two can work together provided we maintain a certain distance from one another.

I have likened this separation to the separation of the two rails on the railroad track. So long as the two rails maintain an agreed-upon distance, then the train passes safely. But if the rails get too close, or they drift too far apart, then the train crashes.

The two rails are, of course, the Church and the State. The train would be the people. The destination is a common one: The spiritual and the temporal progress of the people.

To put it in another way, the Church and the State have a shared objective - useful citizenship in the here and now and in the hereafter, and this citizenship, while dual, can be achieved simultaneously.

The Man who obeys temporal laws scrupulously, who pays his taxes and does no harm to his neighbors - that Man is preparing for good citizenship in heaven. Similarly, the man who loves God and who obeys divine laws will in all likelihood prove to be a good citizen in this world.

Along with this concept, the Bishops of the Philippines also subscribe to the principle that the Church should not concern itself with Governmental forms or Governmental laws so long as human rights are respected and not violated. The Church, after all, has proven repeatedly that it can thrive under all forms of Government: Presidential, Parliamentary, Monarchical, even Dictatorial.

But the moment human rights are trampled upon or are in danger, then the Church has a duty to speak out. For the Church must fight injustice whenever it exists in whatever form it takes.

It is my duty as pastor to insure that my flock are not misled and their freedoms are respected.

This demand, however, is mere chatter unless we back it up with our lives. It is gibberish unless we back it up with our minds. Our demands for freedom is empty, unless we are willing to pay the price of freedom - even in the casting

of a vote! This means, I believe, as we cast our vote, we ought first and foremost to think. Freedom is not license to act without thought. It is not license to act in arbitrariness. We ought to scrutinize the histories and track records of the different candidates to be able to separate information from propaganda, reality from illusion, truth from lies. We ought to be able to correlate substantial promises with credible personalities. And see that the most attractive promises are empty unless spoken by credible persons, that, indeed, is ultimately what is behind the sharpened guidelines that I have issued to our catholic voters last Easter Sunday and again on Easter Friday. Some people have criticized me for these guidelines. Some people have accused me of clerical impropriety, political meddling and sinful recklessness. Some people consider it scandalous that I have a personal choice in these elections at all! I accept the negative criticism. I accept the flak.

But I accept this as consequence today of my own acceptance of my duty as shepherd to guide our catholic voters insofar as they need guidance and insofar as I am able. I accept this as part of the cost of refusing to sit back silently as forces of darkness and evil seek again to seize our democratic institutions. I accept this as part of the cost of refusing to bow to the desire of certain candidates and their devoted supporters that we all cheerfully forget the shameless plunder of the past for which to this very day absolutely no restitution has been made, that we all forget the years when our people were robbed of their democratic freedoms and subjected to the indignities of martial rule; that we forget the people like Ninoy who were jailed and tortured and martyred because they courageously and openly opposed the Marcos dictator-

ship; that we forget the principal players and the principal jailer in this sordid chapter of our history; that we forget the shameless waste and ostentation that went into the grandiose lifestyles of the Marcos family and the Marcos cronies, that numbered them among the richest people in the world, even as the businesses of the wealthy were plundered, the homes of our urban poor were demolished, the tillers of the soil subjected to the cruelties of ham letting and military abuse, and coconut farmers defrauded of the fruit of the coconut levy. Of course, in the formulation of our guidelines, I do not excommunicate those who may not follow these. And I harbor no ill will against those who take exception to them. Even under sin, the freedom of the children of God to vote according to their conscience is respected!

But the freedom of the children of God is also their mandate to think. Should anyone decide not to follow these guidelines, I do not say that he will go to hell. But I do say there is acute thoughtlessness in any person who gives his presidential vote to someone who has stolen billions from the country and refuses to restore these billions to the Filipino people. I do say there is serious thoughtlessness in a person who gives his presidential vote to someone who promises the reinvigoration of the economy to the Filipino people on a personal track record of crony - and monopoly capitalism, in which serious doubts as to the legitimacy of his huge personal fortune have remained unanswered, I do say there is sorry thoughtlessness in a person who gives his presidential vote to someone who was a key supporter of the Marcos regime, and whose behavior since his celebrated renunciation of martial rule has fallen short of being sincere, open and transparent to the people, even though this has been one of the hallmarks of

the administration he claims he will continue. I do say there is thoughtlessness in a person who could gloss over a presidential candidate's tepid of lackluster track record in government service. I do not say that anyone who does not follow our guidelines will go to hell but I do say that if as a people we cast our votes with our hands over our eyes and our hands over our ears and our hands over our mouths and see no evil, hear no evil and say no evil, we will in our democratic freedom condemn ourselves all to hell on earth.

As Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, of course, there is no other way I can punish people who think too little, except by seeking to share my own thoughts with them! People who think too little are generally their own punishment, anyway. But when enough such thoughtless people get together they are the bane of the nation. We love our country. We love our people. We love our freedom. What shall we not sacrifice, what shall we not spare to see our people progress?

I will tell you. Generally we are willing to sacrifice everything except our private interest. Generally we are willing that everyone else sacrifice everything as long as our selfish interests are not touched. As Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, however, I can now say: In casting one's vote it is morally insufficient to be guided purely by self-interest, in casting one's vote it is morally wrong to be selfish, just as the poor are admonished not to sell their votes since this would be a prostitution of a sacred responsibility, so too must the wealthy and influential be admonished not to vote simply in the interests of the family not exclusively in the interests of a private corporation, morally, there is no difference between a poor man who takes a hundred pesos for a vote, and a rich

man whose sole motive for voting for a candidate is how the elected candidate will help advance his business position. Externally, the poor man may appear condemnable and the rich man just. But freedom is not license for selfishness. It is morally reprehensible to vote for the improvement of a business climate, which would certainly enrich me, when I know that the probable cost of this improvement would be the curtailment of the human rights of the poor. It is a demand of morality that voters look beyond the limits of their private interests to the demands of the common good when they finally cast their votes.

The Philippine Church, quite predictably, has been criticized for meddling in politics. I respect the views of these critics even if I disagree with them. What they do not seem to realize was that the travails that the Philippines is going through are not only political. They are, essentially, moral. The Church can never be neutral in the fight against evil. Please join me in conquering evil with good!

(Speech during the Meeting of the Rotary Clubs of Pasay City, Manila Peninsula Hotel, April 29, 1992 at 7:00 p.m.)

On Filipino Values

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

Mga Minamahal kong mga Kababayan:

It has become part of my job, so it seems to visit Filipinos and Filipino communities all over the world. It is always a joy for me to be with our fellow countrymen and countrywomen, under different skies, in different lands. They have always so much warmth, so much joy, so much generosity. One feels, "I have never left home, whenever I may be."

Surely you have much to learn from this great country and its people.

But let it not be a "one-way street" only. You have something of your own to give; you are Filipinos with your own culture, Christians with your own faith. Do not your American neighbors look on you to find out what Filipinos are like, to understand what being Filipino Christian means? So you too must give the best of yourselves; the best of your Filipino culture, the best of your Christian faith.

In the few moments I have with you I will not try to say so many things. But there are a few points which I thought I might mention.

In our hierarchy of values as Filipinos, we are told that *pakikisama*, *pagkaka-isa*, and *pakikipagkapwa-tao* are treasured life - attitudes, norms for human relationship in society.

Pakikisama, tells the Filipino that he must share: share what he has, share himself, not only with his family and friends, but with his neighbors, above all with those in need. "One of the worst things you can say about a Filipino", a great historian among us once wrote, "is that *hindi siya marunong makisama*," (he doesn't know how to be a companion; he doesn't know how to share). *Pakikisama* is the opposite of rugged individualism, the attitude of "survival of the fittest," of being *malakas* at the expense of others.

Pagkaka-isa, is the principle of working together, of forging unity, in a struggle for the common interests and the common good. It means submerging self-interest and seeking what is best for most. At least in the writing of our great figures in history, this has been seen as a primordial value. Rizal spoke often of us acting as one. Bonifacio urged Filipinos "to consecrate all our strength in a common cause." - True in practice we find this hard to do. Precisely because we have a deep-seated strain in our character and culture, *K.K.K. "Kanya-Kanyang-Katwiran, Kanya-Kanyang Kagustuhan, Kanya-Kanyang Kabig, Kanya-Kanyang Kurakot*. Maybe the deepest "cultural ground" for us falling so far behind the forward movement of Asian countries around us is that,

especially in the years of the dictatorship, we have canonized K.K.K., into a way of life.

Pakikipagkapwa-Tao, another treasured Filipino value, means "to be a fellow-man, to be a friend, a brother or sister to another". It is a life-attitude of solidarity, of hospitality, of compassion toward others. Towards others, but especially those in trouble, those in need. In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus describes this compassionate man as "the neighbor" of the one in need. *Marunong Makipagkapwa-Tao*.

Why have I spoken of these values? Because I think that, both at home amongst all our people, and here - among you, Filipinos in America - there is a need to recall these ideals once again, especially this time.

You need not be told that there are a good number of our countrymen and countrywomen who find themselves in very difficult situations here in America. Priests, sisters, and others who live here tell us that a sense of community among all of you should encourage you to reach out to those to whom you can indeed be "neighbor and friends". What this means in practice, you will know better than I. The climate in any highly-urbanized, highly-technological society is such that the human dimensions of life often tend to diminish increasingly... that human relationships take on the literally thousands of our fellow-Filipinos who are here because it is difficult to make a living back home, because they are told there are opportunities here for earning money their families need: It is need, human need, which brings them here. And when they come, they run often into problems they did not foresee, they come up against exploitative working situations,

hardship, suffering, sometimes tragedy. It is easy, I guess, to look down on them, or be indifferent in their regard, or say, "I have enough problems of my own. I do not want to get involved." But that is not the Christian way, that is not the Filipino way.

I hope you will forgive me for bringing this up today. But I know you will understand that as a Bishop and Priest, I cannot be content with speaking praise and perhaps making you laugh, I must also remind you of what the Christian life, and your being Filipino, ask of you.

Kagandahang-Loob is a great Filipino ideal, too. Let me invite you to do that among yourselves, always. Here especially, in a foreign land, make it deeply a part of what you do and what you are. For it ennobles us, and also makes us beloved of God.

Remember the story they used to tell of the old apostle Saint John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. In his final years, as an old man, they tell us, he said only one thing to the Christians who came to him: "My little children, love one another." Let me at least also leave those words with you - as a little souvenir I would like you to remember me by.

Allow me to end these remarks with a story I have told many times. I address this little tale especially to those of you who may be here in America for a while only, or you who may have been pushed into a little corner of difficulty and trial, or you who are simply - badly homesick, and missing your loved ones and your home.

Once a priest, after his Sunday Mass, was speaking to a boy outside the church in Tondo. "Totoy", the priest said,

"I will give you one peso for every correct answer you give me." "Good, Father," Totoy said. He was a bright boy, as many from Tondo are.

"Where is Santo Nino Church?"

"Easy, Father, here in Plaza Moriones!"

"And where is Plaza Moriones?"

"O, here in Tondo, Father! Another peso.

"And where is Tondo?"

"In Manila!"

"Good Boy, here is another peso."

And where is Manila?"

"In Luzon!"

"And where is Luzon?"

"Here in the Philippines!"

More pesos changed hands.

"And where is die Philippines?"

The Boy hesitated a little.

"In Asia, Father",

"Right again! And where is Asia?"

"In the World, Father."

"And where is the World?"

The Boy cast a quick glance at the distant altar of the Church:

"I know that, Father!, the World is in the hands of Santo Nino!"

Today I would like you to remember that. The world is in the hands of the Santo Nino. *Nasa mga kamay ni Hesus.*

Only, in the Hands of the Santo Nino "Grown Up" in the loving hands, the pierced hands, of the crucified and Risen Christ. Do not forget that, ever. Wherever you may be, whatever may happen to you, whatever troubles you may be facing... You are always in the loving hands, the pierced hands of our Lord. And that is true of your loved ones back home, they too are in the hands of Our Father, God.

God Bless you all!

(Homily during the Mass held at St. Hugo of the Hill Church, Michigan, USA, September 21, 1992.)

Real Happiness is Helping Others

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

The story is told about Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian patriot, that one day a woman consulted him about her teen-age daughter's problem of addiction to chocolates and sweets. "She has absolutely, no control over her appetite, O great teacher," she said, obviously anxious over her daughter's health. "Please give her some words of wisdom about temperance," she continued, "for she has great reverence for you and will doubtless follow your advice." To the mother's surprise the Mahatma replied, "Bring her back to me after three months." The mother obeyed. When that period of time had passed she brought her daughter back to Gandhi who promptly advised the girl in an impressive fatherly manner to exercise moderation for her own good. The teen-ager was visibly affected and there clearly was hope that she would indeed strive after the necessary discipline. The mother thanked the Mahatma and, in leaving, she added, "May it please the great teacher to tell me why we needed to wait three months before you deigned to speak your word of advice?" And Gandhi replied, "Three months ago I was also a slave of the habit of eating sweets. I had to learn discipline myself before I could admonish your daughter."

Who can fail to admire such heroic consistency and sincerity? If only every speaker we listened to had the same personal transparency!

But now to our assigned topic, the Rotarian theme for 1992-93: "Real Happiness is Helping Others." To begin with, I doubt if I can consider myself an "expert" on happiness. As a matter of fact, I doubt if anyone can treat the topic of happiness as a presumed expertise. The reason is because happiness, as experience shows, cannot be pursued or programmed directly as is the case with other human goals or objectives. It is rather like a by-product, a consequence of the achievement of a meaningful human life. It is unlike a little sleep - seek it eagerly and you will only succeed in losing it. It is a gift from above more than it is an accomplishment here below. Perhaps the only one in the history of humankind to ever possess an authentic and complete mastery of the subject (though he rarely used the explicit word "happiness") was Jesus Christ. He preferred, however, to speak about peace, or truth, or life. He spoke about overcoming fear and about trusting in the Father's love. And there was this challenging (others would say embarrassing) aspect about his personal history that he suffered and died on the cross. And to make matters more complicated, his followers proclaimed (and were ready to die for this) that he was exalted to new life infinitely greater than the one we know.

You will have realized by now that your chosen theme is far from being simple. No ultimate clarity can be gained regarding it except in the context of a serious reflection on the meaning of being human. For the fine feeling or emotion that goes with being happy is only that proverbial tip of the iceberg. The deeper issues lie elsewhere far below the surface.

It is presumably your awareness of this that has led you in your formulation of the Rotarian theme to qualify the word "happiness" with the adjective "real." For there is happiness and there is real happiness. There is a deeper and a more superficial experience of it. There is a happiness that the world bestows and a happiness that the world cannot give.

Your Rotarian theme identifies "helping others" as the way to real happiness. On the humanitarian level this is a praiseworthy ideal. Whenever individuals, organizations or societies manage to overcome the ever-present down drag of self-concern, it is truly a moment to celebrate. Our capacity to reach out to others is, however, basically flawed, and it is only by the power of Christ's love unto death that we are enabled to help others in sincerity and in truth. For, ultimately, we do not help others in order that we will be happy. Rather, we help others because to do so is the deepest truth about being human and being Christian. Happiness may come as a consequence, but we would have done the same whether it came or not. It is not an expected reward but the gracious overflow of God's love in our hearts.

Just as there is real happiness and counterfeit happiness, so is there real help and inauthentic help to others. Help can become inimical to true human good when our vision of what is helpful becomes narrow and myopic, when our assistance to others is focused on the procurement of short-term material goals to the detriment of enduring spiritual values. The example that comes to mind is the issue of population control. The growth of our population is perceived to be an obstacle to survival and development; it keeps us - so it is argued - from enjoying the standard of living of the newly industrialized countries. From this premise some people of influence

jump to the conclusion that the best way to help our nation is to give pre-eminent importance to population management even at the expense of fundamental moral considerations. The good and happiness of our people, they tell us, is at stake; let us go forth to reduce the population, justifying whatever means we use by the glorious end we envision. This approach to human happiness, let me assure you, can only be self-defeating. For when a people and its leaders target the achievement of certain values (like "the good Life") at the sacrifice of other and more important ones (to wit, a life of principle and integrity) they are bound to miss the mark. "Missing the target" (*hamartia* in Greek) is the New Testament's favorite word for sin. And sin, cardinal or otherwise, has never been known to make men and women happy.

Let me affirm that the Church in the Philippines is as committed as any group you can name to the survival and progress of our people. (During those dark days of martial law it was hard, as a matter of fact, to find a group, society or organization as committed - even in the face of persecution - to the true good of the people as was the Church). The Church merely insists on the principle that moral values cannot be bracketed out of any issue and project if these affect the authentic welfare of men and women.

Esteemed Rotarians, I thank you all most sincerely for this opportunity you have given me to address you on your chosen theme, "Real Happiness is Helping Others." May the Lord of joy bless you and all recipients of your help with a more intimate share of his life and his love. Remember that, in the end, there is no real happiness without him.

(Speech during the Rotarians Meeting at Jade Valley Restaurant, Timog Avenue, Quezon City, September 1, 1992, at 7:00 p.m.)

CPA: Christ's Public Accountant

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

My Dear Friends:

To tell you the truth, I find it a little strange that I should be invited to address you, the officers and members of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants. I say this because I am convinced that I should be the last person to talk to you.

I know that one of your many responsibilities is to discover the net worth of your clients. And if you try to do this on me, you will only be disappointed. You see, when I first assumed office as Archbishop of Manila some 15 months ago, I found the finances of the Archdiocese in very sound condition. So, one of the first things I did was to give away some P30 million pesos to all the poor dioceses of the Philippines. To me, it did not seem right that the Manila Archdiocese should have so much money while the other dioceses were in precarious financial straits. So, I distributed the P30 million. And now, if you were to run my balance sheet, I doubt if you could justify my buying the simplest home appliance on installment basis.

But I did not come to make a public confession. Rather, I was invited to talk to you, to share my views with you on matters which might prove useful to you in your works. Therefore, I have decided to discuss a notion here which may have never -occurred to you before - the notion that, in His own special way, Jesus was and is a public accountant. And certified, at that.

Does this sound funny? It should not for, in a very real sense, Christ is doing work that is very similar to yours. Let me explain it this way.

As certified public accountants, what do you do? Most of the people coming to you for help are people who solicit your expertise to make their income tax returns acceptable and look good. So, you look into their lives, find out how much they are earning, how much they are spending, what are their exemptions, run a balance sheet on them, and come out with their net worth.

If your client is in business, you structure his books and compile his expenses as against his income. And you come out with his profit, minus taxes, of course.

In short, my friends, you, by your chosen profession, have become effective weapons of our people, vital instruments of the government, the right hand of our nation in the desire for economic progress, and in the all-consuming task of nation building. For in your hands lie the task of guiding the people to support the government. To put it bluntly, in your handsale the task of guiding the people to pay their taxes honestly, religiously. In short, you have become partners in the formation of good citizenship.

But my dear accountants, at the risk of offending you, permit me to ask some questions, questions which I consider important. Have you stood equal to the call of our country? Have you answered the demands of your profession? Have you given our people the correct assistance in the preparation of their income tax returns which is the very foundation for economic progress? Or have you, on the other hand, guided them the other way around, giving them the tips on how to avoid taxes they really should pay, thereby cheating our government of few more pesos, pesos which should have gone a long way in the social upliftment of our less fortunate brothers?

You will pardon me, my friends, for speaking frankly, I hope. But we admit that, because of the practices of some unscrupulous accounting practitioners, the entire accounting profession has suffered. With my own eyes, I have seen accountants, hanging around the offices of some clients, their worksheets and calculators on the ready, breaking their heads on how to avoid the declaration of this or that profit. With my own ears also. I have heard people advising other people to go to this or that accountant for it is he who can give the necessary tips on tax avoidance. "After all", I heard a man say, "my accountant says that the money paid in the taxes does not go to the government coffers but to the pockets of the revenue man".

My friends, please don't get me wrong. I like accountants. In fact, many of my best friends are accountants. If I am speaking in the way I do now, it is because I share your desire for reforms in the accounting profession. It is because I want accountants to enjoy a stature and a prestige that they should

rightfully deserve but which has been denied to them because of the dubious actions of some of their number.

How then can we correct these misconceptions, my friends? How can we return to the standards your profession and your nation demand of you? At the moment, I cannot think of an easy way out except for you to return to Christ and His precepts. More than ever before, there is an urgent need for you to be Christ-oriented, to be Christ-conscious, in the practice of your profession.

As I said earlier, Christ is also an accountant, because He makes an accounting of everyone of us. And His accounting believe me, is more thorough and complete than anything you have ever done. He includes all of us in His accounting, and that includes you, my dear accountants. And unlike you who are only human and therefore subject to human frailties, He cannot be fooled. He cannot be bamboozled. He can never commit mistakes.

And I also say that Christ is not only an accountant but a certified public accountant, because he was commissioned by no less than God, our Common Father to see through everyone of us. He can read through our innermost thoughts and He can look into all our motives. Remember the gospel story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee stood in the center of the church and, in a loud voice, he started praying to God. His words were carefully chosen, his language eloquent and high-flown. On the other hand, the tax collector stayed in a corner of the same church and all he could say was, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner."

To any observer, the Pharisee was much more impressive than the tax collector. But not to Christ. He immediately

saw the price and hypocrisy of the Pharisee, and he sensed the sincerity and humility of the tax collector.

In his accounting, Christ looks into our lives and His eyes are never blinded or dazzled by our impressive appearance. He searches our hearts and looks for the goodness - or the evil-that is there.

And when He makes His accounting, what is the first thing He looks for? He looks for love. Love for Him, love for our neighbors. It is not what we say that matters, it is what we do, and what our motives are in doing them.

Thus, if at Christmas time, for example, we spearhead a campaign to gather Christmas package for the poor, He is happy. But he is happier if He finds out that we are doing this because we love the poor, because we are concerned about them, not because we like the kind of publicity we get when we do something like this.

And when we join public manifestations of our Christian faith, like the Rosary Crusade which we are about to hold at the Araneta Coliseum on July 10th, we are doing so because we want to manifest our love for His Blessed Mother, who, after all is our Mother too.

And when we go to church and receive the sacraments, he also knows why we do these things. He knows if we go to church just to please our families, or to show others what good Christians we are because it is to our advantage if they think so.

I repeat, we cannot fool Christ because He is God and He knows everything. And if we try to fool him, woe unto us. You all know what He thinks of hypocrites - He likened

them to "whitened sepulchers, clean on the outside but full of death and corruption inside."

It behooves all of us, therefore, to be constantly aware that, during every single moment of our lives here on earth, we are under scrutiny, subjected to an accounting so thorough and far-reaching that it dwarfs the imagination. It behooves all of us, then, to so conduct our lives so that, at whatever time Christ may make a decision about us, we will be ready to be weighed on the balance sheet and not be found wanting. It behooves all of us to live according to Christ's precepts and examples. It behooves all of us to love our fellowmen for the more you love, the more you will receive in return. As the wise man has said, "the measure of true love, is to love without measure."

In short, my dear friends, it behooves all of us to be true and real Christians. And you, my dear accountants, it behooves all of you not to be just C.P.A.'s or certified public accountants, but C.P.A.'s or Christian Public Accountants.

But what is a Christian accountant? Very emphatically, I say, he is not necessarily any member of your profession who happens to have been baptized in the Christian faith. More accurately, we should say that a Christian accountant is a Christian who happens to be an accountant.

There is a very distinct difference here. A practicing CPA need not be a practicing Christian. But a practicing Christian, if he happens to be an accountant, is certain to infuse Christian precepts into his work.

Thus, the authentic Christian, whatever his profession may be, be he a doctor or architect, accountant or engineer,

businessman or soldier, will always guide his actions in accordance with the preachings of Christ. In the hospital, the doctor or nurse, will never be party to an abortion. In the construction site, the Christian who is an engineer or architect will never cheat on the strength of the concrete mixture because if he does so the building may collapse and people may get killed.

And the Christian who is an accountant will never agree to a deliberate act of cheating and injustice even if, in doing so, he may be depriving himself of a large sum of money.

My friends: What then is a Christian? At the risk of being simplistic, I say, a Christian is a person who accepts Christ's dominion over his life, a person who sincerely tries to be Christ-like in everything he says or does, a person who obeys the commandment of love. And a Christian who is an accountant is all these and nothing less.

I ask you all, therefore, my dear members of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants, to turn your thoughts to Christ and towards all the people whom He loves. More than ever now, there is a need, a pressing, compelling need for all of us to love one another, to love not only those who can afford but also those who cannot, not only the rich clients but also the poor ones, not only the greatest but also the least of our brethren.

Remember the lesson Christ taught mankind, a lesson it has never learned but has not quite forgotten: that there is a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered, side by side, with the greatest.

And how can we manifest our love for our fellowmen, my friends? There are numerous ways of doing this and I say, there are as many ways as there are people. But permit me to bring to your consideration, one way which I consider concrete and solid. And this is the Alay Kapwa campaign which the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines have launched, to make us all aware of our neighbors, no matter how humble they may be. To make us aware that we also have suffering brothers who need more of our time, talents and resources so that life may be a little easier for them, and their tomorrow, a little brighter. There is a need for all of us to share with one another, to get involved in each other's needs, to pray for one another.

Only then, my dear friends, can you be assured of a rich reward. Only then will you show up more favorably in the accounting sheets that Christ is compiling. Only then can you truly say that you are the genuine CPA; not just the *certified public accountant*, Christ's Public Accountant!

Thank you and God bless you all. Remember, I love you all very dearly.

(Address before the Officers and Members of the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants, June 27, 1975.)

The Courage to Live Our Faith

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We are celebrating today this mass in honor of San Lorenzo Ruiz, the Protomartyr of the Philippines, son of the Archdiocese of Manila. We have reason to be particularly proud today because San Lorenzo's elevation to the altars of our churches means the recognition by the church that we have finally reached full maturity in the faith. This is indeed a distinct honor for all Filipinos, but it is an honor that brings with it a challenge - a challenge to sanctity. In other words, you and I are being called to sainthood in much the same way that San Lorenzo was called during his time.

You may say, "What? Me, a saint?" Some may consider the proposal to be preposterous. Others may find it unattractive. Some may flinch at the word "saint" out of a misplaced modesty. We call it virtue to "know our place!". And not strive for "far-out" spiritual goals. In so doing, we fall victim to the lie that denies to us one of the most enriching experiences life can offer: the blessed awareness of the creative

tension that exists between the persons God intends us to become.

Some of us are victims of the bad press given to saints in a secular society. The saints, we assume, were either colorless, uninteresting souls or wild, religious fanatics or cloistered characters ignorant of life's challenge in the real world. We have sadly confused the saints with the sexless, bloodless, lifeless monuments erected in their honor. Because of this caricature, it does not occur to the more heroic and lively soul that what he or she is really striving for is sainthood. People say, "I am no saint," as though not being a saint is something to boast about. So badly have we in the church handled the saints' public relations that if they had anything to say about it, they probably would fire us and get themselves a different agency.

In any case, we are here today to honor Lorenzo Ruiz. We honor this Filipino-Chinese mestizo, a layman and catechist, because he had the strength of character and the courage of faith to prefer death rather than abandon his Catholic faith. To his interrogators who promised him his life if he renounced his faith, he said: "that I will never do, because I am a Christian, and I shall die for God, and for him I will give many thousands of lives if I had them." We honor him today because of this, and the greatest honor we can render him is to emulate the good example he has left us. We should strive to be like him. Precisely because we are not saints, we are being called to sainthood.

The greatest legacy that San Lorenzo has left us is the strength and courage with which he faced pain, suffering and death rather than give up his faith. Reading the account of his martyrdom, we wonder what we would have done under

the same circumstances. Most of us, probably, would breathe a monumental sign of relief that we have been spared such an agonizing ordeal. But to some degree at least, do we not all face the challenge of physical suffering and spiritual degradation? Not one of us who enters the gate of life can claim immunity from these hazards. To be alive is to face risk, to be alive is to risk death, injury, sickness, disease, anxiety, embarrassment, shame, rejection, loneliness, betrayal. And because these are risks we must run necessarily by virtue of our being alive, they subject us to the greatest risk of all - the risk of our spiritual destruction, which is despair.

We spend a good portion of our lives struggling to achieve some measure of security against these and other risks. We build eggs-nest to secure ourselves against the risk of poverty. We follow fashions to secure ourselves against the risks of embarrassment over our personal appearance. We buy insurance to secure ourselves against the financial risks of sickness and disease. We cling to certain persons to secure ourselves against the risk of loneliness. We keep others at arms' length to secure ourselves against the risk of rejection. We keep our own counsel to secure ourselves against the risk of ridicule. We get regular medical check-ups and see our dentists twice a year. We check our brakes and fasten our seat-belts, put our money in banks and double-lock our doors, take our vitamins and do OUT exercises, but try as we may there is no evading the reality that to be alive is to face risks. Troubles will come to plague us. Suffering will come to burden us. And death will ultimately overtake us.

Given this as the condition of life from which there is no escape, given the basic insecurity of life, given this image of ourselves as minute specks in a vast unknown, subject to

the flicks of fate over which we have no control, by what power and authority do we resist the forces of spiritual destruction? By what power and authority do we assert our human dignity? By what power and authority do we dare assert our significance? We Christians dare to assert our significance by the power and authority of the Lord Jesus, the same power and authority which gave San Lorenzo the courage to assert his faith.

In the gospels Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross and follow in my steps. Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, and the gospel's will preserve it." As Jesus' followers, we learn to "deny our very selves." That is to say, we look beyond ourselves for the meaning and purpose of life. The discovery of our true significance lies outside the pale of our feeble efforts to secure ourselves against the risks of suffering and death: "Whoever would preserve his life will lose it." By the power and authority of Jesus Christ our true significance as human beings is revealed under the burden of the cross. Which is not to say that we embrace suffering and bear up under life's burdens for their own sake. Suffering devoid of meaning reduces life to an absurdity. No, we Christians bear our burden for Jesus' sake and the gospel.

To bear the burden, to accept the risks, to reject the passing comfort of false security, to live as we are meant by God to live, we follow Jesus who carried his cross purposefully. We follow Jesus who teaches us that our lives are meaningful; that we are significant to an awesome degree. We follow Jesus who teaches us that who we are and what

we are to become are crucial elements for the fulfillment of his Father's purposeful design of creation.

This is the sense of significance Jesus exhorts us to hold onto even though we may be stripped bare of everything else. The search for significance does not culminate in the achievement of fame or notoriety or power or wealth or prestige. You realize your significance when you embrace the gospel truth that you have been designated by God to play a vital role in all that is going on; that life includes you, and that without you there would be a void in creation that could not be otherwise filled; that no one can take your place in God's plan; that a part of life would not be lived if you didn't live it.

To take up Jesus' cross means to embrace this awesome sense of the real significance of our lives. It means that, somehow, in a way known only to God, this purging, cleansing moment which we call "life on earth" is always a moment closer to our eternal fulfillment which we call "the kingdom of God."

San Lorenzo Ruiz was ready to lose his life for the sake of God and the gospel. And today we honor him because of this. He now lives with God, and his legacy will forever live in our hearts. We, too, are called upon to become like him. To take up the daily crosses of our life, to die the thousand deaths of our day-to-day self-offering until we fully realize our purpose in life-the love and service of God.

May San Lorenzo Ruiz guide us and pray for us so that we, too, could attain the sainthood to which all of us have been called. Amen.

(Homily on Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, during the mass held at St. Columban's Church, Oxon Hill, Maryland, USA, September 17, 1992.)

Mary, Mother of the Church, Mother of Hope

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

When His Excellency, Archbishop Keller, very graciously invited me to take part in this International Marian Conference, it was an invitation I could not refuse. To participate in a gathering like this one, with people coming together from all over the world, to honor the Blessed Mother, is a privilege I am happy to be given, a filial duty I have the joy to fulfill. It is a blessing to be with you today.

Allow me to begin by recalling the memory of the great Pope Paul VI, who solemnly proclaimed the title of Mary, Mother of the Church, *Maria Mater Ecclesiae*. It was at the end of the third session of the Second Vatican Council, on 21 November 1964: the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, was to be promulgated. In his closing address, to the surprise of many, the Pope said, "... for the glory of the Blessed Virgin and for our own consolation, we proclaim Mary as the Mother of the Church."

Pope Paul had hoped the council itself would confer that title on Our Lady. Canon Rene Laurentin has given us his well-researched account of this bit of history. When this was not forthcoming, Pope Paul made his personal decision to make the proclamation "*Motu Proprio*", on his own authority as Pope. Msgr. Pasquale Macchi, personal secretary to Montini from years back, tells us that the decision came from the Pope's own intense personal devotion to Mary, but also from much study in the Church's tradition, from consultation with theologians whose expertise he trusted, and from reflection and prayer. Canon Laurentin suggests that perhaps there was the contribution of mystical experience also.

The links of "resemblance" between Our Lady and the Church had moved Papa Montini in meditation and thought. The last chapter of *Lumen Gentium* had laid down the theological grounds. Mary is member of the Church, and type and exemplar: eschatological icon of the community of the redeemed. Mary was the mother of Jesus, head of the body which is the Church, by physical generation. She is mother of all the faithful who are joined by faith and grace into the body of her son, spiritually mother of the brothers and sisters of Christ by the gift of adoption, through the spirit. Mother of all of us who make up the Church, both people and pastors, and thus Mother of the Church. Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium* was the foundation on which the title, *Maria Mater Ecclesiae* stood in all firmness. The Church's mind had spoken, now it was time for the heart to have its turn. "... it is supremely important for us to announce the maternal role which Mary fulfills in the midst of the Christian people. This is why we now proclaim her Mother of the Church."

Those who were at Saint Peter's on 21 November 1964 will long remember the applause that filled the Basilica after the Pope's solemn words of proclamation. Four-fifths of the council fathers rose in joyous salute, and the applause went on and on. It was one of the unforgettable moments of Vatican II.

Forgive me if I have taken so long to remember the event which gave us the title, Mary, Mother of the Church. I wanted to pay this tribute to Pope Paul VI. We have been informed that the cause of his beatification has been opened, and is now moving forward. Let us pray that it may advance quickly. Should not our assembly here give its entire support to this cause, for the honor of this ardently loving son of the Holy Mother of God, unto God's greater glory.

Mary, Mother of the Church: what can I say, dear friends and devotees of Our Lady, on this great theme? After Pope Paul VI, the present Holy Father has given us *Redemptoris Mater*, an extended meditation on the doctrine of the council. I believe that this Marian encyclical will be regarded as one of the great Mariological texts of our age. It deserves our reading and re-reading. Its depth and originality come through only when one is willing to give the encyclical the time to reveal its hidden treasure! Let me leave it at that, for we will not attempt to summarize its teaching.

What we want to do together, I believe, is to touch on some of the consequences of what *Redemptoris Mater* teaches us, consequences for our lives: first of all on "the Marian dimension in the life of each one of Christ's disciples."

Mary, the encyclical tells us, is not only mother of all the disciples of Jesus, but mother of each one of us, each one in his or her own uniqueness and singularity. We learn this from the figure of the disciple whom Jesus loved, standing there by the cross, with Mary. "Behold your Mother... Behold your Son." Jesus, using "revelatory formulae" says these words to Mary and the disciple. To Mary, regarding each of us. And to each of us, regarding his mother.

Motherhood always establishes a unique and unrepeatable relationship between two people: between mother and child, and between child and mother. Even when the same woman is the mother of many children, her personal relationship with each one of them is of the very essence of motherhood.

The love of a mother for each of her children is not an "all purpose" kind of love, applied by some computer to each son or daughter. No, each relationship is "one of a kind", as in a true sense - each birth is unique, and each person born is uniquely himself or herself.

"Behold your Son." Our Lord bids his mother to love the beloved disciple even as she has loved him, in his earthly life. It is hard to believe that Jesus asks Mary to love each one of us like that. But *Redemptoris Mater* tells us that that is what Jesus is saying to Mary.

Allow me to tell a true story about a priest in my own Archdiocese. A good priest, but perhaps forgivably, during the years of the Marcos dictatorship, he was totally taken up by social activism. Some of our best priests found the oppression of the dictatorship so destructive of our peoples, that

struggling against it became - almost - the only thing that mattered. But after the events of February '86, and the Aquino regime in power, we had more "democratic space", things were at least beginning to be "turned around."

Some people invited him to join a journey to Medjugorje; all expenses paid. So he went. At Medjugorje, his companions told him their rosaries changed color, as they saw the sun throb and move. This did not much impress him. He did see the sun rotate, but thought it was just in his imagination. On their last day there, he was sitting by himself at an hour when the Church was not full. His group was about to depart. He was praying quietly, with some devotion, when he heard, very distinctly, the words, "I love you with the same love with which I love my son." It was a woman's voice, clear and distinct, in the quiet morning. He looked behind him, around him. No, no one was looking at him or speaking to him, it must have been his imagination again. Then, once more, the words were spoken, bringing a great, wonderful peace to his heart. "I love you, with the same love with which I love my son." An inner assurance, at that moment, came to him, that it was Our Lady addressing him. Then, a warmth in his heart, and tears.

All I will tell you is that that priest's life changed at that moment. He was always a good priest. His compassion for the poor and for the suffering, for the victims in our society has, if anything, grown and deepened. But now most of his time is spent promoting devotion to the Mother of God, urging obedience to her requests for prayer and conversion, for greater dedication to the needs of those who suffer. Always, he bears the words he heard that day,

cherishing them in his heart. They were spoken to him, as to a son truly beloved. A son loved by the mother of Christ, even as she loves that blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

I wonder: is it not true that Mary speaks those words to each one of us also? Not perhaps in the way she addressed them to this priest, but just as truly, just as "personally"? Only, so often we are not listening. Or, having heard them, we turn away, because we choose rather not to hear?

Mary is the mother of the Church in yet another sense. She is the mother of each community of the faithful, and mother of each and every people as well. Pope John Paul applies the words of the *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. "... To every individual, to every community, to nations and peoples, and to the generations and epochs of human history." So we rightly speak of Mary's motherhood with regard to every nation and people which flees to her protection, implores her help, and seeks her intercession.

Another story: at the auxiliary shrine at She-Shan.

In the year 1984 I had the privilege of being invited to visit Post-Mao China, not too long after Deng-Hsiao-Ping's takeover. I did not need to travel incognito, I was told: I was on an unofficial visit, but could go as Archbishop and Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. It was the friendship association which invited me. Doors would open even more widely, after 1984.

The last Sunday of my visit was to be in Shanghai. That morning we would visit the only basilica in that vast land, built on top of Zo-Se or She-Shan hill, just outside the populous city. It was the shrine of Mary, Help of Christians. It

had been badly vandalized during the Cultural Revolution. But through the free-will offerings of Chinese Catholics it was just being rebuilt.

On that Sunday morning we motored to the church. The interior was filled with scaffolding, ladders and the like: reconstruction work just beginning in earnest. We went up to the rooftop, surveying the vegetable fields stretching for miles around, the Yangtze River flowing in the distance. A huge bronze image of Our Lady holding the Christ child aloft, blessing the Chinese people, used to stand atop the cupola, but it had been removed and melted down. But I prayed that she and her loving son would bless that great land that morning, there, from the hill of She-Shan.

We had to go down to the original little church, halfway down the hill, to pray. Mass had just been celebrated there earlier that mbrning. The chapel was still half-filled, but people had somehow found out that we were coming, and had begun to gather outside. As we went toward the church, old men and old women fell on their knees, over the gravel and little sharp stones, to ask for my blessing. Seminarians were there too, from the nearby seminary, in their dark Mao-jackets, lined up at the side.

We went in. As was my custom, we knelt and prayed for a while. We looked up to the old lithograph of Mary Auxiliatrix, hung over the altar. It was framed with strings of little lights and plastic flowers. After a while, we stood up to sing: we priests had joined hands as we began. First, the "*Pater Noster*", loud and clear in Latin, with the seminarians joining in, in force. Then we started the "*Salve Regina*", that lovely and ancient hymn, from the monks of the middle ages.

Here, thousands of miles away, we sang those words to the mother of God, "*Mater Misericordiae*", praying for the people of China, and for all peoples in this valley of our tears. Then, as if by some signal, our song began to falter, and our voices failed us. There was a sudden stillness in that little church: a silence, and then tears, sobs, and yet, so much peace. A peace that, somehow we knew, had come to us because of a presence that was in our midst. She who is our life, our sweetness, and our hope. She had come. All of us knew, somehow, that she was there.

I thought: in some way she has come to say to us: these are my people; these are the sons and daughters of my love. Thirty-five years and more they have suffered. They have been driven underground, hunted and spied upon. Their priests were caught and imprisoned, sentenced to hard labor. These are my people. Through all these years they have kept their faith and trust alive: without the Eucharist for so long: without the comfort gathering together to worship in their churches, often with only the rosary, secretly recited, their link with each other, and with the rest of their fellow-Catholics, in that seeming silence of heaven.

Mary, mother of the church: mother of the faithful... in every land and nation throughout the world. For every people her love is unique. And every people turn to her also with a particular love, in ways all their own.

Mary is mother of the church *Catholic*. Catholicity is that property of the church by which her unity in the spirit is the very home of the most wondrous diversity of peoples, languages, traditions and cultures, charisms and gifts. It is that characteristic of God's people, present already at Pente-

cost in virtue and reality, which is coming to full realization in our own time. Pentecost was the radiant proclamation of that catholicity; Vatican II was the beginning of its actualization in the flesh and blood of history.

The biblical account of Pentecost tells us that the apostles, after the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon them, preached to a crowd made up of people "from every nation under heaven". And yet "each one heard the disciples speaking, each in his own language" - the language of the hearers. This was the grace of Pentecost for the apostles: to preach the gospel "to every tongue and nation".

And what of the mother of Jesus? Was she not there praying in the midst of the disciples, when the spirit came upon them as "tongue of fire" from heaven? As the spirit overshadowed her at Nazareth, and God's own son became incarnate in her flesh. At Pentecost was there not "a new incarnation" in her soul? May we not believe that her new "vocation", proclaimed from the cross, was "confirmed" in the upper room? At Calvary, Jesus named her as mother of his disciples, and even, mother of all those for whom he gave his life. St. Bernard tells us that when the soldier's lance opened Jesus' side and pierced his heart, the same thrust opened Mary's side too, and pierced her heart also. At Pentecost, did not the spirit make of that wound in her heart the gateway for all those who would make up the mystical body of her son? *Porta Caeli*, we call her, heaven's open door. Surely Pentecost gave her the fullness of her spiritual motherhood. It was her "confirmation" as mother of the church.

Mary is the Mother of the Church Catholic. Does it not mean, that she is also, in God's design, mother of all peoples?

If it is true that Vatican II was "the beginning of the actualization in history of a truly world church," is not this time we are living in, a special hour for the motherhood of Mary, with regard to all the faithful throughout the world, and with regard to all peoples and nations? For does not our lady's word, "all generations shall call me blessed" also mean "all peoples of the world shall call me blessed?"

You and I have heard, from our childhood, of Lourdes and Fatima, of Rue de Bac in Paris and Czestochowa in Poland, of Loreto and Knock, of Vladimir and Montsedrrat and Walsingham... does not every part of the old Christendom have some sacred place, some venerated shrine, where the faithful believe Mary once came? Came to show her love and concern for a people and their land, to "call them her own"? But in our time, do we not hear of her, so it seems, appearing almost everywhere? But appearing especially "in new places" in once-unknown corners of the world? No, we do not have to believe all these reports are true. But true or false, imagined or real, have we not heard... not only of Guadalupe in Mexico, but of Kibeho in Rwanda, of Akita of Japan, of Naju in Korea, of Damascus in Syria, of Shoubra near Cairo in Egypt, Cuapa in Nicaragua, San Nicolas in Argentina, in Zaire, - places scattered all over the globe? Do these reports not at least tell us that people in all nations are coming together around her name, to give her their love and praise, to ask her to lead them to her son? Mary mother of the world church, mother of all peoples and of all lands - our hearts go to thee: show unto us the blessed fruit of the womb!

Do you wonder, then, that Our Lady told Lucia of Fatima, that it is to her maternal supplication that the peace of the world has been entrusted? Is not this the bottom line of her apparitions in our time?

It is she, the mother of all peoples, who can bring her children together in the near-infinite spaces of her heart. It is she who can break down the barriers which divided the peoples of mankind, across religious and racial enmities, across bitter conflicts with long histories behind them. She can heal the ancient hatreds, forge forgiveness in hardened hearts, bridge the wide chasms of discords grown old, of separations sealed by centuries. How? By the power of her maternal love, saying her "they have no wine" to her son. By the power of the spirit, "creator *spiritus*", who can bring order out of chaos, using Mary's maternal love as chosen instrument of reconciliation and peace. "Do whatever he bids you to do!"

Dear brothers and sisters, what does the Blessed Mother ask of us that we may be channels and instruments of that peace which God has entrusted to her hands and her heart?

The popes of our time, from Pius XII to John Paul II, have with unanimity insisted on entrustment to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart as the way: the way to renewing the life of the church, the way to the reconciliation of peoples. Twenty-five years ago, Pope Paul VI spoke these words:

We urge all sons and daughters of the Church to renew personally their own consecration of themselves to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of the Church. More: to realize his most noble act of cult with a life ever more conformed to the divine

*will, in a spirit of filial service and devout imitation
of our heavenly queen.*

In 1984 Pope John Paul II asked the entire church all over the world to entrust themselves to the heart of the mother of the Lord.

To entrust our lives, singly and together, as peoples and nations, to Mary, is setting forth on a journey, following her footsteps, to the heart of her son. It is an "inner itinerary" through the Paschal Mystery that was the pattern of Jesus' life, and her own. We pass through the valley of conversion, walk the painful paths of penance, climb up the steep hills of reconciliation with our brothers and sisters. It is Our Lady, as *Redemptoris Mater* ever reminds us: it is Our Lady who goes before us always. That is why the message of all her apparitions is the same: prayer, changing of our hearts, renewal of our lives, fidelity through all things, self-giving love for others. This was, in her own way, her own itinerary of faith. That faith, her faith, always precedes us: in our own Nazareths, our own Pentecosts. It is thus a journey of hope, in the community of hope which is the church.

Hope: that is the word Mary means to us. Will you let me rehearse again the story of our "peaceful revolution" of February 1986, that miracle which we believe Our Lady won for us from God?

From 1983 onwards, our country's story was one of growing despair. The dictatorship had brought our people to the edge of ruin, socially, politically, economically, even in our own hearts. There seemed no escape but recourse to armed struggle and violence, with rivers of blood running

across our land. It seemed to be the only way-out. Our bishops decided to declare 1985 Marian Year, in honor of the second millennium of Our Lady's birth. The Holy Father had suggested this, to the entire church. Only our country took up the challenge.

From the first, the Marian Year turned out to be a doorway of hope. Our people responded, with an intensity I do not cease to wonder at, even now. Such an outpouring of prayer, of penance, of petition merging from much pain and anguish, processions and pilgrimages. Holy hours, confessions, Eucharistic vigils. It seemed we had dug up hidden springs all over our land. As I watched one night at the cathedral of my own first see, Jaro in Iloilo, and saw the endless stream of people, streaming in from the surrounding towns and villages, even from distant hills, many of them on foot and fasting, standing before Mary's image with their hearts in their eyes... I knew Our Lady would lift up our cries before the Lord. No, I felt, there would be no insurrection in blood; there would be another way.

In February, the following year, we had snap elections. The dictatorship massively manipulated the outcome, and sectors of the military rose up in defiance, and the people poured out into the streets, by the hundreds and hundreds of thousands, to turn things around, not by arms, but by the weapons of peace. You saw the scenes on your TV screens: everywhere, amid that human sea, men and women and children with their rosaries in their hands, people gathered around their priests for the Eucharist. Images of Our Lady held aloft at every street corner, waves of prayer and song running over the gathered throngs, through the sun-baked

days and the living nights... one hundred hours of a revolution without blood, won through the ways of prayer and peace.

What we had begged Mary to win for us, she obtained for us, but in such wise that her victory was won in us and through us. Her miracle, and ours, on February 25, once the feast of Our Lady of Victory, the dictatorship fell. There was no blood in our streets, only people singing around the Queen of Peace triumphant, she who brought us hope, and its fulfillment.

We may not have carried through to its completion our revolution of hope as yet. But at least the democracy and peace that came with it, remain with us, and hope has not left us orphans, to this day.

Let me end with the little story I read, in my early seminary years, from Gilbert Chesterton. It seems some people were walking one day on the rocky wastes of Donegal in Ireland, as daylight was ending, and the night about to fall. Unexpectedly they met a young mother, a beautiful peasant woman, carrying a child in her arm. Curious, they stopped and asked her who she might be. She answered them, in words they would not forget:

I am the Mother of God
and this is Himself,
and this is the Boy
you will all be wanting at the last.

As we drove away from the hill of She-Shan in China, with the day light fading, I looked up the cupola of the hilltop church of Mary Help of Christians. And I thought of Mary standing there, holding up her child for all the peoples

of the world to see, as the world journeys to the third millennium of our history. And I thought of her saying, in words I often like to remember:

I am the Mother of God
and this is Himself,
and this is the Boy
you will all be wanting at the last.

Mary, Mother of the Church, Mother of all peoples, pray for us sinners. And bring us peace; show us the prince of peace.

This is our hope, the hope we hold ever in our hearts.

(Homily during the Marian Congress held at Baltimore, Maryland, September 13, 1992.)

Ninoy, Cory, Dona Aurora and the Blessed Mother

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

My Dear People of God:

Today we mark once again Ninoy Aquino's gift of his life for our people. When a family loses a loved one, here in our country, it is customary to hold nine days of prayer for him or her. It tells us something of the stature of Ninoy, and the greatness of his legacy, that our *pag-sisiyam* for him has been a novena, not of nine days, but of nine years. Year after year we have gathered in this church, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, to pledge ourselves again to the vision and purpose that he lived for, and for which he was willing to make the final sacrifice.

Tomorrow is the feast of the queenship of Mary. Today we have chosen to make our mass an anticipation of that feast, we offer it as a mass of thanksgiving, and there is a special fittingness that we do this. Dona Aurora Aquino liked to remind us that Ninoy was born on the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, on the anniversary of the second appari-

tion of the Blessed Mother to Saint Catherine Laboure. It was on November 27, 1830. On that day Our Lady manifested herself with a globe - representing the world - in her hands: a globe surrounded with brilliant rays of light which radiated from her hands. This was the image of Mary Queen of the World, queen of all creation: precisely the title of Mary we honor on August 22. These events, these dates may be coincidences. But maybe, just maybe, they bear a message for us: the special linkage between Ninoy and the Blessed Mother.

We do well, to thank Mary the Queen on this day when we call on Ninoy's memory again. His death was an oblation made to win back our freedom, unto justice and peace. That was Ninoy's hope. His death at the service of that hope: a hope that set in motion that almost incredible chain of events which brought our history to February 25, 1986: when the dictatorship fell, and the dictatorship fled our shores, and power passed peacefully, through people power, to a new regime, a regime whose power was entrusted to Ninoy's wife, heir of his purpose and his dream.

Need I remind you today that February 25 was, in earlier times, the feast of Our Lady of Victory?, a feast which commemorated Don John of Austria's triumph over the Turkish fleet, through the intercession of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary.

Another mere coincidence? Coincidence or design, here we find links between events in Ninoy's life, and the former President Cory's life, and the dear mother of the Lord. We will only know in heaven, whether all this was part of God's playful planning, or just our egesis of random dates!

But we do want to thank Our Blessed Lady today for her special guidance and protection over our country, and over the Cory presidency. Sister Lucia of Fatima spoke to me in September of '86 and said that President Cory's accession to headship of State was an answer to the prayers we offered during the Marian year; that Our Lady would see to it that her task would be completed, if all of us kept faithful to her son, the president first of all. The mission would be accompanied by Mary's guardianship, by her presence and help. Now the six years are over; the task is done. Whether we believe in messages or not, still gratitude is in order: we thank the Blessed Mother. I for one believe that Our Lady did give us her special assistance, in a hundred ways and one. All the plotting and trying by adverse forces of restlessness and rebellion, and the many natural calamities which descended upon the country, even the fearful fury of Pinatubo - through all these we yet journeyed together. We held fast in the midst of storms. As a nation we did not stagger and fall.

Brothers and sisters in faith: I have said it before, and I want to say it again: I believe Our Blessed Mother was with us, teaching us to learn the need of solidarity and *kapit-bisig*, leading us to maturity and wisdom as a people, helping us to grow in the crucible of suffering, to deepen in faith and trust - faith and trust, as Ninoy said, in each other and in God. Rightly and fittingly we thank the Mother of the Lord. I ask you to offer this mass to that purpose, and from the deep heart.

We thank our former president also, for the sacrifices she has offered, for the heavenly burdens she has borne, for all the sufferings and hurts endured with so much grace, for these years of selfless service which our people and our

history will not, please God, ever forget. Thank you too, Ninoy, for standing by Cory, so that she, herself, could carve her own place in our nation's life and its history. We must thank Dona Aurora too, for all that she has been to all our people, the valiant woman of the scriptures. She is not, these days, any longer as strong and as active as she would want to be. But this is only an added reason for us to honor her this morning. And Ninoy's children, who have been their mother's first line of loyalty and strong support, our gratitude is yours also, above all to that self-effacing personal secretary, Maria Elena, because she was ever a pillar of prayerful serenity and strength. I am sure that Ninoy is, at this moment, proud - very proud - of all the dear ones he left behind to carry on, when his own work was done.

There is one more theme I want to dwell on, with you, dear friends of Ninoy. Ninoy died, as we know, gripping his rosary. We have the eye-witness accounts of those who sat beside him in the China Airlines plane. The last moments of his life he spent invoking the Blessed Mother. Who stood by him in all the times of trial. Our dear friend Soc Rodrigo is here to give witness to that devotion to Mary which grew in the prison months and years. And it is Ninoy himself who told us, that in his darkest hour, in Laur, I believe - he believed the Blessed Mother came to him, to give him peace, a peace that would stay with him as her gift. And in those days when hope seemed gone, in his terrible isolation, his link with heaven, and his link with his loved ones was the rosary, recited at eight in the evening without fail, a family in loving contact with each other, through the beads and their Hail Marys.

Mary and her rosary, a thread of hope running through life, coming through in death: it is not only in Ninoy's story that we meet this. We see it in the life-stories of other Filipinos whom we honor as patriots and heroes also. Evelio Javier: let us not forget him, for he stands as one of our country's noblest sons. From his school days at the Ateneo, the rosary accompanied him; he kept it with him constantly, because he prayed it often. After he was gunned down by enemies of truth and freedom, they found the blood-caked rosary on his person; in the end it was his only weapon. Like Ninoy, he, too, was Mary's son. Of Don Chino Roces, I am told he was not in life what we could call a pious man. And yet it is true, that in his last illness he turned to prayer, and that only minutes before his death, he prayed the rosary, using the beads President Cory had lent him, beads Sister Lucia of Fatima had made into a rosary for Cory. (I know because I brought the beads from Fatima with me, and I was at table with Chino and Cory, when he borrowed her rosary). And a few months ago, at Senator Tafiada's funeral, two of his grandchildren told us, how absolute a rule it was in that grand old man's home, that the family and all those present should pray the rosary together, every evening without fail. He was a man of the family rosary, all through his life, to the end. - I am sure there are other names that can be added to this litany of great Filipinos who made the rosary their most beloved prayer, and who turned to Mary in all their needs.

In this respect, I am sure our Filipina women surpass the men in their devotion to Our Lady and the Rosary. But I must not go on forever. It suffices to note that for former President Cory the rosary is truly her "hotline to heaven". I am sure she used that hotline often, even before Malacañang

and Arlegui, and that her calls got through to the Lord through Our Lady's switchboard, much more efficiently than through PLDT.

Dear brothers and sisters: I have often wondered, is there any nation on the face of the earth, whose great men and women have a strong bond with the holy mother of God, whose fingers so readily run over her beads, with so much confidence and so much filial trust? It is true: our people are blest, our land is blest, because we are a *pueblo amante de maria*. Let us never forget that, it is one of the greatest gifts God has given to our people. Because of it, despite our sins and all our failings, Our Lady keeps watch over us, in love. At this anniversary of Ninoy's death, I am sure he would want us to remember this.

Today, I have no "great message" to try to impart to you. I will ask for one "little thing" only: that we should follow him in his devotion to, and his love for the Mother of God, learned at his mother's knee, re-learned ki the hardship of imprisonment, beautiful and victorious in the face of death. The rosary was part of that love. The family rosary was part of it too, and the story of "The Eight O'clock Pact" is one of the loveliest portions of the Ninoy Aquino biography... Is there anything that brings out so movingly the message of the family rosary crusade, that "the family which prays together, stays together"? Father Patrick Peyton died only some weeks ago, and I hope Fr. Pat and Ninoy have met up in heaven, and that Ninoy has told that story by now.

Dear friends, let me be bold enough, in Ninoy's name, this morning, to urge the renewal of the family rosary in your homes. If for "the great ones" like Ninoy and Tanny, the

family rosary was significant, should it not find its way also into our families? I appeal to the younger families here present, to "go and do likewise." This is a "pious little request", yes. Yet "little things" have a way of being significant, in the large designs of God, because in the realms of faith, God moves in other ways than ours. I think Ninoy, now that (so we trust) he is with our Lord and Our Lady, would say that it matters for us, in this land of much suffering and yet of much hope, to keep strong the love of Mary in our hearts, and keep the prayers of Mary's rosary constant upon our lips.

We remember you, Ninoy, with undiminished gratitude, today the gift you made to our people lives still, and the honor and courage that walked our ways after your death, continue to question our hearts and challenge our lives. The years have passed so quickly. So much has happened, yet you have so much to teach us still: your passion in the Filipino, your passion for honor and justice above self-serving interests, above our greed for power and for gain. Do not let your hope ever die in us, but ask God to set it aflame in the souls of us all, above all in the young. Continue to lead us, so that that faith you died for, "faith in the Filipino, and faith in God," may become for us what it was in you: a noble obsession, a sacred love, a dream that will not die.

(Homily during the Mass Celebrating the 9th Death Anniversary of Ninoy Aquino, Sto. Domingo Church, August 21, 1992 at 9:00 p.m.)^

"He Took Her Into His Own"

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

One of my memories, from a retreat in our seminary days, was coming upon these lines from Msgr. Ronald Knox's *The Priestly Life*. It is the ending of his chapter on Our Lady.

We shall not (so he writes)... We shall not, all of us, like all the priests... which go with Our Lady's cult. But underneath it, there is something deeper at work. I think she is, in a sense, closer to us nowadays than she was to earlier generations of Christians. She is something more to us than a theological symbol. Nor do we think of her, in the manner of the middle ages, as the patroness of this or that guild. Rather to each of us, she is a personal romance because a natural instinct makes us unwilling to discuss such things in public, I will leave it at that. The real secret of her influence in our lives is something undefined, something indefinable.

We will agree with those thoughts, I think. So my first temptation is to follow Msgr. Knox's advice, and to take

refuge in silence. Thus my conference would be over at this point.

But I suppose His Excellency the Archbishop, and the organizers of his assembly, would be rather unhappy with me if I took this way out. In any case, it is a privilege to try to address you on the theme assigned to me this morning, *Mary, Mother of Priests*.

Let me begin, if I may, with a pre-note. Some ten years after my own priestly ordination, Bishop Fulton Sheen published his book, *The Priest Is Not His Own*. Many of us "not so young" priests here probably read it, and learned much from it. Its last chapter, you may remember, begins this way:

"Every priest has two mothers: one in the flesh, the other in the spirit. Much more is known about the former; more has been written about the latter. There is no more rivalry between these two mothers than between the priest's earthly father and his heavenly father."

That's a true, so I would like to begin by asking you to think of your mothers, to turn to that glorious sector of the communion of saints, made up of the mothers of priests, whether our mothers are now in heaven with the Blessed Mother, or still on earth among the living, whether old or not so old, beautiful outwardly or at least very beautiful "inside".

Bishop Sheen went further in his chapter on *The Priest and His Mother* to tell us that shortly after his birth, his mother brought him to the church and placed him at Mary's^v feet, to ask her to make him her own boy too. Maybe in the lives of many of us, our mothers did the same, for us. This morning we want to thank our mothers, for giving us to our

Lord and Our Lady, and to the priesthood of Jesus. Spiritual writers tell us that in a true sense, Jesus' gift of himself on the cross was born from Mary's fiat in Nazareth. The two events, the two oblations, form a straight line. For most of us, something like that holds true. Today, in our faith in the communion of saints, we want to acknowledge with gratitude what we owe to our mothers - our fathers and mothers, really - for what our priesthood is to us, what it means to our lives, what it has brought into our existence.

Shall we thank our mothers, our parents, just in the quiet of our hearts? Or shall we, here together as brothers in the priesthood, open our hearts wide, and express our gratefulness, our grateful love by giving them, wherever they may be, the warm applause of our hands?

Whenever, dear fathers, we meditate on Mary as our Mother, we begin at the foot of the cross, and go to the Gospel of John, to those verses where Jesus gives his mother to the disciple, and the disciple to Mary to be her own son. Christian tradition, and especially our Catholic tradition, has always seen every follower of Jesus in the beloved disciple.

In a recent book, *The Experience of Priesthood Today*, I came across this closing sentence: "It's hardly an accident that when Christ, in his dying breath, broadened (Mary's) motherhood to include all God's children, the gift was made through a young priest who had dared keep her company beneath the cross." From the cross, our Lord entrusts each one of his priests to his mother in a special way, and gives each one of us to Mary, to be her own son.

We have Pope John Paul II confirming this reading of the text: In his letter to priests of Holy Thursday 1979, he says:

"Mary is our mother in a special way, the mother of priests. In fact the beloved disciple, who as one of the twelve had heard the words, 'Do this in memory of me,' in the upper room, was given by the crucified Christ to his mother with the words, 'this is your son.' The man who on Holy Thursday received the power to celebrate the Eucharist was, by these words of the dying redeemer, given to his mother as her son. All of us therefore, who receive the same power through priestly ordination, have in a sense a prior right to see her as our mother."

But there is an extension to that truth. It is also the Holy Father who makes it, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*. There he tells us how every mother-son relationship is unique and "one of a kind", how the love of a mother for every one of her children is also unique and "one of a kind". No matter how many sons and daughters a good mother has, each one is loved as the "one and only", for his or her own sake. So it must be, of course, with the love which Our Lady, mother of priests, has for each one of us priests. I think as we are gathered in this wonderful brotherhood of our priesthood, we should make an act of faith in that truth. And, in all our diversity, ask Mary to teach us to love one another, even as she loves each one of us.

In my address yesterday, I told the story of one of my priests how this truth came to him, came alive in his own experience. He had gone, as a group's chaplain, to Medjugorje. Why not? It was an "all-expenses-paid" vacation, offered on a silver platter. At Medjugorje he was not too much impressed by even the sight of a sun which seemed to twirl around. But on his last day there, sitting in the quiet of the village church

before Our Lady's image, he heard himself addressed. He heard words, and he knew it was Our Lady speaking to him, telling him, "I love you with the same love with which I love my son." Words he was certain he heard clearly, words he could not believe were being said to him, but words which have turned his life around and have made all the difference to his priesthood.

When I told that story to some of my priests, their own reaction convinced me that it was only an especially dramatic instance of something which is not very very extraordinary, in priests' lives. Someone showed me a chapter in a book written by a priest from New Orleans. Let me cite this paragraph:

"At the cross (Mary) becomes what the fathers of the Second Vatican Council acclaimed her, mother of the church. Many of us have heard this over and over. The words are beautiful and meaningful, but they might leave us personally untouched and unmoved. To a great extent, that was the way it was with me. However, one day, not many years ago, I read those words again, and for the first time, I heard them. Silently, in the depth of my heart, I heard our Lord saying, 'Bob, here is your mother!' and from that day on I have accepted her in a new way into my life and hope to never let her go."

If the author, Fr. Bob Guste is with us this morning, let me just say to him, "thanks for sharing that with us."

The Holy Father, in *Redemptoris Mater*, takes the matter even a little further. He follows the lead of some scripture scholars, who take the words, "and from that moment, the disciple took her 'into his own' to mean, not just 'into his

own house,' but rather 'into his own life'. Here are the Pope's words:

"... He introduces her into all the space of his interior life, that is, into his T, his human and his Christian T. Thus he seeks to enter into the sphere of action of that 'maternal love' with which the mother of the redeemer 'takes care of the brothers of her son,' and 'with those rebirth and development she cooperates' according to the measure of the gift given to each one, by the power of the spirit..."

Saint Augustine says that the disciple took Mary into that communion of life which the words of Jesus on the cross established between the mother and the son. "He took her into his own, he took her for his own." Into his own life, into every joy and sorrow, every plan and hope, every action... everything that was part of his own existence, from that day forward. The paragraph I cited earlier ends like this: "Jesus offers us the gift of his mother. On the day that we actually take her into our home, our life, our heart, then she becomes experientially our mother."

When I was preparing this conference back home, I thought what a wonderful exchange we would have, what a wonderful experience we could share, if each of us here could tell each other what this "taking Mary into our own" has meant to each of us, what a difference it has made in our priestly ministry, in our own life, in our own innermost heart.

There is yet another theme in *Redemptoris Mater* on which I would like to dwell, together with you, dear brother priests. It is the theme of Our Lady's presence in the life of the disciples of the Lord. The encyclical says:

"Following the line of the Second Vatican Council, I wish to emphasize the special presence of the mother of God in the mystery of Christ and his church. For this is a fundamental dimension emerging from the Mariology of the Council..."

Someone has counted the number of times the Holy Father speaks of Mary's presence in his encyclical: some 47 times, I believe. This theme of the presence of Mary in our Christian lives is really one of the key points in *Redemptoris Mater*.

Our Lady was, first of all, really present to our Lord throughout his life, from the moment "his infant heart began to beat beneath the heart of his mother", there in her womb, till the moment when his heart was pierced on the cross, and Mary's heart was pierced also, as Simeon had foretold in the temple. This was not, of course, mere physical presence; it was a mutual communion of mind and heart and soul. A profound communion of life. What is that like? Saint Augustine would say, lovers know what this means. After our Lord's Resurrection, this interior "compenetration of spirit" remained with her, until she was taken up into heaven. And there, of course, this communion is made perfect and complete.

Presence of mother to son, of son to mother, in deepest closeness and intimacy: is this true also, of the spiritual motherhood of Mary? There is a long tradition in catholic spirituality which affirms this: *her mater presence in the lives of her sons and daughters* in the life of the church.

Canon Rene Laurentin is only summing up this lone experience of the church when he says: "united with her son, in one and the same prayer, Mary knows with him and in him,

the church and each one of us." There have been many saints and holy people who have given testimony of this presence of Mary to them, of their own experience of this presence. They are not speaking of visible apparitions, but rather of a presence in faith, a gift of the spirit, a presence "interiorly known, interiorly felt."

- Saint Therese of the Child Jesus tells us that for eight days, she lived "hidden under the mantle of Our Lady, doing things as though not doing them."
- De Chaminade speaks of the "gift of the habitual presence of the Holy Virgin" sometimes given to very generous hearts.

Q Saint Grignon de Montfort writes of the time to come:

"At the end of the world the greatest saints will be those most devoted to praying to the Most Holy Virgin, and who have had her always present to them, in order to imitate her and to have her as their powerful helper in times of need."

The Holy Father, in broad terms, speaks of this maternal presence, for all the faithful, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, as "fundamental dimension" emerging from the Mariology of the Council. Is this not the special grace of "The New Advent" he has so often mentioned? A grace, not only for the great mystic saints, but in some true measure a grace for all the faithful who wish to deepen their life of prayer, their life of oneness with the Lord, in the spirit.

For us priests, especially, must we not try to "live in this dimension"? In his letter to priests, Pope John Paul says that the grace of ordination gives us a wondrous nearness of the

mother of Christ. Is this not another way, precisely, of speaking of her presence to us? If only we will open our hearts to this gift, if only we "lay claim" to it, because "through our priestly ordination, we have... a prior right to see in Mary our mother." The letter urges us: "let us try to live in that dimension," in the radius of that presence. Such is the challenge that is placed before us, as priests.

And how do we do this? How may we make, in our own interior lives, this "graced nearness" to Mary? The saints and St. Grignon de Montfort above all, urge us to do this by entrusting all our lives, our priestly lives, to Mary. We are simply called to do what the beloved disciple did. "From that hour, he took her into his own, he took her for his own." We are called to take our Blessed Mother into the hospitality of our hearts, into the totality of our existence, into everything that makes up our lives.

But we are afraid, you and I, to do this: to entrust everything into her hands: our ministry, our personal life-story, our deepest and most vulnerable self. An entrustment of ourselves, made so completely like that, "*Totus Tuus*", is a "letting go" which our cowardice and our fear forbid us to do. Our Lord understands this, and so does his mother. But that is why we are all together here, dear brothers in the heart of Jesus and in the Heart of Mary. That we may pray for each other; that we may ask our Lady to pray for each of us, for the faith and the courage to be truly like her son, to love and serve her son "with all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength."

Dear brother priests, *Quam bonum et quam jucundum...* what a gift it is, that we are here together this morning. That we have come together from so many places, distant and near,

to honor our Blessed Mother, as priests who ask to be faithful to her son. That we have come here, together to manifest our love for her, because that is what our gathering is all about.

After this we shall go our separate ways again, but before we go, let us ask our Lord to bless each of us and all of us together, and to give each of us to his mother once again, and once again to give his mother to each of us. Let us ask the grace, for each of us, to hear today in his heart the words, "This is our Mother!" Let us pray for each other that we may truly be his priests, priests after his own heart, and that we may desire nothing else, in life and in death, than to be worthy of the gift he has given us, in the spirit, through the heart and hands of his mother.

(A Mediation on Mary, Mother of Priests, held at Baltimore, Maryland, September 14, 1992.)

Wanted: An Authentic Opposition

JAIME L. CARDINAL SIN, D.D.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Yesterday morning, I woke up feeling sad. For me - and those who know me well will attest to it - this is a most unusual phenomenon. For I am basically a very happy person.

Why was I feeling sad? It wasn't because yesterday was supposed to be the day when we celebrated the Fall of Bataan. I regretted, of course, that the celebration of the day had been scrapped. For I believed - and I still believe this with all my heart - that it was indeed a day to celebrate. For the Fall of Bataan did not mean the end of Filipino resistance to the foreign invaders. It catalyzed and galvanized that resistance, and it saw thousands of Filipinos, who had earlier stood by idly while the siege of Bataan was being fought, to go to the hills and from there continue the fight against the enemy.

Neither was I sad because of the results of the plebiscite. I expected the results and, quite frankly, I couldn't care less what they were. You see - and I am speaking now as a citizen of the Philippines and not as Archbishop of Manila - I

did not really believe in last Tuesday's plebiscite. To my mind, it was a useless, enormously expensive exercise, in futility, a super-colossal, stupendous ego trip. It was not a real plebiscite in the sense that the people - at least insofar as the first question was concerned - did not really have a clear-cut choice at all. Whether they voted yes or no to that question, nothing would in fact change. It was a question of "heads I win, tails you lose."

Why so? Without delving into personalities (this was the standard evasion employed by the advocates of a "yes" vote during all pre-plebiscite arguments) a victory for "yes" would mean that we would have a strong President, a President so strong, in truth and in fact, that the Prime Minister he would appoint would be nothing more than a cat's paw, a puppet dangling on a string and ready to dance in the manner dictated by the master. The appointed Prime Minister, who will serve at the pleasure of the President, would be no more than a glorified lackey, an official with an impressive title but in actuality nothing more than a figurehead.

I cannot, for the life of me, imagine how any self-respecting individual, imbued with a sense of dignity innate in all human beings and impelled by a sense of self-worth, would even consider accepting such a position. But then, of course, the incumbent President would have no difficulty in finding such a person.

On the other hand, what would a victory of the "no" votes achieve? It would mean the preservation of the *status quo*, a situation where the incumbent President would at the same time be the Prime Minister. This arrangement, of course, means the concentration of undue powers in one man. The

powers that, in most parliamentary forms of government, are wielded by two men are placed in the hands of the President-Prime Minister. It is certainly not an ideal arrangement, but at least it is honest and open. And it does not subject anyone to the degradation of discharging an important-sounding office that is, in truth and in fact, toothless and impotent.

In effect, therefore, whether the people voted yes or no, the result was the same: the powers of the President and the Prime Minister would be concentrated in the hands of one person. And if the results were the same, what was the point in conducting a supposed plebiscite, spending countless millions of pesos, occupying the time and energy of millions of people?

Earlier, I called last Tuesday's plebiscite an exercise in futility and an ego trip for some people. Perhaps you have a more colorful name for it.

At this point, my friends, you could very well ask: if you feel so strongly about the plebiscite, why do you speak only now? Why didn't you ventilate your views earlier when they conceivably would have done some good?

The answer to that question is this: as Archbishop of Manila and as President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, my hands were tied and I was in estoppel. If I publicly expressed my opinions, they would most certainly have been interpreted as interference in matters that were purely political. I could, of course, protest that I was speaking as a private citizen and not as a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, but my protests would fall on deaf ears. I have no doubts that my remarks would be construed as unwarranted

meddling, as an unjustifiable violation of the separation of Church and State.

But now that the voting is over and I can no longer influence the way the people would vote, I can speak. You will notice that I am speaking from this forum and not from the pulpit. That is because - and I say this again with all the force I can muster - I am speaking as a private citizen. I may be a priest, but I am still a citizen of the Republic of the Philippines.

But let me go back to my original statement at the start of my talk. I was very sad when I woke up yesterday. I was sad, I repeat, not because it was - or formerly was - Bataan Day, not because of the results of the plebiscite. I was sad, rather, because of what I have been noticing of late - the creeping apathy, bordering on lethargy, which seems to be afflicting our people. I notice an indifference, an I-don't-care attitude that, to my unbelieving eyes, is so completely alien to the traditional make-up of the Filipino people.

Whatever their faults, Filipinos heretofore could never be accused of being apathetic to politics. They have always had an extremely intense, passionate and vividly personal attitude towards it. So involved were they, and so passionately committed, that they were willing to stake their lives in upholding their respective candidates.

Surely you still remember what happened to the late lamented President Elpidio Quirino. He committed the mistake of ordering a bed costing five thousand pesos - only five thousand pesos, mind you - and the sense of outrage was so strong that he was voted out of office. Today, the mistakes run into the millions and hundred of millions - the scandal

at the Ministry of Public Highways is simply one of many - and the people do not betray the same sense of outrage. They shrug their shoulders and they say, "*Marunong!*" Or they shake their heads in frustration and say, "Some are smarter than others."

As recently as three years ago, during the elections for the Interim Batasang Pambansa, the situation was still drastically different and still strikingly reminiscent of the active involvement of people in pre-martial law politics. This was in April, 1978. The opposition called for a noise barrage. Despite the constraints of martial law, despite the dire threats of official retribution, the people responded. Rightly or wrongly, they converted all of Metro Manila into a madhouse, a babel of noise that was heard around the world. Rightly or wrongly, they exhibited their political awareness, their personal commitment. And the bedlam that resulted, while offensive to the eardrums, reflected the Metro Manilans' healthy desire to be involved.

But, just last Monday, on the eve of the plebiscite, a similar noise barrage was initiated - and it was a dismal, resounding flop. There were scattered brave souls who tried to drum up some noise and enthusiasm, but their efforts proved puny and unavailing. The general mass of Metro Manilans just did not respond.

And that is what makes me sad. Manila, from time immemorial, has always been the hotbed of opposition. In all previous elections where the votes were counted the way they were cast, no party in power had ever won.

This was very healthy and salutary. It was proof positive that democracy was at work in the Philippines. For, while the

party in power was aware that there would be some opposition and some oppositionists who would make their views known, then there would be some restraints on the actions of that party in power. There would be no excessive abuses, no flagrant derelictions of duty, no blatant renegeing on promises.

Proponents of the New Society, I am sure, would gloat about this and declare that the opposition has died out because the people are perfectly happy about the present dispensation, that they have no complaints to make. This, to be sure, would be a completely unrealistic attitude, a Pollyanna outlook that does not augur well for the future of our country.

Suppose the proponents of the New Society were to start believing their own propaganda? Suppose they start thinking that the people have been so completely cowed into submission that they can now do anything they want, commit any excesses they want?

My friends, I don't mind telling you: I am thoroughly appalled by the prospect. If we have been transformed into a nation of sheep, meek and submissive, with no capacity to move against the proddings of the shepherds, then God save the Philippines.

We need an opposition, an authentic, responsible and dedicated opposition. We need an opposition because, in any country where the opposition has been silenced, totalitarianism becomes an inevitable result. The lessons of history are clear on this point.

We need an opposition which will oppose, not simply for the sake of opposing, but to provide the people with valid, viable alternatives. We need an opposition, finally, to provide an outlet for the pent-up grievances and frustrations that we

feel as a people, an outlet that will give us a safety valve that would stop the social volcano from exploding.

Many times, people have come to me to ask me to lead such an opposition. My answer has invariably been no. For politics is, basically, an activity meant for laymen. My expertise is not in politics, it is in evangelization. If, however tenuously, I do get involved in politics, it is because politics has a morality, and it is my duty, as a churchman, to provide guidelines for that morality.

And I state here and now that it could be immoral not to have any opposition, an opposition that is vital, dynamic and truly unselfish. For, as I pointed out, in any country where the opposition has died down, the inevitable, irresistible tendency is for the powers-that-be to hang on to that power, to consolidate that power. We all know that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And that is where the immorality is, for absolute power always results in the violation - if not the total extinction - of human rights.

That is an eventuality that the Filipino people should not allow to happen. Thus, the spirit of opposition should be reawakened so that the apathy and lethargy, the indifference and the I-don't-care attitude can be dispelled. And this is a task that must be done by laymen, the lawyers and the political scientists among you who have the expertise and the sense of history.

Thank you very much. God bless you and remember, I love you all very dearly.

(Speech delivered before the Manila Bay Breakfast Club, held at the Harana Terrace, Manila Hilton, on April 10, 1981 at 7:30 p.m.)

El Cardenal Sin, 'El Papa de Asia'

MANILA. - El cardenal Jaime Sin, uno de los arzobispos mas influyentes de la Iglesia Catolica filipina y llamado por algunos 'el Papa de Asia', ha muerto **a los 76 años** a causa de un fallo renal.

El cardenal Sin, que llevaba tres dias hospitalizado, participo activamente en las dos revueltas populares 'EDSA 1' (1986) y 'EDSA 2' (2001), que derrocaron, respectivamente, a los presidentes Ferdinand Marcos y Joseph Estrada.

Nombrado arzobispo de Manila en 1974, dos anos mas tarde se convirtio en cardenal.

A finales de 2003, con 75 anos y tras casi tres decadas de intensa actividad politica, se retiro del Arzobispado de Manila por motivos de salud. Su mal estado le impidio tambien viajar a Roma el pasado abril para participar en el conclave que eligio al nuevo Papa.

Pese a ser criticado desde algunos sectores por transformar a la Iglesia filipina en una poderosa fuerza politica,

el cardenal Sin fue una figura respetada y seguida por muchos feligreses, que le consideraban un líder de cambio y evolución política, así como cabeza espiritual de la única nación de mayoría católica en el continente asiático.

Con la caída de Marcos, el cardenal hizo un llamamiento a su pueblo para que protegiera al entonces subjefe de las Fuerzas Armadas, Fidel Ramos, y al que fuera titular de Defensa, Juan Ponce Enrile, quienes apostaron por el cambio y dieron la espalda a la dictadura que antes les había protegido.

Los filipinos salieron a las calles de Manila y entregaron rosas en señal de paz a los soldados presidenciales, en una revuelta pacífica que culminó con el exilio de Marcos a Hawái y con el nombramiento de Corazón Aquino como presidenta de Filipinas.

Unos años más tarde, Sin hizo un nuevo llamamiento para protestar pacíficamente contra el entonces presidente Estrada por los casos de corrupción y saqueo de las áreas del Estado, hecho que llevó a Gloria Macapagal Arroyo al poder y a Estrada a los tribunales.

Sin, considerado la voz del pueblo y la conciencia de la nación filipina, declaró en una ocasión que "la política sin la ayuda de Dios es el peor castigo para una nación".

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2005/06/21/obituarios/1119320343.html>

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, O.P.

IS RE-ADMISSION TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE POSSIBLE?

Can a former member of a religious institute be re-admitted to it? If yes, by whom and under what conditions?

Yes, readmission to the same institute to which one previously belonged is possible. Such is what the Code of Canon Law establishes in canon 690 §1: "A person who lawfully leaves the institute after completing the novitiate or after profession, *can be re-admitted* by the supreme Moderator, with the consent of his or her council, without the obligation of repeating the novitiate."

This possibility of readmission, however, is applicable not to everyone but, according to the canonical provision, only to those who had left the institute *lawfully* or *legitimately*.

The question then is: Who are those who have left the institute "lawfully" or "legitimately"? In other words, who are those who can be readmitted?

Who are those who can be readmitted?

Since the possibility of readmission to the same institute refers exclusively to "a person who *lawfully* leaves the institute," it means that those who have left it "unlawfully" may not enjoy this benefit. Translating this principle in more specific terms, the following subjects have the capacity to be readmitted:

- a) Those who completed their novitiate but who, for whatever reason, never professed;
- b) Those who, having completed the period of temporary profession, freely left the institute;
- c) Those who, having completed the period of temporary profession, were excluded for just reasons from the next profession, whether temporary or perpetual;
- d) Those who after profession [either temporary or perpetual] left with an indult.

What about those who were dismissed? Could they be readmitted? Taking for granted that the dismissal was done following the prescribed procedures, their departure could still be considered "lawful." That is why some authors think that those members who were dismissed still keep the capacity of being readmitted. However, most authors exclude them from this privilege, given the exceptional implications of the dismissal.

By the way, "having the capacity to be readmitted" is obviously different from "having the right" to re-enter the institute by those who had earlier left it, even if some members may have left the convent "with the hope" of being readmitted.

The norm refers simply to the fact that they maintain the capacity, in spite of their departure, to be readmitted again in particular instances and following certain canonical procedures.

Besides, the possibility of readmission in the present case refers to a new admission to the *same institute* of which the individual had formed a part, not to another institute. This is why there is no need to repeat the novitiate.

The mentioned canon 690 further requires that the member had left either "after completing the novitiate or after profession." The expression "after profession" appears to be somehow ambiguous and controversial: Does it refer only to the temporary profession or also to the perpetual? Some canon lawyers understand it in a restrictive sense as meaning only the *temporary* profession, excluding consequently the perpetual profession. Yet, the norm seems to apply to any profession, whether temporary or perpetual. That was the reason for using the term "profession" without any other qualifier (Cf. *Communicationes* 13 [1981], 336.)

Finally, the decision to readmit or not to the same institute a person who had legitimately departed from it would actually depend on a variety of factors: the type of departure, the present condition of the person involved, and the judgment of the competent authority of the institute.

Who is the competent authority to grant readmission?

According to the norm of proper law, the right to admit candidates to the novitiate belongs to major Superiors (cf c.641). However, in the present case, the right to readmit members to the same institute without the obligation of

repeating the novitiate belongs to "the supreme Moderator, with the consent of his or her council"; or, in the case of an autonomous monastery, to the Superior "acting with the consent of his or her council." Both may act either upon the formal request for readmission presented by the ex-novice or ex-professed member, or upon their own initiative, inviting him/her to formally apply for readmission.

Regarding the obligation which both competent superiors have to act *with the consent of their councils*, a further precision is needed here: They would invalidly readmit someone if acting without or against their councils; yet, since this readmission is a personal prerogative, they could prevent the readmission of someone, in spite of having obtained the consent from their councils.

Could anyone appeal or file an administrative recourse before a higher authority in case of not being readmitted? It has been said before that one thing is "having the capacity to be readmitted" and another thing is "having the right" to re-enter the institute that was earlier left. Evidently this readmission is facultative on the part of the religious institute; nobody enjoys the right to be readmitted. Superiors cannot either promise what the law does not allow them. Henceforth, if someone in the end is not readmitted, he or she cannot claim the right to appeal or to file administrative recourse before a higher authority. He or she just enjoys the rights of any Christ's faithful in the Church.

Under what conditions does the readmission take place?

The readmission takes place under two conditions, indicative to a certain extent of the canonical status of the newly

readmitted member, namely, (1) there will be no need to repeat the novitiate, and (2) there will be a probation period before temporary profession and some time in vows before perpetual profession (cf can. 690 §1)

1) No repetition of novitiate

The presupposition here is that the novitiate had previously been completed. The completion of the novitiate is understood according to universal and proper law: the universal law requires a minimum of twelve months, but the proper law of the institute may require a longer period. Needless to say, the competent superiors would act wrongly, that is, against the canonical provision, if they imposed the repetition of the novitiate.

2) A probation period before temporary profession and some time in vows before perpetual profession.

There is an initial phase, during which the re-admitted person continues without vows, and is ordered towards the first profession. Its duration, undetermined by the canon, is left up to the free and prudent determination by the competent authority, in accordance with the proper law. At the end of his phase the candidate is admitted to the first profession.

There is also a second phase that comprises already the re-filling of the period of temporary vows, previous necessarily to the perpetual profession, determined by the universal law (c.655) and by the proper law (c.657). Its duration depends simultaneously of the law and of the superior, who may count the time in temporary vows that the readmitted person had

before his/her departure, or may simply ignore it, depending of the circumstances. (As a rule, this period is not to be less than three years nor more than six years, although it may be extended to a maximum of nine years.) At the end of this phase, the candidate is admitted to the perpetual profession in accordance with their own Constitutions.

The determination of the appropriate probation prior to temporary profession as well as of the length of time in vows before making perpetual profession belongs by law to the same competent authorities who readmitted the member, although this time without the intervention of their councils. Thus is stated also in canon 690 §1: "The same Moderator is to determine an appropriate probation prior to temporary profession, and the length of time in vows before making perpetual profession, in accordance with the norms of canons 655 and 657." What is said of the supreme Moderator is applicable also to the Superior of autonomous monasteries, who have the same faculty. They are not allowed to dispense from that probation period nor can they, in our opinion, have it substituted by the repetition of novitiate. Neither can they cut short the length of time in vows before making perpetual profession below what is required by the Code of Canon Law and the proper Constitutions.

In determining the probation periods, the supreme Moderator (or the Superior of autonomous monasteries) should consider each case separately, having into account the circumstances, manner and reasons that caused the member's departure as well as the present situation. In particular, they are to analyze the reasons for the member's leaving, the time he/she spent outside the institute and how he/she lived; the reasons

that moved him/her to return, and his/her physical and mental health. Additional records to those originally kept in the institute are indeed to be requested.

As a closing remark I wish to add that readmission is a gracious concession by a Church that maternally closes her eyes before the present unsteadiness of certain psychologies and in view of the scarcity of vocations. But let it be reiterated that readmission is in no way a right that can be personally claimed by anyone.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for November-December 2005

EFREN RIVERA, OP

November 6, 2005 <> **32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (A) **Wis 6:12-16; 1 Th 4:13-18 or 4:13-14;
Mt25: 1-13**

1. We have come to the last three Sundays of the liturgical year. It is time once more to reflect on what will happen at the end of time and how that affects our life during these days of one crisis after another in our lives.

Our reflection today will be based on the **Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids**. At the time of Christ the role of bridesmaids was to await the bridegroom and his bride at a little distance from the house where the banquet will be held and light his path with their lamps as they proceed *prf* the house. For some reason, in ancient Palestinian culture, wedding banquets were always done at night, *ifr*

In the parable, there was a *delay in the bridegroom's coming*. When he arrived (and of course his bride - but this is irrelevant to the story) the *wise bridesmaids still had their lamps lit*. They were wise enough to bring oil for a refill. The foolish bridesmaids had not taken such precaution and the light had gone out of their lamps. Obviously, the bridegroom represents Christ and the bridesmaids represents individual Christians who can choose to be wise or foolish. So, that's the challenge presented to us. Are we going to be foolish, or wise?

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

The first value presented to us here is that of having *foresight or providing for a need that could arise for one reason or another*. In America, during hurricane Katrina, some people were wise and heeded the warning of the government to flee from New Orleans. Many people whose sufferings and misery we saw on TV, preferred to stay although the city was not prepared for such a powerful hurricane. The city and federal governments themselves were foolish because they had not prepared the city for a hurricane of intensity 4 or 5. They were ready only for intensity 1, 2 and 3 emergencies.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING, one could suggest: a) that the sharing could be on *how wisdom could come from reading the Bible every day*; b) or on *forming good habits so that in times of crisis one could respond in the proper way*.

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. It is wise

for the Bishops, priests and religious to form lay people who could have the *moral ascendancy to be political leaders of our country*. This cannot be an "instant" formation. It is important to train leaders *now* for the crises that will come *tomorrow*. As for crises we have not prepared for, all we can do is to use prayer power.

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. We are still like the foolish virgins. We do not have the foresight - or maybe the means - to prepare for the crises that will surely come. When shall we ever learn? ^

November 13,2005 <> **33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**
Readings (A) **Pr 31:10-13,19-20,30-31; 1 Th 5:1-6**
 Mt 25:14-30 or 25:14-15,19-21

1. If the main lesson of last Sunday's parable was the need for vigilance and preparedness in the face of the delayed Parousia or Coming of Christ at the end of the world, the main lesson of today's **Parable of the Talents** is the need for faithfulness to the task to which the Christian - any Christian, you and me - has been commissioned. It is the task of spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

Faithfulness is not conservatism. On the contrary, it necessarily involves progress or adaptation to all the different cultures reached by evangelizers. The Church today or its evangelizers - that's you and me - have to remain faithful to Christ as they adapt to the cultures of Asia, Africa, South America, etc. It has to adapt also to the changed cultures of

Europe (Spain, Italy, France, Germany, etc.), a concern that is very dear to the heart of Pope Benedict XVI. It has to adapt to the cultures of the young, the cultures of women, the cultures of the poor, the cultures of the sciences and technology, etc.

Investing the talents received - adapting to cultures so that all peoples will accept Christ - that is what made the first two servants praiseworthy and reward-worthy. Worthy of eternal life, we may say. We have to be like them. We must not "bury our talent". We must not ask God to do what we should be doing.

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

We can pick up the value *offaithfulness to the expectation of one's master*. The faithfulness to which Jesus exhorts his disciples is not mere preservation but *cooperation*. The faithful servant is not the one who merely preserves what he has been given but the one who *Jeeps busy so that a profit can be gained by his master*.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING. Every Christian has to be a missionary. Otherwise he or she is like the lazy servant who buried his talent and gained nothing for his master. Share with your Bibliarasal group your successes and failures as a missionary.

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. Are we really evangelizing the different cultures in our land? Are we

adapting the Christian message to our indigenous people who still form a good number of our citizens? Do we know the "culture of the poor" and the "culture of young people" and are we adapting to these cultures?

We invite our Christian politicians to show that they are Christians first and members of a political party or of the current government administration only second. Are they "doing their thing" so that their master, that is their country, will gain profit, or are they just enriching themselves? Are they using their talents for themselves or for Christ?

November 20, 2005



Christ the King

Readings (A) **Ez 34:11-12,15-17; 1 Cor 15:20-26,28.**

Mt 25:31-46

1. The Parable of the Last Judgement is a reminder that serving Christ or doing supposedly his work of evangelizing is not acceptable to Christ himself if it does not include serving fellow human beings. It is not right for a Christian to think only of serving the glorious Christ in heaven - whom he hopes to see one day, and not think of serving the suffering Christ on earth, whom he can touch and smell, see and hear, feed and clothe.

The parable goes beyond the circle of baptized Christians. All people - Christians and non-Christians - will be judged by what *service* they gave or did not give to the Son of Man present in people - of any religion, race, color, or culture - who are poor and suffering. The mission of Christ is essentially one of *compassion* in the strict sense of the

term, that is, *becoming one with those who suffer*. He came to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases," (see Mt 8:17).

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

Clearly, we are expected to pick up from this Gospel passage the value of *compassion* for anyone - of any faith, citizenship, orientation, etc. - who is in need and is suffering, and cannot cope with life without the help of others.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING, one could suggest that the sharing could be on what kind of *service* one is giving to Christ. We have been conditioned to think of service to Jesus and service to God as becoming a priest or religious brother or nun, or being an acolyte or a lector at Mass, or being part of the choir that sings in Church, or being in the guild that looks after altar vestments and gathers the money offerings of the people in church, etc. The Bible, however, does not mention these services at all. As Jesus once said, it is alright to do such things for God but we must not neglect what counts most, and that is, *the service of love or charitable works done for poor and unfortunate people*. Such service is truly given to Jesus Christ because he is present in the poor, he identifies with the lowly who cannot cope with problems without material help from those who are more fortunate with the goods of the earth. One can share on how one has succeeded in getting out of the old mentality of service and has adopted its most Christian meaning.

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. Helping people overcome a life of poverty and sickness without proper care should be our priority. Not holding grand celebrations with glittering processions. Not building churches, etc.

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. We have to eradicate poverty. Only when the slums of Manila have disappeared could we really take our place at the right hand of Jesus Christ.

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| November 27, 2005 | <> First Sunday of Advent, YearB |
| Readings (B) Is 63:16-17,19; 64:2-7; 1 Cor 1:3-9 | |
| Mk 13:33-37 | |

1. With the First Sunday of Advent we begin a new Liturgical year. For now until the day after the Baptism of Christ, that is, until January 10, 2006, the Sundays will adhere to seasonal themes. We refer to the seasons of Advent with its four Sundays, Christmas with its preparation starting on December 17 and its extension of two weeks covering the New Year and a few days beyond, and Epiphany.

Advent is the season of preparation for the coming of Christ. It is not all about the coming of Christ at the end of time (First Sunday) nor all about about the coming of Christ at Christmas (traditionally in the Roman church, starting on December 17, but in the Philippines we start on December 16, even anticipating it on the 15th). The special coming of Christ to Mary at his conception is recalled on the Fourth

Sunday of Advent. The Second and Third Sundays of Advent are about the coming of Christ into the lives of people wherj they repent and choose to live more spiritual lives - the core message of John the Baptist.

For the First Sunday of Advent, Year B, we have the Gospel Reading from Mark 13, which tells the **Parable of the Absent Master (whose return is sure but its time is not known)**. We can re-title it as "Order to the Doorkeeper: Be on Guard."

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

Jesus will come as a Master who will invite his servants to enter God's Kingdom if they are ready for it. To be ready, they have to be *watchful*. This is the main value recommended by the Gospel passage.

We must not disregard the teaching that the Master will come to invite his servants to enter God's Kingdom. Mistakenly, people think this will happen only at the end of the world. In fact, the Gospel passage teaches that *it can come at any moment, and it will come suddenly*. The call to the kingdom - the call to abandon oneself totally to God - can come any time, not only at the end of time nor only at the time of our death. It comes when an adult person is *baptized*. It comes when a Cursillista *surrenders* to the Lord. It comes when someone who has joined a Life in the Spirit Seminar fills the *onrush of the Holy Spirit in his or her inmost being*. It comes when someone who is told he or she has cancer decides to fight it with the help of prayers or to die in the peace of the Lord.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING, one could suggest: a) that the best preparation for the future is the good use of our time now. Share your experience on living up to the present moment, b) One can also point to a moment in one's life when one decided to live only for the Lord (as we explained in number 2 above).

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. We cannot keep postponing the reforms needed in our church. We must do them now. Most particularly we must become a Church for the poor, with the poor, and learning from the poor.

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. It is time to get our act together and pull together to beat the problem of poverty in our society.

December 4 2005 <> Second Sunday of Advent, Year B

Readings (B) Is 40:1-5,9-11; 2 Pe 3:8-14

Mk 1:1-8

December 8, Thursday, is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a holy day of obligation in the Philippines, because it is the feast of our National Patroness.

December 9--15 is Youth Ministry Awareness Week.

1. **"Prepare the Way of the Lord"** is an appropriate title for today's Sunday Gospel reading. It means: prepare for the Gospel, the Good News; prepare for Jesus Christ! For Mark, the "gospel" is not just a record of Jesus' life, nor is

it simply what to believe about Jesus. It is the Good News *of* Jesus Christ. The "of means the same as the colon (:) when we write, "the Good News: Jesus Christ." We mean "the Good News which is Jesus Christ." The whole of Mark's message is summarized in his first sentence, "Here begins the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The presence of Jesus on earth is itself the announcement of something good that God has done for us: he has sent us someone who is not only the expected Messiah of the Jews but the Son of God who has come to call all of God's children - all of us - to return to our Father.

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

The first value presented to us here is the need for a change of mind and heart as our response to God for sending Jesus, the Messiah (Christ) and Son of God, to us sinful human beings. In Biblical Greek, the word used is METANOIA. It is the change of mind and heart - the change of attitude - that is needed before we can change our bad habits and be freed from the slavery of sin.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING, one could suggest that the sharing could be on *how an individual accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior.*

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today.* We have to ask ourselves again: what do we see in Jesus Christ. When we look at the *belen*, what do we see? Do we see a cute, cuddly baby?

Or do we see a baby born in poverty although he is the Son of God and the Savior of the whole world?

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. We must remember that God has already done his part in the task of saving the world (by sending us the Messiah, his own Son). It is time for us to do our part. We should appreciate the many good leaders, the heroes God has sent us to call us to a renewal of mind and heart so that we would not be selfish and self-seeking but commit ourselves to the common good of all humankind.

**December 11, 2005 <> "Gaudete" or Third Sunday of
Advent, Year B**

**Readings (B) Is 61:1-2,10-11; 1 Th 5:16-24
Jn 1:6-8,19-28**

Aguinaldo masses begin on Friday, December 16 (anticipated on the evening of Thursday, December 15).

The "O" Antiphons for Evening Prayer and the Alleluia at Mass begin on December 17, Saturday, when the Advent season turns our attention to our preparation for Christmas.

1. Although Year B takes Gospel readings mainly from Mark, from time to time, as in the case of today's Gospel reading, we turn to John. Some scholars think that the prologue of John (1:1-18) which is a Christ centered hymn, was originally a poem about John the Baptist. Be that as it may, today's portion (verses 6-8), together with 1:19-28, presents the person of John the Baptist as a hero who gives way to

Jesus. The purpose of this is not only to recall what happened long ago, but to tell us today to heed John's call to humbly accept Jesus as someone who wants to be with us in our ordinary day to day living.

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

John's challenge, "there is one among you whom you do not recognize" (Jn 1:26) is as relevant today as it was about 2,000 years ago. Christ is still hidden among us and he works in the ordinary circumstances of our ordinary human lives. The value we have to pick up here is the *value of what is ordinary in our lives*. In other words, we should not be geared to what is spectacular or sensational or what everybody is talking about. We should look for what God is doing for us in the very ordinary circumstances of our day to day living.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING, one could suggest that we look for a deeper meaning in what we do during Advent and Christmas year after year. Some of us have a wrong idea about Advent. For example, many people still think it is just a preparation for Christmas. It is not. It is a time for intensifying our efforts to cooperate with God when we pray, "thy Kingdom come!" (In the Liturgy, the preparation for Christmas begins on December 17, which falls on Saturday this year). Christmas is also mistaken as the birthday of someone who lived long, long ago. In fact, it is meant to be an intensification of our awareness that the Savior is present among us day after day. Do we really make progress in our spiritual life as we celebrate Advent and Christmas year after year?

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. We must urge people to change so that they will give more importance to what is ordinary - like daily Mass and communion; daily helping of the poor - than to what is spectacular or sensational.

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. It is our day to day faithfulness to our duties as citizens that will truly help our country make progress.

December 18,2005



Fourth and Marian Sunday
of Advent, Year B

Readings (B) 2 Sam 7:1-5,8-11,16; Rom 16:25-27
Lk 1:26-38

1. Ma*Vs **Faith and Obedience**. Unlike the "Jews" (not a racial nor in any way discriminatory tag) of last Sunday's gospel episode, Mary recognized Christ, literally, in her midst. In the conception of a child - one of the most ordinary though totally marvelous of human situations - she acknowledged the presence of Christ. She could do this because, like the servants in Mark 13:34 (see the First Sunday of Advent), she was waiting for the Lord. Obviously her physical conception of Jesus was unique. It was, however, only one moment in a whole life-time of waiting. It is with regard to this waiting that Mary is our model. We cannot be mothers of the Savior. But we can be his acceptors. We accept him with the same faith Mary had when she accepted him.

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

In writing the account of the Annunciation, Luke gives his readers (including those not yet baptized as Christians) an example of what their response should be to the Good News of Jesus Christ. His purpose is more catechetical than historical, even though he is doubtless using certain historical data. Throughout the whole of his "Infancy (of Christ) Narrative" or chapters 1 and 2, he presents Mary as the embodiment of that people of Israel to whom God promised the Messiah. That people, after receiving the Messiah, as the Jewish Christians did - becoming the Church of Jesus Christ - are to bring him forth and invite all people to accept him as Savior. God calls all people to "conceive" Christ and "bear" him and give birth to him through their love that overflows in good works, so that those who have not yet responded to the call might accept him as Savior. The value we can pick up from the Gospel passage is the challenge for us to "conceive" Christ in ourselves and to bring him to the world still to be evangelized.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING.

Before Vatican II it was customary to exalt Mary to such an extent that she became "unreal", up there in the clouds being praised by the heavenly choir of angels, a being that is impossible to imitate. Because of Vatican II, we can now look at Mary as the "First Disciple of Christ", that is, the disciple Christ called long before he called Simon and Andrew, James and John, and the one who followed him most closely. We are all called to imitate her discipleship, her response to God's word with faith and obedience. In your life, have you

also been challenged to believe and obey? How did you respond? Share your answer with your small group.

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. We still have the custom of reciting the Angelus, which is but the prayer form of today's Gospel reading. Does it help us to "conceive" Jesus in our own lives and "bear" him and bring him to those not yet evangelized? Does our Angelus devotion have a missionary dimension?

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. Mary in Luke's Gospel is the embodiment of the "*Anawim*", the "*poor*" who trusted in the promises of God. One can be poor, but with the use of God given talents, and trust in the promises of God, one can do a lot of good in the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres. Moreover, people in power because of wealth and authority, must empower the poor so that wealth could be more equitably distributed.

December 25, 2005



Christmas

Readings (A, B, C) Midnight: Is 9:1-6; Tit 2:11-14
Lk 2:1-14

1. Luke, after fixing the birth of the Savior on the calendar of world history by mentioning the census ordered by the Roman Emperor Augustus (30 BC to AD 14), goes back to the little corner of the earth where the Savior was born. He says that poor shepherds were the ones to whom the good

news was first proclaimed, although the tidings of great joy is to be shared by the whole people.

Through the mention of a "manger" we learn that Jesus, Mary and Joseph are in a stable of some sort, and according to a tradition transmitted by Justin Martyr in the second century, it was in a cave. These circumstances emphasize the lowliness and poverty that surrounded the birth of Jesus. As St. Paul would put it, "he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men" (Ph 2:7).

The shepherds called to see the baby in the manger were not only materially poor by Jewish standards. They were also despised by orthodox Jews as non-observers of the Law. Yet they are the ones who will accept the revelation which the leaders of Israel will reject. The birth of Christ made them spiritually rich. God's favor on them made them the happiest people in the world.

2. WHAT VALUE CAN WE PICK UP FROM THE GOSPEL PASSAGE?

We can pick up the value of Peace. We must note, however that the Vulgate translation "Peace to men of goodwill" and the Christmas carol version, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men" are both wrong. It is better to follow the RSV translation, "on earth peace among men with whom (God) is pleased," or the New American Bible, "on earth peace to those on whom (God's) favor rests," or the New Jerusalem Bible, "on earth peace for those (God) favors." It is a mistake to think that people *earn* peace by having or showing goodwill. The right idea is that peace is given by God as a gift to those who have done what he requires. In the case of people's relation-

ship to Jesus, born in Bethlehem, God requires that people will have faith in him. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are given the gift of peace. The mistaken idea in the Christmas carol is that the peace given by God is the same as his goodwill towards people. No. Peace - Hebrew Shalom - is the sum total of all God's blessings. By giving us Jesus, God in fact is giving us Peace. All we have to do is open our hearts.

3. FOR PEOPLE DOING THE BIBLIARASAL SHARING. Share on how you have experienced peace in your life. Peace is not something we earn. It is, so to say, the side effect of accepting Jesus Christ with Faith, and putting this Faith into practice with works of Justice. For those who have not yet expressly manifested their faith in Jesus Christ, a certain measure of peace comes when a person does the works of Justice.

In the Bible, Justice and Peace go together, and they are at their best when they are founded on faith in Jesus Christ.

4. TODAY'S GOSPEL MESSAGE has many applications. One could apply it to *Philippine Church life today*. We have to celebrate Christmas with the poor, otherwise we do not catch its real spirit.

One could also apply the Gospel message to the *Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos today*. Let us do Justice to the poor. Let us empower them and let them uplift themselves from misery and become truly and fully human. Then everybody will be blessed by God and we will enjoy peace.