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EDITORIAL

Things to Think About in September and October

September is the month when Filipinos remember with sadness Martial Law's reign over our country. In contrast, October is Mary's month, the time when we recall how our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially the Rosary, helped our country emerge from the horrors that threatened not only our existence, but our faith as well.

Is Martial Law all that bad?

It is our custom nowadays to sneer at Martial Law and exaggerate its defects. In contrast, we extol democracy and belittle its dangers. It is about time that we reviewed such judgments. It is simplistic to say that the Martial Law regime had created all our present problems. We are resurrecting repeatedly this chapter in our history as a convenient scape-goat for present failures.

Most of our problems today are not vestiges of the Martial rule but the inevitable off-shoot of our brand of democracy. Priding ourselves as the first democratic country in Asia, we presume wrongly that democracy is practiced

in the Philippines in the same way as in other countries. Democracy is understood and exercised not only in terms of its universally known characteristics but also in terms of cultural parameters. We exercise democracy quite differently from how Americans or Europeans do because our country's democratic processes and institutions have undergone a unique historico-cultural development.

It takes time to develop the right conditions for democracy. Many of us overlook this. People are not born with attitudes and skills needed for democracy.

To his credit, former President Marcos was prudent enough to recognize this. Envisioning a *"Bagong Lipunan"* composed of disciplined, law-abiding, and politically mature Filipinos, he launched an all out war against the social and cultural disvalues that hinder the development of democracy in the Philippines. He could have succeeded but the process was cut short by ambition. He refused to relinquish power even if it was already time for him to go.

So, the democracy that we have now is the strange combination of a democracy resulting from intermittent people power revolts and a democracy imposed from the outside. The former is mostly known for the antics of a querulous but inept Congress and the endless *"rigodon"* of government officials dancing to the tune of street protests and mass action. The latter is a democracy fueled by the neo-colonialist tendencies of industrialized nations, a democracy that has reduced our country into a rich source of cheap labor and has created a weak government ruled by dummies of multinational corporations or puppets of developed nations.

What we have in our country is not a democratic state, but a regime of a small group of agents who depend on outside forces and outside intelligence agencies to maintain stability and order. Sadly, this beautifying veneer, which hides a rule of brutality, has become a necessary component of the now dominant world order or, to be more precise, dis-order.

Are we truly free?

Once, a successful Chinese businessman told me how fortunate we Filipinos are. "People in China are progressing by leaps and bounds" he said, "but they do not enjoy the freedom that Filipinos have." Ah, freedom. I muttered to myself: "Filipinos are so free, that's why we are so lost."

Freedom is the catchword of our time. Embracing an ideology that respects no limits or absolutes, society is now culturally awash in radical pluralism - a pervasive intellectual impulse that rejects the idea of universal truth. The only universal truth, it is said, is that there is no universal truth; there are only interests, felt needs, and ambitions, and the quest to satisfy them all. Expediency, not morality, is the highest norm of public conduct.

The mass media are starting our kids early on this path. They promote an approach to education that encourages students to learn by doing and to acquire knowledge by freely discovering it for themselves. But this renders children ridiculously un-free because it gives them a false sense of independence. Through computers, TV shows, and other gadgets, the child's environment is manipulated to give the child the illusion that his achieve-

ments are all his own. Often, this approach leaves students undisciplined, allergic to failure and to rigorous study.

As a democratic nation, we think we are free because we are guided by the rule of law. But is it really the law that rules us? Or have we become too dependent on lawyers, many of whom have evacuated moral judgment from legal questions? They have embraced a relativism that is incoherent and a hindrance to decision-making. With conflicting interpretation of legal norms, they unwittingly suggest mat at the heart of liberty is pure choice or subjective interpretation.

Democracy exists where reciprocal bonds, governed by truth and justice, link people to one another. Freedom is not the liberty to do anything whatsoever, but the liberty to do what is right and good. The goal of freedom is the achievement of what is objectively good for oneself and society. We cannot desire this good if we are ignorant of the truth. We cannot love that which we do not know.

Today, invoking *ad nauseam* the so-called "high wall" of separation of Church and State, many politicians in government are openly hostile to the truth-claims of faith and moral righteousness. They declare that religion must confine itself entirely to the private sphere. In effect, with the help of the powerful media of communications, they are taming the Church by making it appear boring and inconsequential. They ignore the fact that the political edifice of liberty and equal rights stands on the belief in a Sovereign Power higher than the State.

After the September 11 bombing in New York, a woman was asked on TV: *"Why did God allow this thing*

to happen?" She replied: "I believe God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. Being the gentleman that He is, I believe He has backed out. How can we expect God to protect us if we want Him to leave us alone?"

The words of Jesus: "The truth will make you free" *(Jn* 8:32) remains our best guide in the exercise of authentic freedom. Presumably, all of us are searching for the truth. But as long as we ignore Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life" *(Jn* 14:6), our quest for liberation will lead to a bitter disillusionment. We shall remain so free and yet... so lost.

The Rosary as a Weapon?

In the old Intramuros, during the month of October, *La Naval de Manila,* an annual festivity in honor of Mary, Our Lady of the Rosary, was the grandest religious celebration. For nine days, people gathered in the old Santo Domingo Church, shrine of the centuries-old image of *Nuestra Senora del Santisimo Rosario,* to pray the novena and Rosary in her honor. The celebration culminated in a solemn procession attended by Marian devotees from all walks of life.

La Naval de Manila is a religious tradition we Filipinos have inherited from the Spaniards. For them, it was not just another pious devotion. It was, rather, a celebration of a crucial naval victory that assured, not only the Spanish rule, but also the survival of the Catholic religion in the country.

In February, 1646, a Dutch fleet arrived in the Philippine seas. Earlier, the protestant Dutch had engaged in a long and successful revolt to expel the Spaniards from the Netherlands. The battle of *La Naval* was actually the European wars of religion spilling over to the Spanish colonies, the Philippines included.

The duty of warding off the Dutch invaders fell on a combined force of Spaniards and Filipinos. Compared to a superior Dutch naval fleet, the locals could only come up with two old galleons that they rebuilt into warships. What they lacked in military strength and ammunition, however, they made up for these with their faith. As they prepared to confront the Dutch, the Filipino-Spanish soldiers continuously prayed the Rosary and did penance. They placed their endeavor under the patronage of *Nuestra Senora del Santisimo Rosario* and even vowed to walk barefoot to her shrine if they won the war.

After five naval battles between March 15 and October 4, 1646, the Dutch fleet was miraculously driven off. To give thanks to God, the first celebration of *La Naval de Manila* in honor of Mary and the Rosary was held on October 8, 1646.

It is interesting to note that this historic battle was almost a carbon copy of the one fought by Christian naval forces over the Turkish fleet in 1571, at the Battle of Lepanto. Pope Pius V, in collaboration with Spain and some of the Italian kings, organized a Christian fleet to drive away the Turks who had gained control over the eastern Mediterranean. The victorious Spanish naval force attributed their triumph to the intercession of the

Blessed Virgin Mary and the power of the Rosary. In 1571, the Church established the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in thanksgiving for that victory over the Turks.

Is it not ironic that the Rosary, which has evolved into a family prayer, a prayer for peace and understanding, was once considered a weapon for war? During the *La Naval* times, the Rosary was considered as a powerful weapon against the enemies of Christianity.

Such a time is long gone. It is, therefore, unchristian to continue regarding the Rosary as a weapon against protestants or unbelievers. Perhaps, it is about time that we saw it as a real prayer, or devotion, that can bridge our differences and bring back unity in our war-torn planet. As the compendium of the Gospels, the Rosary can be a source of understanding even among people of varied faiths and beliefs.

THE EDITOR

Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS (USCCB)

Introduction

Elections are a time for debate and decisions about the leaders, policies, and values that will guide our nation. Since the last presidential election and our last reflection on faithful citizenship, our nation has been attacked by terrorists and has gone to war twice.[1] We have moved from how to share budget surpluses to how to allocate the burdens of deficits. As we approach the elections of 2004, we face difficult challenges for our nation and world.

[1] Since 1975, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has developed a reflection on "faithful citizenship" in advance of each presidential election. This statement continues that tradition. It summarizes Catholic teaching on public life and on key moral issues. Although the CBCP has not yet come up with a Pastoral Letter on the forthcoming 2007 elections, this USCCB document can enlighten us regarding the long-held teaching of the Church on political and civic responsibility. The original document is slightly modified to fit local needs.

Our Church is also working to heal wounds. Our community of faith and especially we, as bishops, are working to face our responsibility and take all necessary steps to overcome the hurt, damage, and loss of trust resulting from the evil of clerical sexual abuse. While working to protect children and rebuild trust, we must not abandon the Church's important role in public life and the duty to encourage Catholics to act on our faith in political life.

These times and this election will test us as Catholics. A renewed commitment to faithful citizenship can help heal the wounds of our nation, world, and Church. What we have endured has changed many things, but it has not changed the fundamental mission and message of Catholics in public life. In times of terror and war, of global insecurity and economic uncertainty, of disrespect for human life and human dignity, we need to return to basic moral principles. Politics cannot be merely about ideological conflict, the search for partisan advantage, or political contributions. It should be about fundamental moral choices.

How do we protect human life and dignity? How do we fairly share the blessings and burdens of the challenges we face? What kind of nation do we want to be? What kind of world do we want to shape?

Politics in this election year and beyond should be about an old idea with new power the common good. The central question should not be, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" It should be, "How can 'we' all of us, especially the weak and vulnerable be better off in the years ahead? How can we protect and promote human life and dignity? How can we pursue greater justice and peace?"

In the face of all these challenges, we offer once again a simple image a table.[2] Who has a place at the table of life? Where is the place at the table for a million of our nation's children who are destroyed every year before they are born? How can we secure a place at the table for the hungry and those who lack health care in our own land and around the world?

A table is also a place where important decisions are made in our communities, nation, and world. How can the poorest people on Earth and those who are vulnerable in our land, including immigrants and those who suffer discrimination, have a real place at the tables where policies and priorities are set?

For Catholics, a special table the altar of sacrifice, where we celebrate the Eucharist is where we find the direction and strength to take what we believe into the public square, using our voices and votes to defend life, advance justice, pursue peace, and find a place at the table for all God's children.

Tasks and Questions for Believers

Our nation has been blessed with freedom, democracy, abundant resources, and generous and religious people. However, our prosperity does not reach far enough. Our culture sometimes does not lift us up but brings us down in moral terms. Our world is wounded by terror, torn apart by conflict, and haunted by hunger.

[2] Cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002).

As we approach the elections, we renew our call for a new kind of politics focused on moral principles not on the latest polls, on the needs of the poor and vulnerable not the contributions of the rich and powerful, and on the pursuit of the common good not the demands of special interests.

Faithful citizenship calls Catholics to see civic and political responsibilities through the eyes of faith and to bring our moral convictions to public life. People of good will and sound faith can disagree about specific applications of Catholic principles. However, Catholics in public life have a particular responsibility to bring together consistently their faith, moral principles, and public responsibilities.

At this time, some Catholics may feel politically homeless, sensing that no political party and too few candidates share a consistent concern for human life and dignity. However, this is not a time for retreat or discouragement. We need more, not less engagement in political life. We urge Catholics to become more involved by running for office; by working within political parties; by contributing money or time to campaigns; and by joining diocesan legislative networks, community organizations, and other efforts to apply Catholic principles in the public square.

The Catholic community is a diverse community of faith, not an interest group. Our Church does not offer contributions or endorsements. Instead, we raise a series of questions, seeking to help lift up the moral and human dimensions of the choices facing voters and candidates:

1) How will we protect the weakest in our midst innocent unborn children? How will our nation resist what

Pope John Paul II calls a "culture of death"? How can we keep our nation from tur ning to violence to solve some of its most difficult problems abortion to deal with difficult pregnancies; the death penalty to combat crime; euthanasia and assisted suicide to deal with the burdens of age, illness, and disability; and war to address international disputes?

2) How will we address the tragic fact that more than 30,000 children die every day as a result of hunger, international debt, and lack of development around the world, as well as the fact that the younger you are, the more likely you are to be poor here in the richest nation on Earth?

3) How can we help parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values, a sense of hope, and an ethic of stewardship and responsibility? How can our society defend the central institution of marriage and better support families in their moral roles and responsibilities, offering them real choices and financial resources to obtain quality education and decent housing?

4) How will we address the growing number of families and individuals without affordable and accessible health care? How can health care better protect human life and respect human dignity?

5) How will our society combat continuing prejudice, overcome hostility toward immigrants and refugees, and heal the wounds of racism, religious bigotry, and other forms of discrimination?

6) How will our nation pursue the values of justice and peace in a world where injustice is common, desperate poverty widespread, and peace is too often overwhelmed by violence?

7) What are the responsibilities and limitations of families, community organizations, markets, and government? How can these elements of society work together to overcome poverty, pursue the common good, care for creation, and overcome injustice?

8) When should our nation use, or avoid the use of, military force for what purpose, under what authority, and at what human cost?

9) How can we join with other nations to lead the world to greater respect for human life and dignity, religious freedom and democracy, economic justice, and care for God's creation?

We hope these questions and the election campaigns can lead to less cynicism and more participation, less partisanship, and more civil dialogue on fundamental issues.

A Call to Faithful Citizenship

One of our greatest blessings is our right and responsibility to participate in civic life. Everyone can and should participate. Even those who cannot vote have the right to have their voices heard on issues that affect their communities.

The Constitution protects the right of individuals and of religious bodies to speak out without governmental interference, favoritism, or discrimination. Major public issues have moral dimensions. Religious values have significant public consequences. Our nation is enriched and our tradition of pluralism is enhanced, not threatened, when religious groups contribute their values to public debates.

As bishops, we have a responsibility as Americans and as religious teachers to speak out on the moral dimensions of public life. The Catholic community enters public life not to impose sectarian doctrine but to act on our moral convictions, to share our experience in serving the poor and vulnerable, and to participate in the dialogue over our nation's future.

A Catholic moral framework does not easily fit the ideologies of "right" or "left," nor the platforms of any party. Our values are often not "politically correct." Believers are called to be a community of conscience within the larger society and to test public life by the values of Scripture and the principles of Catholic social teaching. Our responsibility is to measure all candidates, policies, parties, and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and rights of the human person whether they protect the poor and vulnerable and advance the common good.

Jesus called us to "love one another".[3] Our Lord's example and words demand care for the "least of these"[4] from each of us. Yet they also require action on a broader scale. Faithful citizenship is about more than elections. It requires ongoing participation in the continuing political and legislative process.

A recent Vatican statement on Catholic participation in political life highlights the need for involvement:

[3] Jn 13:34-35.

[4] Mt 25:40-45.

> Today's democratic societies ... call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for law-makers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good.[5]

In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. All believers are called to faithful citizenship, to become informed, active, and responsible participants in the political process. As we have said, "We encourage *all citizens,* particularly Catholics, to embrace their citizenship not merely as a duty and privilege, but as an opportunity meaningfully to participate [more fully] *in building the culture of life.* Every voice matters in the public forum. Every vote counts. Every act of responsible citizenship is an exercise of significant individual power."[6] Even those who are not citizens are called to participate in the debates which shape our common life.

Catholic Assets in the Public Square

Our community of faith brings three major assets to these challenges.

[5] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life (November 24, 2002), no. 1.

[6] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998), no. 34.

A Consistent Moral Framework

The *Word of God and the teachings of the Church* give us a particular way of viewing the world. Scripture calls us to "choose life," to serve "the least of these," to "hunger and thirst" for justice and to be "peacemakers."[7]

Catholic teaching offers consistent moral principles to assess issues, political platforms, and campaigns for their impact on human life and dignity. As Catholics, we are not free to abandon unborn children because they are seen as unwanted or inconvenient; to turn our backs on immigrants because they lack the proper documents; to create and then destroy human lives in a quest for medical advances or profit; to turn away from poor women and children because they lack economic or political power; or to ignore sick people because they have no insurance. Nor can we neglect international responsibilities in the aftermath of war because resources are scarce. Catholic teaching requires us to speak up for the voiceless and to act in accord with universal moral values.

Everyday Experience

Our community also brings to public life *broad experience in serving those in need.* Every day, the Catholic community educates the young, cares for the sick, shelters the homeless, feeds the hungry, assists needy families, welcomes refugees, and serves the elderly.[8] In defense of

[7] Dt 30:19-20, Mt 25:40-45, Mt 5:3-12.

[8] The Catholic community has a presence in virtually every part of the nation, including almost 20,000 parishes, 8,600 schools, 237 colleges and universities, 1,062 hospitals and health care facilities, and 3,044 social

life, we reach out to children and to the sick, elderly, and disabled who need help. We support women in difficult pregnancies, and we assist those wounded by the trauma of abortion and domestic violence. On many issues, we speak for those who have no voice. These are not abstract issues for us; they have names and faces. We have practical expertise and daily experience to contribute to the public debate.

A Community of People

The *Catholic community* is large and diverse. We are Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. We are members of every race, come from every ethnic background, and live in urban, rural, and suburban communities in all fifty states. We are CEOs and migrant farm workers, senators and persons on public assistance, business owners and union members. But all Catholics are called to a common commitment to protect human life and stand with those who are poor and vulnerable. We are all called to provide a moral leaven for our democracy, to be the salt of the earth.[9]

The Role of the Church

The Church is called to educate Catholics about our social teaching, highlight the moral dimensions of public policies, participate in debates on matters affecting the common good, and witness to the Gospel through our

service agencies. The Catholic community is the largest non-governmental provider of education, health care, and human services in the United States.

[9] Mt 13:33, Mt 5:13-16.

services and ministries. The Catholic community's participation in public affairs does not undermine, but enriches the political process and affirms genuine pluralism. Leaders of the Church have the right and duty to share Catholic teaching and to educate Catholics on the moral dimensions of public life, so that they may form their consciences in light of their faith.

The recent Vatican statement on political life points this out:

> [The Church] does not wish to exercise political power or eliminate the freedom of opinion of Catholics regarding contingent questions. Instead, it intends as is its proper function to instruct and illuminate the consciences of the faithful, particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good.[10]

We urge our fellow citizens "to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self- interest."[11] As bishops, we seek to form the conscience of our people. We do not wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on the full range

[10] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life, no. 6.

[11] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Living the Gospel of Life, no. 34.

of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address issues in the political arena.[12]

For Catholics, the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause, but a way of life and a framework for action. A key message of the Vatican statement on public life is that Catholics in politics must reflect the moral values of our faith with clear and consistent priority for the life and dignity of the human person.[13]

This is the fundamental moral measure of their service. The Vatican statement also points out:

> It must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good.[14]

Decisions about candidates and choices about public policies require clear commitment to moral principles,

[12] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life, no. 4.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

careful discernment and prudential judgments based on the values of our faith.

The coming elections provide important opportunities to bring together our principles, experience, and community in effective public witness. We hope parishes, dioceses, schools, colleges, and other Catholic institutions will encourage active participation through non-partisan voter registration and education efforts, as well as through ongoing legislative networks and advocacy programs.[15] As Catholics we need to share our values, raise our voices, and use our votes to shape a society that protects human life, promotes family life, pursues social justice, and practices solidarity. These efforts can strengthen our nation and renew our Church.

Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic approach to faithful citizenship begins with moral principles, not party platforms. The directions for our public witness are found in Scripture and Catholic social teaching. Here are some key themes at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.[16]

[15] Resources designed to help parishes and dioceses share the message of faithful citizenship and develop nonpartisan voter registration, education, and advocacy programs are available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. For more information, call 800-235-8722 or go to www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship.

[16] Catholic social teaching is a rich tradition that is rooted in the Scriptures and the lived experience of the people of God. It has been developed in the writings of church leaders through the ages, and has most recently been articulated through a tradition of modern papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. For a more thorough discussion of the themes

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, each person's life and dignity must be respected, whether that person is an innocent unborn child in a mother's womb, whether that person worked in the World Trade Center or a market in Baghdad, or even whether that person is a convicted criminal on death row. We believe that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it protects and respects the life and dignity of the human person. As the recent Vatican statement points out, "The Church recognizes that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in political choices, it succeeds only to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human *person.* Catholic involvement in political life cannot compromise on this principle."[17]

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The human person is not only sacred, but social. The God-given institutions of marriage a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and family are central and serve as the foundations for social life. Marriage and

identified here and their roots, see the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998), the USCCB website (www.usccb.org/publishing), and the Vatican web site (www.vatican.va).

[17] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life, no. 3.

family should be supported and strengthened, not undermined. Every person has a right to participate in social, economic, and political life and a corresponding duty to work for the advancement of the common good and the well-being of all, especially the poor and weak.

Rights and Responsibilities

Every person has a fundamental right to life the right that makes all other rights possible.

Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life - faith and family life, food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable.[18] The prophets denounced injustice toward the poor as a lack of fidelity to the God of Israel.[19] Jesus, who identified himself with "the least of these",[20] came to preach "good news to the poor, liberty to captives ... and to set the downtrodden free."[21] The Church calls on all of us to embrace this preferential option for the poor

[18] Ex 22:20-26.

[19] Is 1:21-23; Jer 5:28.

[20] Mt 25:40-45.

[21] Lk 4:18-19.

and vulnerable,[22] to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities. A fundamental measure of our society is how we care for and stand with the poor and vulnerable.

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's act of creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers, owners, and others must be respected - the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and choose to join a union, to economic initiative, and to ownership and private property. These rights must be exercised in ways that advance the common good.

Solidarity

We are one human family. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Pope John Paul II insists, "We are *all* really responsible for *all".*[23] Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice."[24] The Gospel calls us to be

[2] John Paul II, Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte (January 6, 2001), no. 49.

[23] John Paul II, On Social Concern *(Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1987), no. 38.

[24] John Paul II, *World Day of Peace Message,* (January 1, 1972).

"peacemakers."[25] Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we be "sentinels of peace" in a world wounded by violence and conflict.[26]

Caring for God's Creation

The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply for our own benefit. Our stewardship of the Earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation.

These themes anchor our community's role in public life. They help us to resist excessive self-interest, blind partisanship, and ideological agendas. They also help us avoid extreme distortions of pluralism and tolerance that deny any fundamental values and dismiss the contributions and convictions of believers. As the Vatican's statement on public life explains, we cannot accept an understanding of pluralism and tolerance that suggests "every possible outlook on life [is] of equal value".[27] However, this insistence that there are fundamental moral values "has nothing to do with the legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose among the various political opinions that are compatible with faith and the natural

[25] Mt 5:9.

[26] John Paul II, *Angelus* (February 23, 2003), no. 1.

[27] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life, no. 2.

moral law, and to select, according to their own criteria, what best corresponds to the needs of the common good".[28]

Moral Priorities for Public Life

We wish to call special attention to issues that we believe are important in the national debate in this campaign and in the years to come. These brief summaries do not indicate the depth and details of the positions we have taken in the documents which are cited at the end of this statement.

Protecting Human Life

Human life is a gift from God, sacred and inviolable. Because every human person is created in the image and likeness of God, we have a duty to defend human life from conception until natural death and in every condition.

Our world does not lack for threats to human life. We watch with horror the deadly violence of terror, war, starvation, and children dying from disease. We face a new and insidious mentality that denies the dignity of some vulnerable human lives and treats killing as a personal choice and social good. As we wrote in *Living the Gospel of Life,* "**Abortion and euthanasia** have become preeminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental good and the condition for all others".[29] Abortion, the deliberate

[28] Ibid, no. 3.

[29] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Living the Gospel of Life, no. 5.

killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable. The destruction of human embryos as objects of research is wrong. This wrong is compounded when human life is created by **cloning** or other means only to be destroyed. The purposeful taking of human life by **assisted suicide and euthanasia** is never an act of mercy. It is an unjustifiable assault on human life. For the same reasons, the **intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks** is always wrong.

In protecting human life, "We must begin with a commitment never to intentionally kill, or collude in the killing, of any innocent human life, no matter how broken, unformed, disabled or desperate that life may seem."[30]

We urge Catholics and others to promote laws and social policies that protect human life and promote human dignity to the maximum degree possible. Laws that legitimize abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are profoundly unjust and immoral. We support constitutional protection for unborn human life, as well as legislative efforts to end abortion and euthanasia. We encourage the passage of laws and programs that promote childbirth and adoption over abortion and assist pregnant women and children. We support aid to those who are sick and dying by encouraging health care coverage for all as well as effective palliative care. We call on government and medical researchers to base their decisions regarding **biotechnology** and human experimentation on respect for the inherent dignity and inviolability of human life from its very beginning, regardless of the circumstances of its origin.

Ibid., no. 21.

Catholic teaching calls on us to work to **avoid war.** Nations must protect the right to life by finding ever more effective ways to prevent conflicts from arising, to resolve them by peaceful means, and to promote post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. All nations have a right and duty to defend human life and the common good against terrorism, aggression, and similar threats. In the aftermath of September 11, we called for continuing out-reach to those who had been harmed, clear resolve in responding to terror, moral restraint in the means used, respect for ethical limits on the use of force, greater focus on the roots of terror, and a serious effort to share fairly the burdens of this response. While military force as a last resort can sometimes be justified to defend against aggression and similar threats to the common good, we have raised serious moral concerns and questions about **preemptive or preventive use of force.**

Even when military force is justified, it must be discriminate and proportionate. Direct, intentional attacks on civilians in war are never morally acceptable. Nor is the use of weapons of mass destruction or other weapons that cause disproportionate harm or that cannot be deployed in ways that distinguish between civilians and soldiers. Therefore, we urge our nation to strengthen barriers against the use of **nuclear weapons,** to expand controls over existing nuclear materials and other weapons of mass destruction, and to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as a step toward much deeper cuts and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. We also urge our nation to join the treaty to ban antipersonnel **landmines** and to address the human consequences of cluster bombs. We further urge our nation

to take immediate and serious steps to reduce its own disproportionate role in the scandalous **global trade in arms,** which contributes to violent conflicts around the world.

Society has a right and duty to defend itself against violent crime and a duty to reach out to victims of crime. Yet our nation's increasing reliance on the **death penalty** cannot be justified. We do not teach that killing is wrong by killing those who kill others. Pope John Paul II has said the penalty of death is "both cruel and unnecessary".[31] The antidote to violence is not more violence. In light of the Holy Father's insistence that this is part of our pro-life commitment, we encourage solutions to violent crime that reflect the dignity of the human person, urging our nation to abandon the use of capital punishment. We also urge passage of legislation that would address problems in the judicial system, and restrict and restrain the use of the death penalty through use of DNA evidence, a guarantee of effective counsel, and efforts to address issues of racial justice.

Promoting Family Life

God established the family as the basic cell of human society. Therefore, we must strive to make the needs and concerns of families a central national priority. **Marriage** must be protected as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and our laws should reflect this principle. Marriage, as God intended, provides the basic

John Paul II, Homily in St. Louis (January 27, 1999).

foundation for family life and the common good. It must be supported in the face of the many pressures working to undermine it. Policies related to the definition of marriage, taxes, the workplace, divorce, and welfare must be designed to help families stay together and to reward responsibility and sacrifice for children. Because financial and economic factors have such an impact on the well-being and stability of families, it is important that **just wages** be paid to those who work to support their families and that generous efforts be made to aid poor families.

Children must be protected and nurtured. We affirm our commitment to the protection of children in all settings and at all times, and we support policies that ensure that the wellbeing of all children is safeguarded. This is reflected within our Church in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and other policies adopted by our bishops' conference and dioceses to ensure the safety of children.

The **education** of children is a fundamental parental responsibility. Educational systems can support or undermine parental efforts to educate and nurture children. No one model or means of education is appropriate to the needs of all persons. Parents - the first and most important educators - have a fundamental **right to choose the education** best suited to the needs of their children, including private and religious schools. Families of modest means especially should not be denied this choice because of their economic status. Government should help provide the resources required for parents to exercise this basic right without discrimination. To support parents' efforts

to share basic values, we believe a national consensus can be reached so that students in all educational settings have opportunities for moral and character formation to complement their intellectual and physical development.

Communications play a growing role in society and family life. The values of our culture are shaped and shared in the print media as well as on radio, television, and the Internet. We must balance respect for freedom of speech with concern for the common good, promoting responsible regulations that protect children and families. In recent years, reduced government regulation has lowered standards, opened the door to increasingly offensive material, and squeezed out non-commercial, religious programming.

We support regulation that limits the concentration of control over these media; disallows sales of media outlets that attract irresponsible owners primarily seeking a profit; and opens these outlets to a greater variety of program sources, including religious programming. We support a TV rating system and technology that assist parents in supervising what their children view.

The Internet has created both great benefits and some problems. This technology should be available to all students regardless of income. Because it poses serious dangers by giving easy access to pornographic and violent material, we support vigorous enforcement of existing obscenity and child pornography laws, as well as efforts by the industry to develop technology that assists parents, schools, and libraries in blocking out unwanted materials.

Pursuing Social Justice

Our faith reflects God's special concern for the poor and vulnerable and calls us to make their needs our first priority in public life.

Church teaching on **economic justice** insists that economic decisions and institutions be assessed on whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. We support policies that create *jobs for all who can work* with decent working conditions and adequate pay that reflects a *living wage.* We also support efforts to overcome barriers to equal pay and employment for women and those facing unjust *discrimination.* We reaffirm the Church's traditional support of the *right of workers to choose to organize,* join a union, bargain collectively, and exercise these rights without reprisal. We also affirm the Church's teaching on the importance of *economic freedom, initiative, and the right to private property,* through which we have the tools and resources to pursue the common good.

Efforts to provide for the basic financial needs of poor families and children must enhance their lives and protect their dignity. The measure of *welfare reform* should be reducing *poverty* and dependency, not cutting resources and programs. We seek approaches that both promote greater responsibility and offer concrete steps to help families leave poverty behind. Welfare reform has focused on providing work and training, mostly in low-wage jobs. Other forms of support are necessary, including tax credits, health care, child care, and safe, affordable housing. Because we believe that families need help with

the costs of raising children, we support increasing *child tax credits and making them fully refundable.* These credits allow families of modest means with children to keep more of what they earn and help lift low-income families out of poverty.

We welcome efforts to recognize and support the work of *faith-based groups* not as a substitute for, but as a partner with, government efforts. Faith-based and community organizations are often more present, more responsive, and more effective in the poorest communities and countries. We oppose efforts to undermine faith-based institutions and their identity, integrity, and freedom to serve those in need. We also vigorously resist efforts to abandon civil rights protections and the long-standing protections for religious groups to preserve their identity as they serve the poor and advance the common good.

We are also concerned about the income security of low- and average-wage workers and their families when they retire, become disabled, or die. In many cases, women are particularly disadvantaged. Any proposal to change *Social Security* must provide a decent and reliable income for these workers and their dependents.

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life, a fundamental human right, and an urgent national priority. We need to reform the nation's health care system, and this reform must be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, and meet the needs of the poor and uninsured. We support measures to ensure that decent health care is available to all as a moral imperative. We also support

measures to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid as well as measures that extend health care coverage to children, pregnant women, workers, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations. We support policies that provide effective, compassionate care that reflects our moral values for those suffering from HTV/ATDS and those coping with addictions.

The lack of safe, affordable *housing* is a national crisis. We support a recommitment to the national pledge of "safe and affordable housing" for all and effective policies that will increase the supply of quality housing and preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing. We promote public/private partnerships, especially those that involve religious communities. We continue to oppose unjust discrimination in housing and support measures to help ensure that financial institutions meet the credit needs of local communities.

The first priority for *agriculture* policy should be *food security for all.* Food is necessary for life itself. Our support for programs that directly benefit poor and low-income people is based on our belief that no one should face **hunger** in a land of plenty. Those who grow our food should be able to make a decent living and maintain their way of life. **Farmers** who depend on the land for their livelihood deserve a decent return for their labor. Rural communities deserve help so that they can continue to be sources of strength and support for a way of life that enriches our nation. Our priority concern for the poor calls us to advocate especially for the needs of **farm workers,** whose pay is generally inadequate, whose housing and working conditions are often deplorable, and who

are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. We urge that public policies support **sustainable agriculture** and careful stewardship of the Earth and its natural resources.

All persons, by virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to receive a quality **education.** We must ensure that our nation's young people especially the poor, those with disabilities, and the most vulnerable are properly prepared to be good citizens, to lead productive lives, and to be socially and morally responsible in the complicated and technologically challenging world of the twenty-first century. This requires that all educational institutions have an orderly, just, respectful, and non-violent environment where adequate professional and material resources are available. We support the necessary initiatives that provide adequate funding to educate all persons no matter what school they attend - public, private, or religious - or their personal condition.

We also support providing salaries and benefits to all teachers and administrators that reflect the principles of economic justice, as well as providing the resources necessary for teachers to be academically and personally prepared for the critical tasks they face. As a matter of justice, we believe that when services aimed at improving the educational environment - especially for those most at risk - are available to students and teachers in public schools, these services should be available to students and teachers in **private and religious schools** as well.

Our schools and our society in general must address the growing **"culture of violence."** We need to promote a greater sense of moral responsibility, to advocate a

reduction in violence in the media, to support gun safety measures and reasonable restrictions on access to assault weapons and hand guns, and to oppose the use of the **death penalty.** We also believe a Catholic ethic of responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration can become the foundation for the necessary reform of our broken **criminal justice system.**

Our society must also continue to combat **discrimination** based on sex, race, ethnicity, disabling condition, or age. Discrimination constitutes a grave injustice and an affront to human dignity. It must be aggressively resisted. Where the effects of past discrimination persist, society has the obligation to take positive steps to overcome the legacy of injustice. We support judiciously administered *affirmative action* programs as tools to overcome discrimination and its continuing effects.

In the words of Pope John Paul II, *care for the Earth* and for the **environment** is a "moral issue."[32] We support policies that protect the land, water, and the air we share. Reasonable and effective initiatives are required for energy conservation and the development of alternate, renewable, and clean-energy resources. We encourage citizens and public officials to seriously address global climate change, focusing on prudence, the common good, and the option for the poor, particularly its impact on developing nations. The United States should lead the developed nations in contributing to the sustainable deve-

[32] John Paul II, The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility (January 1, 1990), no. 15.

lopment of poorer nations and greater justice in sharing the burden of environmental neglect and recovery.

Practicing Global Solidarity

We must be careful not to define our security primarily in military terms. Our nation must join with others in addressing policies and problems that provide fertile ground in which terrorism can thrive. No injustice legitimizes the horror we have experienced. But a more just world will be a more peaceful world.

In a world where one-fifth of the population survives on *less than* one dollar per day, where some twenty countries are involved in major armed conflict, and where poverty, corruption, and repressive regimes bring untold suffering to millions of people, we simply cannot remain indifferent. As a wealthy and powerful nation, the United States has the capacity and the responsibility to address this *scandal of* ***poverty and underdevelopment. As*** *a* principal force in globalization, we have a responsibility to **humanize globalization,** and to spread its benefits to all, especially the world's poorest, while addressing its negative consequences. As the world's sole superpower, the United States also has an unprecedented opportunity to work in partnership with others to build a system of cooperative security that will lead to a more united and more just world.

>• We should take a leading role in helping to **alleviate global poverty** through a comprehensive development agenda, including substantially increased development aid for the poorest countries, more equitable trade

policies, and continuing efforts to relieve the crashing burdens of debt and disease.

>• More concerted efforts to ensure the promotion of **religious liberty** and other basic human rights should be an integral part of foreign policy.

>- It is a moral imperative that we work to reverse the spread of **nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons,** and to reduce its own reliance on weapons of mass destruction by pursuing progressive nuclear disarmament. It also should reduce its own predominant role in the conventional arms trade.

>* We should provide more consistent political and financial support for appropriate **United Nations** programs, other **international bodies,** and international law, so that these institutions may become more effective, responsible, and responsive agents for addressing global problems.

Building peace, combating poverty and despair, and protecting freedom and human rights are not only moral imperatives; they are wise national priorities. Given its enormous power and influence in world affairs, we have a special responsibility to ensure that it is a force for justice and peace beyond its borders. "Liberty and justice for all" is not only a profound national pledge; it is a worthy goal for our nation in its role as world leader.

Conclusion

We hope these reflections will contribute to a renewed political vitality in our land. We urge all Catholics to register, vote, and become more involved

in public life, to protect human life and dignity, and to advance the common good.

The elections and the policy choices we will face in the future pose significant challenges for our Church. As an institution, we are called to be **political but not partisan.** The Church cannot be a chaplain for any one party or cheerleader for any candidate. Our cause is the protection of the weak and vulnerable and defense of human life and dignity, not a particular party or candidate.

The Church is called to be **principled but not ideological.** We cannot compromise our basic values or teaching, but we should be open to different ways to advance them.

We are called to be **clear but also civil.** A Church that advocates justice and charity must practice these virtues in public life. We should be clear about our principles and priorities, without impugning motives or name-calling.

The Church is called to be **engaged but not used.** We welcome dialogue with political leaders and candidates, seeking to engage and persuade public officials. But we must be sure that events and "photo-ops" are not substitutes for work on policies that reflect our values.

The call to faithful citizenship raises a fundamental question for all of us. What does it mean to be a Catholic living in this country? As *Catholics,* the election and the policy choices that follow it call us to recommit ourselves to carry the values of the Gospel and church teaching into the public square. As *citizens and residents of this country,*

we have the duty to participate now and in the future in the debates and choices over the values, vision, and leaders that will guide our nation.

This dual calling of faith and citizenship is at the heart of what it means to be a Catholic in this country. Faithful citizenship calls us to seek "a place at the table" of life for all God's children in the coming elections and beyond.

Church and State: A Theological View*

FR. FRANK PAVONE**

The Church's Mission

Let me begin by sharing with you a passage from the Gospel of Mark, which contains a mystifying verse. In Mark 8:38 we read, "whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the Holy Angels. And then he said to them, truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not experience death before they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power."

* U.S. National Director, Priests for Life and President, National Pro-Life Religious Council.

** Transcript of Fr. Pavone's presentation in the symposium "The Church and Politics: Are We as Restricted as We Think?" at Ave Maria School of Law, Ann Arbor, MI, on June 17, 2003. (www.priestsforlife.org/elections/symposium.htm) Reprinted with permission from the Correspondence Department of Priests for Life (www.priestsforlife.org)

Of course what's mysterious there is, did Jesus mean to say that some of those who heard him that day would be around when he came again? Because obviously that's not what happened. Everyone who heard him that day has died. He talked about the Kingdom of God "coming with power." Now he spoke that way about his second coming at the end of time. But that's not the only thing that this passage refers to. We see after he rose from the dead, he says the following words at the end of Matthew's gospel, Mt 28:18-20, "Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and know that I am with you always until the end of the world."

We begin today's reflection by asking, what is the Church's mission? If we're going to understand the relationship between the Church and politics, we have to begin by looking at the Church's mission and how it impacts politics. Why should it have anything to do with politics?

Here's the key: *the person of Jesus Christ.* The Alpha and the Omega. The Kingdom of God Incarnate. The One, who according to his own declaration here before he ascended to heaven, the One in whom all authority, all power, all dominion has been placed because of who He is - God by nature and also Lord by the fact of his redemptive work. Jesus as a human being today with a human body, with a beating heart, the same person who always existed as a human being, today, rules the universe. He is King of Kings, Lord of Lords, judge of not only individuals but judge of nations.

Taking the Body Seriously

This is where the Church begins. Really the problem that we wrestle with today and all the time when we talk about how does the Church relate to or interact with the State and where are the proper boundaries — the problems we're talking about here are really rooted in the fact that the Church takes seriously *the Incarnation.* These are all **incarnational** issues because this is really God and Man in Jesus.

In fact if you look at the different heresies that have existed from the beginning of the Church in regard to who Jesus is, you find there the source of various different ways of understanding or misunderstanding not only what the Church is but therefore, what the Church's relationship is to the world, to the State and to politics.

So, for example, you have the old heresy that says Jesus only *appeared to be human* - he didn't really exist as a human being, he didn't really suffer, he didn't really die. He only appeared to be human. And this gives rise to a form of Christianity which is actually over-spiritualized - and being over-spiritualized can also end up being overly separated from the world.

Then of course you have the other extreme — that Jesus Christ was a man specially appointed by God but didn't really share the Divine Nature. Oh, he was special, all right. The hand of God was upon him, he was anointed, he preached as no one else had preached, he did things that nobody else did, but when it boils down in the end, he was human, just one of us. And if that's the starting point for an understanding of Jesus Christ, of course it's going to follow through that the understanding of the

Church and the Church's relationship to the State which is just a human institution and therefore the power it might have is simply in the end only political power, only human power.

And so you see right away from different ways of understanding who Jesus is, you have the danger of going from one side to the other: a mystical, super-spiritual kind of church or religion that is separate from the world, totally detached, even not caring what happens in the political arena or a completely worldly church that uses only human means and human ends and eventually seeks to establish an earthly paradise.

In reality Christ and therefore also the Church are both human and divine. The Church encompasses everything that's human. *Everything* that's human. The Church takes humanity seriously. For the Church, "matter" matters. So, for example, when we celebrate the Eucharist, the Catholic Church has always proclaimed that this truly becomes the Body of Christ.

The problems that we face today, by the way, in terms of the sanctity of life and the sanctity of marriage and sexual ethics in society, can be traced to a dualism in the way that we look at the human person. Think about when people say, "I can do what I want with my body." Well, what do you mean by that? I can do what I want with my pen, but my *body?* Is my body a thing that I do something with or is it me? The Church has always proclaimed that the body is an aspect of the person. So the body is not some thing that you do something with, it's you. As soon as you say / can do what / want with *my* body, you see right away a separation between / and

my body. I'm over here and my body is over here and I'm doing something with it. This is not the Church's view of the human person.

The Church encompasses everything that is human, takes matters so seriously that the physical body *is* the person. If someone steps on your foot and injures *you*, they injure *you*. Yes, I hurt my foot but you can also say, "you hurt *me."* And we do say that, "I cut myself." If you cut your finger, you say "I cut myself as well as my finger because my finger is part of me." The Church has always taken this view of the human person. At different times and at different ages and different places we've suffered from one of these two extremes: either too spiritual looking at the human person just as a spirit who happens to use the body or getting too mundane, too worldly, too secular and forgetting about the soul.

The Church of course has its origins however, not in humanity, and is not a man-made institution. It has its origins from above and it has its destiny above as well. We're not seeking to build up some kind of earthly power, because the Church exists precisely because the *kingdom of God* has broken into the world. And this is what creates the tension. The Kingdom of God did not just sweep us up into itself, the Kingdom of God broke into human history. It broke into the world but didn't destroy the world. Here is the source of the tension that we discover.

The Kingdom and the World

So what is the relationship between the Kingdom and the world? Of course after Jesus says *"all authority, all*

power, all dominion have been given to me", then he tells the Apostles and tells us, *"go therefore and change the world.* I'm in charge. Go therefore and make disciples of..." of whom? Of all the Nations. He doesn't say of *some.* He means everyone. And the Church has always taught that all humanity; every human being ever created is called to belong to the new people of God, is called to share the benefits of the new and everlasting covenant.

So we have a great commission. The Church has a commission: to make disciples of all the nations, to carry out everything that he has commanded us. No one is exempt. And the authority that has been given to Christ is not only over individuals, it is over nations as well.

Now the same people who belong to the Church also belong to the State. Because it's one and the same person who belongs to both, we have a necessary connection. The connection is rooted in us as individuals, in our actions. That's where morality flows from: an analysis of our actions, good or bad. Are they right or wrong? Well, when the State looks at our actions it's talking about right or wrong before the law. When the Church looks at our actions, it talks about right or wrong in terms of our relationship with God and our eternal salvation. The kingdom of God has broken into the world. We have been called to be part of that kingdom and yet at the same time we have to organize ourselves politically in our society.

I would like to refer your attention to a passage in the second Vatican Council's document on *The Church in the Modern World.* It's one of the most beautiful documents, one of the richest documents that has ever come out of the Magisterium. It's a document always worth going

back to. "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." It says a lot about the topic we're talking about today from the theological perspective. What is the Church's mission? Particularly, sections 36-39 I want to reflect on for a moment. In those paragraphs, the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World asks this question: We know that the Kingdom of God has broken into the world and therefore the Church exists. We know that we are also members of governments and states. How then, does the growth of the Kingdom relate to human activity and the growth of nations and states? And the analysis in those paragraphs is marvelous.

Here's what the document says. The progress of mankind is not to be confused with the growth of the Kingdom of God. They are distinct. But, we are not to see them as totally separated because all of the good that through God's grace we are able to accomplish in this life: the works of justice, of brotherhood, of peace, the building of a just society and a peaceful world - all the good that we're able to do as individuals, as groups and as nations is not lost on the Kingdom of God. That good is not forgotten! It is not in and of itself what ultimately builds the kingdom, but it is used by God as building blocks of the Kingdom and in fact the passage goes on to say that the good things we produce in this world will endure in the world to come.

Now again, as soon as it says that it has to go back to making the distinction and therefore reminds us that the Kingdom is brought to its fulfillment only by the Second Coming of Christ. We do not look for an earthly paradise, we do not look for a Utopia, we look for Christ

to come again. But looking for him coming again is not a passive waiting; it is an *active waiting* because we know that when he comes again - what's he going to do? He's going to take the good that we have been able to bring about in this world, the justice, the peace, the brotherhood and he's going to purify it, he's going to lift it up. It's going to become not only building blocks of the world to come, but it will be taken up and perfected because every good that we do in this world is always all mixed up with evil and error and it's somehow deformed. Not just limited, but tainted. And yet we move forward in bringing about as much good as we can because we know that we're not ultimately relying only on our human activity, we're waiting for the coming of Christ in glory and the good we do will not be lost. So, it's not just like we're sitting back waiting, and saying "let him bring all the good." Nor are we saying we're going to produce all the good. It's a marvelous balance of the two. And more than a balance. The Church is trying to point out to us just how deeply interlocked and intertwined these things are, the mystery - (and these are mysteries) - the mystery of human activity and the mystery of the growth of God's Kingdom which is ultimately always a gift of His grace.

The Church's "Yes" and "No" to the State

In the light of this, the Church historically, starting with the person of Christ Himself, has always looked at the State and has said at the same time, "yes" and "no." And I want to analyze with you, using Scripture, a little bit of the "yes" a little bit of the "no" that the Church says to the State. Let's start with the "no's." I'm going

to recommend to you two of the many, many excellent resources on all of this. Hugo Rahner's book, "Church and State in Early Christianity", published by Ignatius, is an excellent source especially for documentation of the early Church in its relation to the State in both its "yes" and its "no." Also a book by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger back in 1988, "Church, Ecumenism and Politics". I'll be drawing some of these reflections from these two works.

The Church has a balance between her "yes" and her "no." Rahner says in this book, "The Church has never confronted the State with a "no" of inflexible refusal dictated by another worldly mysticism or with a "yes" of unqualified acceptance based on political indifference. The Church of the martyrs, with a sure political instinct illuminated by grace, knew how to find a balance between 'yes' and 'no.'"

The "No"

Let us begin with the "no" of Christians to the State. It is based, or so it seems, on the very nature of Christianity as a religion of a kingdom not of this world. And of course we know that Christ Himself said that to Pilate when he asked him whether or not he was a king. And of course the famous question presented to Jesus about paying the tax to the Emperor. Should we pay the tax to Caesar or not? Now, notice what Jesus does. He asks whose image, whose inscription is on the coin and they say "Caesar's." "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's," he tells them (that's the "yes") "but give to God what is God's" (that's the "no" to the State). In other words there's something higher here. There's a duty to be given. Now, from where does that

duty flow? Think of what he said. The coin belongs to Caesar because it bears the image of Caesar, so give it to him. But "give to God what belongs to God." Well, what belongs to God? That which bears the image of God, namely human beings - *including Caesar himself!* So Christ establishes the framework. Caesar himself belongs to God. The State itself belongs to God.

The State, the Church always has held, does not contain the fullness of human hope or embrace the totality of human existence. The State rather, exists for the human person, not the other way around. And what is our destiny? Our destiny ultimately is the new heavens and the new earth. So we can never put our ultimate hope and trust in what the State can do for us. In this consists the Church's "no" to the State. It frees us from the myth of some kind of political salvation and, you know, sometimes when we in practical terms ask the Church to be more politically involved, this is one of the criticisms. "Oh, we can't rely on those people anyway; they're all crooked, they never keep their promises." And the Church is the first to say, we're not asking you to put ultimate hope and trust in any political party, candidate or system. We're saying that it has a key role. We're not saying that it demands your *ultimate* hope or trust. Our destiny is *not comprised by this world alone.*

The "Yes"

At the same time the Church says a profound "yes" to the State and this is rooted in a very simple fact: that all authority, all power, comes from God. And therefore the fact that there is an earthly, civil authority that we

need to obey becomes part of our obedience to God himself. Scripture is filled with examples of this. Perhaps one of the most striking is in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah and there are other examples. Even when the state and the powers of civil authority are persecuting believers, believers are exhorted to be good citizens. So you may recall the letter written in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 29. Let me read a portion of this letter. The people are being taken into exile in Babylon. And they're not told to create a revolution. They're not called to overthrow the Babylonians. What are they called to do? "Thus, says the Lord of hosts, to the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." Here's what he tells them: "Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives, have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease". Verse 7: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for in *its* welfare you will find *your* welfare."

Seek the welfare of the city even if the city is holding you in exile!

Now we're more familiar with the New Testament exhortations. Peter for example says, "Maintain good contact among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God. Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, *honor the Emperor.* Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, or wrongdoer. But if one suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed." And then of course the exhortation to pay taxes, and the example of Jesus

himself paying the temple tax and taking the coin out of the mouth of the fish to do so.

St. Augustine has a beautiful passage on the Church's "yes" to the State. Let me read this paragraph from "The City of God." He says, "We all know how often the Body of Christ, His Church, is persecuted by the rulers of this world, but in what way do Christians injure the worldly state? I ask again, in what way do Christians injure the worldly state? Perhaps Christ their eternal King has forbidden soldiers to enroll in the service of worldly authority? Did not he himself say when the Jews attempted to trap him, 'give to Caesar what is Caesar's to God what is God's'? Did he not pay taxes with a coin taken from the fish's mouth? Did not one of his followers, a close companion on his journey, say to his colleagues, to Christ's fellow citizens, 'let everyone submit to civil authority' and order the Church to pray for the emperor? In what way then are Christians the State's enemies? In what way are Christians not subject to the kings who rule this earth?"

So to put it simply, the fact that we are citizens of heaven does not give us the right to ignore our duties as citizens of earth. One of the old criticisms of religion is that because we focus on a world to come we are less concerned about this one. But the Church's teaching has always been very clear. The fact that we're preparing for the world to come makes us *more* concerned about this one. Because after all, we want to spend eternity with the person next to us. After all, it's a new heaven and a new earth that God is preparing for us, not some kind of totally disconnected world that has nothing to do with the things that go on in this life.

The king has a King

Let's look at this from a different perspective. Going back to the first book of Samuel (and this again is another great catechetical source when we're talking to our people about this), - First Samuel, Chapter 8. If you'll recall the situation, the people of God are living on the land, with many other nations around them who had strange gods, strange rituals. But there was also another big difference between God's people who are going to the Holy Land and the other nations around them. It was that the other nations had a king. The people of Israel, instead, were always talking about the Lord, the Covenant, the Commandments God gave to Moses - but they didn't have a king. So one day they go to the prophet Samuel, and they say *would you give us a king, please?* All the other nations around us have a ruler that leads them into battle and fights their wars and provides for them and we don't have a king. Samuel says, what are you talking about, the Lord is your king. *No, no, no we want a king.*

So Samuel goes to the Lord and the Lord says, *they asked you for a king, give them a king. But warn them that they're going to suffer for it.* And several chapters later we read the instructions that Samuel gives to the people. He says to them, "You said to me, no we want a king to rule over us. But the Lord your God was your king and now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked. Behold, the Lord has set a king over you. If you will fear the Lord and serve Him and hearken to his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God it will be well. But

if you will not hearken to the voice of the Lord and rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king." Again, the hierarchy is established. You obey the king. You and the king obey the Lord.

If you read through the history of the Old Testament you are likely to be confused. That's why most people avoid the Old Testament. They prefer the parables even though the parables are mysterious at times. People find it a whole lot easier than reading about all these long names and the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. And what makes it confusing is that you're actually reading the history of two kingdoms interwoven one with another. Scripture doesn't say, "Here's all about the history of Israel, the Northern Kingdom of the ten tribes... And here's all about the history of Judah." No, it's all intertwined; it goes back and forth. You have to read it very attentively. But when you do, you find out very soon that you're reading theological history. You're reading history, all right. These things happened, but it's theological history.

What do I mean? It's looking at history from the perspective of God and understanding the God-related reasons why certain armies won the battles, the theological reasons why. You could look at the many fights that the people of Israel and of Judah had with the kings of the surrounding nations that at various times came against them or wanted to overtake them. And you can try to analyze it from a political point of view and say, "They made this strategic mistake or they didn't have a sufficient number of soldiers or they didn't place them properly." In fact you can find both brilliant strategies and terrible

blunders when you read through all the histories of these wars and these battles. However, what scripture is trying to convey is not the brilliant political strategies or the terrible blunders. Rather the fact that it was when the people *and* their king observed and obeyed the *covenant, things went well and God delivered their* enemies away from them. But when they, often at the urging of their king and because of the sinfulness of their king, violated the covenant it was God Himself who delivered them into the hands of their enemies.

At the time of the Babylonian exile, do you know what happened to Jeremiah? Jeremiah the prophet got thrown into a cistern. He sank in the mud. Do you know why he was treated so poorly for preaching the Word of God? Because the people said he was a traitor to the Babylonians. Jeremiah was saying, "The Babylonians are coming against you. Submit to them!" The people responded, "What are you talking about, submit to them? We have to fight against them!" And Jeremiah said, "To fight against them is not going to work because the reason this is happening is because of your sins."

We read about evil kings in the Old Testament, who even set up sacred pillars of false worship that involved the sacrifice, the burning of their sons and daughters. Scripture tells us that that is ultimately why the Babylonian exile and the Assyrian exile that wiped out the ten northern tribes happened - because they sacrificed their sons and daughters to false gods and goddesses. False altars built by the king - not by the people, but by the king. Responsibility rested on the shoulders of the sovereign; the people followed after them and God wiped out both kings and people alike.

The Prophets arrived in scripture to admonish the kings and to instruct the people. You see the role of the Prophets very clearly in the Old Testament as one of admonishing the kings, telling them again that they need to be faithful to the Covenant. You and I are in a position today in America that gives us even more responsibility than the Prophets had when they spoke to the kings. We too are prophets by our baptism into Christ. We have a prophetic role, not in the sense of telling the future but of *speaking the Word of God.* We do it as clergy when we preach but we all do it as baptized members of the faithful when we bear witness to the Word of God in our daily life. The greater responsibility that we have is that we not only have the opportunity to speak to our "kings", our rulers, those in government authority. We have the opportunity to *choose* them. This is not an opportunity that the people in the Old Testament had. We have the power to choose them. And if our system of governance works the way it's supposed to work, we in fact govern ourselves.

What this means is that all the scriptural responsibilities that God places on the sovereign, on the king, on the ruler, are placed on us! If you read the Bible from the beginning to the end you see a whole series of very, very serious responsibilities placed on the shoulders of the ruler of the people. The ruler of the people was to do justice, reaffirm the Covenant, lead the people in the ways of the Lord, promote peace, defend life, rescue the poor and the widow. All of the responsibilities of the sovereign and their people are now on us. We don't only have the responsibility that belongs to the people; we have the responsibility that belongs to the sovereign

because of our ability, our opportunity to take part in the political process and to elect our leaders.

What I'm tracing for you here, in other words, is the profound spiritual responsibility not to escape from the world and politics but to be immersed in them. The profound *spiritual* reason, not political reason. I'm not talking about the political reason; I'm talking about spiritual reason. And here's where the healing has to take place, brothers and sisters. The healing has to take place from a defective, distorted, truncated view of spirituality that somehow runs away from a responsibility to choose the right leaders and admonish them when they go wrong. Now the kings either affirmed the covenant or denied the covenant. When we speak about the role of Christians in politics, we're not talking about wanting to establish a theocracy. We're not talking here about wanting to establish a State in which by law people have to believe in the divinity of Christ or get a fine if they don't go to Sunday Mass. We're not talking about that at all. Let's reflect for a moment about why that's true theologically. We will reflect later about why that's true legally.

Freedom of Belief

Why is it not true theologically that we want to establish a theocracy? Because the truth has a power of its own. You don't need the power of the State to impose on people the truth about God. How theologically does the truth capture people? By being proclaimed. I believe, therefore I speak. Who is to believe unless he hears? How can he hear unless it is preached? The word is preached, the seed is sown, and the dignity of the human person

requires that they hear it and accept it - how? Freely. Always, always freely. When people who heard the Lord Jesus' words did not like them and turned and walked away, He never forced them to come back. Never. He *called* them to come back. He preached the word and proclaimed the message, but it is the living power of the truth itself. We were made according to the truth. You and I were constructed according to the Word of God. The word of truth fits, if you will, into the human heart and into the human mind. How did God create us? By *speaking*. We are made according to the truth, and therefore, when we hear the word of truth it resonates. There are many things that stand in the way, but the word also purifies and burns away those things that stand in the way. So the Church has always stood up for religious liberty.

Now some have misinterpreted the meaning of liberty to mean religious indifferentism. What is the difference? The difference between religious liberty and religious indifference is this: religious indifferentism says you can't require people to belong to any particular religion because after all, all religions are the same, and are of equal value. You can take whatever religion you want and choose from its teachings like you choose from a menu at a Chinese restaurant. Isn't that what freedom of religion and freedom of belief are all about? No religion is inherently superior to any other religion. Now, there are many people in our society that think that way. *But the Church does not think that way.* The Church does not defend religious liberty based on the idea that all religions are equal. The Church defends religious liberty based on a different idea - the dignity of the human person. That

dignity requires that he or she embrace the truth without coercion, that he or she embrace the truth freely. That doesn't mean that there is no such thing as truth. This is a big point of confusion in our day, that somehow we are supposed to be free to embrace whatever religion we want because ultimately it doesn't matter which one you choose. The Church says it matters very much which one you choose. There is only one path to salvation, that's Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ has laid out some very clear teachings that have been preserved and handed down to the Apostles and taught to this very day. And they're true. They're taught not because they're consoling, but because they're *true.*

It is, again, the dignity of the human person that requires that we embrace these truths freely. We're not talking about passing laws or electing candidates that are going to enact the Covenant by requiring us to celebrate certain sacraments or lead certain prayers or say the rosary. However, just as in the Old Testament, the leaders, the rulers, must reaffirm the Covenant.

Church, State, and Morality

And in what sense must they do that? Let's put another piece of the puzzle here on the table. The Church does not only teach religious truths. The Church does not only teach revealed dogmas. The Church also teaches things that we can know by human reason alone. The Church teaches *natural truths.* The Church teaches about fundamental rights. The Church teaches things which we could find out even if we didn't have the Church. Let's consider some examples of the difference between the two.

The Church reveals to us the mystery of the Holy Trinity. That is not something we could come to by human reason alone. God is one in three Persons. They are co-equal Persons. There are relationships between the three. We could not come to that by human reason alone. That is a revealed dogma of faith. The Church also teaches that it is wrong to steal. There is a fundamental human right to one's possessions and those possessions have to be reasonably secure in order to have a functioning society. That is an insight that we can come to and that people do come to without being believers or member of the Church. That truth is reinforced by the Church but it can be reached by human reason. We never hear people complain that the laws against stealing are an imposition of religious beliefs. However, if you go to the Bible, it's on the lips of Jesus. It's on the tablets of Moses, inscribed by the finger of God and it's in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. "You shall not steal." You don't hear anyone say, "In America, I don't have to be Catholic, I don't even have to be Christian, I don't even have to believe in God. Therefore, I can steal."

There is a third term in the formula "Church and State." The third term, which is common to both, is *morality*. It is critical to understand the three: "Church, State, and Morality." I told you earlier one of the key foundational points here that gives rise to the dilemma that we wrestle with here today is that the human beings who are members of the Church are also members of the State and we are talking about the same group of human beings. So human beings choose and they act and they fail to act, and an analysis of those actions give rise to morality. So we can't just talk about Church and State as if we're just talking

about some sphere of religious teaching divorced from the governance of people. There is a morality that flows through both - and norms on stealing or killing gives a good illustration of that.

The recent document that came out of the Vatican, the *Doctrinal Note regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life,* emphasizes this point. Catholics are not called to create a theocracy. We affirm that there is a legitimate autonomy of the Church and the State. Yet when we say that there is in fact a legitimate separation of the two, willed by God Himself, we are *not saying* that the way that we conduct ourselves politically is value free. Democracy cannot be value-neutral. It cannot fail to ascertain that there are certain things that are good, there are certain things that are right. And *we can know* those things.

In other words, look at how society structures itself. If somebody says that a particular policy is good or bad, or a law is just or unjust, do they come to those conclusions because of what the Church says? If I look at a law, if I look at the position of a candidate or a party and I say good or bad, right or wrong, who's saying that? Do I get that from what the Church says - in which case it's simply in the arena of private belief and personal choice? If so, then I can believe it if I want (but I don't have to) and if I try to make someone else believe it, I'm guilty of imposing beliefs. So is my judgement about a policy being right or wrong something that flows from the mouth of the Church? It might, but it might also flow from somewhere else. Take again the example of stealing. I acknowledge that this law against stealing is

necessary - but not because the Catechism says so, but because human reason tells me. And human reason is something that is shared by all of us. Now we all don't all exercise it with the same degree of skill. But the fact is, it is a common heritage of humanity that we are able to reason, we are able to know and discern the difference between right and wrong and that there are certain things about right and wrong that are so fundamental that the state absolutely cannot depart from them.

Here we come to a distinction between fundamental rights and other positions that might be subject to various interpretations. What do we mean by a *fundamental* human right? We mean a human right without which we cannot be persons - life itself, liberty. You can't live as a person if you're enslaved. A person by definition, by his or her very nature is free, and has to be able to act freely. A person by his or her very nature has to be alive. The very right to life has to be respected and protected. These are fundamental rights. The person has to able to acknowledge God. These are certain things without which you're not existing as a human person. This is what the Church means by fundamental human rights - rights without which you cannot function or cannot be a person.

When it comes to fundamental rights the Church teaches that we can discern these by human reason alone and therefore they are not simply a matter of religious teaching. Therefore, to hold the state accountable for protecting those fundamental rights *has nothing to do with imposing religious beliefs.* This is one of the key points of this doctrinal note that came out this in November 2002 from the Vatican.

Church, State, and Human Rights

Let me give you an example from some court history over the last century. In Alabama and Tennessee, there were some state court cases regarding snake handling. Some Christian Churches included the handling of poisonous snakes in their worship service, based on Jesus' words in Mark 16 that believers could handle such snakes without harm. The city, however, passed an ordinance saying that the Church could not have snake-handling, because it was endangering the lives and health of people. It should be noted that the snake-handling was *fundamental* to the belief of these churches; it was fundamental to their creed that faith would enable them to handle poisonous snakes. So the question that came before the court was, was whether the state was justified in passing ordinances and laws restricting or even prohibiting the handling of poisonous snakes in the religious service.

We have here some very, very profound constitutional issues. *Freedom of religion* - the state cannot interfere with what a Church believes or preaches or how they worship. But at the same time, the lives and health of people is on the line here. What the court ultimately said was this: we are not going to interfere with the freedom of belief - believe what you want. However, we have a responsibility to protect people, and if we see their lives are in danger we can in fact prohibit certain actions so that they are secure. The state courts relied on a Supreme Court case from the last century *(Reynolds vs. US* in 1878) which posed a hypothetical situation in which the Church would come along and say that as part of its worship service it would sacrifice a little child on the altar. Suppose a

church like that came along. The Supreme Court said, "Supposed one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship. Would we seriously contend that the civil government under which he lived could not prevent a sacrifice?"

Why is that not an infringement of the separation of Church and State? Because neither the Church nor the State can infringe upon *fundamental human rights.* And when the Church infringes on fundamental human rights by claiming that as part of it's worship service it can sacrifice a child, the state must step in and say "no." ***For the same reason and by the same principle, when the State infringes upon fundamental human rights, the Church should step in and say*** *"no."* That's the situation in which we find ourselves with respect to the abortion controversy. It has nothing at all to do with passing laws that impose religious dogma, and has everything to do with securing fundamental human rights. Brothers and sisters this is the key distinction that needs to be made strongly when we talk about this particular problem.

Concrete Examples

Concretely, we at Priests for Life have been doing everything we can, particularly over the last two election cycles, to push to the farthest limits what the Church can do. The focus of our work is abortion, and the Church has stated repeatedly that this is the fundamental moral issue of our day. That does not obviously exhaust the arena of consideration about Church-State relationships. But let me share some examples of how we have concretely addressed those relationships in the context of pro-life work.

I'll bring you back to the example of the elections of 2000. In the summer of 2000 we had a press conference in Washington, DC at the National Press Club. We brought in priests from about 25 different states and we had them all standing together at the podium at the National Press Club. What a marvelous sight, a marvelous display of unity it was. The room was full of cameras and reporters, and it was a fabulous press conference. We figured it might be only a half-hour - we would make a ten minute statement and answer questions. We were on for an hour and a half. These reporters were sitting there and it became a catechetical session. They were asking question after question. They were delving into the issue; they wanted to know more. I pointed out to them on that day that what they were seeing unfold before their eyes was something that has happened for 2000 years, because it is the mystery of the Church facing the State. We were standing up, and facing the State that day. We were not telling people how to vote or what to believe. Rather, we were telling them to be consistent. If you are a believer, if you believe that certain things are true, first of all that does not make you a second-class citizen. We are not to accept the status of second-class citizens. If you come to your conclusions about how our nation's policies should be shaped or how our leaders should be chosen based on your religious beliefs, that does not disqualify you from having just as much of an input in what those policies are or who those leaders will be as do the views of somebody who is motivated by exactly the opposite belief or no belief at all. That was point number one. Believers are not second-class citizens. We are here and this is as much our country as anyone else's.

Then we said that the country was founded on certain key principles and clear concepts and acknowledged from its beginning certain fundamental rights. We spoke out at that press conference about the right to life as the fundamental issue - not because we are the Church but because we are Americans. We produced print ads, radio and television spots and conferences across the country emphasizing this point. Our friends like Barry Lynn at Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Catholics for a Free Choice, and all of those others groups got wind of it pretty fast and they started to say about me, "Fr. Frank is calling for a Vatican takeover of America." That was the accusation. At the press conference I said we're not talking about a Vatican takeover of America. We're talking about *an American takeover of America.*

We have departed severely from the founding principles of our Nation when we have leaders in government who say that government doesn't have to protect the right to life. We've lost sight of the purpose of government itself. If a politician can't respect the life of a little baby, how is he supposed to respect yours? You can't be a public servant if you turn your back on a whole segment of the public who are being destroyed. You can't get up and say, "I have to be pro-choice because I have represent all the people" when representing *all* the people is precisely *our* argument. You are not representing all the people if some of the people are declared not persons. You're just going to throw them away, you're going to ignore them and say that doesn't matter. If they are defined out of existence you are not serving them; you are not serving all the people.

So we got up and we enunciated that as the fundamental issue in elections. And we pointed out that this is non-partisan message. Many in the media were trying to turn it into a partisan issue. I said, "Look, I didn't name a single name, I didn't even refer to a party. And I can prove to you that our message is completely non-partisan." And here's how I proved it. "No matter what candidate is running, no matter what position he or she takes and no matter what the platform of the respective parties might be, our message is always the same. That proves it's non-partisan. Would I say a single thing differently if the positions of the two major parties on abortion suddenly flip-flopped and reversed themselves? Would I be saying the same thing? Yes, I would. What if the major candidates in this election suddenly reversed their positions on this issue? Would I be saying the same thing? I would be saying *exactly* the same thing. And we would be here in the same place on the same date having the same press conference, calling for the same thing."

And that's how it always is. That's the way it is in our pulpit. The way to demonstrate that it's not a partisan issue is to simply keep our message, keep our target, say the same thing. And we call the people, to do what? *To be active.* That was our other major call both in 2000 and 2002 and now for next year to call people to be full participants in all the opportunities that our Nation gives us to shape our public policy and to choose our leaders.

Brothers and sisters we have taken lessons today from Christian history and Scripture, and those lessons continue right up to the most recent encyclical of our Holy Father, a beautiful encyclical on the Eucharist. I hope you have

a chance to read it. When you do read it you will see that there is a passage in which he talks about how the Eucharist transforms the world and points us to the world to come. In that passage he declares that *citizens of heaven are not called to neglect their duties as citizens of earth.* In the encyclical on the Eucharist he makes the very point that I have been reflecting with you about today, that Christians are called to fully exercise their citizenship in the various nations to which they belong.

Let us pray today that as a result of our conversation and as a result of the commitment that we all have, the Church will in fact become more herself, proclaiming Christ - not a Christ separated from the world but a Christ who transforms the world.

New Ecclesial Movements and the Diocesan Bishops

tLEONARDO MEDROSO, D.D.

They came in droves, some 300,000 committed laymen and women, all representatives of over 100 new ecclesial movements and faith communities around the world. They were invited to meet Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square on the vigil of Pentecost on 2 June 2006. Actually, it was not the first time that they converged in Rome. It was the second time. On this occasion, to prepare them for the eventual meeting of the Successor of Peter, they were huddled together for 3 days, from 31 May to 2 June 2006 in Rocca di Papa. They reflected on the topic: "The beauty of being a Christian and the joy of communicating this," a theme that was inspired by the homily preached by Benedict XVI at the Mass inaugurating his pontificate. On the vigil of Pentecost, they came to St. Peter's Square. The Holy Father shared with them the joy of Pentecost with these introductory words: "You belong to different peoples and cultures and represent here all the members of the ecclesial movements and new

communities, spiritually gathered round the Successor of Peter to proclaim the joy of believing in Jesus Christ and renew the commitment to be faithful disciples in our time (Benedict XVI, Homily on Pentecost)."

This event points out to all the continued existence as well as the proliferation and intensification of lay associations, small faith communities, and new ecclesial movements. They are existing not in abstract places in the world, but in dioceses and parishes, permanent basic structures of the Church's life. Hence, for these institutions to ignore the existence of these realities is, to say the least, not wise. And yet, the phenomenon, refreshing and enlivening though it may be, has been looked with askance and caution by some authorities, for it has through these years remained an unknown factor, if not a mystery, to the local Churches, ever presenting untoward juridical problems. The local authorities and their trusted counselors, many of them experts in the law of the Church, cannot place these new realities within legal dimensions. The issuance of the Code of Canon Law in 1983 with its definitions and classifications of a thousand and one possible configurations of lay groupings somehow ease that tension, giving the bishops the needed locus to identify and define them. But the difficulty is still there, for the legal norms have not spelled out specific references to the juridical space of these new ecclesial realities.

All the while the Magisterium of the Church has gone out to ease the tensions. The event that occurred in 2 June 2006 was in fact a mere follow-up of a series of events and papal pronouncements, oral as well as written, that has articulately expressed the profound concern of the Popes regarding the status of these communities in

relation to the local Church where they exist. Immediately prior to this event was the first world congress of ecclesial communities and lay movements convened by the late Pope John Paul II in June 1998. The following year a meeting of bishops around the world was convened in Rome to shrug off some apprehensions, suspicions, and tensions created by the existence of such communities. It was expected to come out with some concrete resolutions as purported in its theme: "The ecclesial movements in the pastoral solicitude of the Bishops".

These acts of the Magisterium are meant to send signals to the bishops and the priests to welcome these new movements. The Holy Father has accepted them as part of the apostolate of the Church, recognized their charisms as providential gifts of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the local churches, and reminded them of their duties towards the local authorities. This was particularly expressed by Pope Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, in his address to the bishops in the 1999 meeting when he said: "Here, suddenly, something no one had planned. Here, so to speak, the Holy Spirit had taken the floor once again. And in young men and women, the faith was re-embraced, without 'ifs' and 'buts', without escape hatches or loopholes, lived in its totality as a gift, as a precious life-giving gift (J. Ratzinger, The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements in Church Movement, p. 24)." It was on the same occasion that he tried to establish the proper theological place of these movements. These "should be identified in apostolicity, which is the dimension from which a particular bond emerges to it to the ministry of the Successor of Peter... The papacy did not create move-

ments but it was their essential support in the structure of the Church, their ecclesial pillar. The Pope needs these services and they need him, and in the reciprocity of these two types of mission, the symphony of ecclesial life is fulfilled (ibid., p. 39 and 46)."

If these movements are one with the Pope, extending to him the services needed by him in his apostolicity, then they too should be one in communion with the diocesan bishops and the priests in the parishes. Filled with missionary dynamism, these movements could become part of the life of the local churches. If they are welcomed by the bishops and priests within the diocesan and parish structures, they could generate renewed vigor to the faithful.

As Cardinal Ratzinger put it: T therefore recommend that they be spread and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelization, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves" (ibid.).

And yet, when one comes to it, the conflict between these movements and local communities is a reality. It is perhaps caused by human frailty vis-a-vis the freshness of the Word of God and the radicality of the life offered by the movements. It can happen that the awakening spurred on by the Holy Spirit works in human beings whose immaturity or youthful enthusiasm made them, at least for a while, snobbish or exclusive. To insert themselves into the life of the parish is for them to be again dragged into a Christian life that is drab and traditional. Or, perhaps, it is caused by the suspicion of the faithful in the local Church, who perceive the new ecclesial

communities not only as a threat to their religiosity, but as unknown realities and yet undeniably powerful in its promotion of Christian life. Or, perhaps, it is triggered by some apprehensions among the local authorities of the Church thinking that such radical movements of the Holy Spirit may disturb the on-going diocesan pastoral programs and activities. Whatever the cause, frictions have come to the fore.

It is within this context that the late John Paul II had in several occasions expressed his desire to put together these two realities in a harmonious relationship. It was his dream to see the movements humbly becoming an integral part of the local Church; to see bishops and priests within the diocesan and parish structures welcome these groups as gifts from the Holy Spirit. For him there is no opposition between charism and institution. There is dynamic complementarity between them. He expressed this doctrine very clearly in a 2 March 1987 address: "In the Church, both the institutional and the charismatic aspects, both the hierarchy and associations and movements of the faithful, are co-essential and share in fostering life, renewal and sanctification, though in different ways". He reiterated this same thought in 1998 when he said: "Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church, founded by Jesus, because they both help to make the mystery of Christ and his saving grace present in the world (John Paul II, Message, 27 May 1998, n. 5)."

Within this line of thought Cardinal Ratzinger also gave this wise admonition: "Both sides must open themselves here to an education by the Holy Spirit and also by the leadership of the Church. Both sides must learn from each other, allow themselves to be purified by each

other, put up with each other, and discover how to attain those attitudes of which Paul speaks in his great hymn to love. Thus, it is necessary to remind the movements that they are a gift to and in the whole of the Church and must submit themselves to the demands of this totality in order to be true to their own essence. But the local churches, too, even the bishops, must be reminded to avoid making an ideal of uniformity in pastoral organization and planning. They must not make their own pastoral plans the criterion of what the Holy Spirit is allowed to do... (ibid.)."

It then falls on the bishops the task to take another serious look at all these new ecclesial movements and communities. They are the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the local church. With the charism that they have as ordained servant leaders of the community, with the authoritative pronouncements, acts and testimonies of the Magisterium, and, above all, with the sacramental grace that they received in their ordination as shepherds of the Church, the bishops should have that confidence and poise to appreciate and respect the autonomy of the various charisms of these ecclesial communities and movements existing in his jurisdiction, carefully discerning with the founders and the members the genuineness of the charisms that have been let loose, helping them draft the statutes that would faithfully enshrine the nature and objectives of their communities, and gradually inviting them to insert themselves, as far as their rightful autonomy permits, into the structures and organizational set-up of the diocese and parishes. This episcopal act, simple though it may seem, will go a long way not only in guaranteeing the continuity and unity of faith in the local Churches, but also in bringing this experienced faith beyond territorial boundaries.

Homily on the Solemnity of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ

POPE BENEDICT XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the eve of his Passion, during the Passover meal, the Lord took the bread in his hands - as we heard a short time ago in the Gospel passage - and, having blessed it, he broke it and gave it to his Disciples, saying: "Take this, this is my body". He then took the chalice, gave thanks and passed it to them and they all drank from it. He said: "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many" (Mk 14:22-24).

The entire history of God with humanity is recapitulated in these words. The past alone is not only referred to and interpreted, but the future is anticipated - the coming of the Kingdom of God into the world. What Jesus says are not simply words. What he says is an event, the central event of the history of the world and of our personal lives.

These words are inexhaustible. In this hour, I would like to meditate with you on just one aspect. Jesus, as a

sign of his presence, chose bread and wine. With each one of the two signs he gives himself completely, not only in part. The Risen One is not divided. He is a person who, through signs, comes near to us and unites himself to us.

Each sign however, represents in its own way a particular aspect of his mystery and through its respective manifestation, wishes to speak to us so that we learn to understand the mystery of Jesus Christ a little better.

During the procession and in adoration we look at the consecrated Host, the most simple type of bread and nourishment, made only of a little flour and water. In this way, it appears as the food of the poor, those to whom the Lord made himself closest in the first place.

The prayer with which the Church, during the liturgy of the Mass, consigns this bread to the Lord, qualifies it as fruit of the earth and the work of humans.

It involves human labor, the daily work of those who till the soil, sow and harvest [the wheat] and, finally, prepare the bread. However, bread is not purely and simply what we produce, something made by us; it is fruit of the earth and therefore is also gift.

We cannot take credit for the fact that the earth produces fruit; the Creator alone could have made it fertile. And now we too can expand a little on this prayer of the Church, saying: the bread is fruit of heaven and earth together. It implies the synergy of the forces of earth and the gifts from above, that is, of the sun and the rain. And water too, which we need to prepare the bread, cannot be produced by us.

In a period in which desertification is spoken of and where we hear time and again the warning that man and beast risk dying of thirst in these waterless regions - in such a period we realize once again how great is the gift of water and of how we are unable to produce it ourselves.

And so, looking closely at this little piece of white Host, this bread of the poor, appears to us as a synthesis of creation. Heaven and earth, too, like the activity and spirit of man, cooperate. The synergy of the forces that make the mystery of life and the existence of man possible on our poor planet come to meet us in all of their majestic grandeur.

In this way we begin to understand why the Lord chooses this piece of bread to represent him. Creation, with all of its gifts, aspires above and beyond itself to something even greater. Over and above the synthesis of its own forces, above and beyond the synthesis also of nature and of spirit that, in some way, we detect in the piece of bread, creation is projected towards divinization, toward the holy wedding feast, toward unification with the Creator himself.

And still, we have not yet explained in depth the message of this sign of bread. The Lord mentioned its deepest mystery on Palm Sunday, when some Greeks asked to see him. In his answer to this question is the phrase: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24).

The mystery of the Passion is hidden in the bread made of ground grain. Hour, the ground wheat, presupposes

the death and resurrection of the grain. In being ground and baked, it carries in itself once again the same mystery of the Passion. Only through death does resurrection arrive, as does the fruit and new life.

Mediterranean culture, in the centuries before Christ, had a profound intuition of this mystery. Based on the experience of this death and rising they created myths of divinity which, dying and rising, gave new life. To them, the cycle of nature seemed like a divine promise in the midst of the darkness of suffering and death that we are faced with.

In these myths, the soul of the human person, in a certain way, reached out toward that God made man, who, humiliated unto death on a cross, in this way opened the door of life to all of us. In bread and its making, man has understood it as a waiting period of nature, like a promise of nature that this would come to exist: the God that dies and in this way brings us to life.

What was awaited in myths and that in the very grain of wheat is hidden like a sign of the hope of creation - this truly came about in Christ. Through his gratuitous suffering and death, he became bread for all of us, and with this living and certain hope. He accompanies us in all of our sufferings until death. The paths that he travels with us and through which he leads us to life are path-ways of hope.

When, in adoration, we look at the consecrated Host, the sign of creation speaks to us. And so, we encounter the greatness of his gift; but we also encounter the Passion, the Cross of Jesus and his Resurrection. Through this

gaze of adoration, he draws us toward himself, within his mystery, through which he wants to transform us as he transformed the Host.

The primitive Church discovered yet another symbol in the bread. The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles, a book written around the year 100, contains in its prayers the affirmation: "Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom" (IX, 4).

Bread made of many grains contains also an event of union: the ground grain becoming bread is a process of unification. We ourselves, many as we are, must become one bread, one body, as St. Paul says (cf. I Cor 10:17). In this way the sign of bread becomes both hope and fulfilment.

In a very similar way the sign of wine speaks to us. However, while bread speaks of daily life, simplicity and pilgrimage, wine expresses the exquisiteness of creation: the feast of joy that God wants to offer to us at the end of time and that already now and always anticipates anew a foretaste through this sign.

But, wine also speaks of the Passion: the vine must be repeatedly pruned to be purified in this way; the grapes must mature with the sun and the rain and must be pressed: only through this passion does a fine wine mature.

On the feast of *Corpus Christi* we especially look at the sign of bread. It reminds us of the pilgrimage of Israel during the 40 years in the desert. The Host is our manna whereby the Lord nourishes us - it is truly the bread of heaven, through which he gives himself.

In the procession we follow this sign and in this way we follow Christ himself. And we ask of him: Guide us on the paths of our history! Show the Church and her Pastors again and again the right path! Look at suffering humanity, cautiously seeking a way through so much doubt; look upon the physical and mental hunger that torments it! Give men and women bread for body and soul! Give them work! Give them light! Give them yourself! Purify and sanctify all of us! Make us understand that only through participation in your Passion, through "yes" to the cross, to self-denial, to the purifications that you impose upon us, our lives can mature and arrive at true fulfillment. Gather us together from all corners of the earth. Unite your Church, unite wounded humanity! Give us your salvation! Amen.

Quotes:

Jesus, as a sign of his presence, chose bread and wine. With each one of the two signs he gives himself completely, not only in part. The Risen One is not divided. He is a person who, through signs, comes near to us and unites himself to us.

The mystery of the Passion is hidden in the bread made of ground grain. Flour, the ground wheat, presupposes the death and resurrection of the grain. In being ground and baked, it carries in itself once again the same mystery of the Passion. Only through death does resurrection arrive, as does the fruit and new life.

But, wine also speaks of the Passion: the vine must be repeatedly pruned to be purified in this way; the grapes must mature with the sun and the rain and must be pressed: only through this passion does a fine wine mature.

ARTICLES

History of the Rosary

FR. ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, O.R

Until the early part of the 17th century, it was widely believed that St. Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers (commonly known as the *Dominican Order)* received the Rosary from the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. Although many present-day devotional paintings, pictures, calendars, and altar pieces still attest to this belief, historians generally agree that the Rosary, as a form of prayer, is a product of centuries of evolution which began long before the time of St. Dominic.

What the world owes to St. Dominic and the Dominicans is not the Rosary as a formula for praying, but as a devotion with lingering popularity and as an instrument of preaching the Catholic faith. Biographers of St. Dominic (1170-1221) are one in saying that he had a great love for the Blessed Mother. His preaching was interspersed with Marian invocations and meditations on the mysteries of Jesus. Many Dominicans after him formed confraternities of lay people whose devout and regular recitation of *Hail Marys* closely resembled the present-day communal recita-

tion of the Rosary. As Fr. Richard Gribble, CSC writes: "It would **not** be **inaccurate** to call the Dominicans the principal promoters and defenders of the Rosary through history."

The evolution of the rosary is rooted in every believer's desire to link oneself with the Divine. Prayer is at the heart of every religion. Whether ritualized or spontaneous, communal or individual, vocal or mental, prayer serves as an effective link between the human person and the Divine. Through it, a believer not only expresses praise, worship, supplication, reparation, or intercession, but also an insatiable thirst to pierce through the sublime mystery of the Divine. Since the mystery remains impenetrable, the repetition of prayers becomes necessary. The repetition is like a persistent "knocking at the door" of meaning and understanding. Authentic prayer occurs when understanding, however imperfect, somehow grasps the meaning of the Divine, delighting in it in an overpowering moment of mystical communion.

St. Paul urges the Christians of first century Thessalonica to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:1). And in his letter to Rome, the Apostle instructs the Christian community there to "be constant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). He not only demands unceasing prayer of the Christians in his care, but practices it himself. He writes in his letter to the Thessalonian community: "We constantly thank God for you" (1 Thess. 2:13), and he comforts Timothy, his "true child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2) with the words: "Always I remember you in my prayers" (2 Tim. 1:3). In fact, whenever St. Paul speaks of prayer in his letters, two Greek words repeatedly appear: *pantote*, which means

always; and *adialeptos,* meaning *without interruption* or *unceasingly.* Prayer is then not merely a part of life which we can conveniently lay aside if something we deem more important comes up; **prayer is all of life.** Prayer is as essential to our life as breathing.

This raises some important questions. How can we be expected to pray all the time? We are, after all, very busy people. Our work, our spouse, our children, our school - all place heavy demands upon our time. How can we fit more time for prayer into our already overcrowded lives? These questions and the many others like them which could be asked set up a false dichotomy in our lives as Christians. To pray does not mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things or to spend time with God in contrast to spending time with our family and friends. Rather, **to pray means to think and live our entire life in the Presence of God.** Prayer formulas, like the Rosary is one way of enkindling this awareness.

Prefigurations of the Rosary

Spontaneous or ritualized prayer formulas repeated incessantly have been characteristic of world religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and even Islam. Prayer counters such as rocks, sticks, notches in wood, and even knots and beads were used to keep track of the number of prayers uttered. The idea of using a string of beads to facilitate prayer and meditation is not exclusive to Christianity.

As early as the 9th century B.C., Hindus were already using prayer beads in worshipping their gods. Today, devotees of Shiva use a rosary of 32 or 64 beads; while those who worship Vishnu use a prayer counter of 108 beads.

In contemporary Korea, Buddhists use a rosary of 110 beads; while Japanese Buddhists use a very complex rosary that requires them to recite over 36,000 prayers. In islam, 200 years after the death of the prophet Muhammad, Muslims prayed using a rosary of 99 beads, each one corresponding to a name and attribute of Allah. Christianity is perhaps the last world religion to use a rosary in its worship. How did this come about?

Before the Psalms in the Old Testament became the main body of the liturgical prayer of the Church, there were formulas or invocations that Christians uttered repeatedly. The early Christian monks who went out into the desert to live and pray in the 2nd through the 4th centuries had a preference for short, repetitious prayer ("monological prayer"). The Orthodox Church has looked to these Desert Fathers as a major source of spiritual wisdom. A favorite repetitious prayer of these monks was *Kyrie eleison* (Lord, have mercy). By the sixth century, the statement of the tax collector in Luke 18:13 became the basis of the prayer. "God, have pity on me, a sinner." This later evolved into what is now known as the *Jesus* ***Prayer:*** *"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have pity on me a sinner."* It was hoped that a Christian could move from vocal prayer to meditation, and finally contemplation by repeating this invocation. Also called the ***Prayer of the Heart,*** the *Jesus prayer* disposes the Christian to pray as regularly as the heartbeat.

Our Father

With the establishment of monasteries, monks and nuns recited the 150 Psalms in the Old Testament as an

essential element of their religious obligation (their *Divine Office).* Aside from being scriptural, the Psalms are beautiful songs of worship, repentance, thanksgiving, and supplication - the stuff from which prayer is made of. Later, the daily recitation of the Psalms became the focal point within which the daily life of monks and nuns revolved. They would practically recite the entire 150 Psalms every single day, distributed equally among their Morning, Midday, and Evening prayer schedule.

This arrangement was good for the monks and nuns, and later for the clergy, but the laity was greatly disadvantaged by it. Majority of the laity could hardly read, and they had no copies of the Bible. Shortly after the beginning of the 12th century, lay people found a way of participating in the *Divine Office* that was performed in monasteries and convents by reciting 150 times, the Lord's Prayer *(Pater Noster)* lifted verbatim from the Gospel of Matthew. They would count their *Pater Nosters* by using pebbles. This practice became so popular that instead of pebbles, the laity would get a large rope and tie 150 knots in it. Every knot corresponded with one *Pater Noster.* This long rope was later shortened to one with 50 knots, which they used three times a day. It can be said that the first form of the Rosary came in the recitation of the 150 *Pater Nosters.*

Hail Mary

Towards the end of the 12th century, the invocation *"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb"* took on an importance equal to that of the *Pater Noster.* This Marian invocation, taken from Luke 1:28 and

Luke 1:42, is a combination of the greeting to Mary by the angel Gabriel, and Elizabeth's exultant salutation to Mary. In 1198, the *Hail Mary* was listed along with the Apostles Creed and the *Pater Noster* as official Church prayer. The importance given to the *Hail Mary* logically arose from the Church's affirmation of the Blessed Mother's crucial role in the life and mission of Jesus. The 150 *Hail Marys* which soon took the place of the 150 *Pater Nosters* which, in turn, were used in place of the 150 Psalms, constituted what was called ***"Mary's Psalter".*** The name *Jesus* was believed to have been added to the *Hail Mary* as early as 1261 by Pope Urban IV but the addition came into popular usage only 200 years later.

Holy Mary

The phrase *"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen"* was believed to have been added to the Rosary during the 16th century. But this phrase was first used in the document of the Council of Ephesus held in 431 A.D., which defined as a dogma of faith Mary as the Mother of God *(theotokos).* In 1495, the Dominican reformer Girolamo Savonarola wrote in a preface for one of his numerous writings an invocation that is practically the same as our modern prayer: *"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death, Amen."* Finally, in the Catechism issued by the Council of Trent in the first half of the 16th century, the definitive form of the invocation was fixed. It goes: *"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen."* In 1568, the complete prayer: *"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women and*

blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen." came with the publication of the Roman Breviary.

Glory Be

The doxology *"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit..."* recited at the conclusion of each decade of the Rosary originates from the popular Jewish doxology: *"God be praised!"* From the 3rd century, the doxology was used to conclude the recitation of each of the 150 psalms, both in the Western and Easter Catholic Churches. In 529 A.D., the Second Council of Vaison declared that all territories beyond the Alps must pray the doxology in this way: *"Glory be to the Father and to the Son and the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."* History has shown, however, that the doxology was never officially included among the Rosary prayers. In fact, as late as 1882, when Pope Leo XIII issued his first encyclical on the Rosary, he never mentioned the *Glory be.* Nor did Pius XI mention it in his encyclical published in 1937. Regardless of the these facts, the doxology became a popular part of the recitation of the Rosary.

The Creed and Salve Regina

The praying of the Creed as part of the Rosary was first mentioned in a book entitled *Libellus Perutilis,* published in 1495. The author of this work suggested that the *Hail Marys,* together with the *Pater Noster* formed, as it were, a garland of roses connected around a hoop which is the *Creed.* The most celebrated Marian hymn, the *Salve*

Regina, became a popular prayer through the Latin Church. In the 12th century, it was used as an antiphon during the recitation or chanting of Mary's *Magnificat* and as a processional chant among many monastic and religious orders. By the 17th century, through popular practice, this beautiful hymn, containing many relevant medieval themes and titles of the Blessed Mother, capped the recitation of the Rosary.

"O my Jesus..."

By popular practice, this short invocation is now said between each mystery of the Rosary. On June 13, 1917, in one of the apparitions of Our Lady to Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco, she instructed them: "Say the Rosary, inserting between the mysteries the following prayer - *"O my Jesus, forgive us. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need."* At Lourdes, Mary had appeared to Bernadette Soubiros with a rosary wrapped in her hands but her message to Bernadette did not mention the rosary. At Fatima, however, the Blessed Virgin acknowledged herself as the Lady of the Rosary. Her message was simple and direct: "Pray the Rosary each day for world peace".

The Mysteries: Rosaria

The essence of the Rosary prayer, however, lies not in the mere recitation of the various prayers included in it. The central focus of this devotion is the meditation on mysteries in the life of Jesus and Mary's unique role in his life and mission.

In the early 15th century, a Carthusian monk, Dominic of Prussia developed a way of reciting the Rosary with 50

Hail Marys and linked these with 50 meditative phrases about Jesus and Mary. These meditative phrases (called *clausulae)* were actually brief summaries of some aspects of the life and work of Jesus. These phrases would later be known as the ***mysteries of the Rosary.*** Originally, 14 dealt with the hidden life of Jesus, 6 dealt with his public life, 22 were about his passion, and 8 dealt with the glorification of Jesus and the coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It was also in this century that the word *Rosarium* (rose garden) was applied to the recitation of 50 *Hail Marys.* At about the same time, another Carthusian, Henry Kalkar, contributed further to the development of the Rosary by dividing the 50 *Hail Marys* into groups of 10, forming five decades with a *Pater Noster* before each decade.

At the latter part of the 15th century, the 50 mysteries had been reduced to 15 mysteries, one for each decade of *Hail Marys.* In 1470, the Dominican Alan de la Roche (Alan de Rupe) founded the *Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary* (which later evolved into the *Confraternity of the Holy Rosary)* contributing enormously to the Rosary's popularity. In 1483, a book about the Rosary was written by a Dominican entitled *Our Dear Lady's Psalter,* in which he enumerated the 15 mysteries of the Rosary which are the same as the modern-day mysteries except for the final two glorious mysteries. In the version of this anonymous Dominican, the 4th glorious mystery is the assumption and coronation of Mary, while the 5th mystery is the Last Judgment. In 1573, another Dominican set the typical division of the mysteries into the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious.

In 1569, Pope St. Pius V definitively fixed the formula for praying the Rosary, taking into consideration the many modifications through history. He also officially affirmed the Rosary as an efficacious individual and communal prayer, and assured its many devotees graces and indulgences. Pope Gregory XIII established the feast of the Holy Rosary, celebrated every October 7. The concluding prayer of the Rosary is taken from the Mass for this Feast, which goes: *"In meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, we ask that we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise through Christ our Lord."*

The Popes and the Rosary

The universal appeal of the Rosary among the faithful and their spontaneous attachment to it are a proof that the Blessed Mother always has a place in the hearts of the faithful. It is interesting to note that the Rosary was born out of the simple Catholics' desire to participate in the official prayer of the Church. The phenomenal popularity and persistence of this devotion is an instance of the *sensus* ***fidei,*** a proof that the Holy Spirit works among the faithful in ways that the official teaching office of the Church and those who hold it cannot anticipate.

To their credit, many Popes were not wanting in showing support for the propagation of the Rosary. Among the notable ones were Pope Leo X, Gregory XII, Sixtus V, Clement VII, Alexander VII, Blessed Innocent XI, Clement XI, Innocent XIII, and Pope Benedict XIV In the 19th century, the golden season of the Rosary began with Leo XIII, rightly called the *Pope of the Rosary.* He issued numerous documents in praise of this devotion and urged the formation of what he called "army of contem-

platives" who would recite this prayer daily as a weapon against society's evils. Probably the most significant comment on the Rosary made by a modern-day Pope came from Pius XII. He stressed the inseparable link between the Rosary and the family. For him, the Rosary is a family prayer, "a most efficacious means to transform the family into an earthly abode of sanctity, a sacred temple, a school of Christian discipline and Christian virtue."

Following Pius XIFs lead, Father Patrick Peyton, CSC, internationally known as *The Rosary Priest,* popularized the saying "The family that prays together, stays together."

The apparitions of Our Lady and the numerous victories of Christian armies and fleet against their enemies, also gave impetus to the official Church's support of the Rosary. In all of these special events, Mary asked all Christians to pray the Rosary as a sure way to obtain peace and combat the devastating effects of materialism and false ideologies.

A Logic of Love

Pope Pius XI in his encyclical letter on September 20, 1937 described the Rosary as a prayer governed by "a logic of love." He wrote that it is characteristic of those in love to repeat many, many times the same words of affection to their beloved. Yet such repetitions are not futile or vicious because, to both the lover and the beloved, the same words always express something new and life-giving.

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Marialis Cultus* promulgated on February 2, 1974, calls the Rosary a "compendium of the Gospel" and a Gospel prayer. Despite this magisterial support for the Rosary, many lay faithful, theologians,

religious, even seminarians, perhaps influenced by the prevailing skepticism and liberalism of the post-Vatican II period, looked at the Rosary as a pious practice that has outlived its usefulness. Beginning in the West, the communal recitation of the Rosary gradually disappeared in the prayer schedule of many convents and religious houses. The tradition of praying the Rosary in the family also suffered because of the hectic pace of modern living, the preponderance of communications and information and entertainment media, as well as the unmitigated upsurge of materialism and secularism.

A vibrant hope for the future of the Rosary was born on October 16, 2002, when Pope John Paul II signed the document *Rosarium Virginis Mariae,* the Apostolic letter which he considers as the Marian crowning of his other significant encyclical *Novo millennio ineunte.* Focusing on the Christological dimension of the prayer, and completing what has long been lacking in the meditation of the life of Christ, the Pope added the *"Mysteries of Light",* five mysteries corresponding to the public life of Jesus, and stressed that the Rosary remains, as ever, an important instrument for evangelization. He also reminds all Catholics that the Rosary is an effective tool for ecumenism and promoting world peace. He writes: "The Rosary is, by its nature a prayer for peace, since it consists in the contemplation of Christ, the giver of Peace."

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Final Statement: Consultation on Human Formation of Priests - Challenges in the Asian Context 2006

FABC - OFFICE OF CLERGY

I. Introduction

Seventy three rectors/formators from different major seminaries in 14 countries and regions of Asia - Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam - gathered together from May 14 to 19, 2006 at the Salesian Retreat House, Hua Hin, Thailand, for a consultation on the theme "HUMAN FORMATION OF PRIESTS - CHALLENGES IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT". This consultation is the very first programme conducted by the Office of Clergy of the Federation of the Asian

A reference to the document published by the Congregation for Catholic Education on 4th November, 2005: *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders* was done.

Bishops' Conferences (FABC-OC). The meeting enjoyed the effective support of the FABC Secretariat in Hong Kong, and the fraternal and meaningful collaboration of the Office of Consecrated Life, Office of Social Communication, and Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy.

II. Objectives of the Consultation

This consultation had the following objectives:

1. To help clarify the identity of the Priest.
2. To enhance ministry and life of priests.
3. To help priests meet the challenges encountered in present-day Asia in keeping with the dignity and demands of priesthood.

III. Vision

The assembly observed many lights and shadows in the ministry and life of the clergy in Asia. The seminarians in formation should be helped to objectively face both these aspects. One key point highlighted was the need to have a clear vision of what a priest should be. The Church in Asia needs to form a priest who is:

A person of God-experience and is driven by pastoral charity; a person of evangelical counsels and moral integrity; a person who is welcoming and compassionate; a person in solidarity with the poor, a person of relationship and is able to live in and form communities; a humble companion - a brother, father, mother, and friend - on the journey to God; a person of dialogue, justice and peace and is a servant-leader in a servant Church.

What marked this Consultation was the frank exploration of issues related to human formation of priests especially celibacy and sexuality such as heterosexual and homosexual relationships and behaviors, pedophilia, sexual abuse, masturbation and pornography. The insights from this Consultation hopefully contribute toward healthy, contextuahzed and integral formation of priests for 21st century Asia.

We observe that:

Generally in Asia God has blessed the Church with an embarrassment of riches in regard to vocations to priestly and religious life. Seminaries and religious houses of formation do not lack candidates. Our priests are well educated, above the average population. They have a reasonably adequate spiritual formation. Our seminaries have well qualified professors to teach philosophy and theology. Seminaries have a number of spiritual directors, though not all of them are sufficiently trained.

Current formation programmes in seminaries are not sufficiently holistic. While importance is given to the intellectual formation of seminarians, attention given to human and spiritual formation is inadequate. Lack of formation in handling emotions, loneliness and frustration, and healing from hurts often leads to unhealthy relationships and addictions. Over protective and controlled environment of the seminary prevents seminarians from making responsible choices based on inner convictions.

The onslaughts of secularism, materialism, and relativism, some features of the merging global culture as

well as conflicts arising from the plurality of cultures within the formation environment, rise of religious fundamentalism - all these are undermining and confusing the value systems of our seminarians. Lack of contact with people, especially the poor, prevents seminarians from really knowing their situation and growing in solidarity with them. Proper accompaniment of seminarians, especially during conflicts related to close relationships with women is inadequate. There is a growing tendency among some seminarians and priests to opt for a comfortable and easy-going lifestyle.

The life style of some formators as well as some of the priests they encounter during their pastoral ministry and during holidays seem to influence seminarians negatively, often providing a different image of the priesthood than the one they are taught in the seminary. Dysfunctional family backgrounds of some seminarians negatively affect the formation process.

Generally lifestyle of priests is simple, often even austere. In their ministry priests reach out to the margins of society, even to remote and normally inaccessible villages. Priests in general exhibit a particular closeness to and solidarity with the poor. Generally priests get along well with their fellow priests and exhibit, at least with their ordination group, spiritual bonding and solidarity. Priests in general strive toward an ever deeper spirituality through prayer and ongoing formation through occasional seminars, regular retreats and recollections.

In Asian cultures, people usually do not like to reveal incidents and situations that present others in bad light. Hence the prevalence of misconduct, especially

sexual, among seminarians and priests is not much known. There are incidents of sexual misconduct by seminarians and clergy. In some cases, legal action has been taken on offenders. Sometimes the mass media sensationalizes and exaggerates incidents of sexual misconduct by members of the clergy. The Church in Asia is not effectively addressing the issue of clergy sexual misconduct with regard to both the victims and the offenders.

We are convinced that:

Formation has to be holistic - human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral. It is to be directed toward forming priests whose life and motivations are centred on Jesus Christ. Human formation is fundamental to all other aspects of formation of the priest. The very ministry of the priest calls for human maturity. To be able to minister to God's people in today's multi-religious Asian context, priests have to be emotionally well-balanced persons.

Seminaries need to give more attention to the human formation of the seminarians than they currently do. To be able to form such priests, formators themselves have to be well-integrated human beings. The seminary environment has to be characterized by freedom, serenity, openness and rapport that foster trust, inner convictions and right motivation.

Criteria of human maturity are culturally conditioned. Human formation imparted in seminaries need to respect the diverse cultural criteria and expectations. It is important that simplicity of life is an essential characteristic to the life style of priests in the Asian context.

Sexual misconduct of priests separates them from the people they minister to, diminishes the effectiveness of their ministry and has serious repercussions on the moral authority of the Church. Seminaries need to be adequately equipped to provide adequate human formation with a sufficient number of trained counselors and spiritual directors who are comfortable and competent in helping candidates who come to them especially with problems related to sexual and affective maturation and integrity.

We recommend that:

Seminary formation give priority to forming men of God characterized by deep interiority, human maturity and simplicity of life. A full year between philosophical and theological studies is especially devoted to facilitate this. Seminary training needs to foster a great sense of respect for all people, with a special insistence on gender sensitivity and equality.

Greater attention is given to recruitment of candidates with special attention given to family background. Clear guidelines are formulated, and help of qualified psychologists taken to screen candidates for actual or potential psychological disorders. Greater attention is given to the human, social and pastoral formation of the candidate so that seminary formation becomes more holistic.

There is better accompaniment of seminarians, through mentoring, counseling and spiritual direction. All seminaries have trained counselors and spiritual directors who besides being competent are also deeply spiritual and love their work. There is in the seminary an environment that fosters freedom, openness, trust and inner convictions.

Well balanced and guided exposure programmes that give seminarians real life experiences among people, especially the poor and marginalized, are carefully designed and implemented. Cultural factors are taken into consideration in doing this. For greater human maturity, study programmes in seminaries are co-educational wherever possible and lay persons and religious women are on the teaching staff of seminaries.

Seminarians who experience problems related to sexuality and human maturity are given the needed help. If they do not show improvement even after that, they are asked to discontinue seminary formation. Seminarians who have engaged in pedophilic activities or with clearly diagnosed pedophilic tendencies, or deep-seated sexual disturbances discontinue seminary formation.

Candidates who have been dismissed or persuaded to discontinue at one seminary for problems related to sexuality and human maturity are not admitted to any other seminary.

Careful attention is given to selection and training of formators. Academic qualification and competence are not the sole criteria. They are deeply spiritual and communitarian and have good relational and helping skills. Ecclesiastical provinces/dioceses design a system of ongoing formation for and accompaniment of priests and for formators.

Dioceses or regional bodies formulate a *Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct for Clergy* and *Procedures and Policies* to deal with cases of sexual misconduct on the part of seminarians and clergy. Victims of clergy offenders

are given needed support, compassion and means for healing and recovery. Priest offenders are treated with empathy and compassion and provided the psychological and spiritual help needed for healing and containment. Disciplinary action is taken where needed. If rehabilitated, they are not entrusted with any ministry where they are vulnerable to relapse. The Church should set up, preferably at the regional level, specialized treatment centres/ programmes for troubled priests.

V. Conclusion

We, the delegates wish to express our deep gratitude to the Office of Clergy of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference for organizing the consultation and to all bishops, religious, priests and lay staff that contributed to the orderly preparation and conducting of the meeting. It has indeed succeeded in letting us know that we are not alone in our mission and has empowered us to move on amidst many challenges entailed in the task of formation. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Priests whom we constantly invoked during the days of consultation, intercede for all candidates to priesthood and formators.

Cases and Inquiries

FR. JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

THE DIOCESAN SYNOD: CONSULTATIVE OR LEGISLATIVE?

QUESTION:

*May **I** ask about the nature and the juridical character of the Diocesan Synod: Is it a consultative assembly or a legislative one?*

ANSWER:

1) ***Regarding the nature*** of the diocesan Synod I will say the following:

The diocesan Synod is a joint assembly of priests, religious and lay faithful of a diocese which assists the diocesan Bishop in his pastoral ministry. The purpose of the diocesan Synod is precisely "the good of the whole diocesan community" (c. 460) and can be convoked by the diocesan Bishop when the circumstances suggest, in order to confer with him on various questions and projects that are to be carried out in the diocese.

How frequent should a diocesan Synod be held? It depends on the needs of each particular Church. The frequency of the Diocesan Synod is something left up to the diocesan Bishop to determine, after consulting the council of priests.

Who are the members "entitled" to participate in the Synod? The Code of Canon Law (cf can. 463) provides a list of those who are to be summoned to the diocesan Synod as members, and hence with the obligation to participate in it:

1) the coadjutor Bishop and the auxiliary Bishops
2) the Vicars general and Episcopal Vicars, and the judicial Vicar;
3) the canons of the cathedral church;
4) the members of the council of priests;
5) lay members of Christ's faithful, not excluding members of institutes of consecrated life, to be elected by the pastoral council in the manner and the number to be determined by the diocesan Bishop or, where this council does not exist, on a basis determined by the diocesan Bishop;
6) the rector of the major seminary of the diocese;
7) the vicars forane;
8) at least one priest from each vicariate forane to be elected by all those who have the care of souls there; another priest is also to be elected, to take the place of the first if he is prevented from attending;

9) some Superiors of religious institutes and of societies of apostolic life which have a house in the diocese: these are to be elected in the number and the manner determined by the diocesan Bishop;

10) Others, freely invited by the diocesan Bishop, whether clerics or members of institutes of consecrated life or lay persons. He may even invite to the diocesan Synod some ministers or members of Churches or ecclesial communities which are not in ful communion with the catholic Church.

As it can be seen, some members belong to the synod by reason of the office they have in the diocese (bishop, vicars, rector of the seminary, etc.), whereas others are elected or designated by the diocesan bishop so that all the ecclesial sectors may be represented (clerics, laity, consecrated persons, brethren of other denominations).

2) ***Regarding the juridical character*** *of* the Diocesan Synod, I hurry up to say in answer to the query, that the Diocesan Synod is a **consultative** assembly. The canonical provision says that all questions proposed are to be subject to the free discussion of the members in the sessions of the Synod, but that "the diocesan Bishop is the **sole legislator** in the diocesan Synod." Hence he alone signs the synodal declarations and decrees, and only by his authority may these be published. (The text of the declarations and decrees is to be communicated to the Metropolitan and to the Episcopal Conference.)

Two more things to round up somehow the juridical nature of the diocesan Synod: First, that the diocesan Synod can be suspended or dissolved by the diocesan Bishop. Second, that should the Episcopal See become vacant or impeded, the diocesan Synod is by virtue of the law itself suspended (cf. 468 §2) until such time as the diocesan Bishop who succeeds to the See decrees that it be continued or declares it terminated.

HOW MAY A LAY PERSON HELP IN A BEATIFICATION PROCESS?

QUESTION:

Can a lay person help in a cause of beatification whose process is already on going? How or in what ways may he/she help? May the publication of the process be one of them?

ANSWER:

I am not a Postulator myself, so what follows is only my opinion on the matter.

Certainly lay persons *can* and *should* help in every stage of the beatification and canonization processes. This he/she can do in various ways:

1) BEFORE a cause is started, a lay person may propose to the local Bishop the idea of initiating the cause of beatification of a Servant of God (or insist on it if the idea has been already proposed). Likewise, he or she may even volunteer to assume the role of "sponsor" of the cause and to help the postulator seek information about the life of the Servant of God and the reasons for promoting the cause. (Sponsors are normally institutions, such as a diocese, a parish, a religious institute, a religious Province, an association, etc.) Pope John Paul IPs Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* (1983) and the *Normae* by the Congregation for the Causes

of Saints, both issued in 1983, have updated the legislation regarding this special process.

2) WHILE the cause or process is going on, a lay person may support it by providing the means of promoting it, as for instance, financial assistance, since a beatification cause involves significant expense incurred in the payment to at least one researcher or historian entrusted with the gathering of documentation; payment to medical experts who pass judgment on the proposed "miracles" or unexplainable cures attributed to the intercession of the person; travel costs for the thorough examination of the life, writings and miracles of a candidate for sainthood. Also, there will be expenses for persons to be interviewed; testimonies to be gathered and sometimes translated; photocopies of documents to be obtained; the printing of the *Positio,* and... the Beatification ceremony expenses, which the Apostolic See passes on to the Postulator's office, which will in turn ask the sponsor for assistance.

3) Finally, if the *Positio* has been already written, a lay person may volunteer to continue searching for additional data or information about the Servant of God, such as letters, writings, biographical data, etc.

October-November 2006
Sunday Homilies

NOT ONE OF US?
Fr. John D. O'Connor, O.P.
Twenty-Sixth Sunday of the Year (B)

It's a fact of human nature that we often think of others in terms of what positive qualities they lack, rather than in terms of the positive qualities they actually have. Sometimes we make this worse by doing the exact opposite when it comes to ourselves, ignoring our own faults, and then comparing our estimation of others with that of ourselves.

It's what the disciples do in today's gospel. We are presented with the disciples reporting to Jesus the activity of some unknown man who is casting out devils in his name. He could be a follower of Christ who has proceeded to bring the Good News to others.

On the other hand, he could be someone who is not really a follower of Christ, but who uses Christ's name in exorcisms. The fact that he successfully exorcises indicates the activity of God in his actions. What is clear is that he is not one of the disciples and they want to exclude him.

Of course, you might say that the disciples are realistic: you need to have some conditions for discipleship, otherwise discipleship would be meaningless. That is true. But Mark is not focusing on this aspect in today's gospel. We see this because in his account the disciples do not say to Jesus:

> and because **he was not one of *your* followers**
> we tried to stop him.

Instead, they say:

> because he was **not one of** *us*....

What they object to is that the unknown exorcist is not one of their group, and not that he is not a full disciple of Christ. In their eyes they have become the standard by which discipleship is measured and the call of Christ is effectively sidelined. They have concentrated on what the man is not, and not the fact that he successfully exorcises in Christ's name.

This is despite the fact that only a little earlier in the same chapter it is the disciples who are unable to exorcise a demon from a young boy. So, we have here the irony that if we apply the disciples' exclusionary approach to

themselves then it is they who deserve to be excluded. Unlike the unknown man, it is they who are unable to exorcise in Christ's name.

By setting up their own standards they can blissfully ignore their own faults and feel righteous. However, there is a further catch: by trying to exclude the exorcist they show their misunderstanding of Christ's message, and so they merit their own exclusion all the more.

This is not something peculiar to the disciples. It can happen in our Christian communities or in any group situation and we should be aware of it, remembering that inasmuch as we try to exclude others unfairly from Christ, we exclude ourselves. Thankfully, this is not the last word because, although we are often exclusionary, God is not.

Today's gospel therefore confronts any presumption we may have to superiority, challenging us to find the good qualities in others rather than the negative. This may mean having to give up feelings of self-righteousness and superiority which we all love so very dear. It is a serious business because these feelings and the behavior they lead to undermine faith through forms of exclusion, subtle or otherwise.

Jesus makes this point very strongly indeed:

> But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck.

How do you read this? Do you take this as a warning? It is a warning, of course, not to harm the little ones. But

it is more than that. You see, the warning may be addressed to you and to me, but it is also possible that we are 'little ones'. You may or may not see yourself as a 'little one' needing protection, but neither did the disciples even though their behavior showed them to be very little indeed.

They misjudged the exorcist and they misjudged themselves. Personally, I think we are all little ones to a greater or lesser degree and the less we see it the more little we are.

This strong warning remains a warning, but it also gives comfort. It gives comfort because it means that our salvation and well-being are to be protected because we little ones matter very much to God. We are therefore to be protectors, while recognizing that we ourselves also need protection and so the simple categories we construct of 'them' and 'us' break down before our own weaknesses and the love of Christ.

Fr. John O 'Connor is Parish Priest of the parish of St. Columba in Glasgow.

DECIDING TO LOVE
Fr. Gordian Marshall, O.P.
Twenty-Seventh Sunday of the Year (B)

Adam sounds just like a teenager when God introduces him to Eve:

> This is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh.
> 'We were made for each other! We're a perfect match.'

It's the experience of falling head over heels in love, no thought of difficulties to come, of the many compromises that have to be made if a relationship is to survive.

And then Mark's gospel brings things down to earth with its talk of divorce. It touches on the pain of falling out of love, on the sense of betrayal and deception - often self-deception as much as being deceived by one's partner - that sometimes follows in the years when that initial excitement dies away and the love that was promised is no longer alive.

But what is that love and how can it be kept alive? In his book, *The Art of Loving* the psychologist Erich Fromm says something quite illuminating.

To love somebody is not just a strong feeling - it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision?

This is not suggesting that feelings are unimportant, especially when it comes to marriage, but feelings on their own are not enough to carry people through. Feelings fluctuate, sometimes from one day to the next or even from one minute to the next. They are affected by our health, by the weather, by the sort of pressure we are under and so on. If love is to stay alive, we need something more stable than that.

And so Fromm talks about love being a judgment. We make a judgment that our wholeness and well-being and the wholeness and well-being of others are best served by the commitment that we make to each other.

It is a decision: we decide to make that commitment, to give ourselves to a way of life that may well curtail us in some respects but is nevertheless in keeping with our judgment of what is best for all. And it is a promise: what we offer is not just for now but is to endure through all the changes that will come in the future.

That is why Jesus is able to say,

> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. (Jn 13:34)

No one can tell you how you should feel and the very fact that Jesus uses the word 'command' suggests that he too is thinking of decisions and actions and not about feelings. And what is true of all his disciples is particularly true between partners in a marriage.

The judgment and decision that is made on entering into marriage, or any other path of life for that matter, is not something that is made once and never needs to

be revisited. But making and remaking that judgment is what marks people out as Jesus' disciples.

That sounds all right in theory but how do you do it in practice? It isn't easy and there are no foolproof solutions but here are two suggestions.

The first is to try and act in a loving way. A teacher I had many years ago said that when he was teaching an unruly class he pretended to be angry in order to control the pupils. After a very short time of acting as if he were angry, he found himself actually feeling angry. The same principle can work in reverse: if we 'pretend' to love, if we act in a loving way, love rather than anger can grow.

And the second suggestion is prayer. If Jesus commands love, then when we find that loving seems to be beyond us, we have a right to demand that he supports us in our efforts to love. And taking time to pray can also give us a little space away from thinking about everything that is stressing us and offer a chance to offload our frustrations onto God instead of taking them out on each other.

Fr. Gordian Marshall is the superior of Blackfriars, Glasgow and a member of the Editorial Board of torch.op.org

THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday of the Year (B)

Today's is one of those Gospel readings that show you what a Gospel is for, why the Gospels are there at all. Jesus' encounters with other people are not just told because they happened. They're told because they put us on the spot. We're brought face to face with the challenge of Jesus and have to come up with a response.

Take this incident of the rich young man. This young man comes up to Jesus. He's a good, solid, upright, well-instructed, devout young Jew, a fine specimen of Jewish humanity. That's clear from the conversation with Jesus.

Jesus reminds him of the Ten Commandments which then, as now, were the bases of a good life. The young man replies very simply: these he has kept from his earliest youth. Not a boast. Just stating a straightforward matter of fact.

There's no suggestion that Jesus either disbelieves or disapproves of what he says or the way he says it. Quite the contrary.

> He looked steadily at him and loved him.

Loved him for his uncomplicated integrity, his sheer basic goodness. But this goodness is not enough.

> There is one thing you lack.

Here comes the bombshell.

> Go, sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, and follow me.

Being good is not a sufficient condition for being a disciple of Jesus. Indeed, in the first place it's not even a necessary condition. There's something even more fundamental than goodness - so it turns out - and without this 'something' that's even more basic than goodness, you can't even get started on the journey to the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed.

Whatever can it be? It's the recognition of the falseness of our claim to be rich, to have all we need. We can be as good as we like, but if we think we're sufficient unto ourselves, then the God Jesus proclaimed is shut out of our lives.

In the case of the rich young man, it was literal riches - cash, property - that filled in the emptiness that should have been there. In our case, it may be another kind of riches. It may be intellectual riches, it may be emotional riches.

In each case we make a false claim to be able to cope with anything in life - to buy our way out of situations, to talk our way out of situations, or to charm our way out of situations. And this is what has to be cleared away before we can become disciples.

The Kingdom is the reign of a God who is Love: who is unconditional, overflowing, complete and utter

generosity. A God who by his own nature keeps giving himself away, as the doctrine of the Trinity reminds us. A God who would lavish himself on us.

We know from experience that to admit our need of love from anyone is a humbling experience. It is humiliating actually to feel sick because the signs are that X or Y has ceased to love me. Humiliating because it entails recognizing my need, my not being sufficient unto myself.

Along with that recognition must come the knowledge that if my happiness depends on something or someone outside me, over which or whom I have no control, then I may never be happy. And then what a crowd of demons jump out of Pandora's box! It's easier to stick with the idea of being rich or clever of good-looking or nice and leave it at that.

The revelation of an all-loving God means we can't just leave it at that. We could be so much greater, bigger than we are, because the divine Lover is dying to make us so. The crucifixion was the final appeal to us to start to live from this love, but God's wanting had been going on the whole time.

The question for us is: What are we going to do about it? Shall we change the orientation and tenor of our lives? Or shall we say it's all a bit too risky? Shall we go away like the rich young man? Sorrowfully, of course. But go away all the same.

Fr. Aidan Nichols, a member of the Dominican Priory in Cambridge, is a well-known writer and theologian currently teaching in the USA.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF SERVICE
Fr. Euan Marley, O.P.
Twenty-Ninth Sunday of the Year (B)

Over twenty years ago, I arrived by train in Agrigento, in Sicily. Just outside this town lies the famous valley of the temples, a valley covered with the remains of ancient Greek temples.

It was night when I arrived and I walked down to the valley, and seeing the moonlight glinting on the remains of the temples, I decided to spend the night there, sleeping among the ruins. I had thoughts of waking up among these solemn remnants of an earlier religion.

Two sleepless hours later, I gave up on this notion and returned to the station to sleep. The next morning I went down to the temple and in the daylight discovered I had been trying to sleep on a modern construction site. It's amazing how like Greek pillars scaffolding looks in the dark. The temples were further down.

It might seem surprising that there should be Greek temples in Sicily but the Greek world stretched from what is now Turkey to the eastern coast of Italy and Sicily. It was a world ancient Israel would have to come to terms with.

In the other direction stretched vast empires, the Assyrian, the Babylonian, and the Persian. Faced with these

empires, the Israelites clung to the claim to be the chosen people of God. Granted that other races were richer, more powerful, more numerous and tended to win battles over us, we are still God's people.

Where then is the truth in the promise to Abraham to make him the father of a multitude of nations? One explanation was to hope that the power of the Gentiles would pass, a hope often vindicated by history, but there was always a new power to replace it.

With the song of the suffering servant of the Prophet Isaiah, a new understanding of God's promise came. Israel would triumph, not by conquering but by becoming the servant of the world. In Isaiah, we hear of the righteous servant who will justify many.

It is a triumph to serve if it is done in the right way, but only through the power of God is it possible to serve the whole world, as the servant will do. The servant will justify many. It is only when the Son of God becomes the Son of Abraham that the full meaning of this text is revealed.

The fuller version of the Isaiah passage begins:

> Who has believed what we have heard?

The real meaning of service is easily misunderstood. Service can become a sort of tyranny, where the servant is merely subtle in his attempts at domination.

James and John in the Gospel are certainly exempt from the accusation of subtlety. They ask for unambiguous power from the Lord, who it should be stressed, does not

rebuke them for this. He merely explains that they are asking for something impossible in their innocence.

Instead he rebukes the other apostles who are angry with them. They know that lordship and authority belong to the nations. They have learned that much from Isaiah.

What they don't understand is how easily service can be corrupted. Gifts can easily become a way of shaping people to our own preconceptions. We can give to people what we think they should have, not what they want or need. Doing things for people can be a way of stopping them acting for themselves, of enfeebling them.

Yet the Son of Man also came to serve. Don't miss that word 'also'. It shows that service is not a temporary state but is a permanent part of human life, always and everywhere. The true servant justifies many, which is to say, he gives them the power to be themselves, to have what is theirs and to be what they are.

In his death, Jesus will show that the greatest service doesn't deprive people of anything, least of all responsibility. His death is a great act of trust. Others will carry on the work that he has begun. They will succeed. We can be sure of that.

But there is always more to be done and others to do it. After all, the Church is much more a building site, than a temple.

Fr. Euan Marley, O.P. is Subprior of the Priory of the Holy Cross, Leicester, and Catholic Chaplain to Leicester Royal Infirmary.

THE HOPES OF BARTIMAEUS
Fr. Jonathan Fleetwood, O.P.
Thirtieth-Sunday of the Year (B)

Today's Gospel relates the cure of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus. This is a threshold "wonder". But why "threshold"?

Because it occurs on the threshold of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. At this point of the Gospel, the disciples' hope grows (despite dark warnings from Jesus), then die at Jesus' trial, and then rise again at his resurrection.

Why "wonder" and not miracle? Because the episode is more than just the cure of blindness. The hopeful plea of Bartimaeus for cure of blindness is embedded in a wider web of religious hopes. Small fragments of reference in the story indicate this.

The hopes that follow Jesus range from individual hopes for cure to hopes for national liberation. The story of Bartimaeus reflects this range of hopes. A similar range of hopes can be found in the Jewish daily prayer, the "Eighteen" Blessings, the *Shemoneh Esrei*, reflecting the hopes of Jesus' time.

The fragments of reference in the Bartimaeus story can be mapped onto the Jewish prayer. The Blessings thank God for what he did in the past, what he does and is continuously doing, and turn to hope in him for the future. The hopes in blessing recall the past and bode for the future.

Bartimaeus has *personal* hopes. He hopes for *healing,* as does the Eighth Blessing.

> Blessed are you, Lord, who heal the sick of your people, Israel.

To be blind, for Bartimaeus, also means beggary. This consequential effect causes suffering, so Bartimaeus hopes for *relief from suffering,* as does the Seventh Blessing. He hopes, and calls upon Jesus, for God-given *pity.*

The Sixteenth Blessing -

> Blessed are you, merciful Lord, you listen to prayer.

Bartimaeus follows Jesus not only for cure, but also for *teaching.* He calls Jesus 'Master', religious teacher, the theme of the Fourth Blessing:

> Blessed are you, Lord, gracious giver of knowledge.

Bartimaeus has *national* hopes. Twice he addresses Jesus as 'Son of David', matching the plea of the Fifteenth Blessing to cause the *offspring of David to flourish.* This theme carries through in the Gospel to Jesus being called 'King of the Jews'.

The whole threshold episode is also sited in the prayerful hope of the Fourteenth Blessing for the *restoration of Jerusalem.* Jesus' joyful entry into Jerusalem in the next few verses marks this. Jesus' death and resurrection are the Christian end-fulfillment of the rebuilding of the Temple, the core of Jerusalem.

The Tenth Blessing hopes for the *call* of the *Shofar*, the horn, for the *ingathering* of the people. Bartimaeus hears Jesus say, "Call him here."

> Blessed are you, Lord, who gather the dispersed of your people, Israel.

Bartimaeus is *ingathered* with the other disciples along the road to follow Jesus, the sign-to-be of the new Jerusalem and the new Temple. It is a pre-Pentecostal moment that Zechariah's prophecy most seems to fit:

> In those days, ten men of nations of every language will take a Jew by the sleeve and say, "We want to go with you, since we have learned that God is with you."

Bartimaeus had faith in Jesus, echoing the call of the Thirteenth Blessing to *trust in your name.* Bartimaeus is the living sign of the pious Jew and the nascent Christian. He not only has hopes to remedy a problem, blindness; he also has a frame of religious reference with much wider hopes than those of his problem.

A similar range of hopes to both Gospel passage and Blessings is embodied in the Church. We are the hoping inheritors.

Christ through the Church still calls, still gathers together, encourages to faith. Christ is the pledge of unity of worship, of unity of communion, of unity of teaching. Christ through the Spirit gives hope to the ministries of compassion, healing and relief of suffering.

Jonathan Fleetwood is chaplain to the Dominican Sisters at Stone in Staffordshire, and has been both Prior Provincial and Provincial Bursar of the English Dominicans.

THE MUSIC OF LOVE
Timothy J. Calvert, O.P.
Solemnity of All Saints

Listening to homilies isn't everyone's idea of having a good time. One of the benefits of being a preacher, you might think, is getting to inflict your own sermons on others rather than being yourself afflicted. But there are occasions when, hearing a preacher, I am struck by how perfectly the words serve his purpose, and seem to be thoroughly at home. Hearing perfect preaching usually both impresses and depresses me, knowing how I would have struggled in vain to bring my confused thoughts about the Gospel to any sort of clarity.

It's not that good preachers use only perfect words, or set out with perfect ideas. It's not in the tools that we understand the craft, but in the giftedness, or the inspiration, at work in the craftsman. A good preacher or speaker hasn't just arranged his words well, he has felt the stirring of life at the roots of those words, has brought into the open something which has been murmuring in the back of the mind: "Oh that's what I was trying to say all along".

A good musician has a similar power. The difference between someone who can play an instrument and a musician isn't to be found in the level of skill they have acquired. You can teach yourself to play an instrument, and if you practice hard you will in the end probably come to make a fairly recognizable noise. But

only the musician can *enter into* the music. TS Eliot writes of "music heard so deeply that you are the music while the note lasts". A musician already has music inside him; he lives it from within before a note is sounded.

There are those in life who are simply gifted, who can express clearly what the rest of us are trying clumsily and inarticulately to express, and in the realm of grace we call these gifted individuals 'saints'. Saints are those who through God's help, have *lived* their lives, not simply struggled through them. Saints are those who are so in touch with the heartbeat of God's mercy that they express this mercy clearly and articulately with every moment of their journey through this world. Saints are the musicians of God's love.

Throughout the year the Church celebrates the gift to the Church of particular saints, all those inspired lives from which we draw inspiration, and which are still a source of help and intercession for us. But on this great feast we celebrate the *fact* that it is possible to articulate the love of God and neighbor in our frail human lives.

In this world silenced by sin, there are lives which clearly and boldly enunciate the power of that love at work, which give hope to those of us who are still struggling to master this new language of Divine Love which God has given the human race.

The Beatitudes announced by Jesus from the mountain-top to his disciples are the score of this new music which must be played. Heard as a list, they could crush and burden us. Who can make themselves pure of heart, or a child of peace? But the Beatitudes are not just a

list of commands to batter us from outside. They are words which seek entrance to the doorways of the heart, to reshape us from the depths of our being.

To be holy then is not just to have heard the Beatitudes, or to have struggled with them, but to have become them, to have received the sweet blessings of Christ into our own secret depths. The saints are those who internalize this blessing, the beatitude of Christ, so completely that they are no longer master of their actions or their words, but everything they do comes from a secret internal co-operation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the real musician of human possibilities.

If I were to begin this sermon again (which there is not time to do) I would begin from a different place altogether. This is probably how it should be. There are no perfect statements of love to be found written in the words of men.

But the words of God, written deep into human hearts, are words that abide, words that reflect the only true Word, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is through the Spirit the only true source of the inspiration of holiness, the one who sets us free from our tongue-tied fumblings to make our lives, with those of all the saints, a song of love.

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DEATH'S AMAZING EFFECT
Brendan Slevin, O.P.
Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed

The commemoration of All the Faithful Departed is, I think, one of the most consoling days of the Church's year. We both celebrate Christ's offer to us to share in his resurrection as well as recognize our own sinfulness.

For most of the year we tend to try and separate the triumph of the cross from the frail stumblings of our own ordinary lives. On one side we place Christ and his saints and on the other poor sinners like ourselves.

But this artificial separation distorts our understanding of the faith we profess. This day, when we pray for the Holy Souls, reunites us with a broader understanding of the Church. A Church that is one; not two separate churches, one of saints and the other sinners.

The unifying bond is the love our Creator has for us. A love that brings about in us the possibility to love God back. A love that becomes incarnate in Jesus.

We are constantly trying to separate in our minds that which should be considered together. Life and death, past, present and future - we seem to think we can only understand these if we think of them individually, but in reality they must be thought of together in order to make sense of them.

Death has a strange effect on people. More times that not, only good things are said of the one who has died.

All their faults, if not forgotten, are for a time not spoken of. One should never speak ill of the dead, goes the ancient saying.

In much of Europe and in the USA and Canada we go even further. There is an attempt to hide death itself. The whole process is made 'more pleasant'. The body is prepared to look as if it is beyond corruption. Even funerals are becoming celebrations of a person's life rather than about their death. We speak of the past rather than contemplate the reality of the present.

On this day, however, the Church allows us to be honest about death. We recognize that our friends and relatives who have died, and those we never knew, were capable of sinning. We recognize this because we know it is true of our selves. We long to be with God yet we continue to make mistakes on our pilgrim way.

This realization, though, does not lead us to despair. For we believe that at death, life is changed not ended. The soul lives and awaits a share in the resurrection. The holy souls wait to be purified. They wait to see God face to face.

These souls share in our longing as we share in theirs. The bonds that united us on earth continue to unite us. And the source of those bonds is the love of God, which is the bond of the Church's unity.

We pray for the dead not because it is our duty - though it is - but because it is part of what defines us as Christian. We pray for a reconciliation between the holy souls and their Creator. At the same time our prayers act as a reconciliation between ourselves and those we pray

for. The circle completes itself with the recognition of our own sinfulness before a loving God. We renew our acceptance of his offer to be reconciled.

In the thundering silence of prayer we bathe in the mercy of God as the guilt of sin is washed in the blood of the Saviour. The prayers of the Church on earth, united with the prayers of the saints in heaven, embrace the souls of our brothers and sisters in the love of Christ. Our hope is not deceptive, our prayers are not solitary or unheard, the Church is not separate but one, as the saints triumphant unite with us in Christ.

The commemoration of the holy souls should renew in us an understanding of the unity of Christ's Church, while at the same time confirming in us our sure and certain hope in the resurrection.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
And let perpetual light shine upon them.
May they rest in peace. Amen.

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THE LAW AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD
Rev. Richard J. Fairchild
Thirty-First Sunday of the Year (B)

Both of today's scripture readings concern the law.

The first reading reminds us that God has given us his law that it might do us good, and it exhorts us to remember that God is one, and to treasure God's law in our hearts, and to teach it to our children, and to think about it when we work, and when we are at home, and when we lie down and when we rise up.

The second reading, from the gospel of Mark concerns a scribe, an expert in the Law of God, who seeing how well Jesus answered questions from his critics, approached Jesus and asked him - "Which commandment is first of all?" Jesus replied:

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind,
and with all your strength".

Jesus then adds these words:

"And the second commandment is this:
You shall love your neighbour as yourself.
There is no other commandment greater
than these".

A lot of people are confused about the law, they do not understand its relevance to our faith, especially in light of the salvation won for us by Christ, a salvation which, as we have been taught, frees us from the dead letter of the law, and brings to us in its place the living spirit.

Just how, then, in a Christian life, does the law and the spirit fit together, just how is the law relevant to us and our salvation? Well I believe the law and the spirit fit together like the two sides of a coin. *The law tells us what is right, and the spirit enables us to do it.*

It was never the intention of God for us to think that we could do without the law simply because Jesus died for us. Jesus himself said, just after giving us the beatitudes:

> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law
> or the prophets; I have come not to abolish
> but fulfill these.
> For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,
> not one letter, not one stroke of a letter,
> will pass from the law until all is accomplished."

Jesus did not come to the abolish the law, but to fulfill it, to make more than just a matter of do's and don'ts, to make its letters come to life for us and give us life, rather than simply condemn us. When we know the law well, when we know it in our hearts, then it, like the Spirit, brings us close to the Kingdom of God.

Let me tell you a story. One day, St. Benedict was out riding on a horse and he came upon a man out

working in the field. "Fine day isn't it?" St. Benedict called out. "Its fine for you", the man replied, "All you have to do is ride around on that horse thinking about God all day long, while I have to sweat here in this field and then walk home afterward. I don't think its right you should have things so easy while I have to work so hard."

"On the contrary", St. Benedict answered, "thinking about God is one of the most difficult things you can do. And to prove it, I'll give you this horse if you can think about God and nothing else for one minute."

"You're on", said the man and immediately he sat down in silence. Thirty seconds later he looked up at St. Benedict. "Will you also give me the bread you are carrying? St. Benedict replied: "See, you have already stopped thinking about God."

The story is funny but it is also profound because it reminds us of something that we know almost instinctively: not only is it hard to think about God in the way the law tells us we should, but it is all too easy to compound this human defect with even worse offenses against the law.

The man who talked to St. Benedict broke several of the laws of God. Three of these jump right out at you. He envied St. Benedict, coveted his bread and horse, and he judged St. Benedict rashly. I say we **almost** instinctively recognize these, although in the end instinct has little to do with the matter. Rather it is the fact, that in the new covenant with Jesus, we have the law written on our heart by the Spirit; and the fact that the law has been

taught to us by others, that enables us to recognize what is right and wrong.

Paul writes in Romans, chapter 10, verses 13 and following:

> Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed?
>
> And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?... So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word about Christ.

We need the law, the law the spirit writes in our hearts, the law summarized by Jesus in the greatest commandments, the law which Deuteronomy says, should not only be kept by us, but treasured by us, and taught by us to our children.

The law shows us what is right. It guides us, when we are open to it and the spirit's prodding, into the path of salvation, making sure that we are never far from the kingdom of God. Jesus summarized the law in this way: Love your God, love your neighbour as yourself. By combining love of God and love of neighbor, Jesus also tells us how to love ourselves. Just as we have only one heart, we have only one love that encompasses all three loves. A poem gives us the best illustration of this:

> "I sought my soul, but my soul I could not see.
> I sought my God, but my God eluded me.
> I sought my brother and I found all three."

The way we love ourselves and God is revealed by the way we love our neighbor. Another poem brings this point home:

> "Love for God,
> from which there does not spring,
> love for self and everyone,
> is but a worthless thing."

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OUR GENEROSITY REVEALS THE DEPTH OF OUR FAITH

Rev. Richard J. Fairchild

Thirty-Second Sunday of the Year (B)

Contrary to popular belief, people are reasonably good givers. In fact most of us are very good givers.

If Jesus were sitting down there watching as you put money on the offering plate he would see a lot of giving. And I don't believe that he would get up and leave the Church because you weren't giving enough.

But the question must be asked, would we be credited in the same class as that widow? Would we be worthy of special notice? As an example of real giving?

In the time of Jesus, widows were right down at the bottom of the social order. They had no male to defend them, or work to support them. They were like unclaimed baggage.

People weren't sure how widows fit in, or what to do with them, but they were sure that widows were not theirs to take care of. So widows and poverty went hand in hand, especially in rural areas. To expect a widow to have money to give away, was totally unrealistic. It is no surprise that this particular widow only gave two small copper coins. Yet, those two coins were noteworthy to Jesus.

Why? Because the Gospel story about the widow is not about generosity. It isn't just about giving, or

tithing, or donating. It's not even about money. It is all about faith.

The point of the story is about faith that risks everything; faith that knows how to sacrifice, to give all that one has for what is right and good and true in the trust that God somehow, someway, will use that sacrifice and honor it.

God will honor it, not for the sake of the giver, rather for the sake of the work of God in this world, for the sake of the Kingdom, for the sake of others in need, for the sake of the peace that God promises to the world.

How we give is determined by the depth of our faith.

We read in the Old Testament about another widow. The widow of Zarephath, like the widow in our Gospel reading, gave everything she had to Elijah. She gave her son's and her own last meal to a foreigner whose God she did not even worship.

Think of it for a minute: Neither of the two widows in today's scripture readings knew for sure what the outcome of their giving would be for themselves. They did not know if they would live or die because of it. In fact the widow of Zarephath expected to die - one meal earlier than she had planned.

The same can likely be said about the widow Jesus saw in the temple making her free-will offering to God. Her two small copper coins were everything she had.

Do we even come close to that kind of faith?

Brothers and sisters, we're often uncertain of our Christian calling. We often do not take seriously what it

means to be a follower of Jesus. The example of the two widows reminds us that God is not only a giver; he also demands. He demands complete trust and confidence in him by challenging us to give, not only until it hurts, but even beyond the giving that hurts.

Let us not think that God only wants ready cash, or our desire to care for others. We can also offer to him our

fear	vulnerability
ignorance	neediness
confusion	embarrassment
loneliness	and a profound lack of time and energy.

We bring our poverty with the hope that Jesus will make something good out of it.

In times when we feel like giving, but don't know what to do, or how to do it, remember that God does not love a calculating giver but a cheerful one.

Remember Mother Teresa who gave everything she had for the lepers and outcasts of Calcutta; recall that you have relatives, friends, or neighbors who need comfort and support, that there are desperate needs to be met in your own backyard, needs which your real sacrifice of money and of time, and of love can go a long way to meeting.

Remember the widow of Zarephath who gave her last meal and the widow who gave her last coins, and have faith in God - as they did. And as Jesus did - when he gave up his life for us on the cross. AMEN.

FAITH WHEN HE COMES
Fr. Dominic Noel, O.P.
Thirty-Third Sunday of the Year (B)

We live in a world characterized by cosmic phenomena. Whether there is a devastating flood in South America or a record-breaking summer of heat-waves in Europe, the media ensures that the news of these events is brought to our attention. There is no lack of well-documented accounts of numerous triumphant missions into space, leading to monumental discoveries and mostly accurate predictions about future cosmic events, so that even Jesus might be impressed.

No wonder there is an air of comfort about us in today's world, leaving behind the fears of the occurrence of any unforeseeable strange events in the "heavens". Thanks to the advancements in science and technology, we have arrived at this position.

Yet, is it not a puzzle that when there are natural events that go some way to reducing the human population, we term them as "signs of the times"? We seem to consider catastrophic events as ones that God must be held responsible for, and we explain them away by saying that it is a warning or a sign from God.

It even appears that no amount of reasoning would change this perspective. Normally, this belief implies that

the end of the world is not only imminent, but is approaching with great velocity. And maybe this encourages our natural inclination to query the point of our existence.

Today's first reading from the prophet Daniel gives us an image the prophet construes as the events surrounding the end of time. He is not giving an exact cosmic description of the state of the imminent ending. However, there will be a time of great distress to be superseded only by the superior events of the resurrection and the last judgment, which will be the cosmic consummation.

At that time those who are judged righteous will enter into eternal life and the rejected will endure eternal shame and disgrace. The prophet therefore looks beyond the coming state of distress towards the future event that will bring transformation, resulting in those that have been found worthy shining like stars. So the prophet points to a kind of future existence that resembles the image painted by St. Paul, namely, that those who enjoy eternal life will have spiritual bodies, a transcendent mode of existence.

In our Gospel reading, we seem to be confronted with a more vivid painting of the actual events that will occur at the end of time than the one in our first reading. It even seems as if Jesus is using Daniel's prophecy to spell out the content of his message.

Jesus makes reference to a time of distress, just like Daniel, and also teaches about the eventual period of vindication. Our Lord resorts to the Old Testament's apocalyptic imagery of prophecy to aid in the painting of the picture of what the end of time will be like.

There are various reasons why some might think of all of this talk of the end as merely pointing to the fall of Jerusalem, but I think there is more to it. Jesus is not merely referring to these events, but wants to make clear that the time of judgment will be upon us and that it is inevitable. That is why he said,

Heaven and earth will pass away.

Here Jesus is not simply using words in a pragmatic way to gain the confidence of his disciples. He is not trying to prove that he is speaking the truth. Heaven and earth will pass away.

The Lord is not trying to scare anyone into changing their lives for which they will be rewarded, as if their actions could gain such a state of existence. In today's Gospel our Lord is not asking us to be so conditioned by the present scientific and technological age, that we have to search in the universe for cosmic signs of the end. He is not expecting us to look for the day on which the sun will go dark - we have already had many eclipses. So what is he doing?

The Lord wants us to know that his return is certain; the "parousia" is for real. The distress that will accompany the fulfillment of the Lord's message is but part of the story. He is coming back to bring about the consummation of God's creation; he is coming to usher the faithful into eternal life. What we have to ponder is whether Our Lord will find that you and I have faith when he comes.

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BEHOLD, YOUR KING!
Fr. Allan White, O.P.
Solemnity of Christ the King (B)

The other day I saw what comes pretty close to the abomination of desolation. It was a singing Christmas tree. I was walking through a respectable department store when I noticed the bow in the middle of a plastic Christmas tree transform itself into a pair of lips and begin to sing *Jingle bells* in a harsh metallic voice.

On the last Sunday before Advent we are confronted with another tree: the tree of the cross that becomes the throne of the king of glory whose kingship we celebrate today. The cross is not a singing tree. It is not comic, but deadly serious.

Yet it was not entirely serious to those who first witnessed it. All executions involve an element of ridicule, of dehumanization. Unless we engaged in a ritual of ridicule, we could not do this to fellow human beings. We can only torture and maim them if we make them ridiculous.

Pope Pius XI instituted this feast of Christ the King as a response to the Europe of the dictators. His reaction to the bizarre certainties and all-too-human schemes for redemption that were on offer at the time was not to say, "Look at me, listen to me," but, "Look to him, behold

the wood of the cross on which hung the Saviour of the world." He said: Dare to be ridiculous as he did.

A few years ago a couple began a legal action against the Bavarian government that went all the way to the German Supreme Court. They were asking for the removal of crucifixes from schools and public buildings. They argued that it was intimidating and degrading for their daughter to have to sit under the image of a naked, tortured and dying man. She obviously never looked at TV, played videos or read the newspapers, never mind children's comics that are full of degrading images of violence.

When you think about it, it is a bit odd to venerate a crucifix. We don't encourage such images on the whole. Pornography appears more acceptable in our society than images of violence.

The German Supreme Court found in favor of this Bavarian couple, but the decision was contested throughout Bavaria. Many of those who opposed the removal of crucifixes remembered the last time that crucifixes were removed and replaced with swastikas. When we hide the image of God, we go on to defile, profane and destroy that same image which lives in the flesh of our brothers and sisters.

The singing Christmas tree gave a banal message of reassurance. Everything is right with the world as long as we can all sing *Jingle bells.* Images of home, hearth, good cheer and expensive presents will help us through the winter; the feast of Christ the King is a reminder to us of what our eternal joy costs.

What we see in the crucifixion, the enthronement of Christ on the Cross, is a form of pantomime. Christmas is the season for pantomime. Pantomimes are full of violence and cruelty, all disguised with a veneer of humor.

In every pantomime there is a triumphant winning through of the underdog or the victim, at some point disguises are cast aside, mysterious hidden identities revealed. In the end Cinderella ends up with her prince charming, but only after a deal of suffering and rejection.

Jesus on the cross engages in pantomime, the liturgy of his death is a parody of an imperial court liturgy. He is dressed in the purple robe, he wears the thorny crown, the mock imperial diadem, he bears the scepter, a broken reed, and is presented to the people to be acclaimed. "Behold your king," Pilate says. Share in my joke.

What we find funny is very revealing. It says something about ourselves. We see ourselves reflected in our jokes. In the cross we are looking at a mirror. We see what life is like when we try to do without God. When we try to play a God, this is what happens. In this twisted, contorted, bruised and humiliated body, we see our own life without God. What is funny about that?

The next time we are invited by the rulers of this world to share the joke, when they say, laughing, "Behold your king," we might say, "You think this is funny?"

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