

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

*Vol. LXXXIII, No. 860-861*

*May-August 2007*



**ARE YOU WEAK ENOUGH TO BE A PRIEST?**



# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

---

EDITOR

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

ASSOCIATE  
EDITOR

FR. PABLO T. TIONG, O.P.

BUSINESS  
MANAGER

FR. CLARENCE VICTOR MARQUEZ, O.P.

PUBLICATION  
ASSISTANTS

ANGELITA R. GUINTO  
ARNOLD S. MANALASTAS

---

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at UST Publishing House, Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946 and Re-entered at the UST Post Office on October 23, 1996.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned. They will, however, be given courteous and scholarly attention. Writers are reminded that the scope of this review is ecclesiastical and broadly archival. While we wish to inform the whole Church, our readership is largely clerical and this should be borne in mind by prospective contributors. Articles herein published do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Staff. Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and review should be addressed to the Editor.

Advertising and subscription inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager.

## Subscription Rates (Effective September 2006)

	<i>One Year</i>	<i>Per Copy</i>
Philippines	Php900.00	Php150.00
Foreign: (via Air Mail)	US\$150.00	US\$25.00

Subscriptions are paid in advance. In the Philippines, payments should be made by postal order, telegraphic transfer or check with regional bank clearing only. All check and postal money order payments should be payable to UST Boletín Eclesiástico. Orders for renewal or change of address should include both old and new addresses, and go into effect fifteen days after notification.

Address all communications to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

Ecclesiastical Publications Office

University of Santo Tomas

España Blvd., Manila 1015 Philippines

Tel. No.: (63-2) 406-1611 local 8251 • Telefax: (63-2) 740-9710

E-mail: [eccpubli@mn1.ust.edu.ph](mailto:eccpubli@mn1.ust.edu.ph)

ISSN 1908-5567

Table of Contents

<b>EDITORIAL</b>	301	ARE YOU WEAK ENOUGH TO BE A PRIEST?
<b>FEATURES</b>		<b>DYNAMICS &amp; CONTEXTS OF PREACHING</b>
<i>Vivian Boland, O.P.</i>	307	BORING GOD: THEOLOGY AND PREACHING
<i>Rolando V. de la Rosa, O.P.</i>	329	THE RECEPTION OF PREACHING: AN INSTANCE IN HISTORY
<i>Mark O'Brien, O.P.</i>	355	PROPHETIC STORIES AS A PREACHING RESOURCE: THE ELISHA COLLECTION
<i>Paul Murray, O.P.</i>	373	A WINE OF ENCOURAGEMENT: PREACHING IN A TIME OF DISILLUSION
<i>Charles Bouchard, O.P.</i>	389	TEXT OR TOPIC? DOING OR BEING? THE CHALLENGE OF PREACHING ON MORAL ISSUES
<b>SPECIAL SECTION</b>		<b>I. THE LATIN MASS</b>
<i>Pope Benedict XVI</i>	417	APOSTOLIC LETTER "SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM"
	425	Q & A REGARDING THE MOTU PROPIO SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM
<i>Angel Lagdameo, D.D.</i>	431	STATEMENT ON THE "TRIDENTINE" MASS
		<b>II. THE LATIN MASS IN RETROSPECT</b>
<i>Pope John Paul II</i>	433	APOSTOLIC LETTER "ECCLESIA DEI" GIVEN MOTU PROPIO
<i>Congregation for Divine Worship</i>	439	QUATTUOR ABHINC ANNOS

<i>Pope John Paul II</i>	443	DISCOURSE ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF ECCLESIA DEI (OCTOBER 26, 1998)
<i>CBCP</i>	447	STATEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY ON LITURGICAL REVIVAL (AUGUST 6, 1961)
<i>Dietrich Von Hildebrand</i>	453	REVERENCE, RECOLLECTION, CONTEMPLATION
<i>Cardinal Alfons Stickler</i>	465	YOUR MOVEMENT HAS FULL LEGITIMACY
<b>DOCUMENTATION</b>		
<i>Pope Benedict XVI</i>	471	MESSAGE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE 2007
<i>Bishop Arturo M. Bastes, SVD</i>	485	DECREE FOR PUBLIC NOTIFICATION REGARDING "SMAHE" AND FR. ALEJANDRE "ANLY" GALIAS
<b>CANON LAW SECTION</b>		
<i>Javier González, OP</i>	487	IS READMISSION TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE POSSIBLE?
	494	INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS OF THE ASSOCIATIONS OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL
<b>HOMILIES</b>		
<i>Enrico Gonzales, OP</i>	499	AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2007
<i>Efren Rivera, OP</i>	517	OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2007

## **Are You Weak Enough To Be A Priest?**

---

There was a time when parents would dream sending their best son to the seminary. Priesthood was at the pinnacle of all professions, the noblest undertaking for a man, his sure path to glory and respectability. Priesthood was the domain of the strong, the manly, the courageous, the mystic, and the heroic. In evaluating candidates for the priesthood, Rectors of seminaries often look for these traits, or at least a semblance of these. They would ask: **"Is he strong enough to be a priest?"**

The nobility of the priesthood, its mysticism and mystery, were given great emphasis by the Latin Mass (documents regarding this are featured in this double issue of the *Boletin*) wherein the priest's persona is absorbed, so to speak, by the grand spectacle of the Eucharistic celebration. With his face more often invisible than visible, the focus of the Mass is on the awesome intricacies of the liturgy. But with the advent of the

vernacular Mass, and with the priest facing the audience, attention has shifted from the magnificent splendor of the liturgy and its esoteric language, to the very ordinary humanity of the priest. He and the quality of his preaching (a ministry also featured prominently in this issue of the *Boletin*) become the target of people's scrutiny and investigation.

Although people have not lost their high regard for the priesthood, many have been disillusioned with the man gifted with this noble vocation. Perhaps people have become too familiar with him. They came to know him too well. Of course, there remain priests who personify manliness, strength, courage, mysticism, heroism, or sacrifice. But in the eyes of many people, these are the exceptions, rather than the rule. What people see in many priests today are human weakness and failure. Perhaps, seminary formators should start making a difficult paradigm shift in evaluating candidates for the priesthood. They would do well to ask: **"Is he weak enough to be a priest?"**

Weakness. Failure. Are these fitting characteristics of a priest? Or are these the symptoms of decline and obsolescence of a once sublime vocation?

It may be good to remind ourselves that one of the most liberating things about accepting one's weakness is that it stops us from pretending to be strong. Like St. Paul, we can say that it is in our weakest moments that Christ is strongest in us. Leonard Bernstein puts it beautifully: "Have you ever noticed that glass shines brightest when

it's broken?" The church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners.

The Church cannot boast of a tradition of human success and strength. In the early chapters of the Book of Genesis we are at once confronted with human failure and weakness, courtesy of our first parents. Abraham, Lot, Moses, Saul, David, Solomon are just a few of the greatest persons in the Old Testament who, despite God's grace and blessings, gave in to their doubts, lust, greed, and other human inadequacies. In the New Testament, we read about Peter and his betrayals as well as the doubts and desertion of the apostles. We read about Paul and his confessions of weakness and failures. The lives of the saints give ample witness to the same human factor.

Jesus himself was not exempt from weakness and failure. Compared to the stoic Socrates, Jesus failed to conceal his fear and desperation in the face of suffering and death. Socrates went to his death with calmness and poise. He accepted the judgment of the court; spoke of the two alternatives for dying, drank the poison hemlock and died. In contrast, Jesus was profoundly upset in Gethsemane. He felt terror and fear; he looked for comfort from friends and for an escape from death and found neither. Jesus of Nazareth was vulnerable and weak. But it was because of his experience of weakness, and his ability to master his anguish that he showed us the real meaning of courage.

We like to think of Jesus as a Superman, the epitome of valor. But in truth, Superman is not brave. How can

a person be brave when he knows he is indestructible? A person is brave when, despite his awareness of his weakness and the possibility of failure, he dares to fight against all odds, to pursue his goal.

Some priests try to evade confronting their weaknesses through breathless activism, surrender to routine, or advocating new ways of being priests. They think they could reassure themselves by joining a charismatic assembly, an evolving movement with rigid rules and exclusivistic identity, or bringing back old rituals and rubrics. It is like trying to possess what cannot be possessed, or doing things right without knowing the right thing to do.

The recent issue of *Time Magazine* can serve as a consolation to priests who are beset with the reality of their weakness and failure. Mother Teresa's many years of spiritual darkness are an eloquent proof that if a priest genuinely desires union with the unspeakable love of God, then he must be prepared to have his 'priestly' world shattered. If he thinks devotional practices, theological insights, even charitable actions give him some sort of a purchase on God, he is playing games. On the other hand, if, like Mother Teresa, he can face and accept and even rejoice in the experience of darkness, weakness, and failure, if he can accept that God is more than an idea that keeps his world tidy – then he may find a way back to his priesthood that is more creative because he is more aware that it is God, not he, who is the author of his vocation. God triumphs, not despite the priest's weakness



and failure, but precisely through, with, and in his weakness and failure.

Pastoral success, personal charisms, and revival of esoteric rituals and devotions cannot save the priesthood, or make it more relevant. To believe so is a kind of idolatry. Sadly, this kind of idolatry is encouraged by the laity.

Come to think of it, what kind of priests rank high in the eyes of lay people? Society wants priests to model themselves after personalities set up by the mass media. They must be at the beck and call of their parishioners, speak in every demonstration or prayer rally, perform miracles, mesmerize crowds with bombastic sermons. They must be healing priests, running priests, singing priests; they must construct and repair churches without asking for donations; they must influence politicians, brush shoulders with movie stars, businessmen, and famous people.

Many lay people prefer the popular, efficient, powerful, and entertaining priest for the prayerful, holy, self-effacing one. With their subtle form of religious pragmatism, they have replaced the whole with the fraction when they separated priestly ministry from the very source of its power: a priest's LOVE for God nourished by personal prayer and the Eucharist. Truly, at the heart of the many perceived weaknesses and failures of the priest is still the problem of the heart.

**ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, O.P.**



## **Boring God: Theology and Preaching\***

---

VIVIAN BOLAND, O.P.\*\*

In a technical sense, to which I shall turn presently, preaching has to be boring. For the moment there is comfort in knowing that all who have ever been bored, tired, irritated or distracted during preaching have a patron saint in the New Testament, Eutychus, who was put to sleep by Saint Paul's preaching. We read about it in the Acts of the Apostles:

On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with

---

\*Reprinted from *The Grace and Task of Preaching*, edited by Michael Monshau, O.P.

\*\*He is a Dominican of the Irish province, is master of students at Blackfriars, Oxford, where he is also a lecturer and tutor in theology. Senior lecturer in theology at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, London. He contributes frequently to theological and pastoral journals. He is editor of *Watchmen Raise Their Voices: A Tallaght Book of Theology* (Dominican Publications, 2006).

them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, 'Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.' Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left. Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted (*Acts 20:7-12*).

It is encouraging to recall that Saint Paul, preacher of the gospel to the pagans and founder of Churches across the Roman Empire, may not have been always at his scintillating best. If in fact he had a scintillating best. His preaching on the Areopagus broke down and he retreated in some confusion (*Acts 17:32-34*). From there he went to Corinth, but 'in fear and trembling' as he says himself (*1 Cor 2:1-5*). 'His letters are strong but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible,' according to some of his critics (*2 Cor 10:10*). All of this, along with the fact that he seems to have bored Eutychus to death, might be taken as evidence that Paul, arguably the greatest of the preachers of the gospel, was diffident and not necessarily inspiring in the actual task of speaking the Word.

## Thoughts about the Word 'Boring'

The term 'boring' is actually more interesting than it ought to be. Normally it refers to what is tedious, tiresome and irritating as opposed to what is exciting, stimulating and interesting. We use it as an adjective in this sense – 'boring God' would then mean that God is boring or that the God we manage to present to ourselves and to others is boring: unexciting, uninteresting, not stimulating. The original meaning of the word is connected with excavation. One bores in order to find some valuable resource like water, gold or oil. In that sense, 'boring God' can refer either to God getting into us, penetrating us in some way or it can refer to us seeking to penetrate God, trying to 'get into God'. Finbar Ryan, O.P., Archbishop of Port of Spain, neatly combined both meanings of the term in his advice to apprentice preachers: 'if you don't strike oil, stop boring'.

So what about 'boredom' in the technical sense referred to? Dictionaries of Jungian and Kleinian thought do not have anything to say about it but the psychoanalytic tradition, as one would expect, comes up trumps and recognizes boredom as an aspect of human experience worth thinking about. One of Freud's wisest and most humane followers in England, Charles Rycroft, describes boredom as

... the emotion that ensues when an individual fails to find interests and activities which fully engage him. It may arise either as a result of external limitations, e.g. solitary confinement, sensory deprivation, or monotonous work, or as a result of internal inhibition. According to Fenichel

(*Collected Papers*, 1954), neurotic boredom is a state of instinctual tension in which the instinctual aim is missing. As a result, the bored person seeks an object 'not in order to act upon it with his instinctual impulses, but rather to be helped by it to find an instinctual aim which he lacks'. He knows he wants something, but doesn't know what it is. As a consequence, irritability and restlessness are present, and inseparable from boredom.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth noting that what stimulates boredom – if one might be allowed such a paradoxical expression – is as likely to be internal as external. The bored person wants something but does not know what it is he wants. What he does know is that what he is currently being offered is not it. A sweater for 3 year-olds sold in London shops contains the legend 'I don't know what I want but I want it now!' In certain ways human beings never grow beyond this particular need for something that remains unknown.

Augustine famously speaks of the human heart as restless until it rests in God: 'you have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you' (*Confessions* I.1). Thomas Aquinas says that in this life we are united with God 'as with something unknown' (*quasi ignoto coniungamur*, *Summa Theologiae* I 12, 13 ad 1).

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Second Edition, 1995, London, Penguin Books, page 16. The reference within the quote from Rycroft is to O. Fenichel, *Collected Papers* (First Series), 1954, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul. I have left it as it appears in Rycroft where no page number is given.

Putting these two thoughts together means that the human being is condemned, so to speak, to be a creature who wants without knowing what it is he or she wants. It follows also that boredom in the technical, Freudian, sense is always on the point of breaking out in regard to this deepest of our desires. In fact it seems more likely the more intensely we experience this need and seek its fulfillment. The more deeply we enter into the unknown in which our happiness lies, the more sharply we will feel the gap between wanting and knowing. For Augustine, desire increases the closer we approach our goal. For Aquinas, and the Christian Neoplatonist tradition generally, knowledge darkens and language fails the closer we approach our goal.

For philosophers of all generations knowing and speaking belong together. For some, language articulates and gives voice to things already known within the mind. For others, it is through language that human beings come to realize what it is they know. Either way, knowing and speaking are intimately related. So – if Augustine and Aquinas are right – all our efforts at discourse in relation to God, our attempts to establish a satisfactory conversation whether in theology, preaching or prayer, seem doomed to fail for very good reasons. Theology is an attempt to speak about God, preaching an attempt to speak of God and prayer an attempt to speak with God. All of them, as human efforts, are subject to the same limitations of distance and difference, of inadequate language and boredom. We are quite familiar with this point in relation to ‘negative theology’, which has been enjoying something of a resurgence in recent times. But it applies also to preaching and to prayer, related human efforts at discourse appropriate

to the subject of God. If Augustine and Aquinas are right, then these too, as human speaking, are bound to fall short of that which we most desire and the potential for boredom is correspondingly enormous.

## Conversation and Community

But it is not just human conversations in some way related to God that are subject to this kind of difficulty. Adolescents who are bored by celebrations of the Eucharist, for example, are usually bored by many other aspects of family life, of school life and of life in general. In a short but pregnant book about conversation, Theodore Zeldin (better known perhaps for his *Intimate History of Humanity*) examines the problems which beset any conversation between human beings, not just attempts at conversations involving God. Conversation, he contends, is a key concern for contemporary culture, which can change not only the way the world is seen, but can change the world itself. Why make such huge claims for an ordinary thing like conversation? Of course you will not regard conversation as making much difference, he says,

... if you believe that the world is ruled by overpowering economic and political forces, that conflict is the essence of life, that humans are basically animals and that history is just a long struggle for survival and domination. If that's true, you can't change much. All you can do is have conversations that distract or amuse you. But I see the world differently, as made of individuals searching for a partner, for a lover, for a guru, for God. The most important, life-changing events are



the meetings of these individuals. Some people get disappointed, give up searching and become cynics. But some keep on searching for new meetings.<sup>2</sup>

Where the effort required for poetry, love, and philosophy (or for prayer, preaching and theology) is not valued, then conversation becomes problematic and people make do with what distracts and amuses. But there have been 'conversational revolutions' in the past, says Zeldin, just as important as wars and riots and famines:

When problems have appeared insoluble, when life has seemed to be meaningless, when governments have been powerless, people have sometimes found a way out by changing the subject of their conversation, or the way they talked, or the persons they talked to. ...Now it's time for the New Conversation.<sup>3</sup>

Zeldin's ideas echo thoughts of Thomas Aquinas in his commentary on Aristotle's *Politics*. Aristotle argued that human beings differ from the other animals in having speech. Thomas is very keen on this, believing that *communicatio facit civitatem* a phrase we can translate with 'conversation builds the city' or even with 'no community without communication'. There is no human society or community that is not built on conversation, exchange and communication. Talking to one another (with its essential counterpart, we might even say its essential environment,

---

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Zeldin, *Conversation: How Talk Can Change Our Lives*, 1998, London, The Harvill Press, page 4. See also *An Intimate History of Humanity*, 1994, London, Sinclair-Stevenson.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Zeldin, *Conversation: How Talk Can Change Our Lives*, page 5.

of listening to one another) is the way to establish and sustain life together. Thomas writes:

There is a difference between language (*sermo*) and simple voice (*vox simplex*). Voice is a sign of sadness and delight, and so of other emotions like anger and fear which are all related to delight and sadness, as is said in the second book of the *Ethics*. And so various animals have voice so that they might sense delight and sadness and signify this to each other by various natural sounds, as the lion by roaring and the dog by barking. For this purpose human beings have exclamations. But human speech signifies what is useful and what is harmful, which means it signifies what is just and unjust. Justice and injustice arise when useful and harmful matters are balanced or unbalanced. So speech is proper to human beings, because it is also proper to them to have knowledge of good and evil, justice and injustice, and other things, which can be signified by speech. The human being, by his nature, has speech, and speech makes possible that human beings communicate with one another as regards usefulness and harm, justice and injustice, etc. It follows – since ‘nature works nothing in vain’ – that human beings naturally communicate with one another in these matters. But because relating in this way leads to the home and the state being set up, it follows that the human being is naturally a domestic and political animal.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *In Libros Politicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, 1951, Turin and Rome, Marietti, page 11, paragraphs 36-37 (translation by Vivian Boland).

The Bible contains the same teaching about the connection between conversation and community. The story of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 comes to a climax with the confusion of human languages and the consequent fragmentation of the human community. Salvation involves the rectification of this situation, a time when the Lord, the God of Israel, will 'change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord' (*Zeph* 3:8-9). This prophecy Christians believe to have been fulfilled in the events of Pentecost when 'the crowd was bewildered because each one heard the disciples speaking in the native language of each' (*Acts* 2:6). The disaster of Babel with its confusion of tongues and destruction of solidarity is undone by Pentecost with its gift of tongues and establishment of a new community (new conversation = new community).

The Scriptural story of Pentecost makes it explicit that successful (that is truthful) human conversation depends on the gift of the Holy Spirit. Speaking a word that counts is only done under the influence of the Spirit. There are hints of this in Zeldin's work already mentioned with his reference to those who seek a conversation that goes deeper than what is simply amusing and distracting. In a wonderful analysis of human sensuality in relation to God, Timothy Gorringer speaks about the priority of the oral over the visual in human cultures. This is connected, he says, not just with the fact that writing is a late invention but because a person's word marks their interiority. The spoken word moves from interior to interior, and encounters between human beings are achieved largely through voice.

The film *Last Tango in Paris*, where the protagonists mostly grunt at one another, ends in death and alienation.<sup>5</sup>

For Christians, these difficulties are of greater significance for we live a faith that comes through hearing (*Rom* 10:17). The Spirit is received by believing what is heard (*Gal* 3:1-5) and faith, born of the Word, is nourished by the Word (Vatican II, *Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests*, paragraph 4). Suffice for the moment to note this additional dimension to which we shall return presently.

In developing his thoughts about the importance of hearing in human experience, Gorringer uses some ideas of George Steiner that are most fully developed in his 1989 book *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?*<sup>6</sup> There, Steiner argued that in the many billions of words that are now processed every day little of any ultimate consequence is said. There is little or no depth of meaning in this ocean of words. Although they may amuse or distract, there is little or no satisfying truth in most of our words. Steiner is concerned particularly with art, music and literature, which he says have lost depth and point to the extent that their practitioners have given up wrestling with the transcendent. The sharp anger of atheism and the passionate disappointment of apostasy at least continued to fight with the transcendent or with its absence. In one of his final interviews Samuel Beckett, asked about his

---

<sup>5</sup> See Timothy J. Gorringer, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses*, 2001, London, SCM Press, pages 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> George Steiner, *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* 1989, London, Faber and Faber.

thoughts on God, replied 'he does not exist, the bastard'.<sup>7</sup> Even that hint of disappointment vanishes in a culture that is theologically indifferent.

The 'hints of transcendence' whispered by Zeldin are proclaimed unambiguously by Steiner. The fact that language has its frontiers in light, music and silence

... gives proof of a transcendent presence in the fabric of the world. It is just because we can go no further, because speech so marvelously fails us, that we experience the certitude of a divine meaning surpassing and enfolding ours. What lies beyond man's word is eloquent of God.<sup>8</sup>

The argument so far may be gathered as follows. It is not only human efforts to speak of God that are difficult, all human conversation is marked by difficulty, some of it inherent to the kind of being we are, some of it to do with the cultural environment in which we live. But it is only where people continue to try to talk about God, or with God, or of God – in other words where people continue their efforts at theology, preaching and prayer – that conversation with each other worthy of human dignity remains a possibility. Ordinary human conversation is worthy only when it is set within attempts – albeit doomed to failure – to talk about God, of God and with God. What Zeldin, Gorringer and Steiner suggest may be given a more explicitly Christian form in the claim that without

---

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Beckett's comment I quote from memory: it was in a newspaper interview he gave shortly before his death and I have not kept the reference.

<sup>8</sup> George Steiner, 'Silence and the Poet', in *Language and Silence*, 1967, London, Faber and Faber, page 58, quoted in Timothy J. Gorringer, *The Education of Desire: Towards a Theology of the Senses*, 2001, London, SCM Press, page 15.

the Word, words cannot bear the weight of meaning we need them to bear; that without the Spirit who searches the depths of everything, we cannot understand the gifts bestowed on us by God (*1 Cor 1:12*).

### **‘God Spoke Before Them All’**

According to a traditional Irish saying, which might well be taken as a fair translation of the first verse of Saint John’s Gospel, ‘God spoke before them all’. It means that any subsequent speaking is always echo and response. In the beginning, we believe, was the Word who was with God and was God. This same Word became flesh in Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God and the only Son from the Father. It is this same Word that we declare, proclaim and expound in theology, preaching and prayer (*1 Jn 1:1-4*). All things have been created in the Word, through the Word and for the Word, and all things hold together in the Word (*Jn 1:2-4; Col 1:15-17*). The original ‘text’ then is this Word, first known to us perhaps through the translation of it that we call creation, the same creation that forms the first chapter in the history of salvation. Within this view all human conversation, discourse or talk may be understood as an echo of an earlier, radically fundamental conversation, discourse or expression. The Wisdom literature of the Bible speaks marvelously about this, of how all the achievements of science and knowledge, all the wisdom of politics and law, every gain in understanding and technology, is an unfolding or expression of wisdom. This wisdom, that orders all things well (*Wisdom 8:1*), was ‘beside’ the Creator, like a master worker, at play and taking delight in everything about the world and about humanity (*Prov 8:30-31*). All human conversation

or speaking, insofar as it attains something of meaning and truth, is an echo of this primordial discourse. Where our conversation is directly concerned with God it is not only an echo but has also the character of response, a reply to something already spoken.

George Steiner, as noted already, says that silence and music are at the frontiers of language. I am not aware that this triad of silence, language and music has ever been used as a way of thinking about the Trinity but it would not be surprising if it has been. To the best of my knowledge, Marius Victorinus, one of Augustine's heroes and helpers on the way to conversion, comes closest. He refers to the Father as *vox in silentio* (voice in silence), to the Son as *vox* (voice) and to the Spirit as *vox vocis* (voice of the voice).<sup>9</sup> The God revealed in Jesus Christ is a kind of conversation, then, a set of relationships of knowing and loving that are the persons of the Trinity. If we think of the Father as silence, of the Word as voice and of the Spirit as music we are clearly proposing a metaphor but one, which illuminates the argument being developed here, and which is not entirely fanciful as the comments of Marius Victorinus show.

We can look also to Thomas Aquinas for support. In *Prima Pars* question 43 of the *Summa Theologiae* he speaks about the missions of the persons of the Trinity. The Father is not sent. The mission of the Word in creation and its history reflects the procession of the Son in the eternity of God's life. He is the Word, the perfect expression of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Avium* I 13, lines 30-31 [*Traité Théologique sur la Trinité I* Texte établi par Paul Henry. Introduction, traduction et notes par Pierre Hadot. Sources Chrétiennes 68, 1960, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, p. 216].

Father's glory. He is Wisdom, the intelligibility, meaning and truth that is found in all things. The mission of the Spirit in creation and its history reflects the procession of the Third Person in the eternity of God's life. He is Love, the bond that seals the relationship of Father and Son. He is Gift, the inexhaustible and gratuitous source of all the gifts with which God glorifies his people and God's people glorify God.

We have become accustomed to the impressive attempts by contemporary theologians to place the Trinity once again at the centre of Christian theology and spirituality. One need refer only to the works of Gilles Emery<sup>10</sup> and David Coffey<sup>11</sup> in support of this. The biblical Trinity leads us to thinking about the economic Trinity, which must in turn be related to the immanent Trinity. God who is Father, Word and Spirit for us is eternally Father, Word and Spirit. The Son has made God known and on his return to the Father has sent the Spirit to seal the relationship into which human beings are called, their participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity.

This question on the missions of the Persons of the Trinity is also one of the first places in the *Summa* where Thomas talks about grace. The human creature, made in the image and likeness of God, is therefore 'apt' to receive God so as to be in relationship with God through understanding and love (*Summa Theologiae* I 43, 3). The Word, Aquinas says, is not just any Word but is always *Verbum spirans amorem*, 'the love-breathing Word' (43, 5 ad 2). To

---

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Emery, O.P., *La Trinité Créatrice*, Bibliothèque Thomiste XLVII, 1995, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin.

<sup>11</sup> David Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God*, 1999, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.



hear this Word is to understand not simply in an intellectual way. We cannot truly hear this Word without 'receiving' Him, allowing the Word to dwell within us and to plant in our hearts the gift of the Spirit. This Word must always breathe this Love so that those who do receive the Word become doers of the Word and not just hearers, they become lovers in their turn and not just people who are loved. 'To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God' (*Jn* 1:12-13).

Now what does all this mean for our subject matter? It means that wherever there is truth and goodness, wherever there is justice and wisdom in our relationships and in the conversations that sustain those relationships, we are echoing something that is true about the universe itself and about its origin in a source that is wise and loving. Human conversation, exchange and communication that are worthy of human beings echo that conversation, exchange and communication which Christians believe God to be. Thomas Aquinas once again encourages us in thinking along these lines, this time with his endorsement of a comment attributed to Saint Ambrose, that 'any truth, no matter by whom it is said, is from the Holy Spirit' (*Summa Theologiae* I.II 109,1).

## **Preaching as Liturgical Action**

When our conversation seeks to include God explicitly, whether in theology, preaching or prayer, it necessarily has the character of a reply, a response to an earlier expression. It is no longer just an echo of the eternal conversation but is a response to it, or better, a response within it. All

our preaching, then, insofar as it is a preaching of the Word of God is within the conversation that Father and Son carry on in the Spirit. We live in Trinity.

This point is illustrated by the liturgical sense that the term *praedicare* seems to have in the earliest Dominican traditions. We know that the thirteenth century masters in theology at the University of Paris were obliged to read or lecture (*legere*), to dispute or argue (*disputare*) and to 'preach' or proclaim (*praedicare*). This may seem to suggest that preaching is an extension of teaching, that it belongs with the lecture and seminar, with the catechetical exposition and Scripture commentary, as a kind of pedagogical exercise, a moment of instruction. While it is true that preaching is so related, good teaching is never simply the communication of information to hearers who have not known it before. It is a much richer task involving not only material or doctrines to be taught but the relationship between the teacher and the ones taught. Any good teaching is a conversation with a view to wisdom and appreciation, and will have something of the mysterious about it. None of this is to be denied.

But what needs emphasis here is the fundamentally liturgical sense that is to be given to '*praedicare*'. If the masters did preach after their lectures and disputations, then it was at the liturgy that they preached and not in the classroom or in the lecture-hall. This is obvious.

Preaching for the Dominicans always began in this liturgical service of the Word of God, in the hours of choral office and in the daily celebration of the Eucharist. One of the prefaces of the Dominican liturgy identifies the responsibilities of the Order as praising, blessing and preaching (*laudare, benedicere, praedicare*). The first two

are liturgical terms and it seems reasonable that the third be taken in that sense also. The *berakah* blessing of the Jewish liturgies is the essential background to Christian liturgies of the Word in which the wonderful works of God are proclaimed and acknowledged and in which their author is thanked and praised. The canon of the Mass itself was at one time referred to as *praedicatio*. Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation echoes this tradition in its opening paragraphs (*Dei Verbum*, paragraphs 1-3). They speak about the eternal life which was with the Father, which has appeared to us in the Word of God whom we have seen and heard and touched, and which is proclaimed in the Church as it announces the *praeconium*, the glory and praise, of salvation.

If the argument being developed here points to any programme for action, it is in the direction of trying to recover a sense of *praedicare* as primarily a liturgical and sacramental action rather than simply a catechetical or pedagogical one. This is not to deny the importance of these ways of serving the Word of God. Understanding preaching as primarily a liturgical and sacramental action, helps us to see that it must have the character of a response, it must concern itself with praise and thanks, and it must, in some sense, include God in its audience. Saint John Chrysostom, who is the patron of preachers in the Church, confirms this understanding of it. In his work *On the Priesthood* he says that 'the sole object of the preacher must be to please God rather than men'.<sup>12</sup> (In a dusty file I find a quote attributed to John Chrysostom to the effect that 'the preacher ought to preach, whether people listen to him or

---

<sup>12</sup> John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* V.7, translated with an Introduction by Graham Neville, 1964, London, SPCK, page 133.

not' but I cannot now trace the source of it. It is certainly a plausible sentiment in view of the reaction to his own preaching and it states even more strongly the idea that preaching is to be understood as liturgical action: something that must simply continue to be done.) Of course if God is the addressee and not just the subject of our preaching then a final sense of the phrase 'boring God' becomes possible!

As we recall and remember – in the strong biblical sense of 'remember' – the wonderful deeds of God, we echo his Word and seek to name, in faltering human terms, the refractions of that Word in human experience. In preaching we seek, as Catherine Hilkert puts it, 'to name grace'. Our attempt to do so is itself a grace, the 'grace of preaching', by which we are given a place within the missions of the Son and the Spirit, called to speak at various times and in various different ways the one Love-breathing and saving Word. This is the wonder of this grace, that the human language of proclamation, praise and teaching carries the eternal Word to birth in every time and place.

## **A Spirituality of Preaching**

If we turn, finally, to consider the spirituality demanded by this understanding of preaching, it will be a way of living for which silence, conversation and music are central. In this too it will be a 'theological life', an image among human beings of a God who may be thought about as Silence, Word and Music.

Without silence there is no hope of contemplation or prayer. One of the first pieces of advice handed on to Dominican novices is that 'silence is the father of preachers'. The school of silence is an essential place of learning for

the preacher. As we struggle to find something worthwhile to say it is good to recall that it was 'while gentle silence enveloped all things ... (that) your all-powerful word leaped from heaven ... into the midst of the land that was doomed' (*Wisdom* 18: 14-15).

Without talking, of course, there is no preaching. This is not just the actual speaking of the preaching when the time comes to do it, but the entire engagement and involvement of the preacher with the community in which the preaching is to be done. Just as a teacher must adapt to the language and circumstances of those listening, so the preacher must be conversant with what is happening in the world and in the lives of those who listen.

In the 'Life of Jesus' which we find in the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas speaks of Christ's 'mode of conversation' among us (*De modo conversationis Christi* – *Summa Theologiae*, III 40). It is a question about what we would now call a person's 'lifestyle' or 'form of life'. To readers who are not Dominicans, it may have a slightly chauvinistic feel as Thomas paints a portrait of Christ's way of life which is remarkably close to that which Saint Dominic envisaged for the members of his Order. The best possible form of life, Thomas says, is the one whereby a person is called to share with others, through preaching and teaching, what has been contemplated. Christ's mission was to bear witness to the truth and this required a public life of preaching. He lived as he did, Thomas says, in order to give an example to preachers (*ut daret exemplum praedicatoribus* – *Summa Theologiae*, III 40, 1). He lived a balanced life of prayer and preaching. To facilitate his work among them Christ did not live in solitude but shared the living conditions of the people and

conformed to their circumstances (40, 2). He lived among them in poverty, Thomas continues, because this is appropriate to the task of preaching. Christ taught the apostles that they must live in simplicity and detachment if they were to carry through effectively the mission he was entrusting to them and he gave them an example of this in how he spent his days (40, 3).

So what then about music? If language is bordered on one side by silence, on the other it becomes music. At the end of Brian Friel's play *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the narrator, Michael, speaks of his memories of the summer in which the events of the play take place, a memory nostalgic with music, he says,

... a dream music that is both heard and imagined;  
that seems to be both itself and its own echo.  
... When I remember it, I think of it as dancing.  
... Dancing as if language has surrendered to movement. ... Dancing as if language no longer existed,  
because words were no longer necessary ...<sup>13</sup>

Preaching unsupported by silence and music is likely to be boring. Sometimes the music of the words themselves will be sufficient, for good preaching is a kind of poetry. More often, though, it is an actual liturgical celebration of the Word of God that supports preaching. It will involve silence and music and perhaps even dancing (if only the highly formalized dancing of bowing, genuflecting and processing).

In a report prepared for the 1980 general chapter of the Dominicans, Yves (later Cardinal) Congar identifies the

---

<sup>13</sup> Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, 1990, London and Boston, Faber and Faber, page 71.

prior, the lector or librarian, and the cantor as the three essential offices within a Dominican community (or a 'preaching' as it was called in the early days). He says that 'these three functions correspond to the form of our life': a common life overseen by the prior, a life of study encouraged by the lector or librarian, and a liturgical or 'doxological' life led by the cantor.<sup>14</sup>

This can be applied more generally within the Church. Effective preaching presupposes a community, that the preacher is conversant (day by day) with fellow Christians. The network of relationships in which the preacher is involved helps to shape the preaching and there can be no effective preaching where the one who speaks and the ones who listen are, in a strict sense, strangers to each other. Effective preaching is theologically informed, nourished and strengthened by constant study. Study means a kind of anxiety for the truth, a concern that what is said be true. Such a zeal or love sets challenges that are never-ending. Aquinas says that the moral life can never be completely free from anxiety (*Summa Theologiae* II.II 49, 4; 49, 8) and preaching is, of course, a practice within such a life.

Effective preaching, finally, is always within the liturgical and doxological life of the Church. There has been a return to this theme in recent times, largely through the influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar. But it is important to remember that it is a recovery, part of the *ressourcement* in which Balthasar, de Lubac and others of their generation were involved. In particular the writings of Pseudo-

---

<sup>14</sup> The report by Yves Congar to the Dominican General Chapter of 1980 has never been published as far as I know. It is not given as an appendix to the acts of that chapter and I have used the copy circulated at the time to members of the Order.

Dionysius, central for Christian theology and liturgy in the Middle Ages, provide Balthasar and others with a classical exemplar of a theology which is always also a doxology, a 'hymning' of the truth and goodness of God, to use Pseudo-Dionysius' own term (*On the Divine Names* I.7).<sup>15</sup>

## Concluding Comment

One of the Advent prefaces tells us that the Virgin Mother bore Christ in her womb 'with love beyond all telling'. Alan Paton begins *Cry The Beloved Country*, his wonderful novel about South Africa, with the description of hills that are 'lovely beyond any singing of it'.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, the preacher of the Word of God is engaged with a matter that is beautiful beyond any singing of it. If silence is in some way the source of preaching, silence is also its destination. Even our music, dancing and singing, come to an end that is not yet the end we seek. God is the Father who has sent the Love-breathing Word to us so that we already have the mind of Christ (*1 Cor* 2:16) and we are already the children of God (*1 Jn* 3:2). We speak already of these things in words not taught by human wisdom (*1 Cor* 2:13). Where it happens that someone hears, through our preaching, the silent music of eternal love – *la musica callada* of John of the Cross<sup>17</sup> – then, of course, it is not we who speak (in spite of all our talking) but the Spirit of our Father speaking through us (*Mt* 10:20).

---

<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works* The Classics of Western Spirituality, 1987, London, SPCK, page 56.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country*, 2002, London, Vintage, page 7.

<sup>17</sup> John of the Cross, *Cantico Espiritual: Canciones entre el alma y el Esposo*, in San Juan de la Cruz, *Obras Completas*, 1988, Madrid, Editorial de Espiritualidad, page 577.



# The Reception of Preaching: An Instance in History\*

---

ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, O.P.

At the end of his term as Master of the Order, Damian Byrne gave the brethren an interesting insight on preaching. At the 1992 General Chapter in Mexico, he wrote: 'I asked a brother who is a producer on a national TV network which of the students he would select for training in his field. He replied: "Any one of them, as long as he is a good theologian. Anyone can learn the necessary techniques, but a religious who is not a good theologian has nothing to say."' <sup>1</sup>

For Damian Byrne, content is of utmost importance in the act of preaching. He then proposed to the brethren a model for preaching as he recalled the pioneering work of the evangelizers of the New World. He wrote:

---

\*Reprinted from *The Grace and Task of Preaching*, edited by Michael Monshau, O.P.

<sup>1</sup> Damian Byrne, O.P., 'Relatio de Statu Ordinis' in *Acta Capituli Generalis Electivi Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, (1992, Rome, Curia Generalitia), p. 189. Henceforth, *Relatio*.

The story of the first missionaries in the New World underlines the need for scholarship, a collective approach, expert help, and witness. These four lessons can be taken from the consequences of the Advent sermon of Antonio Montesino in 1511.<sup>2</sup>

Byrne's allusion to Montesino was not arbitrary. The year 1992 marked the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. Antonio Montesino<sup>3</sup> figured prominently in its history of evangelization while Mexico served as the focal point of all missionary activities in the region. Byrne thought that Montesino was an excellent model of Dominican preaching because his sermon was derived from prayer and assiduous study, nurtured in community, enriched by the insights and discoveries of other experts, and reinforced or empowered by the witness of his life and his community. In the words of Byrne:

He was respected as a theologian and his words had an impact. When the Councilors of the King wanted to refute him we are told that they brought twenty times more Masters in Theology to the meeting in Burgos than the Dominicans could assemble. We must learn from them and not let rhetoric overcome serious analysis if we are to be truly evangelizers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Montesino, O.P. (1486-1530) was already in the Island of Española together with another Dominican, Pedro de Cordoba, even before the formal evangelization of Latin America began. There, he took up the cause of the natives by preaching against slavery. His advent sermon was called *el primer grito* against the abuses of the Spanish colonizers. Recalled to Spain several times, he pleaded before the Spanish parliament for the just treatment of the natives.

The brothers acted as a group. When complaints were made to the Superior, Pedro de Cordoba, about Montesino's sermon, he replied that the community had preached the sermon. One of our historians once told me that he believed the community restrained Montesino somewhat by approaching the matter as a group. There is added lesson here, too!

They sought outside help. They realized that they did not have all the answers and had recourse to their Professors in Salamanca. Francisco de Vitoria's studies on the controversy led him to formulate the world's first Charter of Human Rights.<sup>4</sup> There will be many occasions when we will need expert help, not only from our scholars but from other experts in economics and the social sciences.

They gave special importance to poverty in their lives. This allowed them the freedom to preach without fear of the consequences. They sought by their voluntary suffering to join themselves to the Passion of Christ and the suffering of the Indian people. They gave a living witness to those who thought only of finding more and more silver and gold.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Francisco de Vitoria, O.P. (1483-1546) was a professor of Theology at Salamanca from 1526-1544. Like the famous *Apostle to the Indios*, Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566), he wrote extensively on the humane treatment of natives in conquered territories. He also wrote treatises on international law as well as on the obligation of the non-Christians to embrace the Catholic faith. He argued that the Christian faith must be preached diligently and zealously to the natives with proper demonstration, reasonable arguments, and the witness of an upright life, in order to bind the natives to receive it under pain of mortal sin.

<sup>5</sup> *Relatio*, pp. 189-190.

But lest we forget, the Advent sermon of Montesino alluded to by Byrne was directed **not** to the indigenous people of Latin America, but to his fellow Spaniards. He might have been quite effective in re-evangelizing his fellow Spaniards, but how did he fare in his preaching ministry to the natives? How was his preaching and that of the other missionaries in Latin America received by the natives whom they hoped to evangelize?

In his other communications to the Order, Byrne showed his sensitivity to the importance of reception in the task of preaching. The 1990 commemorative card issued by the Dominican Province of the Philippines in celebration of its nineteenth anniversary contains a passage taken from a letter of the Master. It goes:

Our preaching must spring from an attentiveness to the needs and experiences of those whom we address... This imposes on us the obligation of listening, an alertness to the movements which are taking place in our society.<sup>6</sup>

Though he did not explicitly mention the element of reception as one of his criteria for considering Montesino as a model preacher, he was certainly aware that it shapes not only the way preachers preach but more so, the content of preaching.

## **I. The Reception of Preaching**

Today, preachers can no longer just rely on scholarship, however sound and extensive it may be, nor on their

---

<sup>6</sup> Damian Byrne, 'We are Preachers' in *Nineteenth Anniversary Commemorative Card*, (1990, Quezon City, Dominican Province of the Philippines).

eloquence and quality of witnessing. Neither can the effectiveness of the preacher be gauged solely in terms of the authenticity of sources used, the relevance of the message and the medium, nor by the extent of preparation. Ample literature has been written about the crucial part the audience plays, not only in the actual event of preaching but also in its composition.

In a way, both the preacher and the listener are actively constructing a meaning: the preacher, in the preparation and delivery of the homily; the listener, in the attempt to understand what was heard. To one familiar with scholastic philosophy and theology, this is but a re-affirmation of the axiom: *quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*.

Preaching involves a participative *making*. The preacher is, first of all, a receiver. The act of composing a homily or a sermon is itself a reception that proceeds out of the horizon of questions from which the preacher intends to communicate meaningful answers. Horizons of questions vary from person to person and from culture to culture, so the preacher's original reception of God's word may not coincide with the listener's own reception of it. The listener, to whom preaching is directed, concretizes in a particular context what was only presented by the preacher in a general way. What was merely virtual in the homily becomes actual or concrete by the listener's appropriation of it.

The act of preaching becomes a dialogic point where the preacher's own reception of revelation is brought to expression, while the listener's reception of the homily is brought to bear on the listener's particular situation. This dialogical nature of the homily itself invites future interpretation and application of the homily not foreseen or

anticipated by the preacher. Indeed, preaching as a hermeneutical *event* leads to the *advent* of unforeseen and unexpected meanings.

The retrieval of reception as a significant theological category gave impetus to a gradual evolution of the way it is understood: from mere passive acceptance to creative transformation of what is received. Indeed, reception shapes, not only the way a preacher transmits the message, but also the *content* of preaching.

*a) A Background Theory: Yves Congar's Idea of Reception*

Yves Congar's idea of reception<sup>7</sup> can serve as our background theory for highlighting its importance in the task of preaching. Although his seminal study of reception was done within the context of the transmission and preservation of Christian tradition, his insights and conclusions could apply *mutatis mutandis* to preaching. Congar's description of tradition as 'not merely a transmission followed by a passive, mechanical reception but entails the making present in a human consciousness of a saving truth'<sup>8</sup> aptly describes the preaching event as well.

Congar developed his idea of reception as a way of extending the previously very narrow understanding of it. He demonstrated the pervasiveness of the reception phenomenon within ecclesial life in general. He set out to present this category not in the limited sense of reception of doctrine as taught by a conciliar body, but as an eccle-

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Yves Congar, O.P., *Tradition and Traditions*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (1966, London, Burns & Oates Ltd. and Macmillan Co.). Henceforth, *Traditions*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

siological reality.<sup>9</sup> First, he rejects any approach that would restrict reception to a process of submitting one's will to authority's legitimate precepts. Reception is not mere acceptance or obedience. He then searched for the areas of Church life where reception plays a role, namely: the councils, the formation of the canon, the exchange of synodal letters, the liturgical life of the Church, and Church discipline. After examining all these, he wrote:

History offers an enormous array of actual *receptions*, and theories of reception within the Church.<sup>10</sup>

For Congar, the degree of importance enjoyed by the category of reception depends on the ecclesiology operative in the Church. He observed that during the first millennium, the prevailing idea of the Church was that of *communion*, with the Holy Spirit binding all the faithful together in unity, and who resides in all churches as guide and guarantor of truth and fidelity to tradition. In this context, not only the preacher, but also the listener (whether as individual or as local community) played a major role towards the transmission of Christian faith, and establishing consensus and unanimity in the Church.

In an ecclesiological model pervaded by communion, the transmission of the Christian faith occurs in a dialogical way. Congar compared this to human conversation:

Every word or communication from one being to another needs to be received. A word is intended

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Yves Congar, O.P., 'Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality' in *Concilium*, Vol. 77 (1977) 43-68. Henceforth *Reception*. This a shortened version of 'La Réception comme réalité ecclésiologique' published in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, Vol 56 (1972) 369-403. Henceforth *La Réception*.

<sup>10</sup> *La Réception*, p. 370.

to make some impression; for the person to whom it is addressed it is a call, a challenge or stimulus, and it creates, virtually, an interpersonal relationship.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, this conversation takes place in human history. Human beings live *in history*; human beings *have a history*. Human beings not only live in a particular point of time, but move through time. They search to integrate into a meaningful whole their past and present, leading into a meaningful future. In Congar's words:

Saving faith is received by minds which ... must "receive" faith in an active way, in a manner which befits their nature. They are human minds, discursive intellects which perceive successively and only partially; hence also, minds fulfilling themselves only when in contact with other minds; lastly, minds living in a cosmic biological and temporal continuum. Historicity is an essential character of the human mind.<sup>12</sup>

Congar nostalgically looked back to the time when the original deposit of faith, carried through time in the memory of the Church, found continual rejuvenation not only in its transmission, but in the various modes of its reception. His thought echoed that of St Ireneaus' who wrote:

The preaching of the Church presents in every respect an unshakeable stability, remains identical to itself and benefits, as we have shown, from the witness of the prophets, apostles, and all their

---

<sup>11</sup> *Traditions*, p. 253.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.



disciples, a witness which embraces 'the beginning, the middle, and the end', in brief, the totality of the 'economy' of God and his operation infallibly ordained for the salvation of man and establishing our faith. From then on, this faith, which we have received from the Church, we preserve it with care, for unceasingly, through the action of the Spirit of God, such a deposit of great price enclosed in an excellent vessel, rejuvenates and causes a rejuvenation of the very vessel which contains it.<sup>13</sup>

Preaching bears the evident mark of *catholicity*, i.e., it makes the saving Word of God understandable and appropriate in diverse times and places. But such *catholicity* belongs primarily to the nature of the Word, for the same Word demands that it be expressed not only in a single tradition but also in several traditions so that it can be the message of salvation for all.<sup>14</sup>

In summary, Congar's idea of reception demonstrated how, during the first millennium of the Church, reception was a dynamic of the inner life of a church, the transmission of doctrine, as well as a dynamic of oral or written communication between persons and communities. To be initiated as a Christian is to be received in a communion. Reception helped maintain not only the continuity of the past to the present, but also its catholicity, by permitting it to expand in a new context.

---

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in J.M.R. Tillard, *Church of Churches. The Ecclesiology of Communion*, 1991, Collegeville MN, The Liturgical Press, p. 144

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

In the second millennium, an ecclesiology gradually developed which became more and more hierarchical, and the notion of the Church as a communion as well as the idea of reception receded into the background. Congar wrote:

The notion of reception – but not its whole reality, since life is resistant to theories – is excluded (or even expressly rejected) when for all the foregoing [interrelated theologies] there is substituted a wholly pyramidal conception of the Church as a mass totally determined by its summit, in which... there is hardly any mention of the Holy Spirit other than as the guarantor of an infallibility of hierarchical courts...<sup>15</sup>

Along with the shift from communion to hierarchy, was a parallel shift in the understanding of tradition, its transmission and preservation. For the early Church, authority resided in the demonstration of fidelity to the original apostolic tradition. The whole Church was understood to possess the grace and mission to exercise that authority. In the second millennium the emphasis was placed more and more on fidelity to WHO IS transmitting rather than on fidelity to WHAT is being transmitted. Consequently, 'there occurred a transition from a primacy of truthful content which it was the grace and mission of the whole Church to protect, to the primacy of authority.'<sup>16</sup>

A shift from discernment to obedience was consequent to this transition. For Congar, this was unfortunate because

---

<sup>15</sup> *Reception*, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> *Reception*, p. 61.

it further diminished the role of reception in the development and transmission of doctrine:

If an authority relative to the content of truth as such is attributed to the ministry, one argues upon the juridical level, and the only permissible connection is one of obedience. If the content of truth and of good is taken into account, the faithful, and, better, the ecclesia may be allowed a certain activity of discernment and reception.<sup>17</sup>

This shift became even more pronounced when the Church was confronted with the crises of discipline and orthodoxy occasioned by the Protestant movements and the expansionist tendencies in the West. The obsession for orthodoxy elevated the philosophico-theological articulation of doctrine to a surrogate of religion itself. Christianity was viewed as a super religion that was all of a piece, absolutely coherent, did not contradict itself, left no loose ends, and could always cope with unexpected twists and turns. Many Church leaders and preachers substituted for Christian faith the *logical scheme* with which they, compelled by methodological and cultural stipulation, sought to define it.

It can also be added that the role of reception receded into the background when culture was viewed in a classicist perspective. Western culture was regarded as the superior culture that transcended and, at the same time, must purify all other cultures. Preaching was thus a sort of a reducing agent, or a means to level off with other cultural expressions of faith, or at worst, a tool for the

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

imperialism of a single interpretation of the Word that anathematized *ab initio* all other interpretations.

With this background theory on the study of reception in preaching, we now examine one historical instance of reception, an instance triggered by Byrne's allusion to the Latin American preachers, notably Montesino, in his *Relatio*.

## II. Preaching to the Natives: The *Platicas*

We have no compilation of the sermons of Montesino but the *Platicas* compiled by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, discovered and published in 1924, are representative of the style and content of preaching used by missionaries in the sixteenth century and onwards. These sermons were used for pre-baptismal instruction and other liturgical celebrations. Originally in Spanish, these sermons were collected by Sahagún and translated into *Nahuatl*, the native language of the Aztecs, at his direction.<sup>18</sup>

The *Platicas* were to have filled two books. Sahagún wrote that the first book was composed of thirty chapters containing sermons and discourses which were delivered

---

<sup>18</sup> The *Platicas* are discussed in R. Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico*, (1966, California, University of California Press), pp. 85-88; pp. 286-88. Henceforth, *Ricard*. He writes that since the missionaries methodically pooled their resources and procedures in the work of evangelization, theologians of the Franciscans, Augustinians, and Dominicans periodically met to assure uniformity in preaching and catechesis. Bernardino de Sahagún (1512-1590) was among the pioneer Franciscan missionaries. He came to Mexico in 1529 and devoted himself mainly to the most methodical and detailed ethnographic study of the natives. Most of his works were lost. A glimpse of his labours can be found in B. de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*. The fourth edition of this work was published in Mexico in 1979.

up to the moment when the natives 'very insistently demanded baptism'.<sup>19</sup> The second book contained a catechism of Christian doctrine.

As an aside, there had been many collections of sermons (*sermonarios*) and catechisms (*doctrinas*) published by the missionaries but these were not for distribution to the natives. The high cost of printing and the use of fragile rice paper ruled out the feasibility of instruction by means of written materials. The transmission of doctrine, therefore, was mainly oral (*through preaching and teaching*), and the catechisms were printed for the Spanish missionaries who needed uniform translations of complex doctrinal concepts that theologians had taken centuries to define.

The *Platicas* are extremely interesting. These showed the apologetic schemes and rhetorical structures common in Spain in those times. These sermons were often developed in a threefold movement corresponding to the Ciceronian requirements of the orator – *utprobet, ut delectet, utflectat*.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly the sermons aimed first, to arrest attention by the appeal to novelty, erudition, or intellectual superiority; second, to delight both senses and intellect with imaginative illustrations, lucid arguments, and suavity of diction; and third, to engage the emotions of the congregation in order to move them to embrace the doctrine or way of life that was preached. The words were carefully chosen, not only for rhetorical effect but also in compliance to Francisco de Vitoria's injunction that the Christian message had to be preached in a way that the hearers are placed under the moral obligation to accept it.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ricard, p. 286.

<sup>20</sup> For a typology of sermons during this time, see Hilary Dansey Smith, *Preaching in the Spanish Golden Age*, 1978, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Their first sermon, addressed to the Lords of Mexico began with an introduction of who they were, an indication of what Congar referred to earlier as an ecclesiology focused on hierarchy and authority.

Fear not, we are men as you are. We are only messengers sent to you by a great Lord called the Holy Father (the Pope), who is the spiritual head of the world, and who is filled with pain and sadness by the state of your souls. These are the souls he has charged us to search out and save.<sup>21</sup>

‘Salvation of souls’ was the over-riding interest of the sermons. This reflected the missionary principle *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*<sup>22</sup> prevailing at the time. The discovery of the New World shattered the medieval assumption that the world as they knew it was co-extensive with Christianity. The theologians faced the problem of reconciling God’s universal salvific will with the immense number of people in newly-discovered lands, who, without their fault, could not have an explicit desire to be saved and to belong to the Catholic Church. Preaching and baptism were thus

---

<sup>21</sup> Ricard, p. 86.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Outside the Church there is no salvation’ was formulated by St. Cyprian in his *De Lapsis* addressed to Christians who have lapsed to heresy. This formula was found in the profession of faith imposed on the Waldensians by Innocent III but its clearest statement was in the bull *Unam Sanctam* of Boniface VIII. Although this formula was later applied to non-Christians Vatican I clarified this by declaring: ‘For someone to obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he is in fact incorporated into the Church as a member, but he is required to be united to it by desire.’ (Denz. 3870). Today, this axiom is understood as a way of expressing the ecclesiological principle that the Church is the sacrament of salvation. Cf. Karl Rahner (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. (1977, London, Burns and Oates) pp. 230-231.

seen as the most potent instruments to bring those *extra ecclesiam* within the Catholic fold.

The current of spirituality sweeping Europe during the age of colonization added a sense of urgency to the task of converting non-Christians. Missionaries were influenced by the twelfth century millennialist thinker, Gioacchino de Fiore<sup>23</sup> who dreamt of a forthcoming Golden Age, the historical realization of the messianic reign of God. Since the end of the world was believed to be imminent, it was necessary to act in a hurry and baptize as many people as possible, to guarantee their eternal salvation. The fact that the Gospel had reached the ends of the earth was itself considered a sign of the imminent *parousia*. Spain was the new Israel, and it was God who sent the missionaries to pagan lands. The time of fulfillment had finally come.

So, in their sermons, the missionaries took pains to explain why the natives must immediately convert to Christianity and why they must belong to a Church headed by the Pope to whom kings and emperors pledge obedience. The Pope was described as the source of the missionaries' power to receive into his Church those who desire to belong to it and are ready to renounce the cult of the false gods. They then pictured in vivid color the stark difference between the Christian God and the gods of the Aztecs, unwittingly reducing the latter into demons:

You have a god, you say, whose worship has been taught to you by your ancestors and your kings. Not so! You have a multitude of gods, each with

---

<sup>23</sup> For more information about this visionary, see F.E. Manuel and F.P. Manuel, *Utopian Thoughts in the Western World*, (1979, Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press) pp. 56-58.

his function. And you yourselves recognize that they deceive you ... what they demand of you in sacrifice is your blood, your heart. Their images are loathsome. On the other hand, the true and universal God, our Lord and Creator and Dispenser of being and life, as we have been telling you in our sermons, has a character different from that of your gods. He does not deceive; he lies not, He hates no one, despises no one; there is nothing evil in Him. He regards all wickedness with the greatest horror, forbids and interdicts it, for he is perfectly good. He is the deep well of all good things. He is the essence of love, compassion, and mercy. And He showed His infinite mercy when he made Himself Man here on earth like us; humble and poor, like us. He died for us and spilled his precious blood to redeem us and free us from the power of evil spirits. This true God is called Jesus Christ, true God and true man, dispenser of being and life, redeemer and savior of the world. Being God, he has no beginning; He is eternal. He created heaven and earth and hell. He created us, all the men in the world and he also created the devils whom you hold to be gods, and whom you call gods. This true God is everywhere. He sees all, knows all. He is altogether admirable. As man, He is in the His royal palace, and here below on earth he has his Kingdom, which He began with the beginning of the world. He would have you enter it now, and for this you should consider yourselves blessed.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ricard, p. 86.



The *Platicas* also dealt with the creation of the angels, the revolt of Lucifer, the part played by the devils and the good angels, the creation of the world and human beings. The last page contained the titles of the missing pages that supposedly discussed the following: original sin, the death of Abel, the confusion of tongues, the Church, and divine justice.

The vehemently apologetic style of the *Platicas* followed a missionary strategy that characterized the evangelization of Latin America: the *tabula rasa* approach.<sup>25</sup> The missionaries generally saw in the native religions nothing that was worth salvaging. This is understandable if we consider the fact that the missionaries came from a nation that had always been extremely hostile to heterodoxy and in which the Inquisition had gone farther than elsewhere. King Philip II, who came to the throne at the onset of the spiritual conquest of Latin America, thought of himself as the champion of the true faith in the world.<sup>26</sup>

Also, the Christianization of Latin America coincided with the Counter Reformation. It is easy to see why the phobia for heresy that raged in Spain was exaggerated in Latin America among the missionaries who saw first hand the non-Christian civilization. Instead of considering native practices and rituals that are similar to Christian practices as heavy with hope and promise, the missionaries regarded these as demoniacal parodies from which they recoiled in horror. They avoided any accommodation, in ritual or dogma, and stubbornly prohibited practices and beliefs

---

<sup>25</sup> Ricard, p. 286.

<sup>26</sup> For ample discussion on the role of the Spanish monarchs in the task of evangelization, see W. E. Shiels, SJ, *King and Church*, (1961, Chicago, Loyola University Press).

that are perceived as pagan in nature. They also caused the disappearance of a great number of native monuments, sacred places, and antiquities. The first Bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumarraga wrote on June 12, 1531 that he had destroyed more than five hundred temples and twenty thousand idols.<sup>27</sup> Similar claims were made by other ecclesiastics and religious.

The missionaries insisted on presenting Christianity, not as perfecting or fulfilling the native religions, but as something entirely new, which meant an absolute and complete rupture with the whole past. The *tabula rasa* approach aimed precisely at achieving this.

It is interesting to know that one of the ways by which the missionaries applied this strategy was through what is now known as *evangelization by children*.<sup>28</sup>

#### a) The 'Preaching Children' Phenomenon

From the very start, the missionaries devoted themselves to the formation of native children not only because these represented the temporal and spiritual future of Latin America, but also because they saw in these youths their surest and most active auxiliaries in the task of spreading God's word.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Ricard, p. 37-58.

<sup>28</sup> Ricard, 286. See also R. Trexler, 'From the Mouth of Babes: Christianization by Children in the 16th Century New Spain' in *Church and Community 1200-1600: Studies in the History of Florence and New Spain, Storia e Letteratura*, Vol. 168 (1987):549-573. Henceforth, Trexler. Trexler traced this phenomenon to the radical juvenile experiment in Florence by Savonarola from 1496-1498.

<sup>29</sup> Ricard, p. 224.

Many missionaries did not hesitate to attribute to these native children the greater part of the merit in the Christianization of Mexico. Without these child preachers, the religious admitted they would have been as helpless as molting falcons. Mendieta went so far as to entitle one of his chapters 'How the Conversion of the Indians was Done through the Preaching of Children'.<sup>30</sup>

The missionaries wrote that some of these children even taught the catechism to adults<sup>31</sup> and they revealed to the religious the secret superstitions of their relatives.<sup>32</sup> They also acted as interpreters when the need arose, repeating the missionaries sermons 'with the most profound convictions and persuasive warmth'.<sup>33</sup> In 1531 the Audiencia of Mexico acknowledged the use of child preachers and this practice received in 1558 the implicit approval of the Viceroy Luis de Velasco.<sup>34</sup>

But how were these children formed to become preachers and catechists? Their training itself mirrored the *tabula rasa* approach. First of all, they were interned in the convents for many years. One obvious outcome of this obligatory detention was the children's attachment to the missionaries whom they, for want of a paternal image, began to regard as surrogate fathers. By capitalizing on the inter-generational conflicts within the native society itself, the missionaries created a socio-cultural break that would

---

<sup>30</sup> G. Mendieta, *Historia ecclesiastica Indiana*, (1971, Mexico), 222. Quoted in Trexler, p. 557.

<sup>31</sup> Ricard, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ricard, p. 100.

<sup>34</sup> 'Letter of Luis de Velasco to Philip II, September 30, 1558' in *Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de Mexico*, 58, 3-8. Quoted in Ricard, p. 100.

sever the connection between the old and new generation of natives. The child preacher was, indeed, the veritable *tabula rasa* receptive of any imprint the missionaries might leave there.

The hoped-for native Christian society, totally free of any vestiges of an idolatrous past, did not materialize, however. The phenomenon of preaching children did not create the necessary break from the old to the new. Neither did this group develop into the future native clergy who would lead a truly indigenous church.<sup>35</sup> It seemed that the natives' reception of the missionary preaching was not commensurate to the benevolence shining through the missionaries' noble enterprise.

### III. The Reception of the *Platicas*

As narrated in the summary of the *Platicas*, when the missionaries preached to the natives, their chiefs were at first stupefied, they found no argument to counter the missionaries' claims so they consulted their own priests. The priests deliberated among themselves and expressed great fear of the revenge of the gods should they prove faithless. They replied:

What we know about our gods came to us from our forefathers. Our ways of worship were shaped by our tradition. Our gods have always served us in the past. Only disaster can come from our abandonment of the gods; their wrath will surely fall upon us. It is not salvation but death that you bring us. Oh what can we do who are

---

<sup>35</sup> Ricard, p. 224.

mortals and dejected? Let us die if we have to die. If we are to perish, let us perish, because truly our gods have died.<sup>36</sup>

Such eloquence must have been evoked by a great sense of loss. For the natives, the acceptance of the Christian God in exchange for their deities threatened not only the end of their tribal organization but also their traditional *credenda* and *agenda*. It was like the death of their way of life as they had known it.

Sahagún wrote that the chiefs and the Aztec priests, after listening to the sermons, eventually asked to be baptized. He saw in this a manifestation of God's grace, the effectiveness of their preaching, and the natives' acceptance of it. A modern reader would, however, wonder whether the natives' desire to be baptized was a proof of efficacious reception of the *Pláticas*, or simply practical capitulation to a foreign power.

In the first place, most of the concepts in the sermons of the missionaries had no surrogates in the natives' system of thought. Even when the missionaries showed sincere efforts at translating their sermons into the native language, much of this was done by forcibly inserting European words (either in Latin or in the language of the missionary) into the native texts. From the point of view of orthodoxy, this was deemed safe. Besides, there was repeated warning from the Crown against the use of any term<sup>37</sup> that might cause confusion in the minds of the natives, that is why religious texts in native languages are sprinkled with many

---

<sup>36</sup> Ricard, p. 266-267.

<sup>37</sup> Ricard, p. 287.

Spanish and Latin words, such as *Dios*, *Apostoles*, *Yglesia*, *Misa*, *Sanctus Spiritus*, *Santisima Trinidad*, and so on.

But even granting that Christian terms were adequately translated and the natives wanted to appropriate the missionaries' *credenda* and *agenda*, their understanding of the depths and subtleties of very Western and scholastic concepts would have been insufficient.

For instance, the missionaries praised the readiness with which their new converts streamed to confession after the former had preached the necessity of this sacrament. But the natives' reaction could also be construed as a desperate need for religious guidance as a result of the disappearance of their native priestly class. The unaccustomed freedom from the dreaded power of the offended idols was translated into eagerness to confess one's sins as an act of propitiation. The inadequate understanding of the sacrament explains the later observation of the missionaries that the natives slipped readily into a completely external view of the moral life and came to depend upon the priest as the absolute arbiter of their conduct.

The reception of the missionaries' preaching would have been greatly enhanced by the preaching children whom the missionaries trained as effective auxiliaries. Sad to say, they served more as the backbone of the new paternalism ushered in by coming of the Europeans, a paternalism that had nothing in common with the former patriarchal structure of the ancient indigenous society. It was a paternalism which, in spite of its good will, had one main flaw: it refused the children the right to grow up. It was a paternalism that regarded them as perennial children.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Ricard, p. 291.

This partially explains why, despite the almost unanimous judgment of the missionaries that the native children were effective preachers and teachers of the faith, the latter never developed into a full-fledged native clergy. In the first place, the religious did not teach the natives the Spanish language. Ignorance of Castilian had the immediate advantage of shielding the natives from the dangerous contact of the European, but it also created a gulf that rendered difficult and even impossible the adequate reception of Christian doctrine. The evolution of this corps of preaching children into a full-fledged native clergy was also not supported by the Spanish Crown. It was regarded as nonsensical, running counter to the system of tutelage.

In the summary of the *Platicas*, the superiority of the Christian God was presented to the natives through many arguments. But the decisive argument given to the natives why they should embrace the Catholic religion was the missionaries' observation that the natives had not been supported in the slightest by their gods, while the Christian God, in proving his omnipotence, had allowed his faithful servants, the Spaniards to conquer the natives.<sup>39</sup>

This argument indicates clearly that the evangelization of Latin America was inescapably tied to conquest. Evangelization involved not only the adoption of the creed as preached, but also submission to a foreign power. For the missionaries, conquest was instrumental to evangelization; for the colonists and not a few priests, evangelization was instrumental to conquest and stability of Spanish rule. These conflicting motives produced disintegrative consequences for the colonized population,

---

<sup>39</sup> Ricard, p. 267.

especially as regards the quality of their reception of missionary preaching and teaching.

As a native, one remained within the traditional world of the indigenous culture, whose practices – linguistic, religious, familial, vocational – affirmed the form and content of one's personal identity. At the same time, as a colonial subject one was connected into an administrative system, including guidelines, norms, expectations, rewards and punishment that amounted to a second nature.

It is impossible to superimpose consistently these two images of oneself without damage to one's sense of identity and religiosity. The native thus became vulnerable to the existential crises that remained unresolved through the centuries. Many contemporary Third World authors now write about these as split-level morality, tendency towards syncretism, re-appearance of folk-religiosity as superstitious practices and beliefs.<sup>40</sup>

What aggravated this self-estrangement were the inconsistent policies and ambiguous or unattainable objectives presented by both the colonizers and evangelizers. It is a mistake to attribute too much clarity, unit, or consistency to the structures that promoted colonization and evangelization. A colonial regime typically resembles less a closed and smoothly contoured hegemonic edifice than an unstable assembly of partial discourses and practices. Its prime concern was the molding of the new

---

<sup>40</sup> See for instance, R. Baglow, *The Crisis of Self in the Age of Information*, (1994, London, Routledge), pp. 139-141. He dealt in these pages on the logic of colonial organization which had detrimental effects on the native psyche persisting up to the present.



colonial society in the image of the mother country's own traditions. When the missionary and the colonizer clashed over the ways in which this enterprise could best be fulfilled, the loser was generally the native over whom they quarreled, and the Christian message whose effective reception was hampered by such conflicts.

## Conclusion

The early Spanish missionaries, undoubtedly exceptional and dedicated men like Sahagún and Montesino, had had the good fortune of seeing much of native civilization in Latin America still intact. Their preaching was a sincere attempt to convert the natives and bring them to the catholic fold. They also took pains to remind their fellow Europeans that the native was a human person with inherent rights and not a natural slave.

But after the middle of the sixteenth century, the solidification of colonial life and accumulation of missionary precedents had hardened the arteries of Spanish spiritual enterprise. The native leadership, initially christianized by the missionaries receded to the background. This was followed by an almost brutal decimation of the native population and a continuous wave of European migration to Latin America.

Many contemporary historians today contend that the christianization of Latin America was not accomplished through a process of evangelization but through the emergence, two generations after the conquest, of a *mestizo* race with its own religion and culture, displacing the natives who receded further to the periphery of society.

Present-day missionaries had learned from the past. In the age of religious pluralism and inter-faith dialogue, missionary preaching is no longer primarily geared towards converting people to Catholicism. Still, many missionaries sincerely trying to update their methods are overly focused on the theological, psychological, sociological, linguistic, and communication theories that must mould their preaching, the politically correct ways of expressing the content of preaching, the dialogical methods to be used to effect understanding on the part of the non-believers, etc.

A study of the history of reception of preaching can complement these efforts. As mentioned earlier, reception refers not only to the way a listener listens, but how the listener shapes the content of the preacher's message. A study of the history of reception need not immerse the message in the relativism of its various receptions, but affirms the rich potential of the message to effect new meanings through the audience's active reception of it. Interest on the historicity of preaching can help modern preachers realistically gauge the conditioning factors of a homily's original production and reception, how these factors shape and are shaped by the history of its later receptions, and the consequent effects on the various receivers.

A study of the history of reception, furthermore, would highlight the reality of the *sensus fidelium*, which in turn affirms the presence of the Holy Spirit who works in all and through all, towards universal salvation. As Congar has written, and history has proven, when the Church acknowledges that it is the Spirit that moves the heart to listen, preaching ceases to be a monologue, a tool for imperialism and domination, but an instrument for understanding and conversion.

# Prophetic Stories as a Preaching Resource: The Elisha Collection\*

---

MARK A. O'BRIEN, O.P.\*\*

When one thinks of Old Testament prophecy, the natural tendency is to turn to books like Isaiah and Jeremiah. These portray prophets as powerful preachers and master poets. The poetic form gives their preaching a vitality that has attracted the attention of generations of preachers and their listeners – and rightly so. Nevertheless, there is another form of prophecy that may be overlooked as one is swept along by the power and intensity of the poetic sermon. These are the stories about prophets, especially those in the books of Samuel and Kings. Prominent among them of course are the stories about Elijah and Elisha.

---

\*Reprinted from *The Grace and Task of Preaching*, edited by Michael Monshau, O.P.

\*\*He is a Dominican from the Australian province, a lecturer in Old Testament at Catholic Institute, Sydney. He served as Prior Provincial from 1993 to 2000. His publications include contributions to *The International Bible Commentary*, to *Concilium*, and to *Priests and People*.

Prophetic poetry and prophetic story provide different opportunities and challenges for the preacher. With the former, one's focus is on the prophetic sermon and how poetry shapes the words to give them rhetorical power and impact. With the latter, the focus is more on the plot of the story and the portrayal of its characters. The point of a story, the depiction of a character, tends to be subtle and even elusive, yet the impact of a story can be just as powerful as a prophetic sermon.

There is no better text to illustrate this than the collection of stories and shorter anecdotes about Elisha. Of particular value is the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-37.<sup>1</sup> If one pays attention to the way any story works, prophetic stories are a rich vein to be mined by the preacher. And not only prophetic stories: Old Testament stories, whether about Israel's ancestors in Genesis, Moses in Exodus and Numbers, or Israel's leaders in the historical books, exemplify the biblical art of storytelling and offer a wealth of material for preaching.

## **The Elisha Collection**

The collection of stories about Elisha begins with 2 Kings 2 where he takes up the mantle of his master Elijah. It effectively concludes with 2 Kings 8:1-15 which revisits two prominent items in the collection – Elisha's resuscitation of the Shunammite woman's child and his

---

<sup>1</sup> Comparison with other stories of women in the Old Testament who are promised a child is beyond the scope of this essay (e.g. Sarah in Genesis 18, or the wife of Manoah in Judges 13). Studies by feminist scholars, in particular, have contributed greatly to our understanding of such stories.

relationship with the kingdom of Syria (Aram). The story of Jehu's revolution in 2 Kings 9-10 begins with Elisha dispatching a disciple to anoint Jehu king, but this is not a story about the prophet as such. Somewhat separated from the collection is a final episode about Elisha followed by the report of his death (2 Kgs 13:14-21).

Because of legendary and miraculous elements, critical scholars who sought to reconstruct the history of ancient Israel attached little value to these stories. Happily, recent study of narrative has opened our eyes to the literary and theological qualities of such stories. Furthermore, we now realize that one cannot expect such texts to be historical records of Elisha and his times. Ancient Israel's authors operated in an age and culture that was marked by dramatic and imaginative storytelling. Maintaining a clear distinction between story and historical report, as we conceive it, was probably not an issue. Nevertheless, for readers interested in historical questions, the stories do allow some insight into how those who composed them thought and worked, and how they portrayed figures in their tradition.

A brief tour of the collection will serve to introduce the types of story found there and provide a context for a closer look at one of its greatest treasures – the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman in 4:8-37. In 2 Kings 2 what one might call the 'succession story', there are two seminal moments. The first is the figure of a lone Elisha, the mantle of his master in his hand, striking the Jordan twice and crying 'where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' (v. 14). The second is that of the new prophet responding to a pressing 'pastoral need' – a community troubled by bad water and barren land (v. 19). The first

moment evokes the powerful yet elusive nature of the prophetic spirit. Despite the experience of divine power associated with Elijah's 'departure', Elisha appears indecisive. His first words are a question, his first action uncertain. He strikes the Jordan twice, a distant echo of the doubting Moses who struck the rock twice in Numbers 20:10-12.<sup>2</sup> Even though the company of prophets proclaims that 'the spirit of Elijah' rests on Elisha, dispute erupts between him and the company over the whereabouts of Elijah. The second seminal moment serves to dispel any doubt about Elisha's prophetic status and it involves his response to a need. In contrast to his earlier uncertainty, he now acts decisively as a prophet to fix a community's water supply (vv. 20-22). Both his words and actions are effective.

The subsequent narrative explores the power and elusiveness of prophecy – its profound mystery – in a variety of ways, not all of them comforting to the modern reader.<sup>3</sup> Prophetic power and insight are prominent in the war stories of 2 Kings 3, 2 Kings 6-7 and 2 Kings 8:7-15. Elisha, not Israel's king and army, is the one who by his words and deeds exemplifies the 'chariots of Israel and its horsemen' (cf. 2 Kings 2:12 with 2 Kings 3:7 [horses], 2 Kings 6:17, 2 Kings 7:6 and 2 Kings 13:14). One may describe these

---

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew in 2 Kings 2:14 uses the same phrase twice: 'and he struck the water'. The NRSV obscures the repetition by translating 'and (he) struck the water ... When he had struck the water...' For a discussion of this and other aspects of the story, see my 'The Portrayal of Prophets in 2 Kings 2,' *AusBR* 46 (1998) 1-16.

<sup>3</sup> In 2 Kings 2:23-24 Elisha curses a gang of boys who ridicule him and they are mauled by bears. This episode warns that those who revile the prophet are cursed: by implication, those who revere him are blessed. The text is a reminder that the Bible comes from another age and culture and that it does not always conform to our expectations.

as anti-war stories because Elisha's intervention thwarts the warlike plans of kings and their armies. In 2 Kings 3, the king of Israel claims that his campaign against a recalcitrant vassal, Moab, is the will of God (vv. 10, 13). Elisha's prophecy initially seems to endorse the claim but, via a series of ironic twists, leads to the very reversal of what the king and his allies set out to do. The king of Moab escapes and Israel is obliged to withdraw. Even worse, instead of providing plunder for Israel, the campaign has destroyed the source of that plunder – the wealth of Moab (v. 25). The story implies that it is dangerous, especially for one in power, to presume to know the will of God.

The two stories in 6:8-23 and 6:24-7:20 tell how Elisha brings peace when kings and armies seek violence and death. In the first, Elisha temporally blinds a Syrian (Aramean) cohort sent to seize him, throws a party for them and then sends them home. There are no casualties. In the second story, he promises a peaceful end to a Syrian siege. A group of lepers, not soldiers, brings the good news of the enemy's flight. The only casualty is an army captain who doubts the prophet (7:2) – he is trampled to death in the stampede to plunder the enemy camp.

The legendary and miraculous elements in the stories should not detract from their value for the preacher. It is a mistake to eliminate such elements in an attempt to recover the historical core of a story. As they stand, the stories make an important faith claim; namely, that God turns what is hopeless and death-dealing into what is hope-filled and life-giving. God can make the impossible possible through the word of the prophet. The legendary elements add a light, sometimes humorous, touch to stories that deal with the horror of war. It is a tribute to the skill and

sensitivity of Old Testament storytellers that they did not wallow in violence and terror. Nor did they see the human condition as tragic: they may paint it in somber colors at times but overall there is a sense of life and hope.<sup>4</sup>

In between these anti-war stories in 2 Kings 3 and 6-7, there is the story of the 'Great Woman' of Shunem in 4:8-37 and the 'Great Man' Naaman the Syrian in 2 Kings 5. Each is preceded and followed by an anecdote about Elisha the miracle worker (4:1-7, 38-41, 42-44; 6:1-7). One gains the impression of a carefully arranged structure but it is nevertheless a flexible one. 2 Kings 5 shares something of the anti-war stories in that Elisha intervenes when the Israelite king sees Naaman's request as a veiled attempt to pick a quarrel (v. 7-8). Nevertheless, the story seems equally at home with the preceding accounts of Elisha's care for those in need – Naaman is a leper seeking healing. It also devotes considerable attention to the character of Elisha's servant Gehazi who features in the story of the Shunammite woman.

The arrangement of this material may in part be due to what Alexander Rofé, professor at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, calls 'associative order, i.e., the arrangement by external associations, such as similarity of words or phrases'.<sup>5</sup> According to Rofé, this is a typical phenomenon in biblical texts. Elisha's assistance for a woman and her sons in 4:1-7 may be linked to the following story of the

---

<sup>4</sup> For an engaging treatment of the Bible as 'comic drama' not tragedy, see Francesca Aran Murphy, *The Comedy of Revelation: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained in Biblical Narrative* (2000; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark).

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories. The Narratives about the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Their Literary Types and History* (1988; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press) p. 49.



Shunammite woman by the presence of children in each and because each woman refers to herself as 'your servant' (4:2, 16). Similarly, the episode in 4:38-41 may have been placed after the story of the Shunammite woman because of a perceived association between the death of her child and the prophets' cry that there is 'death in the pot' (v. 40). The miracle of the loaves in 4:42-44 may have been placed after 4:38-41 because of the theme of food and Elisha's command to 'Serve it/give it to the people and let them eat' (vv. 41, 43). It may be associated with 2 Kings 5 because both the man from Baal-shalishah and Naaman come bearing gifts. The axe-head incident in 6:1-7 and the story of Naaman's healing are both associated with the Jordan River (5:10; 6:2).

The impression is of a delicate editorial touch in the arrangement of the present text. There are connections but they are not intrusive. The result is a bonus for the preacher: each text can be read as an independent piece; each can also be explored for its connection with others and its contribution to the portrait of Elisha.

A common thread in the stories and shorter anecdotes in 2 Kings 3-7 is the prophet as a life-giver for those in need. In the war stories, Elisha's intervention undoes the deadly plans of kings or brings peace where violence threatened. These frame texts in which he brings life-sustaining or life-giving power to a variety of domestic situations, which, from a human point of view, look hopeless or powerless.

The story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman occupies a special place in this company. Of all the narratives in the collection, this one alone tells how Elisha

raised the dead – the ultimate sign of prophetic power.<sup>6</sup> Its importance is also signaled by 2 Kings 8:1-6 which provides a sequel to the story. Yet it is in the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman that the elusive nature of prophetic power, glimpsed initially in 2 Kings 2, is brought more to the fore. The interplay of these two powerful themes gives a special fascination and depth to this story and an array of possibilities for the preacher.

### **The Story of Elisha and The ‘Great Woman’ of Shunem (2 Kings 4:8-37)<sup>7</sup>**

One does not have to be a literary expert to appreciate this story. The customary tools of narrative criticism are as applicable here as to any other literary piece; we are familiar with them and use them regularly to enjoy the literature of our own culture. The following list is therefore simply a reminder – sensitivity to the way things are communicated (form) in order to grasp what is communicated (content); identification of the constituent parts of a text and their relationship to the whole; attention to the way characters are portrayed in a story; tracking the plot of a story and how this normally involves a situation, a complication, a crisis and its resolution.

Three specifically biblical items need to be added to this list. One concerns characteristic features of Old

---

<sup>6</sup> The last mention of Elisha in 2 Kings 13:20-21 tells of the raising of a corpse through contact with his corpse.

<sup>7</sup> The term ‘great (woman)’ is translated as ‘wealthy’ in the NRSV. It can have this sense (cf. Gen 26:13; 1 Sam 25:2; 2 Sam 19:33; Job 1:3). Nevertheless, within the context of this story, it seems to acquire a deeper meaning in relation to the woman.

Testament storytelling such as reticence and economy of expression. Our awareness of these will develop as we become more familiar with Old Testament stories and the culture and history behind them. Another is that Old Testament texts are often the work of more than one hand. However, there seems little evidence of this in 2 Kings 4:8-37. A third is the need to be aware of the particular theology of inspiration that influences the way people interpret biblical texts. It is good to know where we, and those to whom we preach, are coming from. Some may regard this text as an accurate historical account: it is the Word of God and what it says must therefore be (historically) true. Others may see it as a dramatic composition by a storyteller drawing on traditional information, or as a work of fiction like the Book of Jonah or Jesus' parables. They believe that inspiration operates in the various ways people express themselves: a text does not have to be historically accurate to be inspired.

To demonstrate one position to the satisfaction of those holding others is probably out of the question. The only 'evidence' we have is the biblical text and it is on this limited evidence that we must base our interpretations. The only 'tools' we have to sift the evidence are our limited literary and associated skills. It is virtually impossible to be critically aware of all the factors involved in reading a text and to take them into account. My own preference is for the second position outlined: Israelite storytellers drew on the rich stock of their tradition but in a creative way that would engage and challenge their audience. They were like the scribe described in Matthew 13:52 'who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old'.

Telling a story is a creative moment for a storyteller but it also imposes certain limitations. There is a plot to unfold and so some things need to be highlighted while others can receive only passing attention.<sup>8</sup> There are characters to portray and while one or two can be developed (the plot may require focus on a prophet), others serve to fill in the background. Historical and cultural distances between ancient authors and contemporary listeners/readers may mean that some elements in a story will be seen as limitations or even offensive (the way Elisha addresses the Shunammite woman). These factors need to be kept in mind when evaluating a story and the characters it portrays.

The relationship between reader and text is a complex matter and complete agreement between readers is unlikely. Nevertheless, I am willing to assert that most readers would agree – with some fine-tuning here and there – that our story has the following constituent parts. There is the opening scene in 4:8-10 that tells how Elisha came to avail of the woman's hospitality. The next scene in vv. 11-16 involves the promise of a child with the fulfillment of that promise in v. 17. Verses 18-20 tell of the death of the child and vv. 21-37 the events that unfold as a result – the mother's reaction to the death and her dramatic encounter with Elisha (vv. 21-30); his servant Gehazi's

---

<sup>8</sup> Old Testament stories like those about Elisha can be read in a few minutes. This has led Antony F. Campbell to propose that the written text is an outline of the story, a guide for oral performance. In a performance, a storyteller could flesh out scenes in ways that were impossible to record with the methods then available. Choices would of course still need to be made, depending on the occasion, the audience, the storyteller's familiarity with the tale, etc. ('The Reported Story: Midway Between Oral Performance and Literary Art,' *Semeia* 46 [1989] pp. 77-85).

unsuccessful attempt to revive the child in vv. 31; Elisha's successful attempt in vv. 32-37. Some readers may prefer a more detailed division. There is no hard and fast rule about this; readers have different perspectives and this will influence their assessment of the literary phenomena. It is noteworthy that three major parts of the above division, vv. 8-10, 11-17 and 18-20 (21-37) are introduced by the phrase 'one day'.<sup>9</sup> Each 'day' marks a significant stage in the unfolding of a story that reaches a turning point with the third occurrence – the day of the child's death.

The preceding text leads up to it – the woman's hospitality, Elisha's response and the promise of a child, the child's birth and death. The subsequent text looks back to it – the mother's reaction to the death, her encounter with Elisha, the resuscitation of the child. On this reading, the plot of the story looks relatively straightforward: the miraculous power of the prophet over life and death. He gives life and he restores life. This is true enough. But, blessed is the reader whose second thoughts come first: closer inspection reveals a more complex and subtle picture.

Stories normally unfold their plot by developing an initial situation (4:8-10) via a complication (vv. 11-17) that builds to a crisis (vv. 18-20; the death of the child). The remainder of the story tells how the crisis is resolved (vv. 21-37). Sometimes, the crisis may be only partly resolved, allowing for a further story or another chapter to a book. The mark of a great storyteller is to exploit the conventional form in a creative way. In my judgment, whoever composed this story did just that. The way the plot unfolds suggests

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories*, 27-28 and Robert L. Cohn, *2 Kings* (Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry; 2000; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press) pp. 27-28.

that the death and resuscitation of the child is important but not central. The real interest of the story is not so much whether the child will be raised but how this will come about.<sup>10</sup>

An important component that drives the plot of this story is Elisha's promise of a child and the realization of that promise. Two miracles are associated with this component: the first is the gift of a child to the childless woman; the second is the resuscitation of her child. Given the miracle of the child's birth, it seems unlikely the story would end with its untimely death. This would make it a tragedy and, as pointed out earlier, the Bible does not have a tragic view of humanity. Rather, expectation is raised as to how the crisis of the child's death will be resolved. What further miracle may be worked? A tragic ending would also cast a very dark shadow over prophecy. Although this story does paint a critical portrait of the prophet, it believes in prophetic power.

The portrayal of the two main characters in the story supports this interpretation. The woman's hospitality initially draws her and Elisha together. Ironically, his attempt to repay her has the opposite effect. The woman declines any favors for her hospitality (v. 13b) and does not welcome his promise of a child (v. 16b). After the child is born, there is no further reference to his visits or to her hospitality. A gap seems to have opened between them, arousing expectation as to how it might be bridged. The death of the child is the catalyst for a decisive reversal of 'direction',

---

<sup>10</sup> 2 Kings 6:11-23 is somewhat similar. According to v. 12, Elisha knows the most secret plans of the King of Aram; hence he is well aware of the plot to kidnap him. There is no real crisis for Elisha; the focus of the story is on how he will handle an enemy about whom he knows all.

a bridging of the gap – superbly narrated as a dramatic dash by the woman to Mount Carmel and an equally dramatic encounter with Elisha there. As at the beginning, she takes the initiative. A reader senses that this second encounter will play a vital role in the fate of the child who lies dead on the man of God's bed.

In contrast to the woman, Elisha does not initiate hospitality. He accepts it and then insists on rewarding the woman where no such favor is sought. He maintains a certain distance, communicating with her via his servant Gehazi (vv. 12-16). When she objects to his promise of a child, Elisha offers no reply. One could say that he, rather than the woman, 'bears' responsibility for the child. If he has 'worked' the miracle of its birth, a reader can expect that he will work the miracle of restoring it to life. Nevertheless, there are some surprises in the portrayal of the man of God that create an element of uncertainty about how the crisis will be resolved.

Uncertainty is signaled early in the piece when Elisha does not know what Gehazi knows – that the woman is childless and her husband old (v. 14). Why should this be so for a prophet who can so confidently predict 'at this season, in due time, you shall embrace a son' (v. 16a)? The uncertainty becomes more pronounced as the plot unfolds. When the woman reaches him at Mount Carmel, he confesses that God has hidden from him the cause of her 'bitter distress' (v. 27). Without the insight provided by God, prophets are ordinary folk like us and, like us, they miss things and bungle things. Elisha dispatches Gehazi with his staff to awaken the child. The mother senses this will not work because she refuses to leave Elisha. Her cry 'I will not leave you' (v. 30) is exactly what Elisha says

three times to his master Elijah in 2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6.<sup>11</sup> At this point in the drama it seems that the Shunammite woman is cast as the prophet rather than Elisha. She has 'foreknowledge' that Gehazi will fail. In 2 Kings 2, Elijah plays the role of master to Elisha as disciple. One would expect that Elisha would play the role of master now that Elijah is gone. Instead, in an intriguing reversal, Elisha is cast as disciple to another 'master'. According to 4:30b, 'So he (Elisha) rose up and followed her'.

This subtle critique of the prophet is also signaled by the distribution of the man of God title in the story. Elisha is given this title by the woman in 4:9, 16, 22, and by the narrator in 4:21, 25 (bis), 27 (bis). After v. 27, where Elisha admits that God has hidden things from him, the title no longer occurs.

The elusive and unpredictable nature of prophecy is also evident in the account of the resuscitation of the child. Commentators have seen a magical quality in 4:34-35, arguing that Elisha recharges via his own senses the corresponding senses of the dead child. This may be so because magical elements occur in other prophetic stories. Nevertheless, the analysis so far suggests there may be more at work in this story than magic. Verses 34-35 report the second of two 'magical' moves to raise the child. The first is in vv. 30-31 where Gehazi is dispatched to lay his master's staff on the face of the child and awaken it. The use of the master's staff recalls 2 Kings 2:13-14 where Elisha strikes the Jordan twice with his master's mantle and asks 'where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' The water parts

---

<sup>11</sup> The NRSV has translated the same Hebrew phrase in 4:30 as 'I will not leave without you'. The RSV has the better translation 'I will not leave you'.



but Elisha's words and actions betray uncertainty. Compared to this, 4:29-31 indicates Elisha is confident that the touch of his staff will awaken the child. It fails. If this is a story about a prophet wielding magical power, the staff episode does not really help the cause.

Elisha's second and successful 'magical' attempt to raise the child is preceded by prayer (v. 33). This is the first time in the story that he prays to God. The combination of prayer followed by bodily gestures parallels 1 Kings 17: 20-23 where Elijah in similar fashion raises a child from the dead. As v. 22 makes clear, he is successful because God heeds his prayer. Yet Elijah's bodily gestures must also be significant; otherwise why recount them? Presumably they are to be understood as part of the prophet's intercession – it involves his whole person. If this is the case, something similar can be assumed for Elisha. 2 Kings 4: 32-35 also describes Elisha's actions in more detail than the account of Elijah. Within the context of the story, the intensity and intimacy of Elisha's actions evoke a sense of deep commitment to this child for whom he is, after all, more responsible than the woman who never asked for it.

Verses 33-35 create a poignant contrast when compared to Elisha's first encounter with the Shunammite woman in vv. 12-16. In this earlier scene there is a sense of distance as he speaks to her through Gehazi while she remains outside his room. This may well reflect customs in ancient Israel where people from different social strata knew their place. But such polite formalities are shattered when, in vv. 25-27, she brushes past Gehazi to prostrate herself before Elisha and grasp his feet. In response to this, it seems only fitting that this man of God should return with her to prostrate himself in prayer on the body of her dead son.

## From Story to Homily

The step from story to homily is as creative and challenging a moment for the preacher as the creation of a story is for the storyteller. And, as with storytelling, it imposes certain limitations. Choices have to be made, one cannot preach on all aspects of a text. But, by paying attention to the dynamics of a biblical story, the preacher should be equipped to identify elements in it that will best serve the sermon to be given. For a particular sermon, the plot of a story may be judged the more important element to focus on. Alternatively, it may be one or more of the characters in a story that attracts the preacher's attention. There is little doubt that the characters of Elisha and the Shunammite woman loom large in our story. Indeed, the plot seems to have been shaped to highlight their respective roles.

In relation to Elisha, it is striking that a story, which celebrates the peak of the prophet's power – restoring the dead to life – can also be so critical in its portrayal of the prophet. Elisha is described by the woman as a 'holy man of God' in 4:9. Yet he makes no mention of God until v. 27 when he admits that God has concealed the cause of the woman's distress from him. He bungles the first attempt to restore her child and is obliged to follow her initiative rather than his own. A society that is able to portray a major figure in its tradition in such a way is one that has a mature and confident faith. It has moved beyond the need to accord hero status to Elisha or indeed any other prophet.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> It is significant that most of the major figures of the Old Testament are presented as limited, even flawed human beings, in need of God's mercy.

Associated with this critical portrayal of Elisha is the mysterious and elusive nature of the prophetic charism: it is not something the prophet has on his own terms. Just when Elisha needs prophetic insight to respond to the bereaved mother, it is hidden from him (4:27). Instead, it is manifest in the mother. Just when he needs prophetic power to raise the dead child, it is not there (v. 31). He prays (v. 33) and it returns. But is prayer a requirement for the exercise of such power? Earlier in the story, Elisha successfully prophesied the birth of the child without recourse to prayer.

A striking feature of the portrayal of the Shunammite woman is her reaction to the death of the child. There is no mention of mourning or weeping over the dead body; rather she is galvanized into a burst of purposeful activity. Her journey ends with her prostrate before Elisha in what looks to be a dramatic gesture of entreaty. One would expect a plea for help to follow; instead, she asks two questions to which the prophet offers no answer (4:28).

In one sense, there is no need to because the answers are obvious to those who have listened to or read the story thus far. In another sense however, her questions and the prophet's silence imply deeper issues are running here. Are her questions an accusation that Elisha has indeed deceived her, as she feared (v. 16)? He promised her new life but instead there is death and grief. Do they imply that Elisha is the one responsible for her child and so in some way responsible for its death? The elasticity of the story is such that a reader would be unwise to settle for just one answer to her questions.

If her questions are accusations against the man of God, what implications do they have for the portrayal of God in the story? Elisha is described several times as a man of God; yet, as already noted, he acknowledges God only on two occasions (4:27, 33). The woman invokes God once when she swears 'as the LORD lives... I will not leave you' (v. 30). God is not in the foreground of this story; the focus remains firmly fixed on the human players.

Nevertheless, one gains the impression that God responds to the woman's faith and the prophet's prayer to move the story to a happy conclusion. One might ask: Why would God bring about the birth of a child only to allow it to die so soon? On this question, the text is silent. For some, this will be seen as a weakness in the story. For others, it is a question the story does not answer because there is no theology that can offer a satisfactory answer.

Each Old Testament story has its unique shape and features, its strengths and limitations; as a result readers are likely to assess each story somewhat differently. The story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman explores a number of issues with sensitivity and skill. Other issues remain in the background or are passed over in silence – perhaps because words would be inappropriate. Despite their limitations, prophetic stories can have transforming power in the hands of a preacher. In the case of the stories about Elisha, the text actually provides an example of their transforming power – 2 Kings 8:1-6. In this passage the King of Israel, as a result of listening to what one may call 'the gospel of Elisha' from both Gehazi and the Shunammite woman, is moved to ensure that all she lost during a famine is restored to her.

# A Wine of Encouragement: Preaching in a Time of Disillusion\*

---

PAUL MURRAY, O.P.\*\*

In a lengthy but illuminating work entitled 'Treatise on the Formation of Preachers' composed by the medieval Dominican, Blessed Humbert of Romans, there is one line, one phrase, which leaps off the page – at least for me. Humbert writes: 'I became like a man who is drunk, like someone sodden with wine, from my encounter with the words of God'.<sup>1</sup>

---

\* Reprinted from *The Grace and Task of Preaching*, edited by Michael Monshau, O.P. This paper was originally delivered in May 2002 to an Assembly of the Irish Dominican Province. It is printed here in the 'spoken' form in which it was first given.

\*\*He is a Dominican of the Irish Province, lectures on the literature of the mystical tradition at the University of St. Thomas, Rome. Author of four book of poetry, he has also published *T.S. Eliot and Mysticism: The Secret of 'Four Quartets'* (Macmillan).

<sup>1</sup> S. Tugwell O.P. ed. 'Treatise on the Formation of Preachers', no. 70, in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, (New York 1982) p. 202. Humbert is echoing a passage from Jeremiah 23:9.

That image of drinking or of being made drunk is worth noting for it is – I discovered a few years ago – an image which recurs over and over again in the writings of the early Dominican preachers, and not only in their theological writings and homilies but also in the stories they liked to tell about themselves. The image had been used before, of course, by other religious traditions within the Church in order to evoke aspects of the spiritual and apostolic life.<sup>2</sup> But Dominicans seem to have taken to this metaphor with a unique enthusiasm. In their conversations and homilies and writings the image of drinking or of being made drunk described not only the overwhelming impact the Word of God made on their interior lives but also the effect of that encounter on almost every other aspect of their lives as preachers.

In this brief essay I would like to do two things: first of all, to try to understand why the early Dominicans were instinctively drawn to the image of drinking, and in what way it served their understanding of prayer and preaching; and, then, to indicate the possible usefulness and relevance of this image at a time of crisis in the Irish Church and in our own Province.

## **Drunk on the Word**

Many images have been used, over the centuries, to describe progress in the spiritual life, or to name the mysteries of faith-experience, the dark night, for example, or the ladder, or the steep ascent of a mountain. Why the first Dominican preachers should have chosen such an un-

---

<sup>2</sup> See 'Ivresse Spirituelle' in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, Vol VII (Paris 1971), pp. 231-237.

expected image as drinking is, I think, because it answered so well to their sense of the Gospel. Their spirituality was not something tense or introverted or self-preoccupied but rather joyous and expansive. And so the image of a group of friends or companions drinking together would naturally have appealed to them. Here is a line, for example, from one of Blessed Jordan of Saxony's homilies, a sentence which is typically down-to-earth and colloquial: 'Nowadays people say, "I think it would be great if you could come to me and have a drink". And it's just like that with the Lord. For he says to the soul: "Give me something to drink". Or if only you knew the love of God which is saying to you, "I thirst"!'<sup>3</sup>

Drinking wine was, of course, such a common custom in the Middle Ages it might seem, perhaps, a mistake to read too much into the use made by Dominicans of this image. But if we compare the Dominican use of the image in the early years with the use made by the Franciscans, for example, our own particular enthusiasm becomes evident. In the *Fioretti* of St. Francis of Assisi, which can in some way be compared with our own *Vitae Fratrum*, there is only one brief passage that refers to drinking whereas in the *Vitae Fratrum* the image of drinking occurs again and again.

One reason why Dominican preachers were drawn to talk and to write so much about drinking is that wine or drink is an image of the goodness or the sweetness of life. Whereas many of the ascetics of St. Dominic's day would have regarded it as something evil, Dominic himself,

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Sermo de Sancto Johanne Evangelista', f. 90 va. See 'Three Sermons of Friar Jordan of Saxony, the Successor of St. Dominic', *The English Historical Review*, CCXIII (January 1939), p. 14.

with his own deep understanding of the goodness of creation and his innate respect for every living thing, clearly accepted it – and with enthusiasm – as something good.

On one particular occasion, according to someone who knew Dominic well, as soon as the preacher had finished delivering a talk in a certain convent, he said to the sisters: ‘It would be good, my daughters, to have something to drink’.<sup>4</sup> One of the brethren was asked to go and get some wine that was poured into a cup. Dominic was the first to take a drink. Then, the brethren, who were there, were encouraged to take a drink, and third and last, the sisters. Dominic said: ‘I want all my daughters to have a drink’. In the text, as composed by Blessed Cecilia, we read: ‘all the sisters drank as much as they wanted encouraged by St. Dominic, who kept on saying, “Drink up, my daughters!” At that time there were 104 sisters there, and they all drank as much wine as they wanted.’<sup>5</sup>

The notion that drinking wine is not only something good but also something ‘healthy for soul and body’ is stated by Aquinas in a number of places.<sup>6</sup> But St. Thomas always makes it clear that alcohol, though it may well be healthy, should not be overindulged in, much less regarded as one’s best friend or one’s only solace. ‘Wine’, Thomas remarks dryly, ‘does not love man the way man loves wine’! (*Non enim vinum amat hominem, sicut homo amat vinum*).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> *Miracula* 6 [by Blessed Cecilia]. See *Early Dominicans*, p. 391.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, II.II q.149 a.1.

<sup>7</sup> *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*, VIII, 2, 1115 b 27 (Roma 1969) p. 446.



Another reason, and perhaps the most important, why the early Dominicans were drawn to the image of drinking was because it gave them a vivid way of speaking about preaching – about the need, first, to become ‘drunk’ on the Word, and then about the effects of that encounter with God: the ecstasy of self-forgetfulness, the grace of new joy, the compulsion to share that joy with others, and the gifts of renewed hope and courage. On one occasion, making use of the image of drinking or drunkenness to great effect, Humbert of Romans drew attention to an aspect of preaching which has often been overlooked. In spite of the manifest wisdom in our motto, ‘*contemplata aliis tradere*’, [to pass on to others what we have contemplated], Humbert suggests that it is not always because of the preacher’s own holiness or spiritual enthusiasm that the words of a particular homily catch fire, but rather because of the enthusiasm and awakened faith of God’s people listening to the Word. It is because of them – the listeners – that the preacher is sometimes able, even while preaching, to enter into the fire of the Word. Humbert quotes *Proverbs*: ‘He who makes others drunk will himself be made drunk too’ (Prov 11:25). And then he comments: ‘The one who makes his hearers drunk with the words of God will himself be made drunk with a draft of manifold blessing.’<sup>8</sup>

Among the best-known early Dominicans the one who strikes me as, by far, the most Irish in character and temperament is Blessed Jordan of Saxony. I say this, not simply because Jordan likes to cite the image of drinking more than anyone else, but because he had such a great sense of

---

<sup>8</sup> ‘Treatise on the Formation of Preachers’, no. 34, p. 195. See also no. 176, p. 237, and no. 325, pp. 272-73.

humor. According to the ancient account, Jordan 'overflowed with enthusiastic talk, brilliant with apt and powerful illustrations'.<sup>9</sup> What is more, he worked quite consciously, we are told, at getting his hearers 'drunk' on the Word. Once, when he was preaching at Padua, someone asked him why he had such manifest success with the Arts students, the students of Aristotle, but seemed to make little impact on the theologians and canonists. Jordan replied, speaking with his characteristic verve and sharp good humor:

Arts men drink the plain water of Aristotle and the other philosophers all week so when they are offered the words of Christ or his disciples in a Sunday sermon or on a feast-day, they fall victim at once to the intoxication of the Holy Spirit's wine, and hand over to God not only their goods but themselves. But these theologians are always listening to the words of God, and they go the same way as a country sacristan who passes the altar so often that he loses his reverence for it and frequently turns his back on it, while outsiders bow reverently towards it.<sup>10</sup>

As a direct result of listening to Jordan, an amazing number of young men joined the Dominican Order. They had obviously become intoxicated with 'the Spirit's wine'. But Jordan's unique genius or 'tactic' with respect to vocations, was not always matched, it has to be said, by the recruitment practice of some the brethren. One report indicates that actual alcohol may have been employed,

---

<sup>9</sup> *Vitae Fratrum*, III, 11, p. 108. See *Early Dominicans*, p. 127.

<sup>10</sup> *Libellus*, III, 42 ix, p. 141. See *Early Dominicans*, p. 130.

on one occasion, to 'encourage' a particular individual to join the Order! The source for this account is a letter sent by Pope Innocent IV in 1244. There was, at that time, apparently, at least the suspicion, that a number of friars actually got a schoolmaster from Asti drunk, and then forced a habit on him – not, obviously, the kind of *spiritual* intoxication Jordan of Saxony had in mind!<sup>11</sup>

## Jordan and the Wine of Encouragement

At one of the earliest chapters of the Order, held around the time of Pentecost – and we are at Pentecost now – the brethren were obviously feeling a bit discouraged. According to the *Lives of the Brethren*, they asked Blessed Jordan, although he was feeling really ill at the time, 'to say a few words of consolation'.<sup>12</sup> Jordan, more than anyone in his time, was the great encourager of the brethren. A sermon of his has survived in which he speaks memorably about what he calls 'the wine of hope'. It is, he says, that 'good wine which puts a man at his ease, and cheers him up so that he no longer feels his sorrows'.<sup>13</sup>

In his short address to the assembled brothers at the Pentecost assembly, Jordan referred to that passage in *The Acts of the Apostles* in which the first preachers of

---

<sup>11</sup> *Registrum*, no. 529. See *Early Dominicans*, p. 154, n. 27. My confrère, Austin Flannery, has drawn my attention to a comparable story reported by Thomas Cage in the seventeenth century. Cage claimed he had been recruited to the Order with copious drafts of sherry! See J.S. Cummins, *A Question of Rites: Friar Domingo Navarette and the Jesuits* (Aldershot, Hants., 1993) p. 222.

<sup>12</sup> B.M. Reichert, O.P., ed. 'De Sancte Memoriae Fratris Iordani', XLII, in *Vitae Fratrum*, (Louvain 1846) p. 142.

<sup>13</sup> 'Sermon 5', 'Les Sermons de Jourdain de Saxe, Successeur de Saint Dominique', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, Vol LXVI, 1996, p. 205.

the Gospel, after they had come down from the upper room in the power of the Spirit, were accused of being 'drunk' or 'filled with new wine'. Jordan pointed out that it was precisely to people like the apostles, people who had been humbled by failure, and who were 'poor in spirit', to whom the fullness of the grace of Pentecost was given. In order to make his point vivid, Jordan uses the image of a goblet or a drinking-cup that had been completely emptied. 'My brothers, during this week [of Pentecost] we often say these words, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit". You know that a drinking-cup, once it is full, can hold no more. All that is poured in, only flows out again. On this account the holy apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit having been first emptied of their own spirit.'<sup>14</sup>

*Emptied of their own spirit.* We don't know the reason why, at that particular Pentecost assembly of Dominicans in the thirteenth century, the brethren were feeling so discouraged, or what precise circumstances had caused them to feel so empty in themselves and poor in spirit. But what is clear is that Jordan saw this new state or condition of emptiness – the fact of being and of feeling severely humbled – as an opportunity for grace. When they were full of themselves and sure of themselves, like a cup of wine filled to overflowing, they could receive little or no help from God, but once emptied and poor in spirit, they were able at last to receive the Spirit's grace, and drink in the new wine of hope, somehow finding courage again, in that 'drinking', to go out from their upper room of fear and preach the Word.

---

<sup>14</sup> 'De Sancte Memorie Fratre Iordane', XLII, in *Vitae Fratrum*, p. 142.

An observation Cardinal Newman makes about the preacher comes to mind here. If, by chance, he has never known great affliction in his life or oppression or humiliation, the preacher risks delivering very banal and superficial homilies, preaching himself rather than the Word. 'The most awful truths [of Scripture],' Newman says, 'are ... used by him ... for his own purposes'. 'But,' Newman goes on at once to note, and the phrase is memorable, 'let his heart at length be ploughed by some keen grief or deep anxiety, and Scripture is a new book to him.'<sup>15</sup> In the same passage, Newman writes: 'to the disconsolate, the tempted, the perplexed, the suffering, there comes, by means of their very trials, an enlargement of thought, which enables them to see in [Scripture] what they never saw before'.<sup>16</sup>

I think it is no exaggeration to say that, in the present crisis of the Church in Ireland and in the present crisis of the Province, most of us, if not all us, find ourselves among 'the disconsolate', 'the tempted' and 'the perplexed'. We feel hurt and bewildered, and for good reason, and you who are living in Ireland are more affected obviously than someone like myself living in Rome. But what both Jordan of Saxony and Cardinal Newman are saying about the life of preachers, is that opposition, humiliation, grief, embarrassment, or whatever it is which wounds us as a group and wounds us as individuals, that experience of being hurt, that wound itself, in spite of all the damage which it causes, can also somehow become a blessing, a purification, and an aid for better preaching. Somewhere,

---

<sup>15</sup> *A Grammar of Assent* (New York, 1955) pp. 79-80.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

in one of his poems, the seventeenth century poet, Henry Vaughan, once shrewdly remarked:

... the poet, like bad priest,  
Is seldom good, but when oppressed.  
And wit as well as piety  
Doth thrive best in adversity.<sup>17</sup>

But these words are easy to say. What is wounding us and wounding the Church, in these months, is a betrayal of the Gospel and of Gospel witness, and a betrayal of the young, the effect of which is almost impossible to calculate. When, day after day, we find ourselves confronting not just bad news on television, or in our newspapers, but truly horrendous news, we very quickly begin to feel paralyzed. We have no choice, it seems, but to take in the full sadness and the appalling horror of it all. But contemplating so much evil – the evil of sexual abuse for example within the priesthood and religious life – can very quickly sap the sources of our energy and our hope, and especially if we focus our attention, as we must in this area, on the plight of the victims. How are we to continue as preachers to take in so much bad news and yet still retain our hope?

## Bad News and Good News

In the present crisis, particularly in relation to the issue of sexual abuse, there are a number of important questions and issues which, obviously, I am unable to address in this short paper: the issue, for example, about being transparent,

---

<sup>17</sup> 'To the Editor of the Matchless Orinda', in *Henry Vaughan: The Complete Poems* (Harmondsworth 1976) p. 345.

and the need for ourselves and our leaders never again to engage in any kind of 'cover-up'. But the question I want to raise here is simply this: How are we to continue, as men, as preachers, as believers, to drink in so much bad news every day and yet still retain our hope?

In almost every culture and civilization, this question has come to the fore in one form or other – the question, that is, about how to survive a direct confrontation with evil. One of the most powerful and important myths from the ancient world, one that grapples with this question, is the myth of Perseus. Perseus knows that he has to slay the evil Gorgon, Medusa, and he has to do it by cutting off her head. But he also knows that anyone who stares directly into the face of the evil Gorgon will at once be turned into stone. Perseus accepts as a gift from one of the gods a shining bronze shield. And this helps him to achieve his task. For, instead of staring directly into the face of Medusa as he slays her, he looks only at the image of the Gorgon reflected in his shield. So, he sees evil, he confronts it, but indirectly in a sense, and as a result he is not hypnotized by evil, not paralyzed, not turned into stone.

One of the great prayers of the Irish tradition, 'St. Patrick's Breastplate', is concerned almost exclusively with the question of confronting evil. From the beginning to the end we are reminded, by the words of the prayer, never to face evil on our own, but always to seek refuge in God and in God's strength. The prayer begins:

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength,  
the invocation of the Trinity...

I arise today  
Through God's strength to pilot me...  
God's hand to guard me,  
God's way to lie before me,  
God's shield to protect me,  
God's host to save me  
From snares of devils,  
From temptations of vices,  
From everyone who will wish me ill,  
Afar and near,  
Alone and in a multitude,  
I summon today all these powers  
    between me and those evils...  
    against every knowledge  
that corrupts man's body and soul.  
Christ to shield me today...<sup>18</sup>

If out of pride or curiosity I allow myself to contemplate evil directly, without seeking refuge in God, if I contemplate it, day after day, week after week, either in the ordinary realm of the public media or in private gossip, gradually it will rob me of all my energy and hope. But if, when I have to confront evil, I have the humility to look at it only in the light of Christ as my shield, then my energy and my hope will not be taken from me.

There are two ways, I think, in which we can be turned to stone when confronting evil. The first is due to an over-load of bad news, the effect of which can be despair, a slow petrification of despair. That is something

---

<sup>18</sup> S. Dwyer, ed. 'St Patrick's Breastplate', in *Playing With Fire: A Natural Selection of Religious Poetry* (Dublin 1980) pp. 30-32.



all of us will recognize in ourselves should it begin to happen. But the second is something far subtler. It is the hardening of our heart against those among our brothers whom we perceive to be touched in any way by evil, it is the projection of our own fears onto others, it is the sin of harsh judgment. This does not mean that I cannot name evil as evil, and fight that evil in order to protect the innocent. But I can never judge the person; I can judge only the deed. Final judgment is for God alone. I can never name as evil the inner heart of one of my brothers, no matter what evil he may appear to have done or what damage he may have caused.

Learning to look directly at that mirror which is Christ my shield, learning to see the evil around me, and the evil within me, in the light of Christ, is the best way, in fact the only sure way, to prevent my heart from being hardened into a stone by either fear or prejudice, despair or false judgment.

Journalists and social-commentators can give us innumerable facts; necessary facts; facts which are painful sometimes and which must be faced. But all the facts in the world don't add up to the saving truth of the Gospel. The Good News is more, far more, than the sum total of all the knowledge and information, which comes to us from the sciences, or from philosophy, or from the media, even though that knowledge may well be useful and illuminating in itself.

It is, I think, an amazing thing for us to realize that when God looks at us, he looks at much more than the facts of our lives. Catherine of Siena says that God is

‘drunk with love for our good’.<sup>19</sup> And in one of her prayers, thinking about the mystery of our creation, she exclaims: ‘O unutterable love, even though you saw all the evils that all your creatures would commit against your infinite goodness, you acted as if you did not see and set your eye only on the beauty of your creature with whom you fell in love, like one drunk and crazy with love. And in love you drew us out of yourself giving us being’.<sup>20</sup>

If we want to be preachers (the early Dominicans tell us over and over again) it is important – it is *necessary* – to drink in the knowledge that we, that you and I, are loved by God. The problem is, of course, that today we find ourselves drinking in a lot more bad news than good news. And the result is that we lose all confidence as preachers. As Catherine of Siena would say, we begin to lose even our voice! There are all kinds of nettles to be grasped, issues to be faced, in an assembly like this. But I am convinced that our fundamental task, as individuals and as a Province, is first and last to drink deep from the wine of God’s mercy, and to find in Christ our true refuge, and to help others, in time, experience the same deep security in God’s love, the same glad intoxication.

## Dominicans Drinking

In this talk I have been concerned, for the most part, to focus on the spiritual meaning that the early Dominicans gave to the idea of drinking. But I think it will come as no surprise to you to learn that the brothers were not

---

<sup>19</sup> S. Noffke, trans. *The Dialogue*, (New York 1980) p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> S. Noffke, trans. ‘Prayer 13’, in *The Prayers of St. Catherine of Siena*, (New York 1983) pp. 112-13.

always able to remain on that high spiritual level. As early as 1241,<sup>21</sup> there was a complaint from the Provincial Chapter of Provence about 'nocturnal dinners and long confabulations' still going on after Compline. And, in the Roman Province, a special rule had to be introduced which declared that the brethren must say Compline again after their nightly wine-drinking sessions!<sup>22</sup>

Before I end I want to underline one unexpected but profoundly wise statement in Aquinas, a statement which I find personally very challenging. When St Thomas is discussing the question of drunkenness in the *Summa* – a subject which, as you can imagine, he treats with great compassion – all of a sudden he surprises us by drawing attention to a vice or a failure the very opposite of drunken excess, a vice which he says has no name, but which, perhaps, we might call *the vice of being too sober*.<sup>23</sup> Now being too sober, in relation to actually drinking alcohol, is not perhaps our greatest problem as Dominicans! But, at the spiritual level, at the level of our prayer-life and our preaching, and in the areas of hard thinking and decision-making, we stand perhaps accused of being too sensible, too sober, or too safe.

Towards the end of his remarkable study, *Enthusiasm*, Ronald Knox writes: 'Men will not live without vision... If we are content with the humdrum, the second-best, the hand-over-hand, it will not be forgiven us'.<sup>24</sup> We need

---

<sup>21</sup> See Simon Tugwell, O.P., *The Way of the Preacher* (London 1979) p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> Rome Chapter, 1251. See *The Way of the Preacher*, p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> II.II q.150 a.1 ad 1.

<sup>24</sup> Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford 1950) p. 591.

to do something more than merely sipping at the Word of God like the theologians and canonists described by Jordan of Saxony. We need prayerfully but urgently to drink in long draughts of what Jordan calls 'the sweet wine' which Christ himself gives to 'those whose soul is suffering bitterness'. '[T]hat noble wine', he calls it, 'the wine which makes man's heart glad'.<sup>25</sup>

The Word itself is that wine. But, there is another 'wine of hope' which Christ has given each one of us as members of the Irish Dominican Province: it is the wine of the memory of fellowship in the Province, the wine of our own particular tradition and traditions, the good wine of the example given to us over the years by our co-operator brothers and by our brothers on the missions, the wine of wisdom and knowledge and friendship poured out for us in abundance since we were novices, the wine of many kindnesses received and mercies shown. It may be that, if we are to survive as preachers in the future, we must take time to drink in, not only the Word itself, but also the good wine of the memory of these things.

'Let us behave', Catherine of Siena exclaims, 'like the drunkard who doesn't think of himself but only of the wine he has drunk and of the wine that remains to be drunk'.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> A Walz, O.P., ed. 'Epistola XXXV, in *Beati Jordani De Saxonia Epistulae*, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica (Rome 1951) pp. 41-42. See Kathleen Pond, *Love Among the Saints* [Jordan's Letters] (London 1958) p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> P. Misciattelli ed. Letter 29, *Le Lettere di Santa Caterina*, Vol I, (Florence 1940) p. 108.

# **Text or Topic? Doing or Being? The Challenge of Preaching on Moral Issues\***

---

**CHARLES E. BOUCHARD, O.P.\*\***

## **What I Used to Think about Preaching on Moral Issues**

Some weeks after the Los Angeles riots in 1992, Archbishop John May of Saint Louis included the following in a regular communication to the priests of the archdiocese:

Just recently, there have been many complaints that on Sunday, May 3, in many parishes, there was not even a mention of what happened in Los Angeles [i.e., the riots] the week before. [This] would seem to provide a real opportunity for relevant preaching on racial justice and not an excuse to avoid it.<sup>1</sup>

---

\*Reprinted from *The Grace and Task of Preaching*, edited by Michael Monshau, O.P.

\*\*He is a Dominican of the St. Albert Province, is associate professor of systematic (moral) theology at the Aquinas Institute, St. Louis, Missouri, and has been President of the Institute since 1989.

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop John May, 'Relevant Preaching,' *Notanda* ('Blue Notes') XII, 2, May 15, 1992.

Years later, I remember a Sunday Mass at the height of the Monica Lewinsky affair. Long, detailed descriptions of the alleged sexual activity had already appeared in national newspapers. President Clinton maintained his innocence and made his famous statement about the meaning of 'is'. The mixture of sex, adultery, sexual harassment, lying and accountability – not to mention the relationship between personal morality and public office – made a potent brew of moral questions. The preacher that morning started out with a reference to the morning paper's article on the scandal, and I assumed that he was about to offer us some advice on how to make sense of it all. But almost as quickly as he had raised the issue, he dropped it, and went on to preach on a totally unrelated subject. At first I was just disappointed, since all of us were trying to sort out the questions and come up with some answers. Later, I felt resentful. The preacher missed an opportunity – a teachable moment – to talk about sex, lying or leadership. More than just an opportunity, he had a responsibility to bring the Gospel to bear on a topic that was totally pre-occupying the country.

Even more recently, I have sat through many preaching events in which there were allusions to the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001, or to the sexual abuse scandal that has shook the American Church in 2002. Most often, these issues were addressed marginally, if at all. I am sure that many preachers (myself included) were overwhelmed by the magnitude of September 11; we hardly knew where to start. As for the sexual abuse crisis, it touched so close to home that most of us felt anything we said would appear self-serving. And

in all of the cases I have cited, there was the problem of texts. What are preachers to do when they are bound to a set of lectionary readings that do not appear to be relevant to the moral issue in the news that weekend?<sup>2</sup>

## A Change of Heart

I last addressed the issue of preaching on moral issues in a book that was written by the faculty of Aquinas Institute.<sup>3</sup> In my essay, I urged preachers to identify moral issues they wanted to address, clarify the moral norms and the moral values behind those issues, and 'illuminate' those values with the scriptural word. My advice was based on the assumption that most of Catholic moral teaching comes from natural law, which is not really 'law,' but a process of reasoned reflection on human nature (experience) that leads us to draw conclusions about moral goods, that is, those *things that are truly fulfilling to human persons*. In this view, Scripture and revelation do not add anything new to our moral knowledge, but make these natural moral goods clearer and more appealing.

Finally, I urged preachers to plan ahead so that they could use Scriptural 'cues' from the lectionary readings that would allow them to segue into discussion of those issues. This would mean that the preacher could use Genesis to preach about ecology and the environment, the woman

---

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Sloyan addresses this tension in his article, 'Is Church Teaching Neglected When the Lectionary is Preached?' *Worship* 61 (1987) pp. 126-40.

<sup>3</sup> 'Authentic Preaching on Moral Issues,' *In the Company of Preachers* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1993) pp. 91-210.

in caught in adultery to preach about marital fidelity, and the unjust steward to talk about business ethics.<sup>4</sup>

I still hold some of what I said then to be true. The goal of morality, for example, is not obedience to norms or law, but appropriation of the real, tangible moral values (or human goods) these norms are meant to protect. We refrain from lying, for example, not just because the Ten Commandments or the Pope tells us to, but because deceit breaks down the trust that enables us to live together. We promote peace not only because Jesus tells us to 'turn the other cheek,' but because we know that peace is essential if we are to pursue any other goal in life. In our tradition, morality is an intelligent search for choices that bring human persons happiness.<sup>5</sup> We believe that happiness is God's plan for us, and that this plan is refracted to us not only through Scripture and revelation, but also through human experience and Church teaching. I also believe that much of Christian morality is human morality; that is, the bulk of what contributes to human fulfillment or happiness

---

<sup>4</sup> A good example of a similar method is found in Judith Hoch Wray, 'Preaching the Lectionary: The Religious is Political,' *The Living Pulpit* (April-June 1996) pp. 46-58. In this article she attempts to 'cross reference insights from the articles [on politics in the same issue of the *Living Pulpit*] with texts in the Revised Common Lectionary ...to reflect on the political implications mandated by faithful preaching of the Gospel.' I do not mean to disparage this method, as far as it goes.

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (ST) 1-2, q.3, a. 1: 'In the first sense, [our] last end is the uncreated good, namely God, who alone in his infinite goodness can satisfy [our] will. But in the second way, [our] last end is something created ...the attainment or enjoyment of the last end. Now the last end is called happiness ...'



can be discovered through reason, and is thus available to any reasonable person, religious or not.<sup>6</sup>

What I no longer believe is that the preacher should use 'scriptural cues' as springboards to particular moral issues. This is not a viable approach, for several reasons. First of all, many important moral issues are simply not addressed in Scripture. Even though there are general passages that might be coaxed into shedding light on some of these, there is really no scriptural teaching on genetic engineering, cloning, nuclear weapons, civil rights of homosexuals, withdrawing hydration and nutrition, or medically indicated abortion.

Second, if there are passages that relate to specific issues in morality (e.g., David and Bathsheeba on adultery, Jesus casting the money-changers out of the temple on Church raffles, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah on homosexuality), using them in this way is a grave temptation to homiletic proof-texting in which the preacher first arrives at a conclusion and then finds texts to support it.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> See *ST* 1-2, q. 93, a. 2: Responding to the question, 'Whether the Eternal Law is known to all,' he says, 'Every rational creature knows [the eternal law] in its reflection, greater or less. For every knowledge of truth is a kind of reflection and *participation in the eternal law*, which is the unchangeable truth.' This suggests that as a function of reason or common sense, morality is not just obedience to law, and not necessarily religious. It is the process of discovering and appropriating God's plan in our lives.

<sup>7</sup> St Jerome knew the dangers of proof-texting. Humbert of Romans quotes him as saying that some preachers 'disdain to find out what the prophets and apostles really meant. They fit texts to their own view which they do not really fit, forcing reluctant scriptures to serve their own purposes. They are like people who imagine that bells they hear chiming are saying whatever they themselves happen to be thinking of 'Treatise on the Formation

The biggest problem with this approach is that it often misses the 'teachable moments' I referred to above. Congregations will benefit far more from the timely treatment of a moral issue that is forefront in their minds than from a long-range plan that will treat racism on the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, no matter what is in the news.

I always begin my class, 'Preaching and Moral Issues', by asking how many students have heard a homily on a moral issue. Usually about half say they have. Then I ask them how many have heard a *good* homily on a moral issue. Usually only one or two say they have. Therefore, I will begin this chapter by describing some of the reasons preachers are reluctant to tackle moral issues.

I will then highlight some aspects of the Catholic theological tradition that produce a distinctive kind of moral preaching. I am convinced that both the frequency and the difference in styles of moral preaching from one Christian denomination to another are rooted in different theological presuppositions. I will try to show how the Catholic tradition, especially in its view of the relationship between nature and grace, produces moral preaching that has a method and a purpose that distinguish it from Pentecostal, Lutheran or Calvinist preaching.

Finally, I will propose a method for what I call 'contextual preaching', that is, preaching that allows the lectionary readings to address the real moral issues that occupy peoples' minds that day.

## **Reasons Why Preachers Fail to Address Moral Issues**

Perhaps the most important reason that we hesitate to preach on moral issues is that we fear to cause conflict

or disagreement at the celebration of the Eucharist, which is supposed to be the apex of Christian unity. Issues like military intervention, abortion, taxes, and gay rights are certain to have passionate adherents on both sides of the fence. Although the preacher may fear confrontation by members of the parish, he also will not want to cause conflict *within* the congregation. He might also hesitate to enter into a discussion of an issue about which he actually knows very little, e.g., business, medical technology, or military strategy.<sup>8</sup>

Lack of familiarity with or understanding of moral teaching is also a problem. There are more than a few priests who could not explain the Church's position on contraception or *in vitro* fertilization if they had to. A priest may not be expected to know everything about business or medicine, but he *is* expected to be able to summarize the Church's teaching. In today's increasingly complex world, discernment about many moral issues will necessarily involve collaboration between those who know the theological tradition and those who know the day-to-day practices and technical aspects of the issue in question.

---

of Preachers,' in *Early Dominicans*, Simon Tugwell, ed. (New York: Paulist, 1982) p. 208, n. 92.

<sup>8</sup> One of the great frustrations of Catholic businesspersons is that preachers often naively condemn business or business leaders without really knowing much about either. 'Many of us really struggle with the moral implications of our business decisions,' one businessman told me, 'but our pastor just assumes he knows more than we do. We never get any credit for trying to bring the Gospel into the workplace.' An officer in the Air Force made a similar complaint: 'Whenever I hear the preacher start to talk about "peace," I close my eyes to wait it out. I know right off that it will be pie-in-the-sky pacifism. That simply isn't going to work in the real world.'

A second reason is the preacher's ambivalence about aspects of Church teaching, especially on matters of sexual morality. Priests know they are official spokespersons for the Church's teachings on moral matters, but many find it hard to give full assent. Teachings on contraception and divorce are particularly troublesome. They can deal with them privately in Confession or pastoral counseling, but they do not feel they can share their own doubts and questions from the pulpit. Since they cannot affirm the teachings one hundred per cent, they simply refrain from preaching on them.<sup>9</sup>

Another reason is that the complexity of many moral issues makes it impossible to deal adequately with them in the ten minutes or so that are allowed for Sunday homilies in Catholic churches. If, for example, the universal Church has not yet spoken univocally on the withdrawal of hydration and nutrition from some patients, and if various bishops have arrived at differing conclusions, some

---

<sup>9</sup> Some priests' fears are well founded. A novice master for a religious community in the United States was removed from weekend service at a parish and nearly had his faculties revoked because he urged the congregation to make 'inclusion' a priority when dealing with members who were divorced and remarried.

In his recent book *Sacred Silence: Denial and Crisis in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), Donald Cozzens cites the crisis of conscience occasioned by the publication of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968: 'The majority [of priests] chose to be obedient to their bishop who, no doubt, believed he was simply holding fast to his promise to be obedient to the Bishop of Rome. Many did so in good conscience; I suspect many others did so with a very troubled conscience' (p. 46). Describing factors that contributed to the sexual abuse crisis in 2002, journalist Laurie Goodstein cites conflict priests felt about sexual morality: 'Amid surging use of the birth control pill [in the 1960s] many priests say it fell on them to promulgate a teaching they could not agree with.' ('Train of Pain in Church Crisis Leads to Nearly Every Diocese,' *New York Times*, January 12, 2003, A21).

allowing and others disallowing the practice, how can a preacher clarify the matter in any useful way in a few minutes?<sup>10</sup> This also raises the question of adult catechesis, which in the United States is in a pitiful condition. We have at least two generations of Catholics who have had little or no effective catechesis on Church doctrine. It is unreasonable to expect that the preacher can remedy this in weekly homilies.

Yet another reason for the lack of good preaching on moral issues is confusion about the purpose of moral preaching. Is the preacher's role merely to raise questions? To provide information? To articulate teaching, especially conclusions? To pass judgment on real or presumed behavior? To form conscience and facilitate good judgment?<sup>11</sup> To enforce specific behaviors? To shape moral character? To stimulate the moral imagination by the use of metaphor?<sup>12</sup> To catechize?<sup>13</sup> Depending on how the preacher understands her task, the outcome will differ.

---

<sup>10</sup> Noted social justice advocate Msgr George Higgins said thirty years ago: 'The pulpit, as a general rule, is not the proper forum in which to pontificate on complicated and highly controversial political and socio-economic issues' ('The Problems in Preaching: Politics/What Place in Church?' *Origins*, September 21, 1972, p. 213).

<sup>11</sup> The great American Jesuit preacher Walter Burghardt says conscience formation is primary: 'If I dare not dogmatize, I may still raise the issues, lay them out, even tell a congregation where I stand and why. Not to impose my convictions as gospel, but to *quicken their Christian conscience*, spur them to personal and communal reflection' ('Preaching Politics?' *The Living Pulpit* 5 [1996] pp. 4-51).

<sup>12</sup> Philip Keane notes the importance of imagination in the moral life: 'Genuine imagination, even when it deals with fiction, clearly surpasses idle fancy. It seems to be productive; it seeks to open us to the truth. ... The experience of metaphor helps clarify the difference between true imagination

The final impediment to moral preaching is the preacher's own moral weaknesses or vulnerability. All preachers know that they 'preach first to themselves,' out of their own weakness and need for forgiveness; but still, none of us wants to 'cast the first stone'.

Although the problem is in high relief today because of the enormous publicity surrounding clergy misconduct and sexual abuse, it is not new. Humbert of Romans raises it in his thirteenth century *Treatise on the Formation of Preachers*, when he notes that being 'afraid of the kinds of sins which inevitably occur in the life of a preacher,' can cause preachers to neglect mention of those sins.<sup>14</sup>

In a marvelous article entitled 'Words to Match,' Fr Michael Heher describes how preachers can subtly distance themselves from their own sinfulness and their own experience:

Putting God in the spotlight was supposed to have the added attraction of keeping me a few steps

---

and mere fancy. Metaphors strike us as incongruous at first... But in the end, our ability to imagine enables the metaphor to open up fresh and more adequate insights into truth.' *Christian Ethics and Imagination* (New York: Paulist, 1984) p. 83.

<sup>13</sup> Cardinal John O'Connor of New York created a controversy when he urged that the Catechism should be 'preached' from the pulpit. Pressure to make preaching more catechetical led the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to produce 'Preaching the Truth of Christ: A Resource for Catholic Preachers that Correlates the Catechism of the Catholic Church with the Sunday Readings in the Lectionary for Mass' (available online at [www.usccb.org/dpp/advent.htm](http://www.usccb.org/dpp/advent.htm)).

<sup>14</sup> Humbert also cites length of preparation, nervousness, laziness, unreal lack of confidence, false humility, corruption found among the leaders of the Church, and preference for the tranquility of contemplation as 'trivial reasons which deter people from preaching' (*Treatise*, n. 94).

away, safely in the shadows, but it didn't. I wanted my insights and my loves to be known, of course, and I was still young enough to imagine my virtues were worthy of emulation. But I also knew the light to be bright enough to expose my doubts and vices, and when they were revealed, well, then the jig would be up. Who would be convinced by a preacher who does not believe enough of what he professes or puts into practice only part of what he preaches?

To protect myself from the prying eyes of my parishioners, and them from the scandal of my weaknesses, I unconsciously began changing the way I preached. While I continue to be unambiguous about my message of God's presence and love, the methods I used to present it left me more and more out of the picture. My preaching voice developed a timbre quite distinct from the inflection I used with my family and friends. Pious, objective and tinged with the distant ring of authority, I loved the way it sounded. I thought it resonated with the depth of eternity...

But this change in my preaching style had an unexpected result: my parishioners missed me.<sup>15</sup>

Once while traveling in Europe, I saw a huge baroque pulpit with a winding staircase leading up to it. Under each step there was a scripture quotation about sinfulness or humility. No doubt many a preacher ascended those steps with fear and trepidation, but they ascended nonetheless. Many of the most persuasive homilies are those in which

---

<sup>15</sup> Michael Maher, 'Words to Match,' *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* (Summer 1999) pp. 95-109, at 106.

a prudent amount of self-revelation shows the congregation that the preacher himself struggles to acquire virtue. As 'broken vessels' and 'wounded healers', all preachers must have the courage and humility to hold up moral values even if they have not fully achieved them in their own lives.

### **Distinctive Aspects of Catholic Theology that Affect Our Preaching**

Mary Catherine Hilbert has done a great service by describing fundamental differences in theology, especially Christian anthropology and the relationship between nature and grace, that shape different kinds of moral preaching among Catholics and Protestants. In her book, *Naming Grace*, she outlines the difference between two different Christian spiritualities: one based on the dialectical imagination and the another based on the sacramental (or analogical) imagination:

The *dialectical imagination* stresses the distance between God and humanity, the hiddenness and absence of God, the sinfulness of human beings, the paradox of the cross, the need for grace as redemption and reconciliation, the limits and necessity for critique of any human project or institution including the Church, and the not-yet character of the promised reign of God. The *sacramental imagination* (or what Tracy calls the analogical imagination) emphasizes the presence of the God who is self-communicated love, the creation of human beings in the image of God (restless hearts seeking the divine), the mystery of the incarnation, grace as divinizing as well as forgiving, the mediating role of the church



as sacrament of salvation in the world, and the 'foretaste' of the reign of God that is present in human community wherever God's reign of justice, peace, and love is fostered.<sup>16</sup>

Although Hilkert notes that these approaches cannot be 'identified simply as Protestant and Catholic,' they do reflect the distinctive theological emphases of those two traditions. This distinction is rooted in the fact that while Protestants tend to see human nature as mostly, if not totally, corrupted by sin, Catholics, admitting that human ability has been weakened by original sin, insist that it still is capable of knowing something of God's will.

This comes as a surprise to Catholics who have been led to believe in something called 'Catholic guilt.' But in fact, guilt for Catholics is only skin deep. Far from seeing humans as fundamentally sinful, we retain a firm belief that creation is 'good enough' to bear the weight of, and even be transformed by, grace. As one professor described the difference between Catholics and Lutherans: 'Lutherans believe in Sin, but Catholics believe in *sins*.' This means that Catholic preachers don't just use the Gospel to call to judgment or despair and total reliance on God's grace, but to 'name grace' already present in the human condi-

---

<sup>16</sup> Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York, Continuum, 1997) p. 15. Aquinas describes the sacramentality of preaching when he asks 'Whether any gratuitous grace attaches to words?' He replies that it does in several ways, including when one speaks in order to sway hearers. 'In order to effect this, the Holy Ghost makes use of the human tongue as of an instrument; Even as by a miracle God sometimes works in a more excellent way those things which nature can also work, so too the Holy Ghost effects more excellently by the grace of words that which art can effect in a less efficient manner' (ST 2-2, q. 177, a.1).

tion.<sup>17</sup> It also means that the goal of moral preaching is not to replace our humanity, but to fully realize it as God intended it.<sup>18</sup>

The Catholic emphasis on the relative compatibility of nature and grace allows us to root morality in acquisition of virtue rather than obedience to a law. Virtues may be described as 'moral skills' that train our natural abilities of knowing, willing, desiring and fearing so that they work together harmoniously in service of our overall good, both temporal and eternal. When this happens, we also become radically open to grace, which perfects and 'elevates' these natural virtues. We are thus able to strive for human perfection, but also for supernatural perfection, which is the specific destiny of human persons. The 'knowledge' of this destiny is planted in us as deeply as instincts for mating and nurturance of their young are planted in

---

<sup>17</sup> This perspective is reflected in an article by Aquinas Institute student Randall Rosenberg. He notes that as a high school teacher, he has found 'that young people sometimes have a difficult time seeing how the sacred relates to their ordinary experience. The realm of the holy, for many, lies outside their everyday conscious horizon. Would it not be helpful then to point out the grace that erupts from within one's own conscience ... ?' ('The Religious Dimensions of Life: Can We Discover the Extraordinary in the Quotidian?' *America* [December 9, 2002] p. 7-9, at p. 8).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Merton describes how becoming holy is not becoming someone else, but becoming who God has planned for us to be: 'The seeds that are planted in my liberty at every moment, by God's will are the seeds of my own identity, my own reality, my own happiness, my own sanctity. For me to be a saint means to be myself ... Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and discovering my true self... Therefore, there is only one problem on which all my existence, my peace and my happiness depend: to discover myself in discovering God ...' (O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian* [Notre Dame, 1996] p. 206; quoting Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (New York, 1949) pp. 25f.

animals.<sup>19</sup> Thus for Catholics, moral preaching is not so much imposing a foreign order on the moral life, but eliciting the 'natural' yearning for human wholeness and for divine transcendence.

## Non-Rational Moral Knowing and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Our tradition is sometimes criticized for being too rational and deductive, but there is another aspect of the Catholic moral tradition that emphasizes 'non-rational' knowing, instinct, or intuition. This is closely related to 'connatural knowledge,' which is not just knowing *about*, but *having*. The gifts of the Holy Spirit represent this kind of moral knowing. Even though discussion of them has been largely absent from Catholic moral theology in recent times, they are divine 'instincts' that enable us to 'taste' and orient ourselves to our divine destiny.<sup>20</sup> They complement, but do not replace, our more rational attempts to know God's will in our lives. They round out the

---

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas notes this destiny: 'It is not suitable that God provide more for creatures being led by divine love to a natural good than for those creatures to whom that love offers a supernatural good. For natural creatures, God provides generously ... Even more for those moved to reach an eternal, supernatural good, he infuses certain forms of qualities of the supernatural order according to which easily and enthusiastically they are moved to attain that good which is eternal.' (ST 1-2, q. 110, a. 2, 'Whether grace is a quality of the soul?')

<sup>20</sup> Thomas O'Meara quotes Aquinas on this point: 'It is suitable that there be in the human being higher perfections according to which a person is disposed to being moved by God. And these perfections are called gifts ... An easy and prompt response to divine inspiration, a meeting between the divine and the human at an instinctual level, the gift is a less deliberative mode of living. Here the struggle of virtue has reached what Aquinas named a *connatural* contact with the realm of God' (ST 1-2, q. 68, a. 1, 2). See O'Meara's *Virtues in the Theology of Aquinas*, *Theological Studies* 58 (1997) p. 269.

human person and save us from being mathematical in our moral searching. They are a powerful link between morality and spirituality, and are a distinctive characteristic of Dominican moral theology. Aquinas insists that these gifts are available even to children, but I am convinced that learning to profit from them is the sign of a truly mature, adult moral life.<sup>21</sup> Effective moral preaching in the Catholic tradition must not only help people *think* clearly, but help them develop the sensitivity to *feel* these promptings of the Spirit.

### **The Common Good: Beyond 'Jesus and Me'**

There is a strong strain of individualism in modern Christianity, especially in American Protestantism. This accounts both for an individualistic piety and for elements in our 'cultural code' that resist sacramentality and the common good.<sup>22</sup> Because Catholic moral theology is deeply rooted in the tradition of the common good, our preaching must avoid excessive preoccupation with individual perfection and holiness that neglects the social reality of the human person.

---

<sup>21</sup> For a fuller description of the Gifts and their role in the moral life, see my article, 'Recovering the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Moral Theology,' *Theological Studies* (September 2002).

<sup>22</sup> American sociologist Robert Bellah notes the individualism that arises from the 'exclusive [Protestant] focus on the relationship between Jesus and the individual, where accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal lord and savior becomes almost the whole of piety.' ('Religion and the Shape of National Culture' *America* [July 31, 1999] pp. 9-14, at p. 12). He also notes that this radical religious individualism becomes particularly problematic when 'joined with a notion of economic freedom that holds that the unrestrained free market can solve all problems.' He says this view is 'virtually inarticulate about the common good' but that it can be helped by the Catholic tradition which gives greater salience to the sacramental life and especially to the Eucharist (p. 13).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the common good as 'the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.' It requires respect for the person as such, the social well-being and development of the group itself, and peace, or the stability and security of a just order.<sup>23</sup> This means that when the preacher addresses social issues, her vision must include not only the congregation before her, but the larger society of which the faithful are a part. Achievement of the common good requires the cooperative efforts of all citizens, not just believers.

### **What Do We Mean By 'Contextual Preaching' on Moral Issues?**

I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that I had rejected textual cues' in favour of responding to the moral issues that are actually in the news and on people's minds. Doing so takes advantage of natural receptivity on the part of the congregation.

My change of heart resulted from a lecture by a colleague who suggested that the 'text or topic' question was a false dilemma. He said that because of the richness of Scripture, any set of readings could yield a moral message on any particular moral situation. I was skeptical, but intrigued. I decided to test this theory out.

During a summer preaching institute, in which about sixty-five students were enrolled, I used the following exercise.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1906-9.

I created five 'moral contexts' that reflected common moral questions: (1) a city in which a highly controversial criminal execution is about to take place; (2) a 'human rights' ordinance that would extend rights to housing and employment to gays and lesbians; (3) the possibility of a more liberal abortion law, which has polarized 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' forces; (4) the death of a young black man shot by a white policeman after a chase; (5) the case of a young woman critically injured in a car accident who has been in an unresponsive coma for several years. Her parents now want to discontinue artificial hydration and nutrition, but the local bishop opposes it.

I divided students into five groups, giving each group a description of one of the contexts described above. I told them to prepare a homily outline using everything they knew about good preaching, including thorough exegesis. I instructed them to preach on the moral issue their context reflected. The only catch was that they all had to preach on the *same set of Sunday readings* (which happened to be the Fifteenth Sunday in Year C of Ordinary Time, Deuteronomy 30:10-14; Psalm 69; Colossians 1: 15-20, and Luke 10:25-37, the Good Samaritan).

I was astounded by the results. There were at least three or four distinct approaches for each moral context. Some were obvious connections: Seeing the condemned prisoner as the injured traveler whom the Samaritan helps. But others were far more creative: 'What if we saw the homosexual as today's Samaritan?' 'The priest and Levite who passed by were afraid. Perhaps we too are afraid to confront the injustice of capital punishment.' 'What must we do to make "the road to Jericho" safe so that murder and capital punishment become a thing of the past?'

I have done this exercise several times since, and each time the results have been equally impressive: students were able to preach faithfully from the readings in a wide variety of 'moral contexts'. This suggests that the Word is, indeed, richer than I had ever imagined.

### **Personal Morality is not the Same as Public Policy**

Even though I believe this method applies both to questions of personal morality and to social questions that involve civil law, there is an important distinction that the preacher must bear in mind. Many people believe that the difference between morality and law is rooted in faith: viz., I believe certain things about morality because of my faith; in a pluralistic society, however, I refrain from 'imposing my religious beliefs' on others. This is the most common argument invoked by politicians who favour 'the right to choose' in abortion even though they themselves are 'personally opposed to it'.

There are two problems with this approach. The first is that faith and religious convictions *do* have a place in public discussions. In the United States, we frequently invoke the 'separation of Church and state' in order to marginalize religious belief, but in fact religion is a deeply interwoven part of our culture. In a country founded on religious freedom we do not suppress religions, but treat each one equally. Therefore, even religiously based convictions have a rightful place in public discourse.<sup>24</sup> The

---

<sup>24</sup> See Ronald Thiemann, *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy* (Washington: Georgetown, 1996): 'Public religion presents a dilemma for American democracy. The reasons why some would encourage a religious voice in our public life can easily be identified. Given the perva-

second problem is that morality is not necessarily faith-based: even non-religious persons can and do pursue moral goodness. Therefore, we must find a way to define 'moral' that is not exclusively religious.

Charles Curran draws a helpful distinction between morality and public policy rather than between religion and politics. He says that morality, whether religious or not, has 'personal perfection' as its goal. Personal perfection is an internal reality that involves my identity and character.<sup>25</sup> Because it is internal, it can be influenced but not enforced by external events or demands. Law can, for example, compel me to perform an act of restitution, but it cannot make me a just person.

Public policy or civil law has a more modest goal. It aims only to preserve public order for the sake of the common good. Good laws are those that preserve freedom as much as possible, and only curtail it when necessary for public order. Laws that curtail freedom in order to 'make people moral' inevitably fail. (Prohibition in the United States is a perfect example. Not only did it fail to

---

siveness and importance of religious convictions within the American populace, it would indeed be odd to deny such profound sentiments any role in public life' (p. 3); Kenneth and Michael Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993): 'Public theology wants to bring the wisdom of the Christian tradition to public conversation to contribute to the well-being of the society. But public theology also aims at rendering an account of Christian belief that articulates what it means to be a member of the Church;' Christopher Mooney, *Public Virtue: Law and the Social Character of Religion* (Notre Dame, 1986), especially Chapter 1, 'Religion in the Public Sphere.'

<sup>25</sup> Charles E. Curran, 'The Difference Between Morality and Public Policy' in *Toward An American Catholic Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, 1987) pp. 194-201.



instill the virtue of temperance, it gave birth to organized crime.) You can prevent people from doing destructive things, but you cannot 'legislate morality' with a view to making people morally good. That comes from within.

Practically, this means that while some actions might risk scandal or may be immoral, that is, incompatible with personal perfection and holiness, they may be tolerated by civil law in the interest of public order or public health. Abortion, needle exchange programmes for drug users, education about 'safe sex' practices, civil rights for homosexuals, and non-criminalization of homosexual or other kinds of extramarital sex, are examples of these kinds of behavior. We may find them morally repugnant on religious or other grounds, but it may be imprudent for legislators to attempt to ban them through legislation.<sup>26</sup> In some cases, we may have to tolerate permissive laws while working to persuade the wider public to embrace moral values more fully. We may also have to acknowledge that two persons of good will may both find an action (e.g., abortion) to be immoral, but disagree on the specific strategy to eliminate it.

---

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Aquinas recognized the difference between morality and civil law. He asks 'Whether it belongs to law to repress all vice?' and responds: 'Human law is framed for a number of human beings, the majority of whom are not perfect in virtue. Wherefore human laws do not forbid all vices, from which the virtuous abstain, but only the more grievous vices, from which it is possible for the majority to abstain; the purpose of human law is to lead us to virtue, not suddenly, but gradually. Wherefore it does not lay upon the multitude of imperfect citizens the burdens of those who are already virtuous, viz., that they should abstain from all evil. Otherwise, these imperfect ones, being unable to bear such precepts, would break out into yet greater evils (ST 1-2, q. 96, a. 2). Elsewhere, he asks 'Whether the rites of unbelievers ought to be tolerated?' Although he assumes these rites are sinful, he says they may be tolerated by law on account of some good that might occur, or to avoid scandal or disturbance (ST 2-2, q. 10, a. 11).

Preachers should not advise, nor even appear to advise, congregations to vote for one candidate or another. Nor should they attempt to deliver specific conclusions to public policy issues that have a moral dimension. Rather, they should help congregations clearly articulate the question or questions posed by these issues, and put these questions in the context of Catholic social teaching about the common good, justice, subsidiarity and solidarity. In the end, each voter will have to make his or her own choice. American social ethicist Bryan Hehir provides an excellent description of the task of the preacher on public policy issues:

The Church enters the political arena not because it has specifically political gifts but because decisions taken in the political, economic, and legal sectors of society have direct bearing on the dignity of the human person. There is no division between a deeply personalist conception of the Church's ministry and its public engagement on secular questions.

The Church makes its way in the public arena on the basis of its moral authority, its capacity to persuade, to convince and to create coalitions in support of changes in law and policy. The emphasis is on an approach that works through the informed conscience of the citizenry. The public ministry seeks to change society with an emphasis on working from the bottom up.

*The potential of this method of public ministry lies in its capacity to draw the community of the church and the wider civil community into a dialogue about the moral content of public policy.*

In a time when the moral content of issues is the link between religious and politics, the church most effectively exercises its public ministry by *creating space in the public argument for explicit moral analysis* [italics my own].<sup>27</sup>

Behind this approach is an assumption about how the Church 'stands in the world'. Faith communities can relate to the world around them in a number of ways. They can, like the Amish or other sectarian groups, see the world as a threat to the integrity of their religious faith and the holiness of their community, and simply withdraw, keeping society at an arm's length. They can, on the other hand, try to make society resemble a Christian community by imposing their religious beliefs on those around them. This is often the case with Christian fundamentalism which would, if it could, create a Christian society through aggressive legislative activity. Another approach would be accommodationism, in which believers see faith as essentially a private matter than has no place in public discourse (this is prevalent in the United States).

The Catholic understanding of this relationship sometimes resembles all of these, but is best described as 'persuasive collaboration.' This means that, because of our concern for the common good and human dignity, we do not retreat from the world; nor do we see faith as private and therefore irrelevant to public life. Because we respect religious freedom and believe that God's grace is mediated

---

<sup>27</sup> 'Preaching and Public Policy: The Parish and the Pastorals.' *Church* (Fall 1985) pp. 3-7, at p. 5 and p. 6.

through means other than the Church, we also do not try to create a theocracy. Rather, we bring our values and beliefs – whether in explicitly religious language or in more accessible ‘natural law’ language – into the public dialogue. We try to ‘persuade’ the wider public of the truth of these claims, but we are also willing to ‘collaborate’ with those who might not fully share these views. The danger of collaboration is compromise, especially if we cannot achieve one hundred percent; but we are willing to accept that, at least as a transitional stage, if it contributes in some way to the common good, which we see as a manifestation of ‘grace-in-the-world’.

## **Preaching on Personal Morality**

Preaching on personal issues of morality – or urging the pursuit of personal perfection – is difficult because the preacher can’t see into the hearts of his hearers and therefore cannot know whether or to what extent his hearers have achieved this perfection. There is the risk of ‘preaching to the choir,’ on the one hand, or of laying excessive burdens on those who are not as far along in their moral journey. In addition, there is the question of purpose: what does the preacher intend to do? Enforce or proscribe specific behaviors, hold up high ideals that are impractical, or help shape conscience and form moral character?

I believe the preacher’s task in preaching on personal morality must focus on conscience formation and character. Moral preaching cannot aim at ‘What ought I to *do*?’ because there are too many differing circumstances, contingencies, and subjective factors that affect specific

decisions. In morality, one size does not fit all.<sup>28</sup> Discernment of specific moral choices must take place in spiritual direction, pastoral counseling or the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but not from the pulpit. Preaching on questions of personal morality must aim, not at what I ought to do, but at 'what kind of person I ought to be'. It should address questions of personal morality directly, but give people the tools to make good decisions rather than making the decisions for them.

## Virtues and the Moral Life

I have already noted that virtues are 'moral skills' or habits. Much like athletic or musical skills, they are acquired over a period of time and eventually make good moral choices second nature. Just as the musician can play a beautiful sonata with no apparent effort, so the virtuous person can produce beautiful moral acts out of habitual or connatural knowledge that requires little or no reflection.

Preachers must also avoid the trap of 'filling the empty pitcher,' that is, assuming that their listeners are

---

<sup>28</sup> See Aquinas, 'Whether the natural law is the same in all?' He responds that in some sense it is, but in matters pertaining to the human behavior, 'although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects. In matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles, and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all.' (ST 1-2, q. 94, a. 4). It is important to note that Aquinas is not talking about epikeia, which is the prudent *dispensation* from law, but about the nature of moral law itself, since moral law shapes itself according to reality rather than the other way around.

empty vessels waiting to be filled with moral knowledge.<sup>29</sup> The vast majority of persons to whom we preach have already had a lot of experience, some good and some bad. This experience has shaped them as moral agents. Rather than simply filling a void, the preacher must help persons (especially adults) tap this experience and critically reflect upon it. This is especially important in our tradition where God's plan for us is discovered not only through revelation and Scripture, but by growing awareness of what leads us to happiness and fulfillment, and what does not.

One author referred to this process as 'striking the responsive chord.' He says the challenge is 'not to get stimuli across, or even to package stimuli so they can be understood and absorbed. Rather [the communicator] must understand the kinds of information and experiences stored in the audience ... The point is not to deposit your message in the other person's mind, but to somehow activate the layers of meaning already deposited there ...'<sup>30</sup>

In moral preaching, our goal is to tap experiences of moral goodness and nurture them. Instead of striking a responsive chord of fear or hatred, we should strike a chord of virtue and wholeness.

---

<sup>29</sup> Humbert of Romans notes, however, that preachers should allow themselves to be filled: 'There are other [preachers] who have not yet received the fullness of those heavenly blessings they must have before they can pour them out upon others. If you are sensible, make yourself into a bowl, not a pipe. A pipe receives and pours out almost simultaneously, but a bowl waits till it is full' (*Treatise*, n. 167).

<sup>30</sup> Jay Rosen, 'Playing the Primary Chords' (*Harpers March* 1992) p. 23. Professor Rosen was speaking about how the media can effectively communicate in a political campaign, but his ideas have important implications for preaching, too. It is important to recall, however, that there is a fine line between 'activating layers of meaning' and manipulating.

There are innumerable virtues, or moral qualities of persons, that can be acquired. Our tradition generally groups these around four 'hinge' or 'cardinal' virtues: temperance, fortitude, justice and prudence. From these, many others flow. Temperance and fortitude are both considered 'affective' virtues in the sense that they relate to emotions rather than our intellects.

Temperance moderates desires, especially 'desires of touch'. Intemperance is the root of many personal sins because the satisfactions of touch, particularly food, drink, and sex, are very powerful. But temperance also has social and even political implications. Gossip, for example, is an intemperate desire for knowledge we do not need or have a right to; anger is satisfaction of a desire for revenge. Clemency, not justice, is the main moral question in capital punishment. Even if a criminal 'deserves to die', the important issue is whether citizens will grow in virtue by imposing such a sentence. Will an exercise of vengeance hurt us as a society more than the criminal?

Fortitude, on the other hand, has to do with fear rather than desire. We need to have the skill of courage in order to persist in our pursuit of the good, even when faced with adversity. Though we often think of courage as the 'virtue of heroes,' it is also very much an everyday virtue. It involves the determination just to stick with our commitments, even when they are difficult and burdensome.

Justice is a thoroughly social virtue, aimed at achieving a 'web of right relationships'. Intimately bound up with the common good, justice is highly eschatological. We work at it through our lives, constantly adjusting rights

and obligations so that everyone has what they need; in the end, however, we never get it quite right in this world, and have to hope that in God's reign it will finally all come together.

Prudence may well be 'the queen of the virtues'. It is partly practical and partly intellectual because it involves the skill of 'knowing what ought to be done'. It is essential for all the other virtues, and is manifest in wisdom and in those persons to whom we would go for advice on a very troublesome and complicated moral problem.

Preaching virtue is far more effective than preaching 'rules,' because virtues admit of degree; if we preach obedience to a rule, there are only two answers: right or wrong. With virtue, we can judge growth and progress, and there is always room for improvement. After all, the goal of morality is not obedience to the norm, but real appropriation of the moral good or value that the norm protects.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to articulate some of the reasons why good preaching on moral issues is rare, and how basic Catholic doctrines shape the way we approach moral preaching. It is more focused on 'why' than on 'how,' so those who sought a step-by-step guide to preaching on moral questions may be disappointed. I am convinced, however, that our tradition has all the tools to recreate a rich and vital practice of moral preaching. I invite my homiletic colleagues to test and critique what I have outlined here.



## **Apostolic Letter “Summorum Pontificum” issued Motu Proprio**

---

**POPE BENEDICT XVI**

*On Saturday, 7 July 2007 Pope Benedict XVI issued an Apostolic Letter on the celebration of the Roman Rite according to the Missal of 1962. The following text is the unofficial Vatican Information Service translation of the official Latin text.*

Up to our own times, it has been the constant concern of supreme pontiffs to ensure that the Church of Christ offers a worthy ritual to the Divine Majesty, ‘to the praise and glory of His name,’ and ‘to the benefit of all His Holy Church.’

Since time immemorial it has been necessary – as it is also for the future – to maintain the principle according to which ‘each particular Church must concur with the universal Church, not only as regards the doctrine of the faith and the sacramental signs, but also as regards the usages universally accepted by uninterrupted apostolic tradition, which must be observed not only to avoid errors

but also to transmit the integrity of the faith, because the Church's law of prayer corresponds to her law of faith.'<sup>1</sup>

Among the pontiffs who showed that requisite concern, particularly outstanding is the name of St. Gregory the Great, who made every effort to ensure that the new peoples of Europe received both the Catholic faith and the treasures of worship and culture that had been accumulated by the Romans in preceding centuries. He commanded that the form of the sacred liturgy as celebrated in Rome (concerning both the Sacrifice of Mass and the Divine Office) be conserved. He took great concern to ensure the dissemination of monks and nuns who, following the Rule of St. Benedict, together with the announcement of the Gospel illustrated with their lives the wise provision of their Rule that 'nothing should be placed before the work of God.' In this way the sacred liturgy, celebrated according to the Roman use, enriched not only the faith and piety but also the culture of many peoples. It is known, in fact, that the Latin liturgy of the Church in its various forms, in each century of the Christian era, has been a spur to the spiritual life of many saints, has reinforced many peoples in the virtue of religion and fecundated their piety.

Many other Roman pontiffs, in the course of the centuries, showed particular solicitude in ensuring that the sacred liturgy accomplished this task more effectively. Outstanding among them is St. Pius V who, sustained by great pastoral zeal and following the exhortations of the Council of Trent, renewed the entire liturgy of the Church,

---

<sup>1</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 3rd ed., 2002, no. 397.

oversaw the publication of liturgical books amended and 'renewed in accordance with the norms of the Fathers,' and provided them for the use of the Latin Church.

One of the liturgical books of the Roman rite is the Roman Missal, which developed in the city of Rome and, with the passing of the centuries, little by little took forms very similar to that it has had in recent times.

"It was towards this same goal that succeeding Roman Pontiffs directed their energies during the subsequent centuries in order to ensure that the rites and liturgical books were brought up to date and when necessary clarified. From the beginning of this century they undertook a more general reform."<sup>2</sup> Thus our predecessors Clement VIII, Urban VIII, St. Pius X,<sup>3</sup> Benedict XV, Pius XII and Blessed John XXIII all played a part.

In more recent times, Vatican Council II expressed a desire that the respectful reverence due to divine worship should be renewed and adapted to the needs of our time. Moved by this desire our predecessor, the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI, approved, in 1970, reformed and partly renewed liturgical books for the Latin Church. These, translated into the various languages of the world, were willingly accepted by bishops, priests and faithful. John Paul II amended the third typical edition of the Roman Missal. Thus Roman pontiffs have operated to ensure that 'this kind of liturgical

---

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter "*Vicesimus quintus annus*," 4 December 1988, 3: AAS 81 (1989), 899.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

edifice... should again appear resplendent for its dignity and harmony.’<sup>4</sup>

But in some regions, no small numbers of faithful adhered and continue to adhere with great love and affection to the earlier liturgical forms. These had so deeply marked their culture and their spirit that in 1984 the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, moved by a concern for the pastoral care of these faithful, with the special indult ‘Quattuor abhinc anno,’ issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship, granted permission to use the Roman Missal published by Blessed John XXIII in the year 1962. Later, in the year 1988, John Paul II with the Apostolic Letter given as *Motu Proprio*, ‘*Ecclesia Dei*,’ exhorted bishops to make generous use of this power in favor of all the faithful who so desired.

Following the insistent prayers of these faithful, long deliberated upon by our predecessor John Paul II, and after having listened to the views of the Cardinal Fathers of the Consistory of 22 March 2006, having reflected deeply upon all aspects of the question, invoked the Holy Spirit and trusting in the help of God, with these Apostolic Letters we establish the following:

Art. 1. The Roman Missal promulgated by Paul VI is the ordinary expression of the ‘*Lex orandi*’ (Law of prayer) of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite. Nonetheless, the Roman Missal promulgated by St. Pius V and reissued by

---

<sup>4</sup> St. Pius X, Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio* data, “*Abhinc duos annos*,” 23 October 1913: AAS 5 (1913), 449-450; cf John Paul II, Apostolic Letter “*Vicesimus quintus annus*,” no. 3: AAS 81 (1989), 899.

Bl. John XXIII is to be considered as an extraordinary expression of that same '*Lex orandi*,' and must be given due honour for its venerable and ancient usage. These two expressions of the Church's *Lex orandi* will in no any way lead to a division in the Church's '*Lex credendi*' (Law of belief). They are, in fact two usages of the one Roman rite.

It is, therefore, permissible to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass following the typical edition of the Roman Missal promulgated by Bl. John XXIII in 1962 and never abrogated, as an extraordinary form of the Liturgy of the Church. The conditions for the use of this Missal as laid down by earlier documents '*Quattuor abhinc annis*' and '*Ecclesia Dei*,' are substituted as follows:

Art. 2. In Masses celebrated without the people, each Catholic priest of the Latin rite, whether secular or regular, may use the Roman Missal published by Bl. Pope John XXIII in 1962, or the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970, and may do so on any day with the exception of the Easter Triduum. For such celebrations, with either one Missal or the other, the priest has no need for permission from the Apostolic See or from his Ordinary.

Art. 3. Communities of Institutes of consecrated life and of Societies of apostolic life, of either pontifical or diocesan right, wishing to celebrate Mass in accordance with the edition of the Roman Missal promulgated in 1962, for conventual or "community" celebration in their oratories, may do so. If an individual community or an entire Institute or Society wishes to undertake such

celebrations often, habitually or permanently, the decision must be taken by the Superiors Major, in accordance with the law and following their own specific decrees and statutes.

Art. 4. Celebrations of Mass as mentioned above in art. 2 may – observing all the norms of law – also be attended by faithful who, of their own free will, ask to be admitted.

Art. 5. §1 – In parishes, where there is a stable group of faithful who adhere to the earlier liturgical tradition, the pastor should willingly accept their requests to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962, and ensure that the welfare of these faithful harmonizes with the ordinary pastoral care of the parish, under the guidance of the bishop in accordance with canon 392, avoiding discord and favouring the unity of the whole Church.

§2 – Celebration in accordance with the Missal of Bl. John XXIII may take place on working days; while on Sundays and feast days one such celebration may also be held.

§3 – For faithful and priests who request it, the pastor should also allow celebrations in this extraordinary form for special circumstances such as marriages, funerals or occasional celebrations, e.g. pilgrimages.

§4 – Priests who use the Missal of Bl. John XXIII must be qualified to do so and not juridically impeded.

§5 – In churches that are not parish or conventual churches, it is the duty of the Rector of the church to grant the above permission.

Art. 6. In Masses celebrated in the presence of the people in accordance with the Missal of Bl. John XXIII, the readings may be given in the vernacular, using editions recognized by the Apostolic See.

Art. 7. If a group of lay faithful, as mentioned in art. 5 §1, has not obtained satisfaction to their requests from the pastor, they should inform the diocesan bishop. The bishop is strongly requested to satisfy their wishes. If he cannot arrange for such celebration to take place, the matter should be referred to the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei".

Art. 8. A bishop who, desirous of satisfying such requests, but who for various reasons is unable to do so, may refer the problem to the Commission "Ecclesia Dei" to obtain counsel and assistance.

Art. 9. §1 – The pastor, having attentively examined all aspects, may also grant permission to use the earlier ritual for the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Penance, and the Anointing of the Sick, if the good of souls would seem to require it.

§2 – Ordinaries are given the right to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation using the earlier Roman Pontifical, if the good of souls would seem to require it.

§3 – Clerics ordained "in sacris constitutis" may use the Roman Breviary promulgated by Bl. John XXIII in 1962.

Art. 10. The ordinary of a particular place, if he feels it appropriate, may erect a personal parish in accordance with can. 518 for celebrations following the ancient form

of the Roman rite, or appoint a chaplain, while observing all the norms of law.

Art. 11. The Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei", erected by John Paul II in 1988,<sup>5</sup> continues to exercise its function. Said Commission will have the form, duties and norms that the Roman Pontiff wishes to assign it.

Art. 12. This Commission, apart from the powers it enjoys, will exercise the authority of the Holy See, supervising the observance and application of these dispositions.

We order that everything We have established with these Apostolic Letters issued as *Motu Proprio* be considered as "established and decreed", and to be observed from 14 September of this year, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, whatever there may be to the contrary.

*From Rome, at St. Peter's, 7 July 2007, third year of Our Pontificate.*

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio* data "Ecclesia Dei," 2 July 1988, 6: AAS 80 (1988), 1498.



## Q & A Regarding the *Motu Proprio* Summorum Pontificum

---

What is a *motu proprio*?

Most documents signed by a pope originate as a function of the ordinary business of the Roman Curia in its role at the service of the pope. A few documents are initiated and promulgated by the pope himself for reasons he considers sufficient. Such a document is issued *motu proprio* (of his own accord).

Is a *motu proprio* the highest kind of ecclesiastical document?

No, although a *motu proprio* represents a particular papal solicitude the highest form of legislating, or teaching, document is the *Constitution*, which itself could be issued *motu proprio*.

### **Is a *motu proprio* limited in force in any way?**

Although any document issued in the pope's name participates in his supreme authority (*CIC* c.360), canonists consider a *motu proprio* to have a certain finality to it.

### **What is the Mass according to the Roman Missal of 1962?**

This is the Mass as celebrated according to the Roman Missal promulgated by Blessed John XXIII. It was in use at time of the Second Vatican Council (October 11, 1962 to December 8th 1965), and thus prior to that Council's call for a reform of the liturgical books. The Pope refers to this post-conciliar form of the Mass as the *extraordinary form*.

### **Is this the same as the Tridentine Rite?**

Tridentine is the adjective for anything connected with the Council of Trent (1548-1570). The term *Tridentine Rite* is not an accurate term. While the Missal of 1962 corresponds largely with the rite of the Mass promulgated after the Council of Trent by Pope St. Pius V, and therefore it has sometimes been called the *Tridentine rite*, it nonetheless is not identical. Several Popes over the centuries have made changes to the Tridentine missal. In the decade before the Second Vatican Council, Pope Pius XII modified the ceremonies of Holy Week and Pope John XXIII added St. Joseph to the saints' names mentioned in the Roman Canon.

Further, as Pope Benedict makes clear there is one Roman Rite, with two forms, an ordinary form (according

to the Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970, last revised in 2002), and an extraordinary form (according to the Missal of 1962). These two forms should peacefully co-exist, as do other occasionally celebrated forms of the Mass in the Western Church, such as the Ambrosian (Milan) or Mozarabic (Toledo, Spain), or, the various forms of the Divine Liturgy in the Eastern Churches (e.g. Liturgy of St. Basil, Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom etc.).

### **Is it the same as the Latin Mass?**

The expression *Latin Mass* is popularly applied to the Mass according to the Missal of 1962, since one of its most notable characteristics is that the prayers are entirely in Latin. However, this is true also of the *Missale Romanum* of the post-conciliar rite, which is typically celebrated in the vernacular languages of the world. All translations are made from the “typical edition” in Latin (currently the third edition, of 2002), and every missal in vernacular translation must also contain the Latin text, since any priest may freely celebrate the *ordinary* form of the Mass in Latin.

Some, therefore, distinguish Mass according to the 1962 Missal from the current rite by calling it the *traditional* Latin Mass. While this is preferable to *Latin Mass*, it still does not establish the exact form of the traditional Latin Mass in question.

### **When will the norms in *Summorum Pontificum* take effect?**

On 14 September 2007.

## **Who may celebrate the Mass according to the Missal of 1962?**

According to the Apostolic Letter any priest of the Latin Rite may celebrate it in private, or in public according to the norms.

## **What about religious order priests?**

They, too, may celebrate it in private. An institute of consecrated life and a society of apostolic life (both pontifical and diocesan) may also do so publicly for their community Mass, although for this to be habitual or permanent, the approval of the Major Superior, in accordance with the specific laws of the institute or society is needed.

## **May the faithful participate in private Masses?**

Yes, those who freely request it may participate in private Masses of the clergy.

## **What about public Masses, such as in parishes?**

If there is a stable group of people in a parish who want the extraordinary form, the Holy Father says that “the pastor should willingly accept their requests to celebrate the Mass according to the rite of the Roman Missal published in 1962... avoiding discord and favoring the unity of the whole Church.”

## **What if a pastor won't allow it?**

This would be a matter for the bishop, who is “strongly requested” to resolve it by the Holy Father. He can seek

the help of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, and if he cannot resolve it, he should forward the matter to the Commission, which exercises the authority of the Holy See with regard to the norms.

### **May the older rites be used in the celebration of the other Sacraments?**

Yes, pastors may permit the public celebration of these rites at the request of the faithful.

### **Must priests be schooled in the celebration of this form or just take the missal and offer it?**

No, a priest must either know how to celebrate it, as many older priests still do, or become qualified in some way. Neither form of the Roman Mass should be celebrated in a slipshod or haphazard way.

Also, a priest must not be juridical impeded, as would a priest who has been suspended by his bishop for acting independently of the Church in this matter, laicized, or is otherwise canonically irregular.

### **May parts of the rites according to the Missal of 1962 and the current missal be intermingled?**

The rites themselves may not be intermingled, each has its own proper form. However, the Holy Father suggests in his letter to the bishops that the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* "in contact with various bodies devoted to the *usus antiquior*" could study whether recent Mass texts (e.g. the propers of saints like Padre Pio who have been cano-

nized since 1962) may be adapted for use with the Missal of 1962. This is interesting since it suggests the possibility of the continuing and organic development of that missal in line with its nature, as would have occurred if the liturgical reforms of Vatican II had not intervened. In this way this extraordinary form of the Roman Rite would remain both living and true to itself.

### **What about the former edition of the Liturgy of the Hours or Breviary?**

Yes, the clergy may use the former Roman Breviary to fulfill their obligation to pray the Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office.

# **Statement on the “Tridentine” Mass**

---

**ARCHBISHOP ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO, D.D.**

We fully welcome with respect and appreciation the recent Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XVI on the “Tridentine” Mass. It clarifies for us the status of the Tridentine Mass in the Latin Language.

In accordance with the Apostolic Letter (*“Motu proprio”*) entitled *“Summorum Pontificum”* of Pope Benedict XVI, the celebration of the so-called Tridentine Mass, which is in the Latin language, as approved by Blessed Pope John XXIII in 1962 continues to be fully permissible as an extraordinary form of the Mass. The Tridentine Mass was never forbidden or abrogated.

The so-called “New Mass” which was introduced after the Second Vatican Council and approved by Pope Paul VI in 1970 has become more popular among the people because it allowed the use of some approved adaptations, including the use of the popular languages and dialects. It became the ordinary form of the Mass, widely celebrated in the parish churches.

When may the Tridentine (Latin) Mass be celebrated? According to the letter of Pope Benedict XVI, it may be celebrated by catholic priests of the Latin Rite: a) in private masses, b) in conventual or community mass in accordance with the specific statutes of the Congregation, c) in parishes upon request of the faithful and under the guidance of the bishop (in accordance with Canon 392). In such Masses, however, the readings may be given in the vernacular.

This permission given by Pope Benedict XVI means that the Mass in Latin and in accordance with the formula of the Council of Trent, hence Tridentine, with the celebrant's back to the faithful may be celebrated, as it was never forbidden or abrogated. For new priests, this will require formation in the Latin Mass.

Now, we are instructed that in the liturgy of the Mass, there is the ordinary form which is that approved by Pope Paul VI in 1970 after the Vatican II; and there is the extraordinary form – the Tridentine (Latin) Mass which is that approved by Blessed Pope John XXIII in 1962. The two forms will have their way of leading the faithful to the true worship of God in prayer and liturgy; and may even be a factor for unity in the Church.

†ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO  
*Archbishop of Jaro*  
*President, CBCP*  
*July 9, 2007*



## **Apostolic Letter “Ecclesia Dei” of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II given Motu Proprio**

---

**JOHN PAUL II**

1. With great affliction the Church has learned of the unlawful episcopal ordination conferred on 30 June last by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, which has frustrated all the efforts made during the previous years to ensure the full communion with the Church of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X founded by the same Mons. Lefebvre. These efforts, especially intense during recent months, in which the Apostolic See has shown comprehension to the limits of the possible, were all to no avail.<sup>1</sup>

2. This affliction was particularly felt by the Successor Peter to whom in the first place pertains the guardianship of the unity of the Church,<sup>2</sup> even though the number

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “Informatory Note” of 16 June 1988: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 27 June 1988, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Vatican Council I, Const. *Pastor Æternus*, cap. 3: DS 3060.

of persons directly involved in these events might be few. For every person is loved by God on his own account and has been redeemed by the blood of Christ shed on the Cross for the salvation of all.

The particular circumstances, both objective and subjective in which Archbishop Lefebvre acted, provide everyone with an occasion for profound reflection and for a renewed pledge of fidelity to Christ and to his Church.

3. In itself, this act was one of *disobedience to the Roman Pontiff* in a very grave matter and of supreme importance for the unity of the church, such as is the ordination of bishops whereby the apostolic succession is sacramentally perpetuated. Hence **such disobedience – which implies in practice the rejection of the Roman primacy – constitutes a *schismatic act*.**<sup>3</sup> In performing such an act, notwithstanding the formal *canonical warning* sent to them by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops on 17 June last, Mons. Lefebvre and the priests Bernard Fellay, Bernard Tissier de Mallerais, Richard Williamson and Alfonso de Galarreta, **have incurred the grave penalty of excommunication envisaged by ecclesiastical law.**<sup>4</sup>

4. The *root* of this schismatic act can be discerned in an incomplete and contradictory notion of Tradition. Incomplete, because it does not take sufficiently into account the *living* character of Tradition, which, as the Second Vatican Council clearly taught, “comes from the apostles

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 751.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1382.

and progresses in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth".<sup>5</sup>

But especially contradictory is a notion of Tradition which opposes the universal Magisterium of the Church possessed by the Bishop of Rome and the Body of Bishops. **It is impossible to remain faithful to the Tradition while breaking the ecclesial bond with him to whom, in the person of the Apostle Peter, Christ himself entrusted the ministry of unity in his Church.**<sup>6</sup>

5. Faced with the situation that has arisen I deem it my duty to inform all the Catholic faithful of some aspects which this sad event has highlighted.

a) The outcome of the movement promoted by Mons. Lefebvre can and must be, for all the Catholic faithful, a motive for sincere reflection concerning their own fidelity to the Church's Tradition, authentically interpreted by the ecclesiastical Magisterium, ordinary and extraordinary, especially in the Ecumenical Councils from Nicaea to

---

<sup>5</sup> Vatican Council II., Const. *Dei Verbum*, n. 8. Cf. Vatican Council I, Const. *Dei Filius*, cap. 4: DS 3020.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mt. 16:18; Lk. 10:16; Vatican Council I, Const. *Pastor Aeternus*, cap. 3: DS 3060.

Vatican II. From this reflection all should draw a renewed and efficacious conviction of the necessity of strengthening still more their fidelity by rejecting erroneous interpretations and arbitrary and unauthorized applications in matters of doctrine, liturgy and discipline.

To the bishops especially it pertains, by reason of their pastoral mission, to exercise the important duty of a clear-sighted vigilance full of charity and firmness, so that this fidelity may be everywhere safeguarded.<sup>7</sup>

However, it is necessary that all the Pastors and the other faithful have a new awareness, not only of the lawfulness but also of the richness for the Church of a diversity of charisms, traditions of spirituality and apostolate, which also constitutes the beauty of unity in variety: of that blended "harmony" which the earthly Church raises up to Heaven under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

b) Moreover, I should like to remind theologians and other experts in the ecclesiastical sciences that they should feel themselves called upon to answer in the present circumstances. Indeed, the extent and depth of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council call for a renewed commitment to deeper study in order to reveal clearly the Council's continuity with Tradition, especially in points of doctrine which, perhaps because they are new, have not yet been well understood by some sections of the Church.

c) In the present circumstances I wish especially to make an appeal both solemn and heartfelt, paternal and

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 386; Paul VI. Apost. Exhort. *Quinque iam anni*, 8 Dec. 1970: AAS 63 (1971), pp. 97-106.

fraternal, to all those who until now have been linked in various ways to the movement of Archbishop Lefebvre, that they may fulfill **the grave duty of remaining united to the Vicar of Christ in the unity of the Catholic Church**, and of ceasing their support in any way for that movement. Everyone should be aware that formal adherence to the schism is a grave offence against God and carries the penalty of excommunication decreed by the Church's law.<sup>8</sup>

To all those Catholic faithful who feel attached to some previous liturgical and disciplinary forms of the Latin tradition I wish to manifest my will to facilitate their ecclesial communion by means of the necessary measures to guarantee respect for their rightful aspirations. In this matter I ask for the support of the bishops and of all those engaged in the pastoral ministry in the Church.

6. Taking account of the importance and complexity of the problems referred to in this document, **by virtue of my Apostolic Authority I decree the following:**

a) a *Commission* is instituted whose task it will be to collaborate with the bishops, with the Departments of the Roman Curia and with the circles concerned, for the purpose of facilitating full ecclesial communion of priests, seminarians, religious communities or individuals until now linked in various ways to the Fraternity founded by Mons. Lefebvre, who may wish to remain united to the Successor Peter in the Catholic Church, while preserving their spiritual and liturgical traditions, in the light of the Protocol signed on 5 May last by Cardinal Ratzinger and Mons. Lefebvre;

---

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1364.

b) this Commission is composed of a Cardinal President and other members of the Roman Curia, in a number that will be deemed opportune according to circumstances;

c) *moreover, respect must everywhere be shown for the feelings of all those who are attached to the Latin liturgical tradition, by a wide and generous application of the directives already issued some time ago by the Apostolic See for the use of the Roman Missal according to the typical edition of 1962.*<sup>9</sup>

7. As this year specially dedicated to the Blessed Virgin is now drawing to a close, I wish to exhort all to join in unceasing prayer that the Vicar of Christ, through the intercession of the Mother of the church, addresses to the Father in the very words of the Son: **“That they all may be one!”**.

*Given at Rome, at St. Peter's. 2 July 1988, the tenth year of the pontificate.*

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship, Letter *Quattuor abhinc annos*. 3 Oct. 1984: AAS 76 (1984), pp. 1088-1089.

## **“Quattuor Abhinc Annos”\***

---

### **CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP**

Most Rev. Excellency:

Four years ago, by order of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, the bishops of the whole Church were invited to present a report:

- concerning the way in which the priests and faithful of their dioceses had received the Missal promulgated in 1970 by authority of Pope Paul VI in accordance with the decisions of the Second Vatican Council;
- concerning the difficulties arising in the implementation of the liturgical reform;
- concerning possible resistance that may have arisen.

The result of the consultation was sent to all bishops (cf. *\_Notitiae\_*, n. 185, December 1981). On the basis of their

---

\* Indult issued on October 3, 1984, by the Congregation for Divine Worship, to the Presidents of the world's various Episcopal Conferences.

replies it appeared that the problem of priests and faithful holding to the so-called "Tridentine" rite was almost completely solved.

Since, however, the same problem continues, the Supreme Pontiff, in a desire to meet the wishes of these groups, grants to diocesan bishops the possibility of using an indult whereby priests and faithful, who shall be expressly indicated in the letter of request to be presented to their own bishop, may be able to celebrate Mass by using the Roman Missal according to the 1962 edition, but under the following conditions:

a) That it be made publically clear beyond all ambiguity that such priests and their respective faithful in no way share the positions of those who call in question the legitimacy and doctrinal exactitude of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

b) Such celebration must be made only for the benefit of those groups that request it; in churches and oratories indicated by the bishop (not, however, in parish churches, unless the bishop permits it in extraordinary cases); and on the days and under the conditions fixed by the bishop either habitually or in individual cases.

c) These celebrations must be according to the 1962 Missal and in Latin.

d) There must be no interchanging of texts and rites of the two Missals.

e) Each bishop must inform this Congregation of the concessions granted by him, and at the end of a year



from the granting of this indult, he must report on the result of its application.

This concession, indicative of the common Father's solicitude for all his children, must be used in such a way as not to prejudice the faithful observance of the liturgical reform in the life of the respective ecclesial communities.

I am pleased to avail myself of this occasion to express to Your Excellency my sentiments of deep esteem.

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

**Augustine Mayer**  
*Pro-prefect*

**Virgilio Noe**  
*Secretary*



# Discourse of Pope John Paul II

*on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Ecclesia Dei*  
*October 26, 1998*

---

JOHN PAUL II

I greet you cordially, my dear pilgrims, who have decided to come to Rome on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the *motu proprio, Ecclesia Dei*, in order to affirm and renew your faith in Christ and your loyalty to the Church. Dear friends, your presence around the “Successor of Peter to whom it falls primarily to watch over the unity of the Church” (Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution, *Pastor Aeternus*) is of particular significance.

To guard the treasure which Jesus confided to Her and facing the future resolutely, the Church has the duty to reflect continuously on Her link with the Tradition which has come to us from the Lord, through the Apostles, such as it has been established all down through history. In line with the spirit of conversion of the apostolic letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* (nn. 14, 32, 34, 50), I encourage all Catholics to make gestures of unity and to renew their

adherence to the Church, in order that legitimate diversity and different sensibilities, worthy of respect, do not separate them from each other, but encourage them, rather, to preach the Gospel together. Stimulated, thus, by the Spirit who makes all charismata come together in unity, all will be able to glorify the Lord and salvation will be proclaimed to all the nations.

I desire that all the members of the Church remain the heirs of the faith received from the Apostles, worthily and faithfully celebrated in the Holy Mysteries, with fervour and beauty, in order to receive grace in an increasing manner (Council of Trent, sess. VII, 3 March 1547, Decree on the Sacraments) and to live with the Divine Trinity in an intimate and profound relationship. While confirming the good based on the liturgical reform wished by the Second Vatican Council and initiated by Pope Paul VI, the Church grants also a sign of understanding to those persons “attached to certain previous liturgical and disciplinary forms” (*motu proprio, Ecclesia Dei*, n.5). It is in this perspective that one must read and apply the *motu proprio, Ecclesia Dei*. I desire that everything may happen in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, in full harmony with Tradition, aiming at unity in charity and loyalty to the Truth.

It is under “the action of the Holy Spirit, by whom the flock of Christ maintains itself one and whole and progresses in the unity of the faith” (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25) which the Successor of Peter and the Bishops, Successors of the Apostles, teach the Christian Mystery. In a very particular manner, the Bishops, gathered in Ecumenical Councils *cum*

*Petro* and *sub Petro*, confirm and affirm the doctrine of the Church, Faithful Heiress of the Tradition already existing for almost twenty centuries, as a living reality which goes on giving a new impetus to the whole of the ecclesial community. The latest Ecumenical Councils – Trent, Vatican I, Vatican II – applied themselves to clarifying the mystery of the faith and undertook the necessary reforms for the good of the Church, solicitous for the continuity with the Apostolic Tradition, already recognized by St. Hippolytus.

It falls primarily to the Bishops, in communion with the Successor of Peter, to exercise with firmness and charity the shepherding of the flock so that the Catholic Faith may be guarded everywhere and worthily celebrated (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Quinque jam anni* and The Code of Canon Law, c. 386). Indeed, according to the formulae of St. Ignatius of Antioch, (“*Ubi episcopus, ibi Ecclesia*”) where the Bishop is, there is the Church. (*Letter to Smyrniots*, VIII, 2). I invite the Bishops also, fraternally, to understand and to have a renewed pastoral attention for the faithful attached to the Old Rite and, on the threshold of the Third Millennium, to help all Catholics to live the celebration of the Holy Mysteries with a devotion which may be true nourishment for their spiritual life and which may be a source of peace.

Entrusting you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, perfect model of the *sequela Christi* and Mother of the Church, dear Brothers and Sisters, I grant the Apostolic Benediction to you as well as to all those dear to you.

I warmly welcome the English-speaking pilgrims who have come to venerate the Tombs of the Apostles on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the motu proprio *Ecclesia Dei*. Upon you and your families, I invoke the Almighty God's abundant blessings.

# **Statement of the Catholic Hierarchy on Liturgical Revival**

---

**CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES  
AUGUST 6, 1961**

To Our Clergy and Our People,  
The Peace of Christ Be With You:

The great Saint Pius X prepared the ground for a liturgical revival. He issued directives for the restoration of Gregorian chants and a decree on frequent and early Holy communion.

Thus the Liturgical Revival was born: leading liturgists popularized the beauty of the liturgy, its tremendous value in Christian living, and the role of the faithful in it. They soon exerted a great influence on the masses of the faithful, many of whom responded enthusiastically.

There was nothing really new, however, in what the leaders of the liturgical revival proposed. They had merely rediscovered what the Church had taught and lived very intensely from the times of the catacombs to the first centuries of the Middle Ages. In those times the

Liturgy gave the Christians a sense of community: they prayed as one and actively participated in a single common sacrifice.

The Mass was then much more simple in structure, with its essential parts easily recognizable and so the faithful also saw, believed, and lived what was essential. To them the Mass was also the great means to give thanks through Christ to the heavenly Father and to seek unity with Christ and with one another. So much did they live their life of grace in intimate relation with Christ in the Holy Eucharist that they called themselves "the living." The Readings from Holy Scripture, which the priests explained, were their basic catechetical nourishment, and through the Mass they were familiar with the whole Bible, the History of Salvation. Finally, the Eucharistic Sacrifice was their fundamental school of prayer; it taught them to converse with God in the same way as the whole Church did and thus the great prayer of the church became the inspiration of their personal prayers.

The Liturgical Revival, then, is for a return to the primitive forms of Christian piety. We in the Philippines may not remain strangers to it, particularly in the wake of the more recent documents emanating from the Holy See. On the contrary, we should join it with the vivacity and enthusiasm of a young dynamic Church, the more so that Divine Providence seems to have called us to the important role of being the beacon light of Christianity in the Orient.

Pius X, Pius XI and Pius XII emphasized the need for the faithful to take an active part in liturgical functions. They must not conduct themselves as mute spectators, say the Roman Pontiffs, but as active participants in the Liturgy.



The Faithful have their own part in the Liturgy, not a passive part like that of mere spectators of a drama, but an active part. A Christian has to live the life of the Liturgy and he participates in the Priesthood of Christ Himself. The Liturgy is an integral worship of Christ and His Members. So the intelligent participation of the faithful in the Liturgy is a need which springs from the very nature of Christian Liturgy which is an expression of the collective worship of the Christian community. No one is left without function or part to play.

The function as the laity in the Liturgy is not of the same nature and does not belong to the same level as that of the Priest. The Priest acts in the name of the people and goes to the altar as a minister of Christ, but superior to the people. The people do not in any way represent the person of the Divine Redeemer, neither is it a mediator between God and itself, nor can it enjoy any Sacerdotal prerogative.

The Instruction on Sacred Music and the Sacred Liturgy given by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on September 3, 1958, defines and regulates the active participation of the laity in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

We, your Pastors and the Shepherds of your souls, aware of the great spiritual benefits that will result from the proper implementation of the Instruction in general and of its reference to the participation of the laity in the Mass in particular, have jointly adopted some specific rules and regulations to be implemented in all our churches during the Mass on Sundays and Holidays of Obligation. These directives will be issued in the form of a booklet and will be distributed to all parishes and schools.

If these directives and measures are carefully and zealously followed, they will undoubtedly promote a greater and more intense spiritual life among you. They will enable you to “live the life of the Liturgy” which is the life of worship, and “to take part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice so profoundly and so actively as to be most intimately united to the great High Priest” as Pius XII expresses it.

The Mass is the center and source of Christian piety. For any individual Christian it can only be so if he understands and makes it his own action, otherwise the salutary action of Eucharistic Sacrifice, will only pass before his eyes as a drama alien to his innermost feelings, a series of rites and ceremonies which he physically attends because it is his obligation to do so, but as something which may not intimately affect his spiritual life. A novena would for practical purposes do more to promote and increase his piety than this very center and source of Christian piety!

The Christian life is a bond, an exchange of love between the Father and His people. The Father gives Christ to His people as a manifestation of His love, and the people give Christ back to the Father in reciprocation, in gratitude and true love. The holy sacrifice of the Mass recapitulates this plan of the Christian life and the goal and purpose of active participation are to make it a living reality for man and society. The Mass will be a living reality to you, beloved faithful, only if you act the Mass and offer it together with the Priest. In that way, union with the Father, for which Christ prayed on the eve of His Passion, will also become a living reality in your souls.

Aside from an increase in supernatural life, this intelligent and active participation in the Liturgy on the part of the laity will also result in a wider and more profound understanding of Catholic Doctrine. The Liturgy is not only the public and official worship of the Church, it is also a school of Christian life. Pius X called the Liturgy Didascalía. Pius XI said: "The Liturgy is the most important instrument used by the Church in her teaching office." Pius XII, in His closing address to the Liturgical Congress of Assisi in 1956, also affirmed: "However, it will be difficult to point out any truth of the Christian faith which in some way is not expressed in the Liturgy... This way the Church in her Liturgy distributes abundantly the treasures of the "deposit of faith", the truth of Christ... and if the Hierarchy communicates to the faithful by means of the Liturgy the truth and grace of Christ, it corresponds to the faithful on their part to accept them fullheartedly and convert them into living realities."

Liturgical prayer has always been a catechism of Christian Doctrine: not a catechism of many and very detailed questions or of subtle distinctions and long enumerations; but a catechism in which are proposed the fundamental truths of faith and in particular, those that have the character of "good tidings." For this reason we can understand how there existed in the course of centuries a marvelous Pastoral Action which did not have a systematic catechesis, in which there was not much preaching and in which it was not yet possible to give instruction by means of the printed word. However, Christianity flourished full of life, precisely because its great truths were known and were made a living experience by means of the Liturgy.

There is no instruction that teaches so much, and is so authentic and perfectly adopted to the ordinary Christian as what is found in the liturgical prayers, readings, and rites. In those centuries of more faith, even if the majority of the faithful did not receive formal instruction, generally speaking they were much more instructed in the mysteries of our faith than most of the men and women of our day and generation.

In the Philippines the greatest problem of our Church is religious instruction. And it is a problem for which no satisfactory solution has yet been found. If in the past centuries the Liturgy has been found an effective means of religious instruction, there is no reason why it cannot be as effective today in our country if we only work to make our faithful understand and act and pray the Liturgy especially the Holy Mass.

We, therefore, appeal to all of you, our dearly beloved clergy and faithful, to implement effectively our desire in this respect. Meanwhile, receive Our paternal blessing which from Our hearts We impart to you, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Given in Manila on August 6, 1961, Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

For the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines:

(Sgd.) †JULIO R. ROSALES, D.D.  
*Archbishop of Cebu*  
*President, CWO*

# Reverence, Recollection, Contemplation\*

---

DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND

THE ARGUMENTS for the New Liturgy have been neatly packaged, and may now be learned by rote. The new form of the Mass is designed to engage the celebrant and the faithful in a communal activity. In the past the faithful attended mass in personal isolation, each worshipper making his private devotions, or at best following the proceedings in his missal. Today the faithful can grasp the social character of the celebration; they are learning to appreciate it as a community meal. Formerly, the priest mumbled in a dead language, which created a barrier between priest and people. Now everyone speaks in English, which tends to unite priest and people with one

---

\* Reprinted from the October 1966 issue of **TRIUMPH**. Originally titled: *A Case for the Latin Mass*. Dietrich von Hildebrand, was one of the world's most eminent Christian philosophers. A professor at Fordham University, Pope Pius XII called him "the 20th Century Doctor of the Church." He is the author of many books, including *Transformation in Christ* and *Liturgy and Personality*.

another. In the past the priest said mass with his back to the people, which created the mood of an esoteric rite. Today, because the priest faces the people, the mass is a more fraternal occasion. In the past the priest intoned strange medieval chants. Today the entire assembly sings songs with easy tunes and familiar lyrics, and is even experimenting with folk music. The case for the new mass, then, comes down to this: it is making the faithful more at home in the house of God.

Moreover, these innovations are said to have the sanction of Authority: they are represented as an obedient response to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. This is said notwithstanding that the Council's Constitution on the Liturgy goes no further than to permit the vernacular mass in cases where the local bishop believes it desirable; the Constitution plainly insists on the retention of the Latin mass, and emphatically approves the Gregorian chant. But the liturgical "progressives" are not impressed by the difference between permitting and commanding. Nor do they hesitate to authorize changes, such as standing to receive Holy Communion, which the Constitution does not mention at all. The progressives argue that these liberties may be taken because the Constitution is, after all, only the first step in an evolutionary process. And they seem to be having their way. It is difficult to find a Latin mass anywhere today, and in the United States they are practically non-existent. Even the conventual mass in monasteries is said in the vernacular, and the glorious Gregorian is replaced by insignificant melodies.

MY CONCERN is not with the legal status of the changes. And I emphatically do not wish to be understood

as regretting that the Constitution has permitted the vernacular to complement the Latin. What I deplore is that the new mass is replacing the Latin Mass, that the old liturgy is being recklessly scrapped, and denied to most of the People of God.

I should like to put to those who are fostering this development several questions: Does the new mass, more than the old, bestir the human spirit – does it evoke a sense of eternity? Does it help raise our hearts from the concerns of everyday life – from the purely natural aspects of the world-to Christ? Does it increase reverence, an appreciation of the sacred?

Of course these questions are rhetorical, and self-answering. I raise them because I think that all thoughtful Christians will want to weigh their importance before coming to a conclusion about the merits of the new liturgy. What is the role of reverence in a truly Christian life, and above all in a truly Christian worship of God?

Reverence gives being the opportunity to speak to us: The ultimate grandeur of man is to be *capax Dei*. Reverence is of capital importance to all the fundamental domains of man's life. It can be rightly called "the mother of all virtues," for it is the basic attitude that all virtues presuppose. The most elementary gesture of reverence is a response to being itself. It distinguishes the autonomous majesty of being from mere illusion or fiction; it is a recognition of the inner consistency and positiveness of being – of its independence of our arbitrary moods. Reverence gives being the opportunity to unfold itself, to, as it were, speak to us; to fecundate our minds. Therefore reverence is indispensable to any adequate knowledge

of being. The depth and plenitude of being, and above all its mysteries, will never be revealed to any but the reverent mind. Remember that reverence is a constitutive element of the capacity to “wonder,” which Plato and Aristotle claimed to be the indispensable condition for philosophy. Indeed, irreverence is a chief source of philosophical error. But if reverence is the necessary basis for all reliable knowledge of being, it is, beyond that, indispensable for grasping and assessing the values grounded in being. Only the reverent man who is ready to admit the existence of something greater than himself, who is willing to be silent and let the object speak to him – who opens himself – is capable of entering the sublime world of values. Moreover, once a gradation of values has been recognized, a new kind of reverence is in order – a reverence that responds not only to the majesty of being as such, but to the specific value of a specific being and to its rank in the hierarchy of values. And this new reverence permits the discovery of still other values.

Man reflects his essentially receptive character as a created person solely in the reverent attitude; the ultimate grandeur of man is to be *capax Dei*. Man has the capacity, in other words, to grasp something greater than himself, to be affected and fecundated by it, to abandon himself to it for its own sake – in a pure response to its value. This ability to transcend himself distinguishes man from a plant or an animal; these latter strive only to unfold their own entelechy. Now: it is only the reverent man who can consciously transcend himself and thus conform to his fundamental human condition and to his metaphysical situation.



Do we better meet Christ by soaring up to Him, or by dragging Him down into our workaday world?

The irreverent man by contrast, approaches being either in an attitude of arrogant superiority or of tactless, smug familiarity. In either case he is crippled; he is the man who comes so near a tree or building he can no longer see it. Instead of remaining at the proper spiritual distance, and maintaining a reverent silence so that being may speak its word, he obtrudes himself and thereby, in effect, silences being. In no domain is reverence more important than religion. As we have seen, it profoundly affects the relation of man to God. But beyond that it pervades the entire religion, especially the worship of God. There is an intimate link between reverence and sacredness: reverence permits us to experience the sacred, to rise above the profane; irreverence blinds us to the entire world of the sacred. Reverence, including awe – indeed, fear and trembling – is the specific response to the sacred.

Rudolf Otto has clearly elaborated the point in his famous study, *The Idea of the Holy*. Kierkegaard also calls attention to the essential role of reverence in the religious act, in the encounter with God. And did not the Jews tremble in deep awe when the priest brought the sacrifice into the *sancta sanctorum*? Was Isaiah not struck with godly fear when he saw Yahweh in the temple and exclaimed, “Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips... yet my eyes have seen the King?” Do not the words of St. Peter after the miraculous catch of fish, “Depart from me, O Lord, because I am a sinner,” testify that when the reality of God breaks in upon us we are struck with fear and reverence? Cardinal Newman has shown in a stun-

ning sermon that the man who does not fear and revere has not known the reality of God.

When St. Bonaventure writes in *Itinerium Mentis ad Deum* that only a man of desire (such as Daniel) can understand God, he means that a certain attitude of soul must be achieved in order to understand the world of God, into which He wants to lead us.

This counsel is especially applicable to the Church's liturgy. The *sursum corda* – the lifting up of our hearts – is the first requirement for real participation in the mass. Nothing could better obstruct the confrontation of man with God than the notion that we “go unto the altar of God” as we would go to a pleasant, relaxing social gathering. This is why the Latin mass with Gregorian chant, which raises us up to a sacred atmosphere, is vastly superior to a vernacular mass with popular songs, which leaves us in a profane, merely natural atmosphere.

The basic error of most of the innovations is to imagine that the new liturgy brings the holy sacrifice of the mass nearer to the faithful, that shorn of its old rituals the mass now enters into the substance of our lives. For the question is whether we better meet Christ in the mass by soaring up to Him, or by dragging Him down into our own pedestrian, workaday world. The innovators would replace holy intimacy with Christ by an unbecoming familiarity. The new liturgy actually threatens to frustrate the confrontation with Christ, for it discourages reverence in the face of mystery, precludes awe, and all but extinguishes a sense of sacredness. What really matters, surely, is not whether the faithful feel at home at mass, but whether they are drawn out of their ordinary lives

into the world of Christ-whether their attitude is the response of ultimate reverence: whether they are imbued with the reality of Christ.

Those who rhapsodize on the new liturgy make much of the point that over the years the mass had lost its communal character and had become an occasion for individualistic worship. The new vernacular mass, they insist, restores the sense of community by replacing private devotions with community participation. Yet they forget that there are different levels and kinds of communion with other persons. The level and nature of a community experience is determined by the theme of the communion, the name or cause in which men are gathered. The higher the good which the theme represents, and which binds men together, the more sublime and deeper is the communion.

The ethos and nature of a community experience in the case of a great national emergency is obviously radically different from the community experience of a cocktail party. And of course the most striking differences in communities will be found between the community whose theme is supernatural and the one whose theme is merely natural. The actualization of men's souls who are truly touched by Christ is the basis of a unique community, a sacred communion, one whose quality is incomparably more sublime than that of any natural community.

The authentic we communion of the faithful, which the liturgy of Holy Thursday expresses so well in the words *congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*, is only possible as a fruit of the I-Thou communion with Christ Himself. Only a direct relation to the God-Man can actualize this sacred union among the faithful.

The depersonalizing “we experience” is a perverse theory of community.

The communion in Christ has nothing of the self-assertion found in natural communities. It breathes of the Redemption. It liberates men from all self-centeredness. Yet such a communion emphatically does not depersonalize the individual; far from dissolving the person into the cosmic, pantheistic swoon so often commended to us these days, it actualizes the person’s true self in a unique way. In the community of Christ the conflict between person and community that is present in all natural communities cannot exist. So this sacred community experience is really at war with the depersonalizing “we-experience” found in mass assemblies and popular gatherings which tend to absorb and evaporate the individual.

This communion in Christ that was so fully alive in the early Christian centuries, that all the saints entered into, that found a matchless expression in the liturgy now under attack – this communion has never regarded the individual person as a mere segment of the community, or as an instrument to serve it. In this connection it is worth noting that totalitarian ideology is not alone in sacrificing the individual to the collective; some of Teilhard de Chardin’s cosmic ideas, for instance, imply the same collectivistic sacrifice. Teilhard subordinates the individual and his sanctification to the supposed development of humanity.

At a time when this perverse theory of community is embraced even by many Catholics, there are plainly urgent reasons for vigorously insisting on the sacred character of the true communion in Christ. I submit that the new liturgy must be judged by this test: Does it contribute to the

authentic sacred community? Granted that it strives for a community character; but is this the character desired? Is it a communion grounded in recollection, contemplation and reverence? Which of the two – the new mass, or the Latin mass with the Gregorian chant evokes these attitudes of soul more effectively, and thus permits the deeper and truer communion? Is it not plain that frequently the community character of the new mass is purely profane, that, as with other social gatherings, its blend of casual relaxation and bustling activity precludes a reverent, contemplative confrontation with Christ and with the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist?

OF COURSE OUR EPOCH is pervaded by a spirit of irreverence. It is seen in a distorted notion of freedom that demands rights while refusing obligations, that exalts self-indulgence, that counsels “let yourself go.” The *habitare secuni* of St. Gregory’s Dialogues – the dwelling in the presence of God – which presupposes reverence, is considered today to be unnatural, pompous, or servile. But is not the new liturgy a compromise with this modern spirit? Whence comes the disparagement of kneeling? Why should the Eucharist be received standing? Is not kneeling, in our culture, the classic expression of adoring reverence? The argument that at a meal we should stand rather than kneel is hardly convincing. For one thing, this is not the natural posture for eating: we sit, and in Christ’s time one lay down. But more important, it is a specifically irreverent conception of the Eucharist to stress its character as a meal at the cost of its unique character as a holy mystery. Stressing the meal at the expense of the sacrament surely betrays a tendency to obscure the sacredness of the sacrifice. This tendency

is apparently traceable to the unfortunate belief that religious life will become more vivid, more existential, if it is immersed in our everyday life. But this is to run the danger of absorbing the religious in the mundane, of effacing the difference between the supernatural and the natural. I fear that it represents an unconscious intrusion of the naturalistic spirit, of the spirit more fully expressed in Teilhard de Chardin's immanentism.

Again, why has the genuflection at the words *et incarnatus est* in the Credo been abolished? Was this not a noble and beautiful expression of adoring reverence while professing the searing mystery of the Incarnation? Whatever the intention of the innovators, they have certainly created the danger, if only psychological, of diminishing the faithful's awareness and awe of the mystery. There is yet another reason for hesitating to make changes in the liturgy that are not strictly necessary. Frivolous or arbitrary changes are apt to erode a special type of reverence: *pietas*.

The Latin word, like the German *Pietaet*, has no English equivalent, but may be understood as comprising respect for tradition; honoring what has been handed down to us by former generations; fidelity to our ancestors and their works. Note that *pietas* is a derivative type of reverence, and so should not be confused with primary reverence, which we have described as a response to the very mystery of being, and ultimately a response to God. It follows that if the content of a given tradition does not correspond to the object of the primary reverence, it does not deserve the derivative reverence.

Thus if a tradition embodies evil elements, such as the sacrifice of human beings in the cult of the Aztecs, then

those elements should not be regarded with pietas. But that is not the Christian case. Those who idolize our epoch, who thrill at what is modern simply because it is modern, who believe that in our day man has finally "come of age," lack pietas. The pride of these "temporal nationalists" is not only irreverent, it is incompatible with real faith. A Catholic should regard his liturgy with pietas. He should revere, and therefore fear to abandon the prayers and postures and music that have been approved by so many saints throughout the Christian era and delivered to us as a precious heritage. To go no further: the illusion that we can replace the Gregorian chant, with its inspired hymns and rhythms, by equally fine, if not better, music betrays a ridiculous self-assurance and lack of self-knowledge. Let us not forget that throughout Christianity's history, silence and solitude, contemplation and recollection, have been considered necessary to achieve a real confrontation with God. This is not only the counsel of the Christian tradition, which should be respected out of pietas; it is rooted in human nature. Recollection is the necessary basis for true communion in much the same way as contemplation provides the necessary basis for true action in the vineyard of the Lord. A superficial type of communion – the jovial comradeship of a social affair – draws us out onto the periphery. A truly Christian communion draws us into the spiritual deeps.

#### THE PATH TO A TRUE COMMUNION: Reverence... Recollection... Contemplation

Of course we should deplore excessively individualistic and sentimental devotionism, and acknowledge that many Catholics have practiced it. But the antidote is not a

community experience as such-any more than the cure for pseudo-contemplation is activity as such. The antidote is to encourage true reverence, an attitude of authentic recollection and contemplative devotion to Christ. Out of this attitude alone can a true communion in Christ take place. The fundamental laws of the religious life that govern the imitation of Christ, the transformation in Christ, do not change according to the moods and habits of the historical moment. The difference between a superficial community experience and a profound community experience is always the same. Recollection and contemplative adoration of Christ – which only reverence makes possible – will be the necessary basis for a true communion with others in Christ in every era of human history.



# **Your Movement Has Full Legitimacy**

---

**H.E. CARDINAL ALFONS STICKLER**

**20 June 1992**

I have accepted, with great pleasure, the invitation of your chairman and secretary to come to your meeting. Now after reaching my 80's, I am free from my ordinary work in the Curia so I can more easily accept such invitations and I do it with great pleasure when I can be helpful to so many faithful who today have many difficulties.

I will communicate to you some ideas which I have found in many countries. I have been to Italy, France, Austria and Switzerland. I was also in the United States last February for the opening of the Dietrich von Hildebrand institute, with a Pontifical High Mass in St. Agnes church. I was told that the church had never been so full since Fulton Sheen preached his lenten sermons there. People were coming from everywhere. So I realized that also in the United States, the movement and the consideration for the old Mass are very effective.

The first idea I will communicate with you is that you can be sure that your movement has full legitimacy in the Church. Some have said that we are not legitimate. That is not true, because, if you remember Article 4 of the Liturgical Constitution, the Council Fathers explicitly said all the venerable rites have to be preserved. Some people say this is valid for all the other rites, with the exception of the Roman Latin rite. This is not so. Because Article 4 says: all the rites legitimately recognized. This was not only established for the rites existing at that time, during the Council, but also for the rites that should be approved after.

Now the pre-conciliar Latin rite was really recognized after it had been changed, because as you know, exception was given immediately for old priests, and in England you had Cardinal Heenan who obtained the Indult for Wales in 1971. Then we had the *motu proprio*, the Indult of the Pope and then we had later on *Ecclesia Dei*, which was clearly confirmed by the Pope. For example, when he spoke to the Abbot of Le Barroux in 1990, who had asked explicitly for this rite. Consequently a new authority was given to the old rite on the basis of the liturgical constitution of the Council itself.

This recognition is coming from the Holy See, from the Pope, under the conditions given at the moment of the new approbation which institutes a real legitimation of the Old Rite (and is available now). So if you fulfill the conditions for this continuation of the Old Rite, it is legitimate for you. This is the external legitimacy of your movement.

Now we have another legitimacy which comes from the internal sensibility for this rite. You know that worship in every religion is closely attached to tradition. No worship is easily changed in any religion. All are attached closely to tradition. This is true in a special manner also for our rite, our Roman Latin rite. Its changing after the Council was said to be a question of natural development, but for every rite, thinking should be only organic, adopted slowly in order not to give the impression of changing, of cutting the tradition. Unfortunately, many people had this impression after the so-called "reform" established by the Commission which was instituted by Pope Paul VI after the Council.

Many things were changed which really cut the hearts of many of the faithful – I would say sometimes the best of the faithful. This is also a reason for your sensibility. You have a spiritual need to continue the Tradition in the external forms of the rite we professed before. This is the proof of the old saying "*lex orandi = lex credendi*." [the way we pray determines our belief].

Unfortunately, too many things have confused the common faithful in our church; that is one of the reasons that they no longer have the security of an unchanging Rite. "*Lex orandi lex credendi*." If the Law of worshipping is changed so profoundly, our faith has lost the help we had in our worship.

Now the next idea I want to express is that we always have to avoid, in our life and in our discussions, in our general behavior and in our association, every kind of polemics. There is always a danger of hurting others; if there are polemics, they will say: ah, You are a sect with

no more reasoning. So we have to profess our attachment to the Old Rite calmly, reasoning with them but without polemics.

We have to explain also to ourselves the reasons for following the old Latin Rite, and we have many reasons for it. The first I mentioned already; it is the absolute tradition of liturgy in every religion to have no change with the past because we have to preserve that rite as the expression of our faith. You know that the Oriental Church [Eastern Rites] had saved the common truth, that is the Catholic truth, by preserving the sacraments because they were attached so strongly to the rite which they would never change. The other heretics – Protestants and so on – have changed the Faith because they have changed the Rite.

The Vatican Council says explicitly that we have a communion in the Catholic Church: the Pope with the bishops and with the priests in all parts of the world. We are particular churches but we are all in one Catholic church. If we have the same faith, even with different rites, but not in all our fundamental teaching, then we do not have the complete communion. For example, the Oriental church is a church which is not in complete communion because there is not preserved the dogma and the truth in the Primacy of the Pope. They do not have the whole truth, but they have preserved most of it. All the other churches are not called 'Churches' in the full sense but religious communities. This means that they do not have the complete substance of our faith. So the Catholic Church, in relation to the rites, which did not absolutely preserve the truths of the Catholic and Latin rites, does

not have this unity. This is very important in Order to confirm our sensibility for the old Rite which is really that of the *lex credendi* expressed by the *lex orandi*. We have to consider still another idea. Modern catholics say: now we have to cut away all the old things. We must be modern. But this modernity is not the modernity of the Church because we have to preserve the whole substance which is our heritage from the past generations. So if many of the Bishops ask us "why do you follow the old rite?"

We can answer very easily: – the New rite was introduced after the Council as a matter of pastoral care, that means that the faithful should be animated more and more by the new form of rites to be better in Catholic truth and life. But many good people in the world who still believe in the truths of the Catholic Church are not satisfied about the innovations introduced into the Mass. Can you say then that the pastoral purpose has been reached? I think, through my own experiences that there is more and more dissatisfaction becoming stronger always in all the categories of age, social positions, even in many young people. Further, we are told that the truth about the Mass, about the center of the liturgy, is not really changed. But we can ask – do we have the same sense, the same reverence we have had before and perhaps still have when we assist at the old Roman Rite? Or do we have a loss of reverence, of awe for our biggest mystery, our faith in The Holy Mass? In the sacrifice? It was admitted officially when, two years ago, on the silver jubilee of the changing of the rite, authorities in Rome admitted that there was a great loss of awe in the Mass – the most important rite of our worship.

This is the experience of all who travel around everywhere. We have lost what really is at the heart of our worshipping in the Holy Sacrifice. Many times we get the impression that it is the man being worshipped but not God. We have a community meal and not a sacrifice. I think that this was one of the most important changes in the general attitude vis-a-vis the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. When I studied theology I was told that the center of the Mass was the Consecration, the Communion is quite necessary for the priest but supposes the sacrificial act already done. Today at the center is the meal. What do we have to do when confronted with the situation as members of the association [the Latin Mass Society] you represent here? Firstly, we have to tell our bishops and our Priests that we are not satisfied with the New Rite, that we have good reasons for being attached to the Old Mass. We should explain all the reasons why it should be available for those who ask for it. We must also explain that the Holy Father has granted the privilege contained in the *motu proprio Ecclesia Dei* and wants to take care of the sentiments of those attached to the old Latin Mass. Our fidelity to the old Rite must always conform to the decisions of the Holy See, with all the conditions satisfied which the Holy See has laid down for this purpose. We should persist in our fidelity to this heritage. Which is a heritage of truth, because we can be sure that also today, the old Latin Mass is completely valid and the *lex orandi* reflects the *lex credendi*. If we are faithful *in oratione*, we can be certain to remain also attached to the truth *in credendo*, in full devotion to our heritage of faith.

## **Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 2007**

---

**POPE BENEDICT XVI**

### **THE HUMAN PERSON, THE HEART OF PEACE**

1. At the beginning of the new year, I wish to extend prayerful good wishes for peace to Governments, leaders of nations and all men and women of good will. In a special way, I invoke peace upon all those experiencing pain and suffering, those living under the threat of violence and armed aggression, and those who await their human and social emancipation, having had their dignity trampled upon. I invoke peace upon children, who by their innocence enrich humanity with goodness and hope, and by their sufferings compel us all to work for justice and peace. Out of concern for children, especially those whose future is compromised by exploitation and the malice of unscrupulous adults, I wish on this World Day of Peace to encourage everyone to reflect on the theme: *The Human Person, the Heart of Peace*. I am convinced that respect for the person promotes peace and that, in building peace, the foundations are laid for an

authentic integral humanism. In this way a serene future is prepared for coming generations.

### *The human person and peace: gift and task*

2. Sacred Scripture affirms that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (*Gen 1:27*). *As one created in the image of God, each individual human being has the dignity of a person*; he or she is not just something, but someone, capable of self-knowledge, self-possession, free self-giving and entering into communion with others. At the same time, each person is called, by grace, to a covenant with the Creator, called to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his place.<sup>1</sup> From this supernatural perspective, one can understand the task entrusted to human beings to mature in the ability to love and to contribute to the progress of the world, renewing it in justice and in peace. In a striking synthesis, St. Augustine teaches that “God created us without our aid; but he did not choose to save us without our aid.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently all human beings have the duty to cultivate *an awareness of this twofold aspect of gift and task*.

3. Likewise, *peace is both gift and task*. If it is true that peace between individuals and peoples – the ability to live together and to build relationships of justice and solidarity – calls for unfailing commitment on our part, it is also true, and indeed more so, that *peace is a gift from*

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 357.

<sup>2</sup> *Sermo* 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 923.



*God.* Peace is an aspect of God's activity, made manifest both in the creation of an orderly and harmonious universe and also in the redemption of humanity that needs to be rescued from the disorder of sin. Creation and Redemption thus provide a key that helps us begin to understand the meaning of our life on earth. My venerable predecessor Pope John Paul II, addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations on 5 October 1995, stated that "we do not live in an irrational or meaningless world... there is a moral logic which is built into human life and which makes possible dialogue between individuals and peoples."<sup>3</sup> The transcendent "grammar", that is to say the body of rules for individual action and the reciprocal relationships of persons in accordance with justice and solidarity, is inscribed on human consciences, in which the wise plan of God is reflected. As I recently had occasion to reaffirm: "we believe that at the beginning of everything is the Eternal Word, Reason and not Unreason."<sup>4</sup> Peace is thus also a task demanding of everyone a personal response consistent with God's plan. The criterion inspiring this response can only be *respect for the "grammar" written on human hearts by the divine Creator.*

From this standpoint, the norms of the natural law should not be viewed as externally imposed decrees, as restraints upon human freedom. Rather, they should be welcomed as a call to carry out faithfully the universal divine plan inscribed in the nature of human beings. Guided by these norms, all peoples – within their respective cultures

---

<sup>3</sup> No. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Homily* at Islinger Feld, Regensburg, 12 September 2006.

– can draw near to the greatest mystery, which is the mystery of God. Today too, recognition and respect for natural law represents the foundation for a dialogue between the followers of the different religions and between believers and non-believers. As a great *point of convergence*, this is also a fundamental presupposition for authentic peace.

### ***The right to life and to religious freedom***

4. The duty to respect the dignity of each human being, in whose nature the image of the Creator is reflected, means in consequence that *the person can not be disposed of at will*. Those with greater political, technical, or economic power may not use that power to violate the rights of others who are less fortunate. Peace is based on respect for the rights of all. Conscious of this, the Church champions the fundamental rights of each person. In particular she promotes and defends respect for the *life* and the *religious freedom* of everyone. Respect for the right to life at every stage firmly establishes a principle of decisive importance: *life is a gift which is not completely at the disposal of the subject*. Similarly, the affirmation of the right to religious freedom places the human being *in a relationship with a transcendent principle which withdraws him from human caprice*. The right to life and to the free expression of personal faith in God is not subject to the power of man. Peace requires the establishment of *a clear boundary between what is at man's disposal and what is not*: in this way unacceptable intrusions into the patrimony of specifically human values will be avoided.

5. As far as *the right to life* is concerned, we must denounce its widespread violation in our society: alongside

the victims of armed conflicts, terrorism and the different forms of violence, there are the silent deaths caused by hunger, abortion, experimentation on human embryos and euthanasia. How can we fail to see in all this an attack on peace? Abortion and embryonic experimentation constitute a direct denial of that attitude of acceptance of others which is indispensable for establishing lasting relationships of peace. As far as *the free expression of personal faith* is concerned, another disturbing symptom of lack of peace in the world is represented by the difficulties that both Christians and the followers of other religions frequently encounter in publicly and freely professing their religious convictions. Speaking of Christians in particular, I must point out with pain that not only are they at times prevented from doing so; in some States they are actually persecuted, and even recently tragic cases of ferocious violence have been recorded. There are regimes that impose a single religion upon everyone, while secular regimes often lead not so much to violent persecution as to systematic cultural denigration of religious beliefs. In both instances, a fundamental human right is not being respected, with serious repercussions for peaceful coexistence. This can only promote *a mentality and culture that is not conducive to peace.*

### ***The natural equality of all persons***

6. At the origin of many tensions that threaten peace are surely *the many unjust inequalities* still tragically present in our world. Particularly insidious among these are, on the one hand, *inequality in access to essential goods* like food, water, shelter, health; on the other hand, there are *persistent inequalities between men and women in the exercise of basic human rights.*

A fundamental element of building peace is the recognition of the *essential equality of human persons* springing from their common transcendental dignity. Equality on this level is a good belonging to all, inscribed in that natural “grammar” which is deducible from the divine plan of creation; it is a good that cannot be ignored or scorned without causing serious repercussions which put peace at risk. The extremely grave deprivation afflicting many peoples, especially in Africa, lies at the root of violent reactions and thus inflicts a terrible wound on peace.

7. Similarly, inadequate consideration for the *condition of women* helps to create instability in the fabric of society. I think of the exploitation of women who are treated as objects, and of the many ways that a lack of respect is shown for their dignity; I also think – in a different context – of the mindset persisting in some cultures, where women are still firmly subordinated to the arbitrary decisions of men, with grave consequences for their personal dignity and for the exercise of their fundamental freedoms. There can be no illusion of a secure peace until these forms of discrimination are also overcome, since they injure the personal dignity impressed by the Creator upon every human being.<sup>5</sup>

### *The “ecology of peace”*

8. In his Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II wrote: “Not only has God given the earth to

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world* (31 May 2004), 15-16.

man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God's gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed."<sup>6</sup> By responding to this charge, entrusted to them by the Creator, men and women can join in bringing about a world of peace. Alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a "human" ecology, which in turn demands a "social" ecology. All this means that humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that *disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence*, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God. The poem-prayer of Saint Francis, known as "the Canticle of Brother Sun", is a wonderful and ever timely example of this multifaceted ecology of peace.

9. The close connection between these two ecologies can be understood from the increasingly serious problem of *energy supplies*. In recent years, new nations have entered enthusiastically into industrial production, thereby increasing their energy needs. This has led to an unprecedented race for available resources. Meanwhile, some parts of the planet remain backward and development is effectively blocked, partly because of the rise in energy prices. What will happen to those peoples? What kind of development or non-development will be imposed on

---

<sup>6</sup> No. 38.

them by the scarcity of energy supplies? What injustices and conflicts will be provoked by the race for energy sources? And what will be the reaction of those who are excluded from this race? These are questions that show how respect for nature is closely linked to the need to establish, between individuals and between nations, relationships that are attentive to the dignity of the person and capable of satisfying his or her authentic needs. The destruction of the environment, its improper or selfish use, and the violent hoarding of the earth's resources cause grievances, conflicts and wars, precisely because they are the consequences of an inhumane concept of development. Indeed, if development were limited to the technical-economic aspect, obscuring the moral-religious dimension, it would not be an integral human development, but a one-sided distortion which would end up by unleashing man's destructive capacities.

### ***Reductive visions of man***

10. Thus there is an urgent need, even within the framework of current international difficulties and tensions, for a commitment to *a human ecology that can favour the growth of the "tree of peace"*. For this to happen, we must be guided by a vision of the person untainted by ideological and cultural prejudices or by political and economic interests which can instil hatred and violence. It is understandable that visions of man will vary from culture to culture. Yet what cannot be admitted is the cultivation of *anthropological conceptions* that contain the seeds of hostility and violence. Equally unacceptable are *conceptions of God* that would encourage intolerance and recourse to

violence against others. This is a point which must be clearly reaffirmed: war *in God's name* is never acceptable! When a certain notion of God is at the origin of criminal acts, it is a sign that that notion has already become an ideology.

11. Today, however, peace is not only threatened by the conflict between reductive visions of man, in other words, between ideologies. It is also threatened by *indifference as to what constitutes man's true nature*. Many of our contemporaries actually deny the existence of a specific human nature and thus open the door to the most extravagant interpretations of what essentially constitutes a human being. Here too clarity is necessary: a "weak" vision of the person, which would leave room for every conception, even the most bizarre, only apparently favours peace. In reality, it hinders authentic dialogue and opens the way to authoritarian impositions, ultimately leaving the person defenceless and, as a result, easy prey to oppression and violence.

### ***Human rights and international organizations***

12. A true and stable peace presupposes respect for human rights. Yet if these rights are grounded on a weak conception of the person, how can they fail to be themselves weakened? Here we can see how profoundly insufficient is *a relativistic conception of the person* when it comes to justifying and defending his rights. The difficulty in this case is clear: rights are proposed as absolute, yet the foundation on which they are supposed to rest is merely relative. Can we wonder that, faced with the "incon-

venient” demands posed by one right or another, someone will come along to question it or determine that it should be set aside? Only if they are grounded in the objective requirements of the nature bestowed on man by the Creator, can the rights attributed to him be affirmed without fear of contradiction. It goes without saying, moreover, that human rights imply corresponding duties. In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi said wisely: “The Ganges of rights flows from the Himalaya of duties.” Clarity over these basic presuppositions is needed if human rights, nowadays constantly under attack, are to be adequately defended. Without such clarity, the expression “human rights” will end up being predicated of quite different subjects: in some cases, the human person marked by permanent dignity and rights that are valid always, everywhere and for everyone, in other cases a person with changing dignity and constantly negotiable rights, with regard to content, time and place.

13. The protection of human rights is constantly referred to by international bodies and, in particular, the United Nations Organization, which set itself the fundamental task of promoting the human rights indicated in the 1948 Universal Declaration. That Declaration is regarded as a sort of *moral commitment assumed by all mankind*. There is a profound truth to this, especially if the rights described in the Declaration are held to be based not simply on the decisions of the assembly that approved them, but on man’s very nature and his inalienable dignity as a person created by God. Consequently it is important for international agencies not to lose sight of the natural foundation of human rights. This would enable them to avoid the risk, unfortunately ever-present, of sliding towards a merely positivistic inter-



pretation of those rights. Were that to happen, the international bodies would end up lacking the necessary authority to carry out their role as defenders of the fundamental rights of the person and of peoples, the chief justification for their very existence and activity.

### ***International humanitarian law and the internal law of States***

14. The recognition that there exist inalienable human rights connected to our common human nature has led to the establishment of a body of *international humanitarian law* which States are committed to respect, even in the case of war. Unfortunately, to say nothing of past cases, this has not been consistently implemented in certain recent situations of war. Such, for example, was the case in the conflict that occurred a few months ago in southern Lebanon, where the duty "to protect and help innocent victims" and to avoid involving the civilian population was largely ignored. The heart-rending situation in Lebanon and the new shape of conflicts, especially since the terrorist threat unleashed *completely new forms of violence*, demand that the international community reaffirm international humanitarian law, and apply it to all present-day situations of armed conflict, including those not currently provided for by international law. Moreover, the scourge of terrorism demands a profound reflection on the ethical limits restricting the use of modern methods of guaranteeing internal security. Increasingly, wars are not declared, especially when they are initiated by terrorist groups determined to attain their ends by any means available. In the face of the disturbing events of recent years, States

cannot fail to recognize the need to establish clearer rules to counter effectively the dramatic decline that we are witnessing. War always represents a failure for the international community and a grave loss for humanity. When, despite every effort, war does break out, at least the essential principles of humanity and the basic values of all civil coexistence must be safeguarded; norms of conduct must be established that limit the damage as far as possible and help to alleviate the suffering of civilians and of all the victims of conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

15. Another disturbing issue is the desire recently shown by some States to *acquire nuclear weapons*. This has heightened even more the widespread climate of uncertainty and fear of a possible atomic catastrophe. We are brought back in time to the profound anxieties of the “cold war” period. When it came to an end, there was hope that the atomic peril had been definitively overcome and that mankind could finally breathe a lasting sigh of relief. How timely, in this regard, is the warning of the *Second Vatican Council* that “every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and humanity, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation.”<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, threatening clouds continue to gather on humanity’s horizon. The way to ensure a future of peace for everyone is found not only in international accords for *the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons*, but also in the determined commitment to

---

<sup>7</sup> In this regard, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* indicates strict and precise criteria: cf. 2307-2317.

<sup>8</sup> Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 80.

seek their reduction and definitive dismantling. May every attempt be made to arrive through negotiation at the attainment of these objectives! The fate of the whole human family is at stake!

***The Church as safeguard of the transcendence  
of the human person***

16. Finally, I wish to make an urgent appeal to the People of God: let every Christian be committed to tireless peace-making and strenuous defence of the dignity of the human person and his inalienable rights.

With gratitude to the Lord for having called him to belong to his Church, which is "the sign and safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person"<sup>9</sup> in the world, the Christian will tirelessly implore from God the fundamental good of peace, which is of such primary importance in the life of each person. Moreover, he will be proud to serve the cause of peace with generous devotion, offering help to his brothers and sisters, especially those who, in addition to suffering poverty and need, are also deprived of this precious good. Jesus has revealed to us that "*God is love*" (1 Jn 4:8) and that the highest vocation of every person is love. In Christ we can find the ultimate reason for becoming staunch champions of human dignity and courageous builders of peace.

17. Let every believer, then, unfailingly contribute to the advancement of *a true integral humanism* in accordance

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

with the teachings of the Encyclical Letters *Populorum Progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, whose respective fortieth and twentieth anniversaries we prepare to celebrate this year. To the Queen of Peace, the Mother of Jesus Christ “our peace” (*Eph* 2:14), I entrust my urgent prayer for all humanity at the beginning of the year 2007, to which we look with hearts full of hope, notwithstanding the dangers and difficulties that surround us. May Mary show us, in her Son, the Way of peace, and enlighten our vision, so that we can recognize Christ’s face in the face of every human person, the heart of peace!



## THE ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP OF SORSOGON

DIOCESE OF SORSOGON  
The Diocesan Chancery  
4700 Sorsogon City, Philippines

Tel. No.: (63) (056) 421-5825  
Fax: (63) (056) 211-1842

bp\_bastes@sorsogondiocese.org  
bp\_bastes@yahoo.com  
<http://sorsogondiocese.org>

### DECREE FOR PUBLIC NOTIFICATION REGARDING "SMAHE" AND FATHER ALEJANDRE "ANLY" GALIAS

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Let it be known that a group called Sons/Sisters of Mary, Adorers of the Holy Eucharist (SMAHE) is not a religious institute or congregation, not even a public association with canonical rights. Hence, it does not possess a juridical personality according to Canon Law.

SMAHE is founded by Fr. Alejandro "Anly" Galias, native of Lavezares, Northern Samar, Philippines, and a priest incardinated to the Diocese of Sorsogon, Philippines. The address of the main house of the group is "Domus Filiorum Mariae", Rangas, Juban, 4703, Sorsogon, Philippines.

The public is warned that Fr. Alejandro Galias uses a religious name "Fr. Franz Mariae Crucis", as an alias. Being not a religious superior, he is forbidden to recruit vocations (men and women) as well as to solicit funds for his group.

I will disclaim any responsibility for the actions done by Fr. Alejandro Galias.

Given this 20<sup>th</sup> day of April 2007 at the Diocesan Chancery, 4700 Sorsogon City, Philippines.

Most Reverend Arturo M. Bastes, SVD, DD  
Bishop of Sorsogon

Rev. Fr. Antonio G. Lorilla  
Chancellor

Diocesan Seal



## CANON LAW SECTION

### Cases and Inquiries

---

JAVIER GONZÁLEZ, OP

#### IS READMISSION TO THE SAME RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE POSSIBLE?

*May former members of a religious institute be re-admitted to the same institute? If so, by whom and under what conditions? Will they have to repeat the novitiate? Assuming that they will have to undergo a probation period, how many years will have to pass until they are definitively incorporated into the institute?*

*I wish to have some enlightenment on the matter. Thank you.*

\* \* \* \* \*

It is not difficult to give a generic answer to the above consultation from the canonical point of view, since the Code of Canon Law contemplates explicitly the issue of possible readmission to the same institute of former members who have legitimately left it. In fact, canon 690 reads: "A person who lawfully leaves the institute after completing the novitiate or after profession, can be re-

*admitted by the supreme Moderator, with the consent of his or her council, without the obligation of repeating the novitiate. The same Moderator is to determine an appropriate probation prior to temporary profession, and the length of time in vows before making perpetual profession, in accordance with the norms of canons 655 and 657."*

Accordingly, the following points could be highlighted:

**1. *Readmission is possible but it is not a right.***

The readmission referred to here is not a general re-admission to religious life, but to the same institute which one has left. Such readmission is facultative on the part of the competent authority. Hence those former members of a religious institute (Order or Congregation) who one day left it, even if they did it with the "hope" of eventually returning to it in the future, do not keep the faculty – and still less the right – to demand for readmission. The norm simply refers to the fact that they, or at least certain number of them, "maintain the capacity, in spite of their departure, to be readmitted again in the same institute, following the prescribed procedures."

**2. *Who may or could be readmitted?***

Not all former members may be readmitted, but only those who had left the institute *legitime* (trans. "lawfully" or "legitimately"), whether after completing the novitiate or after profession. Clearly, they should have already finished their novitiate since this is the reason why they are dispensed from going through it when readmitted. Not so clear, however, is the interpretation of the expressions "those who *legitime* left the institute" (does it include



also those members who were dismissed?), and “after profession” (does it refer only to the *temporary* profession or also to the *perpetual*?). On these issues there are some disparities among the commentators of the quoted canon. My opinion is that since the expression “after profession” is not qualified by either temporary or perpetual, the presumption is that the canon applies to *any* religious profession and therefore refers not only to old members who were *temporarily* professed and *left legitimately* the institute (cc. 688 and 689), but also to those *perpetually* professed who likewise *left legitimately* the institute (such seems to be confirmed by the history of the redaction of the canon [*Comm.* 13 (1981) 336]). This, however, does not apply to members who were *dismissed* (cc. 694ff).

Summing up, the following subjects have in principle the capacity to be readmitted:

- a) Those who, having finished their novitiate, whether they were accepted or not for profession, the fact is that they never professed (cf. c. 653 §2);
- b) Those who, having completed the period for temporal profession, freely left (c. 688 §1);
- c) Those who left with an indult during the period of temporary profession (c. 688 §2);
- d) Those who, having completed the temporary profession, were excluded for just reasons from the next profession, whether temporary or perpetual (c. 689); and
- e) Those who left with an indult after being perpetually professed religious (c. 691).

On the contrary, those who cannot benefit from *this* readmission, since they are not included in the initial clause of this norm (c. 690), are the following:

- a) Those who, during the novitiate, freely left or were dismissed (c. 653 §1), because they did not complete the novitiate;
- b) Those who strictly speaking *did not leave* the institute, but were forced to do so, whether through automatic dismissal (c. 694 §1), or through compulsory dismissal (c. 695), or facultative dismissal (c. 696), or through immediate and urgent dismissal from the religious house (c. 703). [I respectfully dissent from those authors who consider those dismissed in any of the four ways as having left the institute “lawfully” or “legitimately” and therefore keeping the capacity to be readmitted.]

### 3. *Who is the competent authority that may grant readmission?*

The faculty to readmit is granted by the law to the *Supreme Moderators* of all religious institutes (also to the local major superiors of autonomous monasteries) with the consent of their respective councils. (The competent superiors would invalidly readmit someone if acting without or against their councils; however, since it is a personal faculty, they could prevent the readmission of someone, in spite of having obtained the consent from their councils.) They may act either upon the formal request for readmission presented by the ex-novice or ex-professed member, or upon their own initiative, inviting them to formally apply for readmission.

Obviously, the actual readmission of those who had legitimately departed will depend on a number of factors, such as type of departure, present condition of the person involved, and the judgment of the competent authority of the institute.

This prerogative given by the law to the Supreme Moderators is seen as a sign of the autonomy granted to all religious institutes; also as an appropriate pastoral remedy for those departures from religious life considered as "lawful" or "legitimate." The norm finds its justification in the fact of being unique, actually an exception from the common readmissions for which an apostolic indult is required, and from the ordinary readmissions regulated by cc. 641-645.

#### **4. *Under what conditions are they readmitted?***

The actual readmission is a facultative task of the institute, as it has been already said, and depends on a number of factors. In principle, nobody enjoys the *right* to be readmitted. Superiors cannot either promise what the law does not allow them. Henceforth, if someone in the end is not readmitted, he or she cannot claim the right to appeal or to file administrative recourse before a higher authority. He or she just enjoys the rights of any Christ's faithful in the Church.

Those who are readmitted are exempted from repeating the novitiate, and they will have to undergo a "probation" period whose length will have to be determined by the competent superior, considering, among other things, the length of time required before making perpetual profession.

Such is the provision of canon 690, which Superiors are bound to abide with. In fact, they would act wrongly, that is, against the law if:

- a) They impose the repetition of the novitiate;
- b) They dispense the returnee from the appropriate probation period or substitute it by the repetition of novitiate;
- c) They cut short the length of time in temporary vows before the candidate makes the perpetual profession required by the Code of Canon Law and the Constitutions.

**5. *How long will be the probation period before temporary and perpetual profession?***

The canonical provision says: *“The same Moderator is to determine an appropriate probation prior to temporary profession, and the length of time in vows before making perpetual profession, in accordance with the norms of canons 655 and 657.”*

The prerogative of determining both the “appropriate probation” and the length of time in vows before those being readmitted make perpetual profession is a faculty granted – personally and without the intervention of their councils – to the above-mentioned Superiors. On the other hand, it is an obligation from which they cannot dispense.

Regarding the length of this probation period, each case should be considered separately, taking into account the circumstances, manner and reasons that caused his/her departure as well as the present situation.

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

The *second phase* that comprises already the re-filling of the period of temporary vows, previous necessarily to the perpetual profession, determined by the Code of Canon Law (c. 655) and by the proper law (c. 657). Its duration depends simultaneously on the law and on the superior, who may count the time in temporary vows that, perhaps, the readmitted person had before his/her departure, or may simply ignore it, depending of the circumstances. *As a rule, this period is not to be less than three years nor more than six years* (cf c. 655), although it may be extended to *nine years* (cf c. 657 §2). At the end of this phase, the candidate is admitted to perpetual profession in accordance with their own Constitutions.

The reason for this probation period is that those who have left Religious Life most probably have lost some of the spirit imbued in them by their religious institutes during their time outside. Also because the mere fact of having left the institute implies certain instability, unpredictable challenges, normally unknown to the superiors... that make advisable a probation period before the candidate is definitively readmitted.

## INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS OF THE ASSOCIATIONS OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL

I would like to ask your guidance regarding the involvement of the associations of Christ's faithful (Can. 298-329) in politics.

The Church should not be involved in partisan politics or should not be directly involved in politics; but she has the right and duty to preach morality in politics or, as "*Gaudium et Spes* 76" states, "she also has the right to pass moral judgments, even on matters touching the political order whenever basic personal rights or the salvation of souls should make such judgments necessary." This rule applies also to the clergy.

According to Fr. James A. Coriden in his book, "An Introduction to Canon Law," pp. 59-60, there are four categories of associations:

- A. *Non-canonical*: An association which has no recognition, no juridical standing or canonical personality, needs no review of its statutes, and has no obligation to report to or be subject to visitation by church authorities.
- B. *Private*: Initiated and directed by the faithful, recognized after a review of its statutes, but without juridical personality (i.e., the association itself is not a subject of canonical rights and obligations; however, its members may jointly contract for rights and obligations, and own property), it is subject to the vigilance and visitation of ecclesiastical authority (cc. 299, 310, 322, 323). All canonical

associations must have statutes which spell out their purpose, headquarters, conditions for membership, and policy-making bodies (c. 304). All private associations, in addition to being recognized, can also be praised or recommended by church authority; this does not change their juridical status (cc. 298, 299).

- C. *Private and possessing juridic personality* (cc. 113-123) which is given by church authority; a recognized association, the subject of canonical rights and obligations, and subject to vigilance and visitation by church authority (c. 305).
- D. *Public*: Established by ecclesiastical authority, and given juridical personality and a canonical mission at the same time; the association must have its statutes approved, and function under the direction of church authority (cc. 312-315, which authority names or confirms the moderator of the association and can remove that person and appoint a caretaker (cc. 317-318); the association must render an annual accounting of its properties and funds (c. 319), and it can be suppressed by church authority (c. 320).

Am I right in saying that the rule, mentioned above, which applies to the Church and to the clergy regarding involvement in politics, also applies to the associations of the faithful which belong to the categories B, C, D? And that this rule does not apply to category A?

*If am wrong, kindly tell me how far each of these different categories may be involved in politics.*

*I shall greatly appreciate your accommodation to my request for guidance.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Without pretension of having a definitive answer to the above consultation, I shall answer to our consultant by expressing my opinion on the matter.

## **1. Prohibition affecting all mandated associations**

I believe our consultant is *right in his canonical appreciation of the issue*, although I also believe that the church prohibition of involvement in partisan politics by the associations of the faithful should be somehow qualified and understood not univocally but rather analogically, that is, applying the same principle (in this case, the prohibition) to each kind of association within certain parameters of proper proportionality or degree.

Thus, while the prohibition of being involved in *partisan* politics may affect *all mandated* associations of the faithful, whether private or public, clerical or lay, the gravity of such prohibition however falls in its biggest degree on the *public* associations, since they act in the name of the Church (cf. cc. 116, 313) [an essential characteristic that our consultant (Coriden) failed to mention under letter D]. This cannot be said of the *private* associations (C), particularly of those which have not been established as juridical persons (B), and therefore there is a big difference here among them, a difference to be taken into consideration by the ecclesiastical authority. But, even if it is in a lesser degree, *private* associations as a whole are not exempted from the general obligation the "Church" has of being not



involved in partisan politics. As to the exact measure of involvement in particular cases, it is something that I believe the competent ecclesiastical authority will have to discern, since “All associations of the Christian faithful are subject to the vigilance of competent ecclesiastical authority which is to take care that the integrity of faith and morals is preserved in them and is to watch so that abuse does not creep into ecclesiastical discipline. [...] These associations are also subject to the governance of this same authority...” (Can. 305).

Summing up, this is what I say regarding the above consultation:

First, that in my appreciation our consultant is right in saying that the rule regarding the prohibition of the Church’s direct involvement in politics and especially in partisan politics which applies to Bishops and clergy also applies to the associations of the faithful which belong to the categories B, C, and D. And not to A (non-Canonical associations).

Second, that such application to the associations of the faithful is not univocal but rather *analogical*, that is, it has to be gradually qualified and understood within certain parameters of proper proportionality.

## **2. Addendum on “Church and Politics”**

The issue of “Church and Politics” is not on whether the members of the Church should participate or not in politics (it is an obligation!), but rather on the *how* of that participation.

In this regard the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines drew up a clear delineation of roles in the Church's participation in politics:

1) Bishops, priests and religious, commonly identified as "the Church", must refrain from partisan politics, avoiding especially the use of the pulpit for partisan purposes, to avoid division among the flock they shepherd (PCP-II, a. 28, no. 2).

2) Lay men and women in responsible positions in our society must help the civic conscience of the voting population and work to explicitly promote the election to public offices of leaders of true integrity (PCP-II, a. 28, no. 1).

In other words, while the lay faithful – as individuals, not as members of associations – are urged to engage in political activity, and can, with full freedom, participate in partisan politics, pastors can teach moral principles and issue moral guidelines regarding political activity but cannot engage in partisan politics.

The same prohibition applies to *all* associations of Christ's faithful in the Church, whether public or private, clerical or lay, especially the "public" ones since they act in the name of the Church. This is the general rule. It is not, however, an absolute rule, since "*When the judgment of competent authority, moral and gospel values are at stake, the prohibition against clergy [and associations'] involvement in partisan politics may yield to the necessity of upholding the rights of the Church, the common good and the cause of human dignity and peace.*"

# **August – September 2007**

## **Sunday Homilies**

---

**FR. ENRICO GONZALES, O.P.**

<p><b>18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 12:13-21</b> <b>August 5, 2007</b></p>
--

### **THE PROFESSIONAL TRAVELER**

Jesus serves us a warning telling us the parable of a rich man obsessed with his possessions. It was originally a practical reply to a petitioner who wanted him to solve some inheritance problem between brothers. In answer, Jesus went beyond the issue and tackled its cause which actually corrupts the moral fiber not only of an individual but of society at large: greed. Greed, especially today, is no longer just an abnormality of one individual. It has become a social cancer. Cancer is a disease which begins imperceptibly and ends shocking its host because all of a sudden it shows its ugly head when it has already invaded the whole organism. So, with greed. It starts with little things and grows into a monstrous proportion, call it, systematic and globalized.

In the past, greed could easily be detected. Life was simple then and so, any violation against this simplicity was simple likewise. It was a violation constituted by having more than what one needs. One needs to lead a decent life as an individual and member of human society. For this reason, he has to enjoy the right to property. He must have enough possessions so that he may be able to support himself and his family, and give some modest contribution to the uplift of society. The right to property ensures him sufficiency of possessions but not necessarily the ownership of superfluities or wealth. Indeed, there is no such thing as the right to wealth but simply the responsibility of stewardship which obliges him to share with the society the abundant fruits of his gift: management. In the measure that this gift is precisely gift because it is free, that is the measure he must likewise share this gift with the society. This is stewardship in action. When one appropriates for himself exclusively this gift and its fruits, then, you have a bizarre display of greed. A social cancer indeed!

Jesus was never tired of reminding us that our life in this world is just a journey. So, while living, we must learn how to be a professional traveler. A professional voyager travels light. He only brings a carry-on luggage which contains the basic necessities. Customs are as a rule strict anywhere. They exact a detailed accounting of our baggage. Expect that it will be no less strict in our last port of call. In heaven only passengers are admitted. Strictly no baggage. Naked we enter into this world, naked we will enter into the other world.

Avoid the cancer we call greed. Be a professional traveler.

**19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 12:35-40**  
**August 12, 2007**

**OPEN TO SERVE YOU!**

There is quite a peculiar twist in the story of Jesus this Sunday. He advised servants to be ever ready for the coming of their Master. One will expect the reason why: Servants are meant to wait on their Master anytime. The Master arrived. Did the predictable happen? No. Here enters the amazing twist in the story. When the Master arrived and found his servants ready, the Master served the servants instead!

Service is the concrete expression of charity in history. Charity is the only key to heaven. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can open heaven except charity. This explains why Jesus came to this world not to be served but to serve. (Mk 10:45) Have you by chance encountered on the road a business establishment offering to the public its service for the first time? There is usually a streamer hanging on its door proclaiming: "Open to serve you!" Never will you expect the words telling us otherwise: "Closed to serve you!" This is utterly unthinkable. Nobody closes to serve. Openness and service are indeed indispensable twosome. In service, they can never be separated. It is not surprising then why Jesus opened heaven for us through loving service.

Jesus in today's story left us a piece of advice. Be ready to serve anytime and all the time. Preparing ourselves for the coming of his Kingdom is never a process

of passive waiting. When the Lord of the Kingdom comes, he must indeed find us waiting which when interpreted means: "We are serving". Our service – honest and true – will open heaven for us. For only those who look like God will inherit the Kingdom. For only those who resemble God can truly claim they are children of God. Only the children are heirs to their parents, aren't they? So, image God in his charity. In history such charity takes the form of service. Serve and you will go beyond history itself. Loving service will transport us to eternity.

## **BEAUTY IN TRUTH AND PEACE**

Jesus grants us eternal peace. Identified with eternity itself, this peace cannot be founded on purely political diplomacy. Earthly politics is based on expediency. It is the game of the possible because it as a rule ends up with a decision for convenience. Convenience means “Everybody happy!” Nobody leaves the negotiating table dissatisfied. How do these political brokers make this happen? Simple, forge an agreement couched in general terms which can be interpreted in any manner whatsoever provided it does not contradict anyone else’s position. In the ultimate analysis, such agreement is a dynamite ready to explode. Diplomacy – its tool – is employed only to give more time for the participants in the alleged dialog to prepare for bloody war.

Jesus offers us a sure formula for peace: truth. Political diplomacy which flatters everybody’s ego is of course a lie. For being untrue, it cannot bring lasting peace but only to a grim realization that its tool – diplomacy based on flattery – is the greatest illusionist of all. Peace founded on truth is, on the contrary, eternal because truth which brings peace is timeless. But truth to be attained demands us to struggle against so many odds. We have to fight against our selfishness, against our bias for indulgent lifestyle and arrogant behavior.

Attaining lasting peace by embracing the truth is, in the metaphor of Jesus, facing the light. Light does not tell lies. It just shows the real color of things. In the face of light, objects appear as what they really are: yellow is yellow, red is red. That is why light – the metaphor for truth – is not just a sign of hope: our deliverance from darkness. It is also a sign of division. In its brilliance, it shows what is authentically beautiful and authentically ugly. The ugly hates the light. It cannot bear to see itself in its utter disfigurement. So, it would rather put off the light and dwell in eternal darkness. But peace is beautiful. It is unity. It is harmony. For this reason, it finds its home in the light – in truth. Indeed, truth – the harbinger of peace – is likewise beautiful.

Jesus revealed to us that peacemaking is paradoxically waging war. It is a battle against all forms of ugliness and lie. Only when we face the light will peace come. For only then will shadows disappear, ugly ghosts vanish, and guilt-laden consciences rest in forgiveness and mercy. Only then will there be peace on earth because only then will the world totally surrender to God.



## **WHY ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW DOOR?**

While following the words of Jesus, we feel at home with its familiar development. It is practical life in action: an event that looks to be a common ingredient of our daily struggles. Yet, as it reaches its climax, it suddenly gets out of its banality and explodes like a bomb. As a result, it upsets us, it pricks our conscience, it wakes up our dormant conscience, it challenges us to action. One amazing example of how Jesus employed his story to wake us up from lethargy is the Gospel reading for today. Look, someone asked him whether only a few would enter heaven. (v. 23) We would expect that to answer this question, Jesus would cite statistics. Instead, he gave us an injunction: "Strive to enter through the narrow door..." (v. 24) In the end, Jesus proved himself correct. What does it profit us to know how many will enter heaven if we are not included in that number? What is supremely important is the knowledge on how to get to heaven more than the information on heavenly statistics. So, Jesus gave us the route: "Enter through the narrow door!" This goes without saying that we must be careful in handling the wide door.

Politics provides us with the wide door that never leads to heaven: to think that the political map is the sure road to the heavenly abode. We are fools to think that we can play politics with God: to tell him that we belong

to his party because “we ate and drank with you...” (v. 26) Jesus was never rude. He could have told them outright: “Go to hell!” Instead, in a subtle way, he pictured to them where they are really going: where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth ....” (v. 28) That is indeed the price we have to pay in committing the error to think that the road that leads to political victory is the same road that we have to take to reach heavenly success. To enter the political palace, we have to get connections. We have to belong to the circle of the high and the mighty. This strategy makes no sense in heaven. There, there is only one policy that matters: “The first is the last, the last the first.” (v. 30) After all, is not *The Beatitudes* the constitution of the reign of God? Is not *The Beatitudes* the most expressive articulation of this policy? “Blessed are the poor ...” (Mt. 5:1-12; Lk 6:20-26) To traditional politicians, this sounds like bad politics. This strategy will not lead to Malacañan. But is Malacañan heaven?

## **THE HUMILITY THAT EMPOWERS**

The two stories which Jesus narrated in the Gospel reading for today should be taken together. Jesus in telling the first story was not just outlining for us a practical strategy to get attention: to employ reverse psychology. At times, by occupying the lowest place are we not becoming more conspicuous? Understatement is actually a case of overstatement in a subtle way. In a banquet, the guests whom we notice most are the early comer and the late comer: the first and the last. The first story is not just a literary illustration of this fact. The second story explains where the first one is leading us if only to tell us the common message of them both: the essence of Christian humility.

Only Christians consider humility a virtue. The pagans, never! To them, humility is plain acceptance of weakness but to do so is plain stupidity. One opens himself up to abuse. It is an invitation to others to bully him around precisely because in humility, he shows to the public his vulnerability. To the predator, anything that runs away is a prey. A humble man by publicly displaying his weakness is a prey. To Christians, this is not how humility operates. To them, humility is the imperative of service. A servant is necessarily humble. An arrogant servant is a contradiction in terms. Yet, the humility of the servant empowers.

It is in fact the dynamo that enables him to serve well. The moment the servant turns arrogant, he can no longer serve. He ceases to be a servant and becomes in fact the master. The master never serves; he is served!

The second story is not just an invitation to throw a party. It is actually a command to all Christians to serve, and in order to do so, they need to be humble. They need to be humble because in serving, they need to bend down. For Christian service is never mercenary: service with pay. No, it is service done out of charity and for this reason, free. Whom will we, Christians, invite to our parties? The poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, anyone and everyone who cannot pay! (v. 13) We will go down to their level not out of sheer condescension but out of joyous love. We will happily serve them because they are our brothers. It is through them that we will share God's blessing. By being poor in spirit, we will have the blessing of the Kingdom. (Mt 5:3). So, humility because it is indispensably linked to service is never self-degrading. It is in fact self-enriching. Only the genuinely tall can bend down. Short people do not bend down. With their height, they can almost kiss the ground. Only tall people show there is something higher than the earth. Paradoxically, they show it by bending down.

To Christians, humble people are the genuinely great. For they like the Christian God, do not come to be served but to serve. (Mk 10:45)

## **THE ABSOLUTE DEMAND OF RELIGION**

Jesus Christ assured those who were following him that what they were doing was not just a physical move. To walk with Jesus requires not just two feet but the absolute commitment of the heart. Religion is self-offering that will cut us off from all attachments. Name the knot and Jesus will command us to untie it. Not even the love for parents, for spouse or children should deter us from loving God first. (v. 26) Religion is indeed absolute sacrifice. In it, only the cross remains for it is there that this absolute sacrifice is consummated. (v. 27)

We do not use religion for our own selfish motive. Not for publicity sake. We watch with horror how some traditional politicians use religion to have free advertisements. Before election time, we see them, all of a sudden, becoming pious devotees of prayer rallies. They even sponsored Eucharistic Celebrations if only their names will be announced in the pulpit as big supporters of the church. Such gesture has of course nothing to do with religion. It is political advertisement pure and simple.

Not for business sake either. Unscrupulous personalities have discovered that the Bible is good for business. They do lots of commercials for the Lord for their own selfish game. Yes, they discover religion a lucrative business and found themselves the number one gainer. Religion can

indeed be a good racket. For this world is filled with gullible people. For every sucker, there is a wolf in sheep's clothing watching for someone to devour. These wolves can be very voracious. They can swallow up your possessions in one gulp!

Absolutely not for some escapist motive. The communists once accused religion of becoming the opium of the people. According to them, because people cannot cope with the demands of the world, they go to the church to escape from their responsibilities. Well, communists to some extent have a point there. We occasionally find abnormal people in the church: Wives who spend their time early in the morning to allegedly attend the Mass whereas in fact they only want to escape from the boring routine of preparing breakfast for their husbands. Or young men who entered seminaries because they have no opportunities in the world to advance in any secular profession. Name all kinds of neurotic and psychotic interest and you will find them hiding in religious garb. Indeed, the habit covers a multitude of defects! So, do not be amazed when you discover sociopaths and psychopaths lurking in the church as an effective hideout. To some people, God is a handy tool to be used, an ever available miracle factory! This belief is not faith. This belief is not religion. This belief is plain jukebox: it sings whatever song at your request! And will you expect God to dance with your tune? That is no longer religion. That is pure entertainment.

## **THE ABSOLUTE VALUE: THE PERSON**

The stories of Jesus never cease to amaze us. Here we are again: In today's Gospel-reading, we wonder where in the world we could find a shepherd so naïve that he will leave his ninety-nine sheep only to search for a lost one. This is absolutely poor economics, a mathematics that makes no sense at all! Yet, Jesus is practically telling us that this is the wisdom of God. Well, that is indeed the case if we take the story as a whole. After all, the statistics in his story – as usual – should never be taken literally but metaphorically. He is just making a point that the sheep are not plain animals but persons. And persons are absolutely valuable in themselves not just as a group but as individuals. For every person is unique. Every person is unrepeatable image of God, it cannot be xeroxed. Take your case for example. We can travel throughout the entire solar system in search of your exact duplicate and we will not be able to find someone exactly like you – not even if you have an identical twin. Identical twins only appear infallibly the same to people who have weak power of observation but for the sensitive ones, the difference will always be obvious. Because you are the one and only one of your kind, you are irreplaceable. You destroy a house and you can build another one exactly like the original. But once you are lost, you are lost

forever. There is no one exactly like you who can take your place. In a genuine sense you are an endangered species.

We solicit millions of dollars just to preserve Bohol tarsiers. Why? What is our interest in preserving such stupid animals the eyes of which are bigger than their brains? Because once we lose the last of the tarsiers, we will lose them forever. If we are willing to spend millions of dollars for the preservation of tarsiers, why can we not do the same for humans? Man is a person. He is more than all the tarsiers combined. He is more than this whole universe can offer. He is the image of the Trinitarian God who is a communion of persons. Yes, for being a person, man is a little god. Any attempt to kill man is an attempt to kill God. Never mind if man is a sinner. Evil cannot totally corrupt man as to destroy totally his personality. Sinful he might be, his heart remains soft enough to be permeated by grace. That is why God never gives up hope on man. Man is the outflow of God's communion of persons. And as long the Holy Trinity lives, man has always hope for redemption. The Holy Trinity lives forever. So, ....



## **MONEY: TO BE USED, NOT TO BE LOVED**

The parable of Jesus is as down-to-earth as our daily struggle in this world to win a bargain. All of us are intent on making the best value of our money. We never enter into our purchases without examining every detail of our buys. Because money is a rare commodity, we do not want to part from it without solid reason. But heaven is more valuable than money, more precious than all things that money can buy. For sure one cannot buy heaven but at least one can make use of money to prepare the ground for charity – the only key that can open heaven for us. For, charity is of God since God is love. (1 Jn 4:16) So, why not use money as fertilizer? Fertilizer is dirty all right but it is the essential ingredient to make soil productive. Because it is dirty, money is not necessarily evil. It is just dirty. Paradoxically, there is such thing as clean-dirt and fertilizer belongs to this kind. Money works like fertilizer to earth. Through it, the world expands and improves its charitable institutions: from lowly soup-kitchen to global campaign against famine and diseases. So, let us be fair to money. Let us not condemn it as the root of all evil.

How oftentimes people misrepresented St. Paul by citing him as the source of the quotation “Money is the root of all evil.” St. Paul never said this. What he wrote is: “Love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” (1

Tim 6:10) And rightly so, because the dynamics of love makes us identical with the very object of our love. We love God and we eventually will resemble God; we love money and we will in the long end, look like money (*Mukhang pera*). No wonder we have a lot of people in our midst who image as though the minted coin of the Central Bank. So cheap! Originally, we, humans, are created in the image of God. (Gen 1:27) Even then, God did not create us so spiritual that we have nothing to do with the earth. We were from the very start, a creature of soil. God molded us from the earth itself. (Gen 2:7) Man was indeed originally a farmer. He was the gardener of Eden (Gen 2:15). Today we continue to be so. We cannot renege on our responsibility for the world. One aspect of our original sin is precisely the dereliction of this duty when following the example of our first parents, we refuse to serve. Called to be stewards of this world, we want to be its god. No wonder nature also revolts against us. It knows better. It knows we are simply usurpers to the throne which is never meant for us. So, let us once more return to our primeval role in Eden. Serve God once again as his reliable and honest treasurers. God can entrust us heaven only when we can be trusted with the earthly treasure as money. True, we cannot serve both God and mammon but we can conquer mammon to serve God.

## SINNING AGAINST HUMANITY

The offense of which the rich man in the Gospel-reading of today is guilty of is the sin against humanity. It is of course the most basic violation against God. The refusal to see God's image in man is tantamount to the outright rejection of God. This happened in the case on hand in *The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man*. The rich man was feasting day in and day out with Lazarus at his feet vying with dogs for scraps falling from the table. The scraps most probably were not just breadcrumbs but fairly sizable slices of bread which doubled as table napkins at this time when table napkins were to be invented yet. The rich man, to wipe the sauce from his lips, would ordinarily take hold of a piece of bread, used it like a table napkin, and threw it afterwards to the dogs which would then fight against each other to determine which among them would finally obtain the much coveted prize. The rich man treated Lazarus exactly as though one of these dogs. Lazarus was being fed all right but this is beside the point. The point is that the rich man could have prevented Lazarus from behaving like his dogs. Instead of competing with dogs for scraps of bread, Lazarus could have been easily summoned to the table and enjoyed the meals as humans do: stylish and decent, replete with etiquette. But no, the rich man had chosen to make a circus out of

Lazarus' suffering. He enjoyed the sight of dogs and man fighting over the scraps that fell from the table. A bizarre form of entertainment indeed!

We could not help but be sorry for the inhuman way by which the rich man treated Lazarus but we are more sorry still for the rich man himself who, for being inhuman, jeopardized his own redemption. We too may turn into this kind of person if we turn our charity into a carnival instead of pure expression of the love of God. Let us bring our banners and photographers to take pictures of our so-called apostolate in action: feeding the poor and visiting the prisoners. Let us pay reporters to broadcast through mass media that we are sponsoring a medical mission to the sick. Let us ring the bell to get the people's attention to our donations to the Church. In short, let us do some works of mercy and in turn, become pathetic ourselves. Why? Because in doing charity, we insult our beneficiaries. We use them. We turn them into mere photo opportunities. We then become the proverbial rich man in today's parable: a sinner against God, a sinner against humanity. What a shame!

# October – November 2007

## Sunday Homilies

---

FR. EFREN O. RIVERA, O.P.

**27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 17:5-10**  
**In many parishes: Feast of the Holy Rosary**  
**(October 7, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

1. The Gospel passage is called *The Parable of the Tenants who Killed the Owner's Son*. <> The vineyard is a famous symbol of Israel in the Old Testament prophetic teachings. Jesus and Matthew, however, considerably modify the image. They mean to tell us that the whole human race is the Lord's vineyard. Those who work in it – the laborers (Mt 20:1-16), the sons (Mt 21:28-32) and the tenants (Mt 21:33-43) – compose the True Israel, the Church. The Greek word for "tenant" really means "gardener," a person who does not simply occupy the vineyard but works in it. Jesus emphasizes **personal responsibility**. The Church is not just a farm protected by God, it is **a community of workers who must work to produce fruit**.

2. The parable as we read it today refers not just to the leaders of the people, who would be the tenants of the vineyard, but to the whole people, the whole Church, considered as individuals who must bear fruit.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*)

1. V. 36 “Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones... Finally, he sent his son.” – Value of God’s persistent calls to repentance. *Share:* Has God persistently called you to repentance?

2. V. 41b “Lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times.” – Value of being results oriented. *Share:* After so many years in the Lord’s service, do you think you have produced fruit?

**Sample Homily:**

## **FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT NEEDED IN ASIA**

To mark the year of the Holy Spirit in 1997, the Office of Theological Concerns (OTC) of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences published a theological paper on “The Spirit at Work in Asia Today.” Unfortunately the many beautiful and deep insights of this paper have not yet filtered down to people at the parish level. We will focus on just one point in this homily.

There is need for people to discern whether it is the Holy Spirit or a mere human spirit or an evil spirit that is at work in their midst. How do we do the discernment? OTC recommends five measuring sticks: (1) Fruits of the

Spirit; (2) Values of the Kingdom; (3) Sense of Faith of the Church; (4) Listening Attitude; and (5) Love, Harmony, Unity.

Here we have space only for the first criterion, the Fruits of the Spirit. OTC says: "the tree is known from its fruits: 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits' (Mt 7:15-16). St. Paul speaks of the 'fruits of the Spirit:' 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Gal 5:22-23). These fruits of the Spirit certainly constitute fundamental criteria for the discernment of the Holy Spirit."

**28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 17:11-19**  
**Indigenous People's Sunday. <> Extreme Poverty day.**  
**(October 14, 20007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*).

The story about the faith and gratitude of one Samaritan leper (out of ten) begins the third part of the special instruction on the meaning of the Christian way in Luke's gospel.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*).

1. V. 11 “As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem...” – Value of persistence or perseverance in one's plans. <> Jesus persisted in his journey to Jerusalem where he will give up his life on the Cross for the salvation of humankind.

2. V. 13b “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” – Value of asking for Jesus' pity or divine mercy. – Value of making a collective petition. *Share:* Have you experienced the power of prayer when done not by yourself alone but with other people either gathered in one place or dispersed in many places like different homes, different monasteries of Nuns?

3. V. 14b “They were cleansed.” – Value of returning to the fold of society. <> Unclean people, like lepers at



the time of Jesus, were cast out of society. When they got cured they were reintegrated back to society. So, Jesus did a double act of mercy for the ten lepers: he cured them and he enabled them to get back to social life. *Share:* Have you experienced Divine Mercy by using forms of prayer like the Chaplet of Divine Mercy or the Three o'clock Prayer?

4. V. 15-16 "And one of them, realizing that he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice, and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him." – Value of gratitude or saying thanks. – Value also of gratitude to Jesus and to God as a sign of being among those who are *saved by faith*. <> This is the main point of the Gospel passage.

### *Sample Homily:*

## **ONE HAIL MARY EVERY DAY AT ONE O'CLOCK**

Most visitors to Tagaytay city fail to notice the huge image of our Lady towering at "Tierra de Maria" between the Japanese Garden and the People's Park. It's more than two stories high, but it's in a cramped place, so one does not have a good perspective. It's the main attraction of Jiggers Alejandrino's project. He wants people to come to Tierra de Maria (popularly known by locals as "Manawag") to make a commitment – to promise to Mama Mary that he or she will say One Hail Mary every day at One o'clock for the needs of all people who have similarly made the commitment of saying that one Hail Mary every day.

By Bro. Jiggers' estimate more than one million people are now praying one Hail Mary every day at one o'clock. And more are joining the movement.

"Miracles" have been happening – but of course we are using the word "miracle" here in its popular, not canonical meaning. Canonically, a miracle has to be verified by experts appointed by Church authority. It must be proven that what happened cannot be explained by human or natural causes. Such miracles are required for someone to be beatified or canonized.

Popularly, anything unusual that happens because of prayer is called a miracle. For example, after job hunting for one year, a young man still cannot find a job. He prays, and next day he gets a job. That's a miracle!

Such "miracles" do happened when people bond together in a prayer chain. It happened at the time of Jesus (in fact his miracle of curing the 10 lepers was "canonically approved"). It still happens now. You can join the movement of prayer-bonding.

**29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 18:1-18**  
**World Mission Sunday (October 21, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

Parables are true to life stories from which a lesson is drawn. Today's Gospel passage gives us a story reflecting the situation of injustice toward the poor at the time of Jesus. Most unfortunately we still find this situation in the Philippines in our time, about 2,000 years later! We still have "unscrupulous judges" who don't attend to their duties just because poor people, not rich ones, are the aggrieved parties. The lesson drawn by Jesus (or the evangelist) is that the persistence (in prayer) of aggrieved Christians will pay off in the end.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*)

1. V. 1 "The necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary." – Value of persistent prayer (specially in a time of oppression). *Share:* Have you experienced discrimination?

2. V. 6 "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says." – Value of learning wisdom even from a sinful person (the dishonest judge).

3. V. 8a "He will see to it that justice is done for them speedily." – Value of speedy justice.

4. V. 8b “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” – Value of holding on to one’s faith until the end. <> This might be an addition to the original words of Jesus, added at a time when Christians were being oppressed and quite a number (many?) gave up their faith. *Share*: Have you experienced being oppressed because of your Christian faith?

### **Sample Homily:**

## **WIDOWS AND ORPHANS AND NOW TRAFFICKED WOMEN**

Widows and orphans were considered the most unfortunate people – the poorest of the poor – from the time of Moses to Jesus Christ. Moses and the prophets warned the children of Israel time and again not to oppress widows and orphans, otherwise God will take vengeance and terribly punish oppressors and those who allow the oppression to happen.

Today, there are still poor widows and orphans, but other classes of people have joined them to make up that sector of society we call the “poorest of the poor.” Among them are the trafficked women and the street children. We’ll have a separate homily about street children, so now we’ll talk only about trafficked women.

Trafficking in women is a worldwide plague, although most victims today come from Third World countries like the Philippines. Rural girls are lured, some of them not yet in their teens. They are told they will have good jobs in the city – they will be beauticians, waitresses, garment factory workers, etc. Since they are usually no-read no-

write people or people with little education, no one promises that they will be secretaries or call center employees. Once the girls fall into the trap they actually become “women for sale,” and they are bought by local or international sex slavers. They are repeatedly raped by their buyers and once these have had enough of them, they are sold to other masters or let out for hire to all comers. Eventually the girls get STD (sexually transmitted disease) and AIDS and left to fend for themselves. They die with nobody caring for them.

What can we do about this? First of all, we must let people know this is happening right under our noses and prosecute people engaged in women trafficking. These are not only the recruiters (mostly women) and traders and brothel operators but contacts in airports and ship terminals who smuggle the girls into planes and boats. Secondly, when the girls escape or are rescued, we must be ready to rehabilitate them, and if they are sick and dying we must ease their pain and care for them. Thirdly, we must give good Elementary and Secondary education to all youth, but especially in the rural areas. Fourthly, we must give them good job opportunities, if possible in their own localities.

Most people listening to this sermon in church today probably think they can do nothing about trafficking in women. The Gospel Reading tells us that we can at least pray for trafficked women, especially those who have faith in Jesus, so that their faith may not fail. We can also pray for and give support to people trying to help trafficked women, because, thank God, there are such people in a number of organizations. A search in the internet (Philippines only) yielded more than 200 sites.

**30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 18:9-14**  
**Prison Awareness Sunday (October 28, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

People who are “convinced of their own righteousness and despise everyone else” – Pharisees – are so difficult to convert. None of them were won over by Jesus during his public ministry. By contrast, Jesus was able to convert at least two Publicans, Tax Collectors who, upon their own admission, were sinners: Levi (Matthew) and Zacchaeus.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*)

1. V. 1 “Two people went up to the Temple area to pray ...” – Value of going to a public area to pray. <> The Temple was an aid to prayer. However, the Pharisee abused the Temple – he used it as a prop for showing off. The Pharisee took advantage of the Temple’s atmosphere and availed of it to dramatize how he, a sinner, has to remain far from God, and should not even dare look up to his majesty.

2. V. 13b “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” – Value of being humble, and asking for God’s Mercy. *Share:* (1) Have you witnessed the failure of someone who trusted on his own abilities and did not seek God’s Mercy? (2) Have you witnessed the success of someone who trusted more on Divine Mercy than on his or her own abilities?

## *Sample Homily:*

### **A PHARISEE AND TWO PUBLICANS**

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5, Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'"

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

The Pharisee in this anecdote is Kevin. He's so self-centered, and he wants to be first at all costs, even when he does not deserve it. Besides he is also a bully.

Our next anecdote is about a wife who invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?"

"I wouldn't know what to say," the girl replied.

"Just say what you hear Mommy say," the wife answered.

The daughter bowed her head and said, "Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

The publicans in this anecdote are both the mother and the daughter. The mother had a good heart, for she did invite those people to dinner. But when she was already preparing dinner, and she felt her cooking was not turning up too well, she regretted bringing all that work upon herself.

The girl, too, was a publican. She was honest in her prayer – although it turned out to be embarrassing!

Our lessons from these anecdotes are simple enough, but would make a big difference in our parish life if we follow them. Firstly, people who have the advantage over others because to their position, their wealth, their talents, should not become bullies. They should rather imitate Jesus who “did not come to be served but to serve.” Secondly, we must admit our limitations even when our good heart pushes us to do something good. That’s when we should turn to the Lord in prayer and ask him to have mercy on us and help us.



**31ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 19:1-10**  
**(November 4, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

In Luke's narrative, Jesus has reached Jericho. There are two episodes here: the cure of the blind man (Lk 18: 35-43, not used in year C), and the encounter with Zacchaeus, which is our Gospel Reading for this Sunday. Some commentators consider these two episodes as summaries of Christ's ministry to the outcasts.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*)

1. V. 2-3a "A man named Zacchaeus... was seeking to see who Jesus was." – Value of wanting to see Jesus.

2. V. 3b-4 "He was short of stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way." – Value of finding a way – no matter how awkward or humiliating – to attain one's goal. *Share:* Did you ever try unconventional ways of getting to know Jesus Christ?

3. V. 6 (Zacchaeus) received (Jesus) with joy. – Value of joyful hospitality.

4. V. 8b "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor..." – Value of giving a generous part of one's possessions to the poor.

5. V. 8c “If I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times.” – Value of making reparations for one’s misdeeds.

6. V. 9-10 “Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house... For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.’” – Value of salvation over and above material wealth (given away). <> The salvation of the lost is the goal of Christ’s ministry. *Share*: Did you ever experience salvation like a benediction descending on your home?

### *Sample Homily:*

## **SYCAMORE TREES IN INTERNET**

I have seen the sycamore tree in Jericho shown to tourists who inquire: where is the tree Zacchaeus climbed? But I was curious to find out if the Internet had an image of it, so I searched. I simply typed in “Sycamore tree, Jericho,” and I got it! If you have the Internet, why not do the same?

Then I became curious. Maybe they have other pictures of sycamore trees, so I typed this in and clicked on “search.” Yes, indeed, they have beautiful sycamore trees, more impressive than the one in Jericho. But what I liked best was the bonsai sycamore tree. Zacchaeus is too big to climb it – only an ant can do that! But I like it because it reminded me that if there are bonsai trees, there are also bonsai people like Zacchaeus.

Although Zacchaeus belongs to the bonsai category in body, he is in fact a spiritual giant. He personally did

what God wants the people to do collectively, namely, humble themselves, seek God's presence, and turn from their evil ways. When that is done, God will heal the people's land (see 2 Chr 7:14). If we, as a people, would only do that, salvation will descend on our land not only like a gentle falling rain but like a *bagyo*. Give your contribution today.

**32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 20:27-38**  
**or LK 20:27, 34-38**  
**(November 11, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

**The Resurrection of the Dead.** Explicit belief in the resurrection of the dead came late to Judaism, around 300 B.C. It came because of the influence of Hellenistic philosophy, which, we must admit, clarified some of the longings for immortality that are expressed, for example, in the Psalms. It should not be a surprise that some Jews, like the Sadducees, opposed the teaching. In an argument with them, Jesus gave two reasons why there is no marriage in heaven: (1) People in heaven will be like the angels, who do not marry. (2) People in heaven will be “children of God” more perfectly than they were on earth. They will share in his immortality and glory more than what is possible on earth. Like God, too, they will not need to marry.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*).

1. V. 34-35 “The children on this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.” – Value of marriage for earthly life... Value of celibacy for other-worldly life.

*Share: (Married person) How and When I came to appreciate marriage as my vocation; (Celibate person): How and When I came to appreciate celibacy as my vocation.*

2. V. 36 "They are children of God..." Value of being *eternally* children of God.

### *Sample Homily:*

## **CHERRIE LANORIO – IN MEMORIAM**

Cherrie was the wife of Dante Lanorio. I got to know them when I gave the *Bibliarasal Training* at Miraculous Medal Parish at Project 4, Quezon City. At that time their pastor was Msgr. Severino Pelayo, who was the one who got the Parish moving towards Post-Vatican II Renewal. They were among the youngest in the group, but because they became so active, they were soon the leaders. So Msgr. Pelayo sent them to the Catholic Bible Ministry School (CBMS) founded by the Charismatic Secretariat of Quezon City, where I was also teaching. There they were in fact ahead of my other students in the Biblical Apostolate. Later, in spite of changes made by a number of pastors who succeeded Msgr. Pelayo, Cherrie and Dante were still the recognized leaders of the Biblical Apostolate in their parish and so they were sent to the Institute for Lay Ministers of the Word (ILMW), which I founded.

Meanwhile, their family was growing. Christopher, Christine and Charlotte were born about two years apart. To them Cherrie imparted, together with her mother's milk, the love for the Word of God. Some years later they would be honored by their parish as A Model Family.

To support their growing family, Dante left his job at the Sony Company so that he could be at Cherrie's side in running their travel agency, which they called "Good News." Quite a number of people who wanted help with their passports, visas and plane tickets went to them because they were struck by such an unusual name for a travel agency. And when they entered the office, they would be struck by the enthroned Bible and the profusion of Bible literature, especially the Daily Bible Reading Guide. Some would ask, "*Are you Born Again?*" Cherrie would just smile and say, "We're doing the Biblical Apostolate as good Catholics."

Near their office was the Ermita Catholic Church, where Cherrie attended daily noontime Mass. Soon, she was the regular First Reader at that Mass. The Parish Priest was so pleased that Cherrie would proclaim the Word of God with such conviction.

One may say that Cherrie did only "little things" but did them *very well* – and that is Sta. Teresita's Little Way to heaven. Come to think of it, those "little things" are really the big things that matter in life.

Cherrie died of cancer that spread to her brain. Before becoming comatose, her last words (recorded by Dante) were: "Lord, I accept my sufferings. But please do not let any of my loved ones suffer what I am suffering now." To the end, she followed what I taught her: think of "JOY" – Jesus, Others, Yourself – in that order.

We'll see you in heaven, Cherrie! Together with St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Doctor of the Church.

**33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – LK 21:5-19**  
**(November 18, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

**Warning Signs of the End of Jerusalem and the End of the World.** Many commentators believe that Luke wrote when Jerusalem was already in ruins, and from his experience he could confirm the statement, “the end (of the world) does not follow immediately.” For Luke’s contemporaries, the passage for today’s Gospel Reading is an exhortation “not to be perturbed” in spite of times of crisis. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, the majority of Christ’s followers escaped death and they were unscarred by their experience of hard and painful times. The experience in fact made them stronger and better persons.

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*)

1. V. 7 “What sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?” – Value of having a forewarning of a time of danger. <> Because the early Christians of Jerusalem were prophetically forewarned about the destruction of the city, they fled and were saved.

2. V. 12-18 “They will persecute you... because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony... I myself

will give you wisdom..." – Value of loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus. <> Jesus promised to give Wisdom to his loyal and faithful followers who undergo persecution. *Share:* (a) Were there times in your life when you had to show your loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus Christ? (b) Have you experienced receiving Wisdom from Jesus during a time when there was so much pressure on you?

### ***Sample Homily:***

#### **AMONG THE MARTYRS BEATIFIED OCT. 28, 2007: 7 DOMINICANS WHO WORKED IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The 42 martyrs beatified in Rome on October 28, 2007, were killed during the Spanish Civil war, 1936-39. Most of them were just a little older than my parents. Extremists who belonged to the Spanish Popular Front were the ones who killed them, usually by firing squad. These extremists (Communists, anarchists, etc.) hated the Roman Catholic Church, which supported the National Front, to which the Spanish army led by Generalissimo Francisco Franco also belonged. They were not killed because of their political color, but because they were priests, seminarians, or religious brothers. They had no "crimes against the people" but were simply followers of Jesus Christ.

Among them, seven Dominicans worked in the Philippines and we could add one more who lived in Santo Domingo in Intramuros and studied in UST, but was later a missionary in China before returning to Spain (Fr. Jose Ma. Lopez Carrillo).



The most illustrious of the group was Fr. Buena-ventura Garcia Paredes, ex-Master General of the Order of Preachers (1926-1929). He was a professor of Civil Law at UST, 1899-1901, and from 1900 to 1901 he was Director of *Libertas*, the Philippines' Catholic Daily newspaper at that time.

The one most prolific in assignments was Fr. Jesus Villaverde Andres. He was a Professor at the UST Faculties of Theology and Philosophy (1918-1924), Treasurer of the University (1929-1934), and Acting Dean of Theology (1932-1933) and eventually Dean (1933-1934). Besides that he also taught at San Juan de Letran (1905-1910) and became its Rector (1924-1927). He worked in Batanes (1915) and in Baguio (1916-1918). When he went back to Spain he was Prior at Avila and also worked in Valencia. He must have known English quite well, having been Prior at Rosaryville in New Orleans, USA.

Fr. Inocencio Garcia Diaz (or Diez) worked at Santo Domingo Convent in Intramuros (1901-1903), and then taught at Colegio de San Jacinto, Tueguegarao (1903-1910) before going to Vietnam and then back to Spain.

Pedro Ibanez Alonso studied in UST and did his diaconate at Sto. Domingo Church. Ordained priest after his studies, he worked in China. Before returning to Spain he was again assigned to Sto. Domingo Convent in Intramuros.

Fr. Antonio Varona Ortega studied at the Catholic University of America before coming to the Philippines, where he worked in Letran (1926-1933) and was involved in the NCAA sports league in its infant years.

Manuel Moreno Martinez also studied in UST while doing his diaconate at Sto. Domingo Convent in Intramuros. Ordained priest after his studies, he became chaplain of the Colegio de Sta. Rita in Pampanga (1913-1916). He worked in China before returning to Spain.

Maximino Fernandez Marinas finished his diaconate at Sto. Domingo convent in Intramuros and at UST before going to the Dominican missions in Alcala and Sanchez Mira in Cagayan (1891-1899). When he went back to Spain he served as Chaplain of Dominican nuns in Zaragoza, and later also helped the Dominican priests and Sisters at Pompei and Madonna del Arco in Italy.

**SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING – LK 23:35-43**  
**(November 25, 2007)**

**Teachings.** (*Bibliarasal Step 3. Again Look at the Text to identify teachings*)

**Words of Jesus to the Good Thief.** As Jesus suffered the excruciating torture of crucifixion, the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers kept on insulting him. The first one to turn to him as Savior was one of the criminals being similarly crucified beside him. The salvation given to that criminal is described as “being with Jesus in paradise.”

**Values.** (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing – Step 5 – can be done on these points*).

1. V. 38 “This is the king of the Jews.” – Value of having a king. *Share:* Have you experienced giving your loyalty and faithfulness to someone (whether or not you call him/her a king/queen)?

2. V. 40 “Have you no fear of God...” – Value of defending an innocent man. *Share:* Have you experienced defending an innocent person?

3. V. 42-43 “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” – Value of desiring to be counted in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

### *Sample Homily:*

## **MARTYRS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936-39**

During the early months of 1936, political unrest in Europe began to escalate rapidly. The Popular Front in Spain – an anti-fascist coalition of middle class liberals, Socialists, Communists, and working class groups – won the national election in February. Opposing the Popular Front was the National Front, which included the Spanish Catholic party (CEDA), the Monarchist party, the Fascists of the Falange, and other middle class and right-wing groups. The National Front claimed the support of the Army in addition to that of the Catholic Church.

The Spanish Popular Front tried to steer a moderate course during its first months in power. Groups on the far Left, however, including anarchists, Stalinists, and other splinter groups, felt that the liberal victory implied a mandate for immediate change. When change was slow to come, they responded with riots, assassinations, and anti-church vandalism.

On July 19, 1936 the Civil War officially began when General Francisco Franco took control of the Spanish Army. Those who remained loyal to the Popular Front government of Spain were called “Republicans” or “Loyalists.” Early in November, Franco’s Army began an assault on Madrid, the seat of government and a Republican stronghold of obvious importance.

The civil war raged all over the country. The town of Guernica was chosen by the German allies of the National Front for saturation bombing on April 26, 1937.

The town's population was decimated, and the carnage was immortalized by Pablo Picasso's monumental painting, "Guernica."

Barcelona, the last Republican stronghold, fell to Franco's troops in January 1939. The war ended in March when Madrid was taken by Generalissimo Franco, "El Caudillo."

Before Franco, championing the National Front, emerged victorious, the extremists of the Popular Front had a free hand killing priests, seminarians and religious sisters. These victims, the Catholic Church now hails as its martyrs in a number of "causes for beatification."

Heading the cause of beatification for 42 martyrs opened in Madrid and successfully concluded in Rome with ceremonies at the Vatican last October 28, 2007, is Fr. Buenaventura Garcia Paredes, former Master General of the Dominican Order (1926-1929). Seven of them, including Fr. Paredes himself, worked in the Philippines before returning to Spain. One more lived in Santo Domingo Convent in Intramuros and studied Theology at UST before working in China (and returning to Spain). Some parishioners of the Santisimo Parish of UST live at a street called "P. Paredes." That name should now be changed to "Beato P. Paredes."

We are happy to mark the feast of Christ the King this year by recalling the martyrdom of some people who walked in our land, the Philippines. They are valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ, their king. In a way, they were like the "good thief" who stole heaven with his last-

minute repentance and profession of faith in Jesus Christ. They lived very much like the Spanish Dominicans we still have in our midst today, with their faults and weaknesses. But because at the time of the crunch they stood up for Jesus Christ, they are our heroes today.



PHILIPPINE POSTAL CORPORATION  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Linasang, Bonifacio  
1000 Manila

Permit No. Old  
Date Granted June 21, 1946

SWORN STATEMENT  
CLARENCE VICTOR

The undersigned Fr. MARQUEZ, OP ~~editor/business manager/~~ business manager/~~editor~~  
~~editor of~~ BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS (title of publication) 6 issues/year  
frequency of issue English, Filipino in which printed at UST Publishing House  
office of publication Boletin Eclesastico entered as 2nd Class (first, second and/or third  
class) office of entry UST Post Office, Mla, after having duly sworn to in accordance with law, hereby  
submit the following statement of ownership, management, circulation, etc., which is required by act 2580 as  
Amended by Commonwealth Act 201.

ADDRESS

Editor (Associate) FR. PABLO TIONG, OP  
Managing Editor na  
Business Manager FR. CLARENCE VICTOR MARQUEZ, OP  
Owner UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS  
Publisher UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS  
Office of Publication UST BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO

If publication is owned by a corporation, stockholders owning one percent or more of the amount  
of stocks na

Bond holders, mortgage or other security holders owning one percent or more of the total amount  
of Security na

In case of daily publication average number of copies printed and circulated of each issue during  
the preceding month of na

1. Sent to paid subscribers na
2. Sent to others than paid subscribers na
- Total na

In case of publication other than daily total number of copies printed and circulated at the last  
issue date January-February 2007

- Sent to paid subscribers 600 copies  
Sent to other than paid subscribers 200 copies  
Total 800 copies

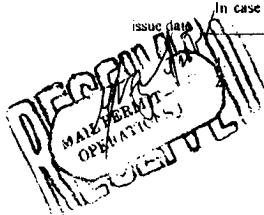
Fr. CLARENCE VICTOR MARQUEZ, OP  
(Designation and Signature  
Business Manager)

APR 12 2007

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO, before me this 200 day of 2007 in  
The City of Manila, Philippine. Affiant exhibiting to me his/her Community Certificate  
No. 10099629 issued at Manila, on Jan. 8, 2007

ATTY. LEONARDO G. SYJOCO  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
PTR NO. MLA-5335757  
MLA Jan 05, 2007

Doc. No. 96  
Page No. 18  
Book No. XIV  
Series of 2007



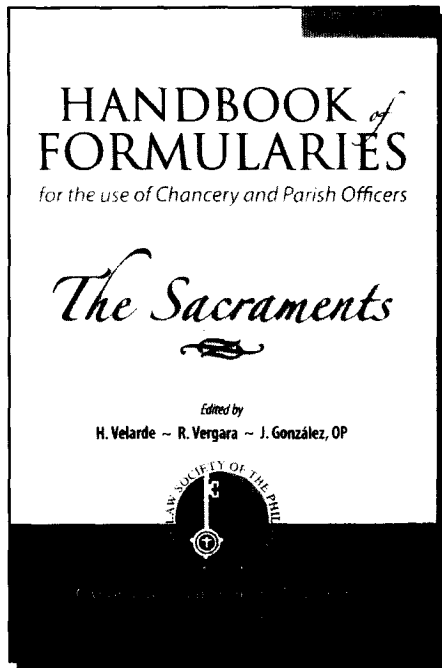
# ATTENTION: Chancellors and Parish Priests

Do you need to prepare various forms and documents, like:

- ☐ Certificate of Baptism ...
- ☐ Permission to Baptize in a private house ...
- ☐ Authorization to correct or change entry in baptismal registry ...
- ☐ Declaration of parenthood by an unwed mother or father ...
- ☐ Appointments to / Removal from Offices ...
- ☐ Transfer of Parish Priest ...
- ☐ Profession of Faith / Oath Taking ...
- ☐ Penal Procedures ...
- ☐ Other prescribed forms for the different Sacraments ...?

The **HANDBOOK OF FORMULARIES**, published by the Canon Law Society of the Philippines (CLSP), contains 170 ready-made formularies covering the above list and other forms related to the Sacraments. It also carries succinct explanations of pertinent canons and procedures.

It is in the spirit of service that CLSP has come out with this expanded second edition of the "*Book of Formularies*." Indeed a very practical handbook for Chancellors and Parish Priests.



Second Edition  
Soft board cover, with flaps  
Bookpaper inside  
294 pp.; 6" x 9"

Price per copy: PhP 250.00  
(Plus mailing expenses)

**Address all orders and inquiries to:**

CLSP SECRETARIAT  
Room 312, 3/F CBCP Building  
470 General Luna Street  
Intramuros 1002 Manila  
Telefax: (63-2) 523-5301  
E-mail: cbcpcanonlaw@yahoo.com

FACULTY OF CANON LAW  
University of Santo Tomas  
España Blvd. 1015 Manila  
Telefax: 731-4066  
E-mail: ecclesia@mn1.ust.edu.ph