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***Towards a More Authentic
Veneration of Mary***



BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

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Towards a More Authentic Veneration of Mary

In 1974, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines published a pastoral letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary entitled *Ang Mahal na Birhen: Mary in Philippine Life Today*. This is a definitive and exhaustive treatment of the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary as practiced in our country. In the document, we read that in 1974, four hundred sixty-three, or over one-fourth of all parishes in the country have the Virgin Mary as their titular patron. After more than 30 years, the number must have greatly increased. If we add to this number the barrio chapels, oratories, private shrines, seminaries, prayer groups, and religious convents dedicated to her, the total would be immense.

The document also stated that over 100 of the parishes honor the Immaculate Conception, and over 60 are dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, and still others bear the various titles like the Assumption, Lady of Carmel, Mother of Perpetual Help, etc.

Among the shrines dedicated to Mary, some have become the focal point of pilgrimages or popular centers

of devotion, like *Our Lady of Charity* and *Our Lady of Badoc* in Ilocos; *Our Lady of Piat* in Cagayan, *Our Lady of Manaoag* in Pangasinan, *Our Lady of Salambao* in Obando, Bulacan, *Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage* in Antipolo, La Candelaria in Laguna, *Our Lady of Caysasay* in Batangas, *Our Lady of Peñafrancia* in Naga City, *Nuestra Señora de la Regla* in Cebu, *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* in Zamboanga, etc.

The veneration of Mary has been and still is an important element in bringing about a deep evangelization of the masses of our people. Devotion to Mary, according to the Pastoral Letter of the CBCP, “is the safeguard for the preservation of our faith and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization.” Marian devotions and celebrations prove that the veneration of Mary is deeply rooted in the socio-religious structure of the Filipino family. Undoubtedly, these elaborate show of Marian piety stem from sincere and simple faith and intertwined with the love of Christ and belief in the mystery of Incarnation and Redemption.

But the same document also cautions us against some aspects of Marian devotions that may detract from authentic veneration of Mary. It states: “We (must) reflect on those aspects of the devotion which might have deflected from genuineness and purity, and hence are in need of reform and renewal. Some attitudes or practices in Marian devotion, well-intentioned as they are, cannot be unreservedly approved, and in this respect there is a need of instruction and correction.”

The document identified the root of such deviant forms of Marian veneration as “*the lack of doctrinal instruction*

(biblical or liturgical) on the role of Mary in the history of salvation. This results in the exploitation of Marian popular devotions for show and the fact that in many places the main devotions appear to be too secularized."

This observation is quite relevant today, especially with the proliferation of Marian sects and cults that deviate from mainstream Catholicism, as well as the unmitigated attack by non-Catholics against the veneration of Marian images. Some Protestants brand Catholicism as a religion of pseudo-faith and superstition because of what they call "Mariolatry" – the worship of Mary. They think that the multiplication of so many Marian statues and the prevalence of Marian apparitions simply point to the Catholics' penchant for the mythical and the miraculous, and an embarrassing show of fanaticism.

Although these criticisms and attacks are expressed or carried out relentlessly and sometimes violently, these must be seen by us Catholics as an invitation to look carefully at our practice of Marian veneration. Perhaps it is about time that we retrieved the "authentic" Mary whom we have buried under tons of pietistic accretions and historical myths.

One wonders whether we priests have also contributed to this supposed large-scale demolition of the real Mary and the devotions associated with her. For instance, the Rosary is still a favorite devotion of many Filipinos, but have we tried to study deeply the meaning of the Rosary to cleanse it from the pious misconceptions that have arisen because of ignorance or cheap sentimentality?

A more robust understanding of the “rosary”

One time I was asked, “Father, why is the Rosary called that way?” The traditional answer is, the Rosary derived its name from *rosa*, (Latin for *rose*) because it was supposed to be a prayer in the form of a garland of roses offered to the Virgin. Every bead of the Rosary is like a rose, its fragrance and beauty symbolizing the purity of Mary and the sincerity of our prayer. But perhaps the Rosary did not really have such a sentimentally sweet origin. Otherwise, how could medieval soldiers, valiant preachers, and manly crusaders have embraced it as their prayer especially in times of war? If the Rosary had such a sentimental meaning, how could have heroes and martyrs clung to it in deep faith and courage amidst persecutions?

The rose has always been a symbol of secrecy since the medieval times. In a milieu where most people were illiterate, public and private institutions and societies usually place a symbol in front of their gates or doors for identification purposes. Secret societies chose the rose as their symbol, giving birth to the phrase: *sub rosa*, an ecclesiastical phrase referring to things that must be kept in confidence.

In this sense, the Rosary could have originated as a secret prayer, or a private prayer primarily for laypeople who had no access to the official prayer of the Church – the Divine Office – which was the domain of the consecrated religious. This can also explain why each decade is called *mysterium*, to emphasize the fact that the Rosary is not a magic formula for getting what we want from God, but a private meditation on the mysteries of Jesus and Mary’s role in His work of redemption. It is the

intensely personal meditation of these secret and unfathomable aspects (mysteries) of the life of Jesus and Mary that brings out the best in every devotee of the Rosary.

Priests' Response to the challenge of *Mahal na Birhen*

How have we, priests responded to the call of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter to renew and purify Marian devotions, especially in our churches and shrines? Not once have we heard the comment that many Marian shrines have become like the Jewish temple during the time of Christ where buying and selling have overtaken true worship. Or, that people flock to these shrines in search of a miraculous cure or a personal favor like passing the Bar Examination or getting a visa abroad. People today rarely associate devotion to Mary with the social dimension of Christian living, and so novenas and pilgrimages in honor of Mary appear more like expressions of pious individualism.

In our preaching, how have we catechized devotees who flock to Marian shrines concerning the social dimension of Marian devotion? Should we not remind the devotees of Mary about the words of the prophet: "You may multiply your prayers, I shall not listen. Take your wrong-doing out of my sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good, search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:15-17)?

The CBCP document states: "Devotion to Mary shows itself in works, and the works which we need in the Philippines today are the works of justice and freedom from oppression."

Towards an authentic veneration of Mary

Perhaps priests have to read again the CBCP's document, *Ang Mahal na Birhen* for a more authentic veneration of our Blessed Mother. Herewith are the guidelines set by the document:

1. *All veneration of Mary is to be subordinated to the adoration of the triune God and of Christ who is the Mediator.*
2. *We do not approve of the presence of several images of Mary in the same house, chapel or church – even parish churches – with their devotees extolling the power of their statues over the others as if they were rivals.*
3. *Medals, scapulars and votive candles are by their very nature religious symbols and manifestations of spiritual trust and candid devotion. But these should not be considered as magic talisman, a kind of aning-anting for material gain or bodily protection.*
4. *We discourage the thirst and easy acceptance of visions and visionaries with the concomitant dangers of paying a less than prudent credulity to strange announcements, threats or promises.*
5. *We warn our faithful against so-called faith-healers who use the popularity of the devotion to Mary under one or other of her titles to persuade the simple people that their faith-healing power comes from her or through her intervention.*
6. *The faithful should be instructed to venerate Mary out of love for her and appreciation of her dignity and not primarily to obtain personal and material favors.*

7. *They should pay greater attention to the participation in the Eucharistic celebration on Sunday than in any other form of Marian devotion.*
8. *Public and traditional Marian celebrations like the Flores de Mayo, often connected with the Santacruzán, must be prevented from becoming fashion shows that take away their spiritual meaning, with the danger of converting Marian devotions into beauty parades rather than religious manifestations of faith.*
9. *Similarly the traditional forms of devotion must never be an ostentatious show of pomp and pageantry. The real spirit of these devotions should be emphasized, and not merely the external practice.*
10. *Pastors must be vigilant to prevent as far as possible the mixing of paraliturgy with liturgy, or the simple incorporation of novenas into the Eucharistic celebration.*
11. *Novena prayers should be renewed periodically by making them more scriptural, avoiding a verbosity present in some of them and a sentimentality less in consonance with today's religious attitudes.*
12. *We address also a word of encouragement to priests and religious: they too should try to rediscover the value of the rosary as a community prayer.*
13. *Pastors should be very careful not to eliminate or discourage Marian devotions in their correct forms, and in this way create a vacuum which cannot be easily filled. This is a delicate matter that needs to be handled with utmost pastoral prudence lest we*

lose many religious practices and particularly forms of devotion to Mary, because of an imprudent or too premature uprooting of forms that demanded only reform and renewal. This demands in turn a certain sensitivity and a profound respect for the people's affectivity, their love for color and their sentiments of faith.

ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, O.P.

FEATURES

“The Lord is With You” – The Essence of All Preaching*

FR. TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, OP

When I saw that I had been asked to talk about the Rosary, I must confess that I had a moment of panic. I have never read about the Rosary or reflected about it ever in my life. I am sure that most of you have much more profound thoughts about the Rosary than I have. The Rosary is simply something that I have done, without thought, like breathing. Breathing is very important to me. I breathe all the time, but I have never given a talk on it. Saying the Rosary, like breathing, is so simple. So what is there to say?

Simplicity

It may seem a little strange that a prayer as simple as the Rosary should be particularly associated with Dominicans. Dominicans are not often thought of as very

*An address at Lourdes, in October 1998, for the ninetieth anniversary of the Pèlerinage du Rosaire, the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes organized by the Dominicans of France.

simple people. We have a reputation for writing long and complex books on theology. And yet, we fought to keep the Rosary ours. The General Chapter of 1574 urged the brethren to preach the Rosary. It is “*nostra sacra haereditas*”, “our sacred inheritance”. There is a long tradition of pictures of Our Lady giving the Rosary to St Dominic. But at one time, other religious orders grew jealous, and started commissioning paintings of Our Lady giving the Rosary to other saints, to St Francis and even to St Ignatius. But we fought back, and, I think in the seventeenth century, persuaded the Pope to ban the competition. Our Lady was only allowed to be shown giving the Rosary to Dominic! But why is this simple prayer so dear to Dominicans?

The Rosary

Perhaps it is because at the center of our theological tradition is a longing for simplicity. St Thomas Aquinas said that we cannot understand God because God is utterly simple – simple beyond all our conceptions. We study, we wrestle with theological problems, we strain our minds, but the aim is to draw near to the mystery of the One who is totally simple. We have to pass through the complexity so as to arrive at simplicity.

There is a false simplicity, which we must leave behind. It is the simplicity of those who oversimplify, who have too easy answers to everything, who know it all in advance. They are either too lazy or are incapable of thought. And there is the true simplicity, the simplicity of heart, the simplicity of the clear eye. And that we can only arrive at slowly, with God’s grace, as we draw near to God’s blinding simplicity. The Rosary is indeed simple,

very simple. But it has the deep and wise simplicity for which we hunger, and in which we will find peace.

It is said that when St John the Evangelist became an old man, he became utterly simple. He liked to play with a dove, and all that he would say to people, when they came to see him, was 'Love one another'.

You and I would not get away with that! People would not believe us. It is only someone like St John, who wrote the richest and most complex Gospel of all, who can arrive at the true simplicity of wisdom and say no more than just: 'Love one another'. Just as it is only a St Thomas Aquinas, after he has written his great *Summa Theologiae*, who can say that all that he had written is 'as straw'. Yes, the Rosary is very simple. But perhaps it is an invitation to find that deep simplicity of true wisdom. It was said of Lagrange, one of the founders of modern biblical scholarship, that he did three things every day: he read the newspapers, studied the Bible, and prayed the Rosary!

I would also like to suggest that not only is the simplicity of the Rosary good and deep simplicity, but also that it has many characteristics which are truly Dominican.

The angel as a preacher

The Hail Mary begins with the words of the angel Gabriel, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Angels are professional preachers. It is their whole being to proclaim the good news. The words of Gabriel are the perfect sermon. It is even short! He proclaims the essence of all preaching, "The Lord is with you". Here we see the heart of our vocation, to say to each other: "Hail Daniel, Hail Eric, the Lord is with you". That is why Humbert of Romans, one

of the earliest Masters of the Order, said that we Dominicans are called to live like angels. Though I have to say that, in my experience, most Dominicans are not especially angelic!

Last December, I was in Ho Chi Minh City, visiting the Province of Vietnam. After the day's work was over, my socius and I loved to go and get lost in all the back streets of the city. Part of the fun was to escape the Government spy who was sent to see what we were up to. We spent hours wandering around the maze of tiny streets, filled with life – people gambling, eating, talking, playing billiards. Many of the houses had images of Buddha. And then one evening, we went around the corner into a little square, and there, right in the middle, was an enormous statue of a Dominican with wings. It was St Vincent Ferrer, who is always represented as an angel. He was the great preacher. He was seen as the angel of the Apocalypse, announcing the end of the world. Well, no preacher can get everything right! So Gabriel the archangel is a good model for us Dominicans.

And there is another way in which the Hail Mary is like a sermon. Because a sermon does not just tell us about God. It starts from the Word of God which is addressed to us. Preaching is not just the reporting of facts about God. It gives us God's Word, which breaks the silence between God and us.

The opening words of the prayer are words that are addressed to Mary by the angel: "Hail Mary, full of grace". The beginning of everything is the Word which we hear. St John wrote "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sin." (1 Jn 4:10) In fact in the time of St Dominic the Ave Maria only consisted of these words of the angel and those of Elizabeth. Our prayer was the words given to us. It was only later, after the Council of Trent, that our own words to Mary were added.

So often we think of prayer as the effort that we make to talk to God. Prayer can look like the struggle to reach up to a distant God. Does he even hear us? But this simple prayer reminds us that this is not so. We do not break the silence. When we speak we are responding to a word spoken to us. We are taken into a conversation that has already begun without us. The angel proclaims God's word. And this creates a space in which we can speak in turn: "Holy Mary, Mother of God".

So often our lives are afflicted by silence. There is the silence of heaven, which may at times seem closed to us. There is the silence which may appear to separate us from each other. But the Word of God comes to us in good preaching, and breaks open those barriers. We are liberated into language. We find words come, words for God and words for each other.

Perhaps we can say even more. Meister Eckhart once said that "We do not pray, we are prayed". Our words are the reverberation, the prolongation of the Word spoken to us. Our prayers are God praying, blessing, praising in us. As St Paul wrote, "When we cry "Abba, Father" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God ..." (Rom 8:14) The greetings of the angel and Elizabeth to Mary are continued in the words that we address to her. The second half of the prayer echoes the first. So the angel spoke "Hail Mary, full of grace", and this becomes, in our mouths, the same greeting, "Holy Mary". Elizabeth says "Blessed is the fruit of your womb", and we say "Mother of God". We are caught up into God's speaking. Our prayer is God speaking within us. We are caught up into the conversation that is the life of the Trinity.

So, I would suggest that this simple prayer of the Hail Mary is like a tiny model sermon. It proclaims the good

news. But like all good sermons, it does more than that. It does not simply give us information. It offers a word from God, a word that echoes in our words, a word that overcomes our silence and gives us a voice.

A prayer for home and a prayer for the journey

There is another way in which this prayer is very Dominican. And that is because it is a prayer for the home, and a prayer for the road. It is a prayer which builds community and also which propels us on our journey. And that is a tension which is very Dominican. We need our communities. We need places in which we are at home, with our brothers and sisters. And yet at the same time we are itinerant preachers, who cannot settle for too long, but must set out to preach. We are contemplative and active. Let me explain how the Hail Mary is marked by this same tension.

Think of the great pictures of the Annunciation. They usually offer us a domestic scene. The angel has come to Mary's home. Mary is there in her room, usually reading. Often there is a spinning wheel in the background, or a brush leaning against the wall. Outside there is a garden. This is where the story begins, at home. And this is appropriate, because the Word of God makes his home with us. He pitches his tent among us.

And in a way, the Rosary is often the prayer of the home and the community. Traditionally it was said by the family and by religious communities each day. From the mid-fifteenth century we see the foundation of Rosary Confraternities who meet to pray together. So the Rosary is deeply associated with community, a prayer that we share with others. I must confess that I have ambiguous memories of family Rosary! We did not say the Rosary at home, but we often stayed with

cousins who recited it together every night. But it was often a disaster. No matter how carefully the doors were locked, the dogs always burst in and made their way around the family licking our faces. And so however pious we intended to be, we, usually collapsed in giggles. I came to dread the family Rosary.

But the angel's greeting does not leave Mary at home. The angel comes to disturb her domestic life. I often think of a wonderful Annunciation made by our Dominican brother Petit, who lives and works in Japan. He shows Gabriel as a great messenger, filling the canvas, and Mary is this small, shy, demure Japanese girl, whose life is turned upside down. She is propelled on a journey, which will take her to Elizabeth's home, to Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Jerusalem. It is a journey that will lead to her heart being pierced, and to the foot of the cross. It is a journey that will eventually carry her to heaven and glory.

So the Rosary is also the prayer of those who journey, of pilgrims, like yourselves. I have come to love the Rosary precisely as a prayer for my travels. It is a prayer for airports and airplanes. It is a prayer that I often say as I come into land at a new place, and I wonder what I shall find, and what I can offer. It is a prayer for taking off again, giving thanks for all that I have received from the brothers and the sisters. It is a prayer of pilgrimage around the Order.

I think that the structure of Mary's journey marks the Rosary in two ways. It is there in the words of each Hail Mary. And it is there in the structures of the mysteries of the Rosary.

Hail Mary – The story of the individual

Each Ave Maria suggests the individual journey that each of us must make, from birth to death. It is marked by the biological

rhythm of each human life. It mentions the only three moments of our lives which we can know with absolute certainty: that we are born, that we live now, and that we shall die. It starts with the beginning of every human life, a conception in the womb. It situates us now, as we ask now for Mary's prayers. It looks forward to death, our death. It is an amazingly physical prayer. It is marked by the inevitable corporeal drama of every human body, which is born and must die.

And this is surely truly Dominican. For Dominic's preaching began in the south of France, not far from here, against heretics who despised the body, and who thought of all creation as evil. He was confronted with one of those waves of dualistic spirituality which have periodically swept Europe. Augustine, whose Rule we have, was caught in another such movement, when he was a Manichee as a young man. And even today, much of popular thought is profoundly dualistic. Studies have shown that modern scientists usually think of salvation in terms of the escape from the body.

But the Dominican tradition has always stressed that we are physical, corporeal beings. All that we are comes from God. We receive the sacrament of Jesus' body and blood for our nourishment; we hope for the resurrection of the body.

The journey that each of us must travel is, in the first place, this physical, biological one, which takes us from the womb to the tomb. It is in this biological span of life that we will meet God and find salvation. And this simple prayer helps us on the way.

Conception

The words of the angel promise fertility, fertility for a virgin and for a barren woman. The blessing of God makes

us fertile. Each of us, in our individual births, is a fruit of a womb that was blessed.

I believe that the blessing promised by the angel always takes the form of fertility, in every human life. It is the blessing of new beginnings, the grace of freshness. Perhaps we are made in the image and likeness of God because we share God's creativity. We are his partners in creating and recreating the world. The most dramatic and miraculous example of this is childbirth. But even we men, who cannot manage that miracle, we too are blessed by fertility. When we are faced with barrenness, sterility, futility, then God comes with a fertile word. Whenever God draws near to us, it is so that we may be creative, transforming, making new, whether in tilling the soil, planting and sowing, or through art, poetry, painting.

"Blessed is the fruit of your womb". Perhaps the best way, then, that we can ever preach the miracle of this fertility is through art, through painting and song and poetry. Because these are some small share in that same blessing, that endless fertility of God.

There is a charming story, which was told by Malaroux to Picasso. He said that when Bernadette of Lourdes entered the convent, many people sent her statues of the Virgin. But she never had them in her room, because she said that they did not look like the woman whom she had seen. The bishop sent her albums of famous pictures of the Virgin, by Raphael, Murillo and so on. She looked at Baroque virgins, of which she had seen so many, and Renaissance virgins.



But none of them looked right. And then she saw the Virgin of Cambrai, a fourteenth century copy of a very old Byzantine icon, which was not like any picture of Mary that Bernadette would have seen. And she said, "That's her!"

Perhaps it is not surprising that the young girl who had seen the Virgin, recognised her again in an icon, the fruit of a holy art, a sacred creativity. Mary shows herself most clearly in the work of one who was made fertile through God's grace, a painter.

Now

But the Rosary also invokes another time, not just of birth but also now. "Pray for us sinners now". Now is the present moment in the pilgrimage of our lives, when we must carry on, survive, on our way to the Kingdom.

It is interesting that this present moment is seen as a time when we sinners need compassion. This is a profoundly Dominican compassion. You remember that Dominic prayed always to God: "Lord, have mercy on your people. What will become of sinners?" Now is a moment when we need compassion, mercy. In the Sistine Chapel, in the fresco of the Last Judgement, there is a man being pulled up from Purgatory by an angel with a Rosary.

Now is the time when we must survive, wondering how long we must wait for the Kingdom. When an American Dominican went back to visit China a few years ago, he found various groups of Dominican laity who survived during years of persecution and isolation. And the only thing that they had kept during all those years was the recitation of the Rosary together. It was the daily bread of survival. And when some of our brethren went to remote areas of Mexico, and met groups of Dominican laity, who had

not been in contact with the Order for years, they found the same thing. The one practice that was continued was the Rosary. It is the prayer for survivors in this present time. During Communist times when our brother Dommik Duka was in prison with Vaclav Havel, now the President of the Czech Republic, they said the Rosary together on a knotted piece of string.

Bede Jarrett, the English provincial in the 1930s, sent a member of the Province, called Bertrand Pike, to South Africa, to help in the new mission of the Order. But Bertrand felt overwhelmed and unable to cope. It was more than he could face. He lacked the courage to continue. And Bede wrote to him reminding him of a time in war when he had found his courage in his Rosary.

“Do you remember that dreadful day you had to cross between trenches at Ypres, when your courage failed you, and only after 3 or 4 attempts, did you force yourself to get by, and how you found the carved edges of your Rosary-beads had cut into your finger in your unconscious gripping of them to take a new lease of courage from holding them.”

“Yes, I remember that.”

“But, my dear Bertrand, courage and fear are not opposed. Those only have courage who do what they should do even though they have fear.”

So Bertrand must tightly grip his Rosary to have courage, “now and at the hour of his death”. It is the prayer for all of us who need courage to carry on, to triumph over fear. It gives us the courage of the pilgrim.

The hour of our death

And the final certain moment of our bodily lives is death. 'Pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death'. In the face of death, we pray the Rosary. I have just returned from Kinshasa, in the Congo, where many of our sisters have faced death in recent years. The Provincial of the Missionary Sisters of Grenada, Sister Christina, told me about how she and her sisters had had to flee from their home in the north of the Congo during the last war. They had been hidden in the bush by friends. She is a doctor, and when they were fleeing she met a man whose wife she had saved. And he said to her that now it was his turn to save her life. All around them they heard the sound of gun fire. They were told that the rebels had discovered where they were and would come soon to kill them. In the face of this death, they prayed the Rosary. It is a prayer that when we face death, knowing that we will not do so alone, Mary will then pray for us.

I think also of my father. During the Second World War, my mother and the three eldest children remained in London. I was just on the way. My mother insisted on being available in case my father could ever have leave and come home, even though night after night the bombs fell on London. And my father promised that if all of his family would survive the war, then he would pray the Rosary every night. So one of the memories of my childhood is of how every night before dinner, my father would pace up and down the drawing room, praying the Rosary. He gave thanks nightly, that we had survived that threat of death. And one of my last memories of my father was of just before he died, too weak to pray himself any more, we his family, his wife and six children, gathered around his bed and prayed the Rosary for him. It was the first time that he could not do it himself. That he be

surrounded by all of us was an answer to that prayer he had said so many thousands of times. "Pray for us now and at the hour of our death."

T.S. Eliot begins one of his poems "Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth". And this is right. For we must face these three sure moments in our life: birth, the present, and our death. But what we long for in each moment is always the same, new birth. What we long for now, as sinners, is not the mercy that merely forgets what we have done, but which makes this too a moment of new birth, of fresh beginning. And faced with death, we again long for the words of the angel to announce a new fertility. For all of our lives are open to God's endless newness, his inexhaustible freshness. The angel comes time and time again, with new Annunciations of good news.

The Mysteries of the Rosary – The story of salvation

So the individual Ave Maria is the prayer of the journey that each of us must make, from birth, through the present now until death. But ultimately our lives do not have meaning in themselves, as private and individual stories. Our lives only have meaning because they are caught up in a larger story, which reaches from the very beginning to the unknown end, from Creation to the Kingdom. And this longer span is given by the mysteries of the Rosary, which tell the story of redemption.

The mysteries of the Rosary have been compared with the *Summa Theologiae* of St Thomas. They tell, in their own way, of how everything comes from God and everything returns to God. For each mystery of the Rosary is part of a single mystery, the mystery of our redemption in Christ. As Paul wrote to the

Ephesians, "For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth". (Eph I:9)

So, one might say that each Ave Maria represents an individual life, with its own story from birth to death. But all these Ave Marias are taken up into the mysteries of the Rosary just as our individual lives are taken up into the larger story of redemption. We need both dimensions, a story with two levels. I need to give a form and meaning to my own life, the story of this unique human flesh and blood, with my moments of failure and victory. If there is no place for my unrepeatable story, then I will be merely lost in the history of humanity. For Christ says to me, "Today, you will be with me in paradise". I need the individual Ave Maria, my own little drama, in the face of my own little death. My death may not mean much for humanity, but it will be quite important for me.

But it is not enough to remain trapped on that merely personal level. I must find my life taken into the larger drama of God's purpose. Alone my story has no meaning. My individual Ave Maria must find its place in the mysteries of the Rosary. So the Rosary offers that perfect balance we need in the search for the meaning of our lives, both the individual and the communal.

Repitition

I have tried to sketch a few reasons why the Rosary is indeed a deeply Dominican devotion. The Ave Maria bears all the marks of a perfect little sermon. And the whole of the Rosary is marked by the theme of the journey, our own and that of humanity. All this fits well the life of an Order of itinerant preachers. There are

other things that I could have stressed, like the biblical basis of the mysteries. It is a prolonged meditation on the Word of God in scripture. But I have said enough!

But I must face a final objection. I have tried to suggest the theological richness of the Rosary. But the fact is that when one prays the Rosary, one rarely thinks about anything. We do not in fact think about the nature of preaching or the human story and its relationship with the story of salvation. Our minds are largely blank. We may even sometimes find ourselves wondering why we are endlessly repeating the same words in this mindless fashion. That is surely not very Dominican! Yet from the very beginning of our tradition, our brethren and nuns have delighted in this repetition. One brother Romeo, who died in 1261, is supposed to have recited a thousand Ave Marias a day!

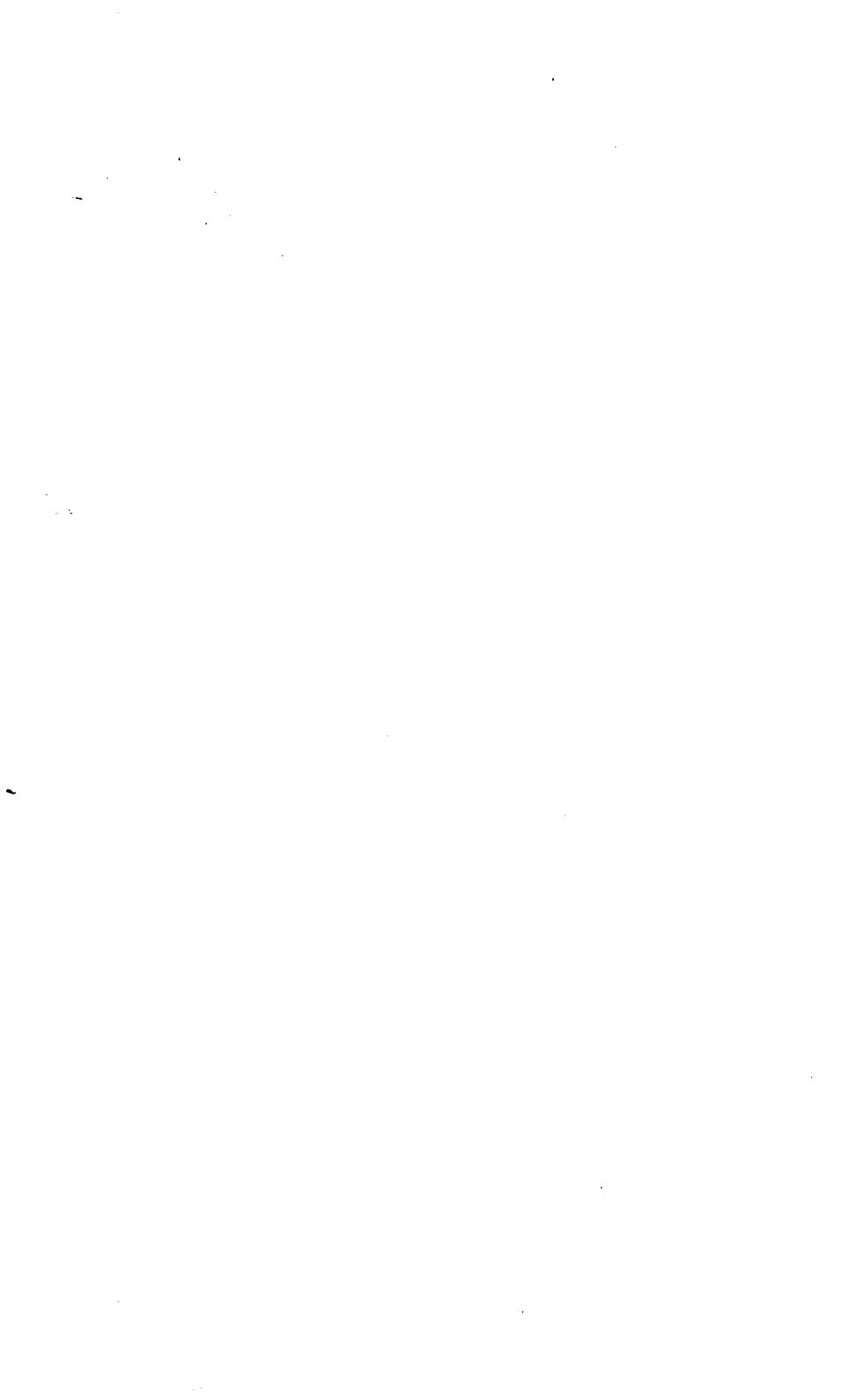
First of all, many religions are marked by this tradition of the repetition of sacred words. Last Sunday, when I was wondering what to say about the Rosary, I heard a Buddhist service broadcast on the BBC, and it seemed to consist in the endless repetition of holy words, the mantra. It has often been pointed out that the Rosary is quite similar to these Eastern ways of prayer, and that the constant reiteration of these words can work a slow but deep transformation of our hearts. Since this is so widely known I will say no more.

One could also point out that repetition is not necessarily a sign of a lack of imagination. It may be sheer exuberant pleasure that makes us repeat words. If we love someone, we know that it is not enough to tell them “I love you” just once. We will want to say it again and again, and we may hope that they wish to hear it again and again.

G.K. Chesterton argued that repetition is a characteristic of the vitality of children, who like the same stories, with the same words, time and time again, not because they are bored and unimaginative but because they delight in life. Chesterton wrote: Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead, for grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes each daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical encore. Heaven may encore the bird who laid an egg.' Or our repetition of the Rosary!

Finally, it is true that when we say the Rosary we often may not think about God. We may go for hours without any thoughts at all. We are just there, saying our prayers. But this may be good. When we say the Rosary, we are celebrating that the Lord is indeed with us and we are in his presence. We repeat the words of the angel "The Lord be with you". It is a prayer of God's presence. And if we are with someone then we do not need to think about them. As Simon Tugwell wrote, "I do not think about my friend when he is there beside me; I am far too busy enjoying his presence. It is when he is absent that I will start to think about him. Thinking about God all too easily leads us to treat him as if he were absent. But he is not absent."

So, in the Rosary we do not try to have thoughts about God. Instead we rejoice in the words of the angel addressed to each of us, “The Lord be with you”. We endlessly repeat these same words, with the endless vital exuberance of the children of God, who take pleasure in the good news.



The Rosary*

FR. DAMIAN BYRNE, O.P.

Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the faithful vine, growing up in thorns and briers; until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field." Isaiah 32:12-15.

The cry of the Prophet may well have come to the lips of Our Holy Father, St. Dominic in Languedoc, as again it comes to many of us in our own times. The land is desolate and needs to be watered from on High.

The Dominican legend of the Rosary – "The barren land"

The order was born into a barren land: dichotomized humanity, with flesh warring against the spirit, with woman downgraded and life itself despised, was unable to accept the reality of the Worst made flesh, dwelling in the midst of us.

*Letter from the Master of the Order, September 1985 on the 750th Anniversary of the Canonization of St. Dominic.

There was only one answer, and it was summed up in the simple words: "Hail... the Lord is with you... you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son..." (Luke 1: 28-31).

Whatever critical historians may have to say about the Legend of the Rosary, it bears witness to the charismatic gift entrusted by the Church to the order of Preachers, a gift which we must exercise by reason of profession, by our legislation and by the constant exhortation of the See of Rome.

The Legend, as such, is worth recalling in these days of renewed insistence on our preaching ministry: After much fruitless labour, tradition has it that the Mother of God appeared to Dominic in the forest of Bouconne near Toulouse:

"Wonder not that until now you have had such little fruit from your labours. You have spent them on a barren soil, not yet watered with the dew of divine grace. When God willed to renew the face of the earth he began by sending down the fertilizing dew of the Angelic Salutation. Preach my Rosary composed of one hundred and fifty Aves, and you will obtain an abundant harvest."

True Devotion to Mary

It places Mary in her true ecclesial context – waiting herself in the barren land with the broken, the wounded and the little people of God. The heavenly Ave comes first on her, for in truth the Hail Mary is not so much an ascending prayer as a downward divine blessing poured out on all flesh. Mary stands in the desert on behalf of all humanity, so that it may blossom once more like the rose. The word addressed to Mary is addressed to all:

“Rejoice, the Lord is with you.” Here, we all draw waters from the springs of salvation, as the fertilizing rain of the Ave renews our land.

A School of Prayer

There is a healthy plurality about the Prayer of the Rosary, for its long and varied history has produced many approaches: it has its rich Marian tradition, as witnessed at thousands of Marian shrines, in processions and in rituals where Mary is crowned as Queen. It has too, its Christological orientation as a “compendium of the Scriptures;” it is a powerful vocal prayer and it is a many levelled way of contemplative prayer. It can be prayed in a group or alone. In a word, the Rosary is a School of prayer, providing for body, soul and spirit.

One thinks of the vast collection of Rosary spirituality from the renowned Alanus de Rupensis, Michael de Insulis and William Pepin down to modern times and embracing the wealth of Papal teaching and the untold wealth of Dominican libraries such as that of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. One work which deserves special mention is “Le Triple Rosaire” by Père Bernard, the seventeenth Century Dominican of Toulouse. Père Bernard deals with the classic three ages of prayer in tree Rosary:

“The Rosary of meditation, or of serious reflection ...

“The Rosary of intimacy, or of looking in love ... “The Rosary of union, of resting in the Lord and listening in the heart ...”

Many who abandoned the Rosary as not in keeping with their spiritual development, would be greatly surprised by original

dynamic. Directors of the Rosary would do these well-springs of our Dominican heritage.

A Method of Preaching

St. Dominic is above all the “Man of the Book.” Art may show him without the beads, but never without the Scriptures. The well known fresco of “Christ mocked” in San Marco is a classic illustration. It contains the main elements of Rosary preaching:

1. The Central theme of the Lordship of Jesus, the subject of our contemplation and of our preaching. This is the suffering, yet triumphant Jesus of “now”, with power still going out from his glorious wounds to heal his people.
2. Mary, the first and supreme contemplative who is already exquisitely occupied in pondering these things in her heart and at the same time inviting Dominic to keep her company.
3. St. Dominic, standing for ourselves, pondering the word in the Scriptures and preparing to preach it to others. Fra Angelico portrays him exactly as Our Lady requested five hundred years later at Fatima when she said: “Keep me company meditating on these mysteries of the Rosary.”

The Gospel of the Votive Mass of the Rosary which we have in the old missal is that of the Sower and the Seed, falling on good and bad ground, ending with the challenge “To you is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom”. It reminds us of our preaching mission and points to the role of the Rosary in our preaching.

In the golden age of the Rosary, it was common practice to open up any detail of the lives of Jesus and Mary to this preaching of the mysteries of the kingdom. Huge volumes were produced on the lines of a modern Lectionary, entitled: "Annualia" and "Festivalia", giving a whole panorama of the Gospel. This would explain the old adage: "Rosarium magis est modus praedicandi quam orandi."

There is scope here for study by future Congresses of the Rosary, such as have taken place in the recent past. Meanwhile it would be well to study the analysis of the Rosary method of preaching set out in *Marialis Cultus* of Pope Paul VI:

"The Rosary is thus a Gospel prayer, as pastors and scholars like to define it, more today perhaps than in the past."

"It has also been more easily seen how the orderly and gradual unfolding of the Rosary reflects the very way in which the Word of God, mercifully entering into human affairs, brought about the Redemption..." "It has also been observed that the division of the mysteries of the Rosary into three parts not only adheres strictly to the chronological order of the facts but above all reflects the plan of the original proclamation of the faith and sets forth once more the mystery of Christ in the very way in which it is seen by Saint Paul in the celebrated 'hymn' of the Letter to Philipppians – kenosis, death and exaltation (2: 6-11)".

An instrument of healing

Early preachers of the Rosary were concerned not merely with preaching a devotional exercise. They were mindful of the Acts of the Apostles: "Grant to your servants

to speak your word with boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:29, 30).

Among the classic texts of their preaching was the story of the woman with the issue of blood. She touched the Lord and experienced power go out from him. Healing was a very real part of the Rosary apostolate of former times. The Preacher would hold up the beads, and invite his hearers to touch the Lord in faith, as they reverently called on the name of Jesus in each Ave. “The beads”, they would say, “are like the tassel of his robe. Reach out and clutch them in faith and you will be made well.”

Bernard of Toulouse would encourage the members of the Rosary Confraternity, to do as members of the Milan confraternity: did “anoint themselves with oil from the lamp burning before the Rosary altar, repeating often the names of Jesus and Mary”. He goes to the trouble of setting down a form of words to be used by the laity themselves when they anoint the sick members in the course of their visits.

The Spanish apostle of New Granada, St. Louis Bertrand, gives a graphic account of the miracles performed through his own use of the beads which he was accustomed to place around the neck of the sick person. After his return to Valencia he gave a Rosary to a friend and told him to preserve it with reverence, “because in the Indies, this Rosary cured the sick, converted sinners, and I think, also raised the dead to life.”

In these days of the new flourishing of the ministry of healing, it would be remiss of us Dominicans to fail

in the healing dimension of the Rosary which is an integral part of our tradition.

A fraternity of faith

As early as the year 1486, when Michael de Insulis (Francois de Lille) made his defence of the Rosary Confraternity at the time of public debate in the University of Cologne, the Order of Preachers had espoused the concept of a fellowship in the spirit, as the basis for a solid Rosary devotion. However vague and undocumented the involvement of the Order with the Psalter of Mary itself, its concern for community, for sharing and support has always been part of its Rosary tradition.

Michael de Insulis often used the Vulgate text: "I share with all those who keep your law." (Psalm 118: 63), while Pépin quoted the words of the Prodigal's father: "All that is mine is yours..." Membership of the Rosary Confraternity implied a great deal more than having one's name in a register and promising to say certain prayers. It meant assuming the authority of an elder brother, of knowing how to put the robe of mercy on your brother's or sister's back; how to put the shoes of freedom on their feet and the ring of covenant friendship on their finger. Henceforth all would be one and walk like a prince in the royal household. Cf "Alanus Redivivus".

Small group apostolate

While we may not be able to rival the great confraternities of the past we do have in these times a veritable

explosion of small Rosary Groups all over the world. Strong in faith and bound together by bonds of love and service, these groups display many of the qualities of committed covenant community. In keeping with the terms of *Marialis Cultus* (Par. 51) they have learnt to integrate into their prayer the four elements mentioned by Pope Paul VI: Scripture, Silence, Song and the Sharing of the fruits of their contemplation. A wealth of meditation literature, and other Scripture-based material has sprung from these groups. They have endeavoured in many instances to build their Rosary around the Eucharist, using the traditional Jesus-clauses in each Hail Mary, so as to make of their prayer a deep communion with the Lord.

Directors of Confraternities would do well to encourage and help these groups and in turn to learn from them. In many instances it may be feasible, in accordance with the norms of the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Leo XIII to invite the group to become affiliated to the legally constituted Confraternity in the local district.

Addressing the issues of the day

In the context of this small group apostolate, as well as in the preaching which must accompany any true Dominican Rosary apostolate many of the issues of our day can be faced up to.

The wounded ones can come for healing; it is good to know that many of our Dominican colleagues are once again using the Rosary as did St. Louis Bertrand; the spirit of St. Martin who went about with the beads in one hand

and bread in the other, is still alive. We hear of women being comforted and strengthened as, like the woman of the Gospel, they find that power goes out from the mysteries of Jesus, in our day as in the days when the Lord walked the earth in the flesh.

It is encouraging to observe that where social and political ideologies may fail, the true devotion of God's own people brings enlightenment and strength. Genuine Rosary fraternity in our day is manifesting itself as another "Upper Room" experience, as men women and little children wait with Mary and the disciples once again for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, with all the gifts and the fruits of that same Spirit.

In Conclusion

A Promoter General of the Rosary has been appointed at the Curia, and all Provincial Promoters are asked to keep in touch with him. It is hoped in due course to have Coordinators for the major language groups to assist him and act as facilitators and resource people for the Rosary personnel of their respective groupings.

It would be well if structures for furthering the Rosary could be reviewed in the light of new found experiences of prayer movements in the world today. Is the model of a rosary-office or bureau adequate for new role of the laity, and the growth of covenant communities? We hear of Priests, religious, and laity forming a Prayer-support community for the Rosary with its varied ministry. These ought to be encouraged and facilitated so as to form a genuine Rosary Confraternity in keeping with our times.

Dominican formation must not neglect the rich heritage of the Order in regard to the history and spirituality of the Rosary. It should enable the student to integrate his studies, especially those of Sacred Scripture, mystical theology and preaching with a future Rosary apostolate. Bearing in mind the references to the Rosary in the New Code of Canon Law, we ought to be foremost in implementing these norms.

It may be timely to recall a remarkable letter addressed to a former Master of the Order by Pope Pius XI. On 7th March, 1934, he wrote:

“It may justly be said that the Rosary of Mary is, as it were, the principle and foundation on which the very Order of St. Dominic rests for the perfecting of the lives of its members, and obtaining the salvation of others.”

Mary and the Fulfillment of God's Plan in History

REV. FR. YULITO Q. IGNACIO, S.Th.L.

I. A Woman Clothed with the Sun... On her Head a Crown of Twelve Stars. (Revelations 12:1)

On the occasion of the Centennial of the Canonical Coronation of the Image of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, La Naval de Manila, (1907-2007), being the first canonically crowned image of the Blessed Mother in the Philippines, we would like to give honor to this venerated image by deepening our knowledge on the role of Mary in the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation as *"a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."* (Rev. 12:1)

The Canonical Coronation of Nuestra Señora del Santísimo Rosario – La Naval de Maria took place on October 5, 1907. It is the first time in the history of the Philippine nation that a Canonical Coronation took place.

Chapter twelve of the Book of Revelations, which speaks of the *woman crowned with twelve stars*, will help us appreciate better the canonically crowned image of Our Lady of La Naval, historically old, well acclaimed, most loved image, which continues to be a beacon of faith and a sign of sure hope for the Filipino people.

The beautiful image of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – La Naval de Maria, dressed as a royal lady and lovely Queen bedecked with jewels – is the “*woman clothed with sun*”. She is clothed with the sun, which is the more emblematic proof of God’s existence and expresses God’s transcendence. “To clothe” in the scriptures signifies love, tenderness and solicitude. God showed His love and care for the “woman” giving her for clothing what he has best, namely the “sun”. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary does not keep this love only to herself. She shares God’s love to us through her maternal love and protection.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – La Naval de Manila has ever since lead us more closely to God. As a mother, she leads us to her Son, as she holds the Child Jesus on her left arms. As a Queen, she leads us to accept God’s kingship in our life as holds a royal scepter, staff and a rosary as our way of meditating on the mysteries of the life of her Son in the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation for us.

The “*woman... on her head a crown of twelve stars*” represents Mary and the People of God. The crown is the symbol of the Triumph of Victory. The Saga of La Naval speaks of the Triumph of a People’s Faith. A Crown of *twelve* stars refers to the *twelve* tribes of Jacob (Gen 37:9). The revered image of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – La Naval de Manila has twenty four stars, which represent not only the figure of the ancient people of

God, formed by the twelve tribes of Jacob but the figure of the new people of God, formed by the twelve apostles, which is the Church of Christ.

The *twenty four stars* of the canonically crowned image of Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario – La Naval de Manila leads us to the ‘woman’ of Revelation – the people of God of both the covenants: Church of the ancient Israel which prolongs then in that of the new Israel with Christ and his disciples at all times. The canonically crowned image of Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario – La Naval de Manila with twenty four stars represents not only Mary, but the ancient people of Israel and all of us now, the Filipino people in our faith journey as a people of God in love with her.

Devotion to Mary under the title of Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario – La Naval de Manila was the grandest celebration across the centuries in the Old Intramuros. She was, she is, and she will always be in the faith – journey of the Filipino Catholics.

1. A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

2. She was with child, and wailed aloud in pains as she labored to give birth.

3. Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads where seven diadems.

4. Its tail swept away a third of the stars and the sky and hurled them down to the earth.

Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth.

5. She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and to his throne.

6. The woman herself fled into the desert, where she had a place prepared for her by God, that there she might be taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days.

7. Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

9. The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth and its angels were thrown down with it.

10. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have salvation and power come, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed. For the accuser of our brothers is cast out, who accuses them before our God, day and night.

11. They conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death.

12. Therefore, rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, for he knows he has but a short time."

13. When the dragon saw that it he had been thrown down to the earth, it pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.

14. *But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she could fly to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, and two years, and a half-years more.*

15. *The serpent, however, spewed a torrent of water out of his mouth after the woman to sweep her away with the current.*

16. *But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth and swallowed the flood that the dragon spewed out of its mouth.*

17. *Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus.*

18. *It took its position on the sand of the sea.*

Revelation 12:1-18

Revelation chapter 12 is made up of two separate visions: the attack of the dragon on the woman and her children, vv. 1-6 and 13-17; the attack of Michael on the dragon vv. 7-12.

It portrays the power of evil represented by a dragon, in opposition to God and his people.

First, the dragon pursues the woman about to give birth, but her son is saved and "caught up to God and his throne".¹ Then Michael and his angels cast the dragon and his angels out of heaven.² After this, the dragon tries to attack the boy indirectly by attacking members of his Church.³

¹ Rv 12:5.

² Rv 12:7-9.

³ Rv 12:13-18.

It is a mysterious text that is a meeting place for all the biblical avenues leading to the Virgin Mary. Prophecy is mingled with events and with ways of viewing them. The account follows an order that is geared not to chronology but to typology.

“a great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” (Rev. 12:1)

The beginning of the passage echoes the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 taken up by Micah 5:1-2.

*“Therefore the Lord himself will give you this **sign**: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)*

*But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah,
too small to be among the clans of Judah,
From you shall come forth for me
One who is to be ruler in Israel;
Whose origin is from old,
From ancient times.
Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time
When she who is to give birth has borne,
And the rest of his brethren
shall return to the children of Israel. (Micah 5:1-2)*

*a great sign appeared in the sky, a **woman**...” (Rev. 12:1)*

As the 'almah of Isaiah, the **woman** of the Revelation is a **sign** (sēmeion).

*“a great sign appeared in the sky, a **woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev. 12:1)*

The **woman** appears in **triumph**.

1. Points of Contact between Revelation 12 and Genesis 3:15

“A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev. 12:1)

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel” (Gen 3:15)

Points of Contact between Genesis 3 and Revelation 12

Gen. 3:14-15

God said to the *serpent*...

Revelation 12:9

The great dragon, the *ancient serpent* known as the devil or Satan

Gen. 3:14-15

“I will make you enemies of each other: you and the *woman*”

Revelation 12:13

Sprang in pursuit of the *woman*... But she was given a huge pair of eagle’s wings to fly away from the serpent into the desert.

Gen. 3:14-15

“your offspring and *her* offspring.”

Revelation 12:17

Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of *her children*, that is, all who obey God’s commandments and bear witness for Jesus.

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers” (Gen 3:15)

- The “woman” in Genesis 3:15 is **Eve**.

– “Between your offspring and hers.”

– The offspring of the **serpent** are those who follow the incitement of evil.

– The offspring of the **woman** are those who keep themselves faithful to the ways of God.

– “... **He**, the seed or offspring, will strike at your head, while you strike at this heel.”

“He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.” (Gen 3:15)

It shows the **unending hostility** between the serpent and men. The serpent was regarded as the devil (Rev 12:9; 20:2), whose eventual defeat seems implied in the contrast between the head and heel. Because “the Son of God appeared that he might destroy the work of the devil”. (1 Jn 3:8)

According to the Hebraic text, **He**, who will strike the head of the serpent will not be the woman, but the **seed/offspring of hers**.

Genesis 3:15 can be understood as the promise of a **Redeemer** for a fallen mankind.

The woman’s **offspring** is primarily Jesus Christ.

*“Then another sign appeared in the sky, it was a huge **dragon**, flaming red, with seven heads and ten horns” (Rev 12:3)*

Revelation 12:3 and Genesis 3:15

The **Dragon** is the “the ancient serpent, he is called the Devil or Satan, and who deceived the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). The Dragon is in open hostility against the woman.

The **huge red dragon**: is the **Devil or Satan**⁴ symbol of the forces of evil. In Jewish tradition, the **serpent** and the **dragon** symbolize the power of evil, the enemy of God and his people which God is to be destroyed at the end of time.⁵

2. The mantle of "light" and the "crown" of 12 stars

"a great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." (Rev. 12:1)

The "**woman** clothed with the sun": she is the woman of the covenant

b. *"Sun-moon-stars" = the three sources of cosmic illumination (Rev. 6:12; 8:12).*

The Light = the mantle of God (Ps 104:2)

"... a woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1)

The **Sun**:

The Sun is the more emblematic proof of God. It better expresses transcendence.

"...a woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1)

"**To cloth**" signifies love, tenderness, solitude. God showed his loving care for the "woman", giving her for **clothing** what he has best, namely the "**sun**". (cf. Mt. 5:45)

"...with the moon under her feet" (Rev. 12:1)

⁴ Cf. Rv 12:9; 20:2.

⁵ Cf. Jb 3:8; 7:12.

The **Moon**:

The Moon is the heavenly body which presides at the division of time in days, years, and seasons. (Gen 1:14-19)

If the **moon is under the feet of the “woman”**, it wants to say that the “woman” exercises a dominion over time, and is the owner. (Ps 110:1)

The passage indicates that she is raised above the vicissitudes of which this constantly changing planet is the symbol.

As with Mary in John 19:25-27, “Woman, behold your son”, this heavenly personage is repeatedly designated by the word “woman”. (Rev. 12:1,4, 12, 13-17)

*“... and on her head a **crown of twelve stars**” (Rev. 12:1)*

The **Stars**:

The Stars express the transcendence of God.

“Above all the stars of God, I will set my throne...” (Is. 1:13; Jb. 22:12)

c. A **“Crown”**

The **Crown** is symbol of the **triumph** of victory.

We commemorate this year the 100th Year Anniversary of the Coronation of the Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval with the theme, “The saga of La Naval: the Triumph of People’s Faith”

d. The number **“twelve”**

A **crown of 12 stars** refers to the **12 tribes of Jacob** (Gen. 37:9)

The **“Woman”** is the figure of the ancient people of God, formed by the twelve tribes of Israel.

The **“woman”** of Genesis and her descendants are identified with the **“community of Israel”** in journey towards the Messianic Redemption. The **woman** of Genesis is essentially an image of **Israel** as the mother of Messianic Savior.⁶

e. The number **“twelve”**

A **crown of 12 stars** refers also to the **12 apostles of Christ**.

The **“woman”** is also the figure of the new people of God, which is the Church of Christ.

The **“Woman of Revelation”** is the people of God of both the covenants: Church of the **ancient Israel** which prolongs then in that of the **new Israel** with Christ and his disciples at all times.

*“a great sign appeared in the sky, a **woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of **twelve stars**” (Rev. 12:1)*

The **woman** symbolizes God’s people in the Old and the New Testament. The Israel of old gave birth to the Messiah and then became the New Israel, the Church, which suffers persecution by the dragon. (Rev. 6:13-17)

At first, the **Marian interpretation** of the Revelations 12 is **debated**. Beginning in 1953, a change of direction set in. Renowned exegetes such as Braun, Cerfaux, Dubarle, LeFrois,

⁶ Cf. *Mi* 4:9-10 and *Is* 66:7

Feuillet, Lyonnet, believed that Revelations 12 refers both to **Mary** and the **People of God** at the same time.⁷

*“a great sign appeared in the sky, a **woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of **twelve stars**” (Rev. 12:1)*

Revelation 12 refers to both the community and Mary, who is preeminently the eschatological culmination of Israel, the Daughter of Zion giving birth to the Savior. It speaks of God's Plan and Mary's Role too in the fulfillment of God's Plan of Salvation for His People.

In Revelation 12, Israel, Mary and the Church refer to together as historical stages of God's Plan of Salvation.

As with Mary in John 19:25-27, **“Woman, behold your son”**, this heavenly personage is repeatedly designated by the word **“woman”**. (Rev. 12:1, 4, 12, 13-17). As with Mary, she is taken to be the Mother of Christ, and mother of the disciples of Christ, who are called **“the rest of her children”** (Rev. 12:17). This term is an echo of Gen 3:14-15, where also the serpent (Rev.12:9 and 14) is at war against **“the woman”** and **“her descendants”**

3. The childbirth of the woman, figure of the paschal mystery

*“Because she was with child, she wailed aloud in **pain** as she labored to **give birth**” (Rev. 12:2; 12:4b; 12:5)*

⁷ B.LeFrois, *The Woman Clothed with the Sun, Apoc. 12. Individual or Collective?*, Rome, Orbis catholicus, 1954. S. Lyonnet, “Maria santissima nell’Apocalisse,” *Tabor* (Rome) 25 (1959), 213-222. A. Feuillet, “Le Messie et sa mere d’après le chapitre XII de l’Apocalypse,” *Revue biblique* 66 (1959), 55-86. R. Laurentin, “Bulletin marial,” *RSPT* 46 (1962), 333-334, 50 (1966), 509.

Because of Eve's sin, the woman gives birth in distress and pain. The woman's pain may recall the curse of Eve whose offspring would ultimately wound the serpent so that Israel is seen as representing all humanity.

The suffering of the woman in labor does not refer to the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, rather to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus, namely at the "hour" of the passion and resurrection of Christ...

Christ appears in heaven as "a Lamb that seemed to have been sacrificed"⁸ The pains of the woman who in Rev.12:2 appears in the heavens are a counterpart of the immolation of the heavenly Lamb. We are led back not to the birth at Bethlehem but to Christ's words from on the cross: "Son, this is your mother." (Jn. 19:25) It speaks of Mary's spiritual motherhood and of the compassion by which the Mother of Jesus shared by the sufferings of the immolated Lamb.

John 19 and Revelation 12 closely correspond to each other.

"Woman, behold your son..." (John 19)

"Woman clothed with the sun..." (Rev 12)

Mary's motherhood with respect to the disciples is envisaged in a context of **pain**. (Jn. 10:25; Rev. 12:17). Christ's immolation is prolonged there, as is **Mary's pain**: John, who sees glory in the Passion, continues to see the Passion in glory.

"She gave birth to a son – a boy destined to shepherd all the nations..." (Rev. 12:5)

⁸ Cf. Jn 19:36.

It refers to the **Messiah** considered as an individual person and as head or leader of the New Israel.⁹

*“She gave birth to a son – a boy destined to shepherd all the nations **with an iron rod**. Her child was caught up to God and to his throne.” (Rev. 12:5)*

Reference to Christ’s Ascension and the Triumph of the Messiah that will result in the dragon’s fall.

a. The death and resurrection of Christ as “birth”. The passage of Jesus from this world to the Father is conceived on all level with a birth, of a mystical generation.

b. The Psalms 2 and 110 are interpreted in Paschal key
Rev. 12:5a: “She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod” is a citation of Psalm 2:8-9: “Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for an inheritance... with an iron rod; you shall shepherd them”)

Parallel between:

Rev. 12:5b:

“Her child was caught up to God and his throne”

Psalm 110:1

“The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Take your throne at my right hand, while I make your enemies your footstool.’”

4. A Church still persecuted

“If the **world** hates you, realize that it hated me first. Remember the words I spoke to you, “No slave is greater than his master.” if they persecute me, they will also persecute you.

⁹ Cf. “The Son of Man” of *Daniel* 7:13 and the “The Servant of Yahweh” of *Isaiah* 42:1.

If they keep my word, they will also keep yours". (Jn 15:18-20) In the Gospel of St. John, the word refers to the **Evil One**.

*"The **woman** herself fled into the **desert**, where a special place had been prepared for her by God; there she was taken care of for **twelve hundred and sixty days**."* (Rev. 12:6)

The "**woman**", wandering in the desert of this world, will be exposed to the attacks of Satan for 1260 days. The desert is a place of trial. In the desert, God protects the persecuted Church. The desert is a traditional Old Testament refuge for the persecuted. It is also a journey towards the promise land.

"Remember how for forty years, the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert, so as to test you by affliction and find out whether or not it was your intention to keep his commandments" (Deuteronomy 8:2)

a. The desert is the traditional Old Testament place of refuge for the afflicted. In the desert, Satan moved his own alliance, to which he transmits his demonic power.

b. The **1260 days** refers to the time the "woman" was persecuted in the desert. (Rev. 12:6)

*"the woman was given the wings of a gigantic eagle so that she could fly off to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she could be taken care of **for a year, and for two, and a half-years more**."* (Rev 12:14)

The **1260 days** may mean "a year, two years, and half-year". (Rev 12:14)

*"there she was taken care of for **twelve hundred and sixty days**."* (Rev. 12:6)

“I will commission my two witnesses to prophesy for those **twelve hundred and sixty days** wearing sackcloth” (Rev. 11:3). The number 1260 may mean the 42 lunar months of 30 days each. It refers to the persecution of the pagans that trampled the holy city (Rev 11:2) or the blasphemous power of the beast (Rev 13:5).

The 1260 days may mean one year added with two years, a half-year and 42 months. It expresses a non arithmetic relation, but a qualitative and symbolical one. It designates a period of strong tribulation, of violence, of anguish, of calamity, and of death.

Michael is the archangel, guardian and champion of Israel. He won victory over the dragon. In Hebrew, the name Michael means “**Who can compare with God?**” (Hb 13:4)

5. Nevertheless a victorious Church

The consoling promise is that just as Jesus had defeated the evil one, so the disciples also would have the strength to overcome that which is opposed to the Gospel. “In the world, you will have trouble, but take courage, **I have overcome the world**” (Jn 16:33).

“I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21)

The Christians can defeat in their time the dragon in virtue of the blood of the Lamb and thanks to their personal testimony, persecuted until the end and lead to martyrdom. “To the one who wins the victory, who keeps to my ways to the end, I will give authority over the nations – the same authority I receive from my Father.” (Rev. 2:26a) “They defeated him by the blood of

the lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death." "So rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell therein. But woe to you, earth and sea, for the devil has come down upon you! His fury knows no limits, for he knows his time is short" (Rev. 12:11-12) "They will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called, chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

"The **Christians** will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called, chosen and faithful"

*"But the woman was given the two wings of the **great eagle**, so that she could fly to her place in the desert..." (Rev. 12:14)*

The **Great Eagle** is a symbol of the power and swiftness of divine help.

*"But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly to her place in the **desert**, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, two years, and half year." (Rev. 12:14)*

The **desert** is a place of divine protection. It is also a space for refuge. It is an intermediate stage towards Palestine, the place that God has prepared to make rest for his people (Ex. 23:30)

*"But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly to her place in the **desert**, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, two years, and half year." (Rev. 12:14)*

In the desert, away from the serpent, the "woman" finds the sustenance (Rev. 12:6-14), which can allude to the Eucharistic Bread, the new manna. (Jn 6:48-58)

Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus. (Rev. 12:17)

Although the Church is protected by God's special providence, the individual Christian is to expect persecution and suffering. All faithful Christians are called to obey God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus.

The New Jerusalem *"One of the seven angels who held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came and said to me, 'Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. He took me in spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.'" (Rev. 21:9-10)*

The winning historical destination, the New Jerusalem, is a celestial destination to the "woman". Her vocation is to become a **"woman-spouse of the Lamb"** (Rev. 21:9), the **New Jerusalem** (21:2).

"Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." (Rev. 21:9) "I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Rev. 21:9)

"I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race, he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God.'" (Rev. 21:3)

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

The new Jerusalem appears “on a great, high mountain”. (Rev 21:10)

“He took me in spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.” (Rev. 21:10)

There will no more be the sun and the moon the source of radiance, because “for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb” (Rev. 21:23; cf. Is 60:1-2, 19-20)

“The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.” (Rev. 21:23)

*“Rise up in splendor! Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth,
and thick clouds covered the peoples;
But upon you the Lord shines,
and over you appears his glory.” (Is 60:1-2)*

*“No longer shall the sun
be your light by day,
Nor the brightness of the moon
shine upon you at night;
The Lord shall be your light forever,
your God shall be your glory.
No longer shall your sun go down,
or your moon withdraw,
For the Lord will be your light forever,
and the days of your mourning shall
be at an end.” (Is. 60:19-20)*

The days of mourning are finished! "No longer shall your sun go down, or your moon withdraw, for the Lord will be your Light forever, and the days of your mourning shall be at an end." (cf. Is 60:20)

L. Cerfaux, an exegete, in his article, "La vision de la femme et du dragon de l'Apocalypse en relation avec le Protévangile" sees in Revelation 12, Mary who appears as "predestined to be the very beginning of the Church, and by the very fact possessing holiness... and the immaculate perfection of a world being born..., to a degree higher than all the saints."¹⁰ A.M. Dubarle, another exegete, in his article, "La femme couronnée d'étoiles", reaches a similar conclusion: "Even before the attacks of the dragon, the woman appears surrounded with resplendent glory...."¹¹

"As a new Jerusalem, she is a heavenly being, though still subject to the trials of earthly life. Here one can see the predestination of the Virgin in a brilliantly vivid description of its beginning. However this royal dignity does not prevent suffering and contradiction..."¹²

Mary appears at the culmination of the chosen people's history with a role in God's plan of salvation. Mary is the summit where the chosen people give birth to their God and become the Church.

¹⁰ L. Cerfaux, "La vision de la femme et du dragon de l'Apocalypse en relation avec le Protévangile." ETL 31 (1955), pp. 32-33.

¹¹ A.M. Dubarle, "La femme couronnée d'étoiles", *Mélanges bibliques...* A. Robert, Paris, Bloud, 1957, p. 518.

¹² Ibid.

II. Mary's Role in God's Plan of Salvation in relation to the Mystery of Christ

"Mary Immaculate, star of the morning,
Chosen before the creation began,
Destined to bring, through the light of your dawning,
Conquest of Satan and rescue to men"¹³

In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4) From all eternity, God chose forth a woman to be the mother of His Son and this woman was Mary. She was totally united with the Father in His plan of salvation for humanity.

A. As described from the Old Testament:

The books of the Old Testament describe the history of salvation and show the role of Mary as the Mother of the Saviour in the Father's plan of salvation.

- as the prophesied "*Virgin Mother*"¹⁴

Mary is already prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent which was given to our first parents after their fall into sin.¹⁵ Mary is the Virgin who shall conceive and bear a son, whose name will be called Emmanuel.¹⁶

¹³ A hymn from the Mother of Perpetual Help Novena Devotion entitled: "*Mary Immaculate, Star of the Morning*" by Fr. Teofilo V. Vinteres.

¹⁴ Cf. *Gen* 3:15; *Is* 7:14; *Mi* 5:2-3; LG 55.

¹⁵ Cf. *Gen* 3:15.

¹⁶ Cf. *Is* 7:14; *Mi* 5:2-3; *Mt* 1: 22-23.

- as the promised “*mother of the living*”¹⁷

At the very beginning there was Eve. Because of her disobedience, Eve became the Mother of death. Mary, because of her obedience to the will of the Father, became the Mother of life.

That is why St. Ireneus says in his preaching, “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith”.¹⁸ Comparing Mary with Eve, the Fathers of the Church call Mary “the Mother of the living,”¹⁹ and still more often they say: “death through Eve, life through Mary.”²⁰ “Just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also a woman contributed to the coming of life”²¹

Mary is the “Mother of the living”.

If we see our life, does our presence brings life to others?

Like Mary, who became the Mother of the Living, because of her obedience,

We ask ourselves: Are we obedient to the will of the Father?

¹⁷ Cf. *Gen.* 3:15, 20; CCC 489.

¹⁸ S. Ireneus, *ib.*: Harvey, 2, 124.

¹⁹ S. Epiphanius, *Nacr.* 78, 18: PG 42, 728 CD; 729 AB.

²⁰ S. Hieronymus, *Epist.* 22,21:PL 22, 408. Cfr. S. Augustinus, *Serm.* SI,2,3: PL 38, 33S; *Serm.* 232,3: col. 1108 – S. Cyrillus Hieros., *Catech.* 12,15: PG 33,741 AB. – S. lo. Chrysostomus, *In Ps* 44,7: PG SS, 193. – S. lo. Damascus, *Nom.* 2 in *dorm.* B.M.V., 3: PG 96, 728.

²¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 61.

- as the “*poor*” of *Yahweh*²²

Mary “stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receives salvation from him”.²³ Mary as the “Poor of Yahweh”, the Anawim. The Anawim are those whose trust and only dependence are in God.

Do we put our total dependence in God?

Do we trust enough God’s providence in our life?

That we have to be poor of ourselves, that we may rich of God alone, His love?

- as the “*daughter of Zion*”²⁴

Throughout the Old Testament, we can see the mission of many holy women and these holy women *prepared* for that mission of Mary....

After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in Mary, the exalted Daughter of Zion, and the new plan of salvation is established’.²⁵

God chooses those women who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Ester; and many other women.²⁶

²² Cf. *Zec* 13:8-9; *Ps* 149:4; *LG* 55; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 489.

²³ *LG* 55.

²⁴ Cf. *Zep* 3:14-17; *LG* 55; *CCC* 489.

²⁵ *CCC* 489.

²⁶ Cf. *1 Cor* 1:17; *1 Sm* 1.

God chooses us, not because we are strong, but because we are weak.

God chooses the weak to make them strong!

God chooses the poor to make them rich in His sight!

Like Mary, the daughter of Zion, we must learn what it means to weak, to be powerless, that the strength and power of God may shine in us, that we may allow God to use us with all our weaknesses.

The angel Gabriel greeted Mary with the salutation: *Hail! Rejoice!*

Chaire in Greek and *Ave* in Latin.

Gaude: be glad, exult, rejoice.

Gabriel's greeting: *Chaire!* "*Rejoice*" reveals an echo of the prophetic announcements of salvation to the 'daughter of Zion': from the Book of Zephaniah:

*"Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion!
Sing joyfully, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!"*²⁷

Mary is the unique creature who brings to herself the new daughter of Zion.

B. As revealed in the New Testament:

- as "*God's Choice*"²⁸

²⁷ *Zep* 3:14-15.

²⁸ Cf. *Gal* 4:4; *Heb* 10:5; CCC 488, 508.

– as the “woman” willed by God (*LG 56*)

Mary was the person chosen by God. God gave her message to Mary through the angel Gabriel and Mary accepted it. Mary said her “Yes” to God and because of that “Yes” of Mary, Christ was conceived in her womb.

“God sent forth his Son” (*Gal. 4:4*), but to prepare a body for him (*Hb. 10:5*), God the Father wanted the free cooperation of a creature.

For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, ‘a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary’ (*Lk. 1:26-27*).²⁹

Like what happened to Mary, God may be asking something from us.

Are we willing to say our “Yes” to what God wants in our life?

Mary gave total space for God in her life. She was empty of herself, because she is filled with God. She was nothing of herself, because God is everything for her.

Are we willing to say our “Yes” to what God may ask of us?

How obedient are we to the will of the Father for us?

- as “Full of God’s Grace”³⁰

²⁹ CCC 488.

³⁰ Cf. *Lk 1:28*; CCC 490.

– Mary as prepared by grace³¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that:

To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary ‘was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role’.³² The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as ‘full of grace’.³³ In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God’s grace.³⁴

We see this in the narrative of St. Luke’s Annunciation. Mary is called “*Full of Grace*”; the *Graced One*. In Greek: *Kecharitomene*. ‘graced’. St. Luke used the verb: *Charitoo*, which means ‘*bestowing grace upon... with joy*’. St. Luke wants to underline the action of God, who inclines favourably and with joy towards Mary, thereby rendering Mary a lovable and graceful person in his sight.

Therefore, the translation of ‘*chaire, kecharitomene*’ (*Ave, gratia plena: Hail full of grace*) could be: “*Rejoice, grace has been bestowed upon you*’ or ‘*Rejoice, O graced one*’. We see in this translation how Mary has won God’s favour! The source of the gift is the grace of God for Mary. It is the grace of the Lord, which is merciful, generous, faithful, loving and just, which was bestowed upon Mary, in view of her divine motherhood.

³¹ LG 56.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lk 1:28.

³⁴ CCC 490.

As we look on Mary, we see how much she loved the Father and how Mary has truly been loved by the Father. The Father loves her, the Father loves us.

“Remember that God loves you personally,
that God loves you uniquely, and
that God loves you immensely!”

The love of the Father is the origin of the history of salvation. The love of the Father is a love that from eternity is lived in relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. The love of the Father in the fullness of time is communicated to people, through the mission of Christ and of the Spirit. The love of the Father is the source of the history of salvation.³⁵

Mary, as the graced one, “*kechatomene*”, is the one favoured by love. She is the one who is rendered an absolutely graceful creature before the Father in view of the Son. Mary is pervaded to the depths of her being by the grace of the sanctifying Spirit, who has constituted Mary fully holy and wholly beautiful.

The love which determines the choice of Mary, a humble woman from an insignificant village in Galilee, is the same love which determines the choice of Israel and determines the love of God for us.

God loved Israel. God loved Mary. God loves us.

Being chosen, because of love alone, is grace.

“When Israel was a child I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt...”

³⁵ Cf. Pastoral-Missionary Study Aid for the Year 1999, The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*It was I who, who taught Ephraim to walk,
I myself took them in my arms..
I drew them then with human cords, with bands of love...*³⁶

The love which determines the choice of Mary is also the same love that determines the choice of the Church, God's choice for us. I am serving the Church now, not because I chose it. God chose me.

Do we respond generously to this choice of God for us?

Everything is God's grace, God's love for us!

Do we accept God's grace, God's love in our life?

The source of every gift is the grace (*charis*) of God, that is the goodness of God, God's love for humanity, God's loving tenderness. At the very moment of the annunciation of Mary, God showed His image to us. God is a loving God. We have seen the loving face of God who passes bestowing grace, moved by limitless mercy which restores mercy.

I repeat the words of the angel to Mary: "*Rejoice, you who were rendered pleasing in the eyes of your Lord by the Lord himself!*" Mary represents the Father's love for us. She represents all whom the Father has graced in passing, by whispering to our hearts in the risen Jesus the love He has for us. The Father may whisper too in our hearts: "*You have been made attractive and beautiful*" simply on account of a gift of love, without any merit!"

³⁶ *Hos* 11:1, 3-4.

- as the faithful “*handmaid*” of Christ³⁷

She freely and wholeheartedly “committed” herself with the plan of the Father in the work of man’s salvation.³⁸ Mary submitted herself wholeheartedly to the Will of the Father in her life for the mission that has been entrusted to her to be the Mother of the Son of God.

Mary surrendered herself. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: “*Mary did not question; she didn’t doubt. She humbly submitted herself to the will of the Father*”. Mary, therefore, the Handmaid of the Lord (cf Lk 1:38-48), received the Word of God in her heart and in her body, and gave Life to the world”, becoming by grace “Mother of God”.³⁹

The Vatican II document: *Lumen Gentium* tells us that:

“Mary devoted herself totally... to the person and work of her Son”⁴⁰

Mary responsibly present in the redemption of man.

Like Mary, the faithful handmaid of the Lord, we ask ourselves:

Do we wholeheartedly “commit” ourselves totally with the Father’s plan of salvation?

Like Mary, the handmaid of the Lord,

³⁷ Lk 1:38.

³⁸ LG 56.

³⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Virgin Mary in the Intellectual and Spiritual Formation*.

⁴⁰ LG 56.

have we wholeheartedly submit ourselves to the Will of the Father in our life?

Like Mary, who had been entrusted with a mission to be the Mother of God,

have we discovered God's mission in our life?

• **as the *mother* of God's Son**

Jesus "was born as to his humanity from Mary, the Virgin Mother of God"⁴¹

"Mary is the mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus, the God-man"⁴²

"Mary brought Jesus to birth, she fed him, tended him and educated him"⁴³

Mary gave birth to Jesus. Mary gave Jesus to the world.

Let us listen to Lumen Gentium no. 57, 61:

She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple... making the offering of the poor. She heard Simeon foretelling at the same time that her Son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword would pierce the mother's soul that out of many hearts thoughts might be revealed.⁴⁴

Mary must have said again her "yes" to God as she listened to these words of Simeon. When the Child Jesus was lost and

⁴¹ CBCP, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)*, 1 March 1997, 544.

⁴² *CFC* 545.

⁴³ *LG* 57, 61.

⁴⁴ *LG* 57.

they had sought Him sorrowing, His parents found Him in the temple, taken up with the things that were His Father's business; and they did not understand the word of their Son. His Mother indeed kept these things to be pondered over in her heart.⁴⁵

Mary was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. Mary shared in the sufferings of Christ. This is what we are called to live.

Like Mary, the Mother of God's Son: *have we totally received Jesus in my heart?*

Mary conceived Christ first in her heart, before conceiving Him in her womb. Mary is the Theotokos, she bore Jesus first in her heart.

Do we have Jesus in our hearts? Do we bear the presence of Jesus deep down in our hearts? Are our hearts totally empty for Jesus? If not, how can we be a Christoforos? A Christ-bearer?

- **as the perfect *disciple* of Christ⁴⁶**

Mary was present in some significant events in the public life of Jesus.

At the marriage feast of Cana, moved with pity, "she brought about by her intercession the beginning of miracles of Jesus the Messiah (cf. *Jn. 2:1-11*). She, during the preaching of Christ, "received his praise when, extolling a kingdom beyond the calculation of flesh and blood, he declared blessed (cf. *Mk. 3:35; Lk. 11:27-28*) those who heard and kept the Word of God, as she was faithfully doing (cf. *Lk. 2:19*).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. *Lk 2: 41-51*.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Jn 2:1-11; Mk 3:35; Lk 11:27-28; LG 58*.

⁴⁷ LG 58.

Mary is the first and foremost of all the disciples of Christ. When Christ called his twelve disciples. He was about thirty years of old. But Mary was before any other disciple was. She conceived Christ, and was united with Him at the very beginning of His life.

Mary lived only the Word of God and shared it to others. If we want to be disciples of Christ, like Mary, we must follow Jesus. We must live His Words like Mary. *Are we faithful followers of Christ, do we live His words!*

- **as the associate in Christ's saving work⁴⁸**

- “she conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ
- “she presented him to the Father in the temple,
- “she was united with Him in suffering as He died on the cross⁴⁹

Mary united herself wholeheartedly to her Son, as He gave up himself for us.

She was discretely always near her Son, and she was there also at the time of his death (*Jn 19:25-27*) and after the resurrection (*Acts 1:14*).⁵⁰

Lumen Gentium shows us Mary's union with Jesus on the Cross:

“The Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with

⁴⁸ LG 61.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pastoral-Missionary Study Aid for the Year 1999, The Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

the divine plan,⁵¹ grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth.⁵²

“Mary cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Saviour’s work of restoring supernatural life to souls.⁵³ We can see in Mary such obedience to the will of the Father.

• *as a “Sign of sure hope and solace for the Pilgrim People of God”*⁵⁴

“Maria, Signum Certae Spei et Solatii Peregrinanti Populo Dei:

*Mary is a Sign of True Hope and Comfort for the Pilgrim People of God”*⁵⁵

Mary is a Sign of Hope for the People of God. The Second Vatican Council states that: “The Mother of Jesus in the glory she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise she shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come.(cf. 2 Pet. 3:10)

⁵¹ Cf. Jn 19: 25.

⁵² Cfr. Pius XII, Litt. Encycl. *Mystici Corporis*, 29 iun. 1943: AAS 35 (1943) pp. 247-248.

⁵³ LG 61.

⁵⁴ CFC 1434; LG 68; Cf. CCC 974.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The conciliar text on “Mary, Sign of Hope”⁵⁶ reminds us probably of the text of Revelation 12:1ff, where it is described that “a great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars”.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, living in the glory of heaven in the integrity of her person, shines forth to the members of the Church as such “sign of true hope and consolation”, since she reminds us, without ceasing, of the happiness and the glory that awaits us beyond our earthly life, in the life eternal.

Mary will continue to be a sign of true hope and consolation for the Church, “until the day of the Lord shall come”, that is to say, until the Pilgrim Church shall reach the Triumphant Church and shall accomplish its earthly mission.

Mary is a sign of true hope and consolation for her children, who not only see in Her glorious state the sign of their future glorification, but continuously benefit from her help, because She in heaven “by her maternal charity cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home”.⁵⁷

We continue to walk with Mary, inspired by her faith and her life of witness to the gospel.

We cooperate with her in the Church and in the fulfillment of God’s Plan in history. With her love with which she reached out to all her children, we bring to completion

⁵⁶ LG 68.

⁵⁷ LG 62.

with her, day after day, our commitment of love and service, especially to our needy brothers and sisters.

We embrace them all in her heart, transforming for their sake, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, our life and our every deed into an unceasing act of love and offering.

We prolong in ourselves her maternity in the order of grace, to the benefit of all humanity in this present life and in eternity to come. We immerse ourselves in her moments of silence, which are moments of intense action.

We give our humble availability to the Lord, like Mary, and share Mary's delicate care for our brothers and sisters. We have the heart of Mary with which to love God and neighbors. We live the life of Mary and allow her to live in us and through us her desire to cooperate in God's plan of salvation.

Like Mary, how can we strive to become faithful children of our heavenly Father, giving witness to the transforming work of love, joy, peace, justice and holiness?

Like Mary, how can we become communicators of love, tangible instruments of God's love, revealing to others the Father's mercy and love, in the midst of this society, unbridled with egoism and selfishness?

III. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, La Naval de Manila and the Triumph of the People's Faith

"A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head, a crown of 12 twelve stars" (Rev 12:1)

What a fitting text to celebrate the Centennial of the Canonical Coronation of Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval de Manila.

The Church in the Philippines has always been characterized as **“Pueblo Amante de Maria”** – a People in Love with Mary”. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines has underlined this **“Pueblo Amante de Maria”** as “the outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines”⁵⁸

The Pastoral Letter ‘*Ang Mahal na Birhen*’ (1974) emphasizes that deep devotion to the Mother of God has been the strongest force keeping our faith alive.⁵⁹ Mary has been and remains the central inspiring force in bringing about a deeper evangelization of the masses of our people. Devotion to Mary is “the safeguard for the preservation of our Catholic Faith, and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization”.⁶⁰

The *Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (1991) pointed to “Mary as the Model of Discipleship”, as “the Church of the Philippines, as a “Pueblo Amante de Maria” – “a people in love with Mary” – will always continue to seek her intercession and learn from her way of life what we need to be as a community of disciples”.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Cf. Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines, *Ang Mahal na Birhen* (AMB), *Mary in the Philippines Life Today*, February 2, 1975, A Pastoral Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary. CBCP, “Mary Model of Discipleship.”, in the *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II)*, 20 January – 17 February 1991. CFC. 1997.

⁵⁹ Cf. AMB 67.

⁶⁰ AMB 72-73.

⁶¹ PCP-II, 153.

The outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines is to be a "*pueblo amante de Maria*" – a people in love with Mary.⁶² The typically "Filipino" approach to Christ, therefore, is with and through Mary.⁶³ Devotion to Mary has always been intimately intertwined with Christ. Marian devotion and piety seem co-natural to us Filipinos.⁶⁴ Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*, has greatly helped many simple Filipinos to remain Catholics.⁶⁵

Our love and devotion to Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario – La Naval de Manila has always served as a beacon of faith, hope and light in the history and culture of our Filipino people. The historically old, well loved and acclaimed image of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – La Naval de Manila will continue to live in the minds and hearts of every Filipino Catholics as our special love and devotion to her marks our Filipino life and history.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – La Naval de Manila leads will continue to lead us to the Triumph of our Faith as Filipino Catholics amidst the valley of tears of our social and political upheavals in our life situation today. The Saga of La Naval will always remind us of our Filipinos' love and devotion to her across the centuries and the triumph of our people's faith.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, La Naval de Manila, has always been present in the faith and journey of the Filipino People since 1593. We are precisely called "a pueblo amante

⁶² CFC 45.

⁶³ CFC 46.

⁶⁴ CFC 47.

⁶⁵ CFC 48.

de Maria – a people in love with Mary” because of the love and devotion of the Filipino people to Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario – La Naval de Maria.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, La Naval de Manila has journeyed with us throughout the past centuries, she journeys with us in this centennial of her canonical coronation and will continue to journey with us, Filipino People, until we reach the shore of our final destiny in the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation for us as “a pueblo amante de Maria” – “*isang bayan sumisinta kay Maria*”.

To the millions of Filipino Catholics in the past and in the present that have flocked the Virgin’s shrine in the old Santo Domingo Church in Manila and now in Quezon City, and have been enriched in their Christian faith through Mary’s intercession, we can truly say that the Filipino devotion to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, La Naval de Manila has been a “safeguard for the preservation of our Catholic Faith, and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization”.⁶⁶

The Filipino people, venerating the crowned image of Our Lady of La Naval, inspired by her shining example of faith, hope and motherly love, being a “Pueblo Amante de Maria” – “a people in love with Mary” – will always continue to seek her intercession and learn from her way of life what we need to be as a community of disciples”⁶⁷

The history and devotion of the Filipino people to the centuries-old Nuestra Señora del Santissimo Rosario – La Naval

⁶⁶ AMB 72-73.

⁶⁷ PCP-II, 153.

de Maria, being the biggest and most spectacular of Marian images in the Philippines, shows us that we are truly a *"pueblo amante de Maria"* and that Marian devotion and piety seem co-natural to us Filipinos.⁶⁸ Our special love for Mary has always been intimately intertwined with Christ. We approached Jesus through Mary and Mary leads us to Jesus. We thank Our Lady of La Naval to her many maternal intercessions that lead to the greater faith of the Filipino Catholics, especially her intervention in the battles called "La Naval de Manila" in 1646.

On the Centennial of the Canonical Coronation of Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval de Manila (1907-2007), we pray to our Lady that like her and through her intercession, we can grow in our faith as Christians. We pray that, like Mary, we can truly persevere and be faithful children of our Heavenly Father, giving witness to the transforming work of love, joy, peace, justice, and holiness.

We pray to Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval that like her, "the woman clothed with the Sun, on her feet the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1), we can be defenders of faith, communicators of love, bearers of hope, preachers of truth, and carriers of peace in the midst of the society enslaved by sin and selfishness.

Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval is truly a sign of sure hope and comfort for God's people for the triumph of their faith. If victory of goodness over evil will triumph in our country, it will be through the intercession of the Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady, Queen of Peace.

⁶⁸ CFC 47.

If victory comes to our land, "Pueblo Amante de Maria", it will be the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It will be the triumph of love over hatred, the triumph of light over darkness, the triumph of peace over division, and the triumph of goodness over evil.

God will wipe every tear in our eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, for the old order has passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

The triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary comes to our land, Pueblo Amante de Maria. There will no more be the sun and the moon, the source or radiance, because "for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb. (Rev. 21:23)

The Lamb will be our light. The people who once walked in darkness have seen a great light: the light of Christ and the woman clothed with the sun on her feet the moon and on her head, a crown of twelve stars, Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval.

To the glory of the Most Triune God and the greater honour of Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval de Manila.
Viva La Virgen!

Act of Commitment

In the name and to the glory of the Blessed Trinity, who has chosen you to be the Mother of Christ the Saviour, and the Mother of a humanity in need of salvation. Aware of our unworthiness, but confident of your motherly help, we, who through our Baptism have already immersed in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, place ourselves today entirely in your hands.

To walk with you, to cooperate with you in the Church in the history of salvation, to bring to completion with you, day after day, our commitment of love and service to our brothers and sisters. With your shining example of faith, with your life of witness to the gospel, with that love with which you reach out to all as your children, may we too embrace them all in your heart, transforming for their sake, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, our life and our every deed into an unceasing act of love and offering. And thus would we prolong in ourselves your maternity in the order of grace, to the benefit of all humanity in this present life and in eternity to come.

Grant us, O Mother, a deep knowledge of you. Immerse us in your moments of silence, which are moments of intense action. Give us your humble availability to the Lord, and your delicate care for the brethren. Lend us your heart with which to love; live through us your desire to save. Amen!

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary – La Naval de Manila, pray for us!

DOCUMENTATION

Mense Maio*

POPE PAUL VI

To His Venerable Brethren the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and other Local Ordinaries who are at Peace and in Communion with the Apostolic See.

Venerable Brethren, Health and Apostolic Benediction

1. The month of May is almost here, a month which the piety of the faithful has long dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God. Our heart rejoices at the thought of the moving tribute of faith and love which will soon be paid to the Queen of Heaven in every corner of the earth. For this is the month during which Christians, in their churches and their homes, offer the Virgin Mother more fervent and loving acts of homage and veneration; and it is the month in which a greater abundance of God's merciful gifts comes down to us from our Mother's throne.

2. We are delighted and consoled by this pious custom associated with the month of May, which pays honor to the

*Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on Prayers during May for Preservation of Peace, April 29, 1965.

Blessed Virgin and brings such rich benefits to the Christian people. Since Mary is rightly to be regarded as the way by which we are led to Christ, the person who encounters Mary cannot help but encounter Christ likewise. For what other reason do we continually turn to Mary except to seek the Christ in her arms, to seek our Savior in her, through her, and with her? To Him men are to turn amid the anxieties and perils of this world, urged on by duty and driven by the compelling needs of their heart, to find a haven of salvation, a transcendent fountain of life.

A Time for Special Prayers

3. Because the month of May is a powerful incentive to more frequent and fervent prayers, and because our petitions more readily find access to her compassionate heart during it, it has been a favorite custom of Our predecessors to choose this month, dedicated to Mary, for urging the Christian people to offer up public prayers whenever the needs of the Church demanded it or some grave crisis threatened the human race. This year, Venerable Brothers, We in turn feel compelled to call for such prayers from the whole Catholic world. Looking at the present needs of the Church and the status of world peace, We have sound reasons to believe that the present hour is especially grave and that a plea for concerted prayer on the part of all Christians is a matter of top priority.

THE NEEDS OF THE COUNCIL

4. The first reason is linked to the present historic moment in the life of the Church, the celebration of the Second Vatican Council. This momentous event confronts the Church with a weighty proposition: to adapt herself, in a suitable way, to the

needs of our day. On the success of this endeavor will depend, for a long time to come, the future of Christ's spouse and the fate of many souls. It is indeed a great moment which God has injected into the life of the Church and the history of the world.

The Work Ahead

5. Although a great deal of its work has been completed, there is still much for you to do, Venerable Brothers, in the next session, which will also be the last. The period which follows that session will be equally important. At that time the Council's decisions will have to be implemented. Priests and people will be called upon to combine their efforts so that the seeds sown during the Council may bear tangible, salutary fruit. And so, to obtain the necessary enlightenment and divine blessings for completing this great volume of work, We place Our hope in her whom We gladly proclaimed Mother of the Church at the close of the last session. From the very start of the Council she has given us her loving help, and she will surely stay with us until the task is finished.

PEACE IN JEOPARDY

6. The second reason for our appeal stems from the present state of international affairs, which, as you well know, Venerable Brothers, is extremely troubled and uncertain. The supreme benefit of peace is again being placed in jeopardy. Today we see tensions worsening gravely between nations in certain parts of the world, as if no lesson had been learned from the bitter experiences of the two world wars which caused so much bloodletting in the first half of this century. Once again we see men risking recourse to arms instead of negotiating to settle disputes between opposing viewpoints. Thus the inhabitants of entire nations are subjected

to unspeakable sufferings occasioned by uprisings, secret and treacherous warfare, and outright battles. These activities grow more frequent and more bitter each day, and could at any time spark a new and terrible war.

Plea to World Leaders

7. Cognizant of these grave dangers threatening mankind, and conscious of Our duty as Supreme Pastor, We deem it necessary to voice.

Our anxious concern and Our fears that these tensions may degenerate into a bloody war. We implore all those who bear the responsibility of public authority not to disregard mankind's unanimous desires to achieve peace. Let them try everything in their power to preserve the peace which is now threatened. Let them not cease to promote discussions and negotiations on every possible occasion and between men of every rank, so that they may forestall the dangerous recourse to weapons and the terrible misfortunes which result for temporal, spiritual, and moral values. Following the paths marked out by law, let them try to single out every sincere quest for justice and peace; let them encourage such quests and make them successful; let them place confidence in every sincere token of good will, so that the praiseworthy cause of right order may prevail over the cause of disorder and ruin.

Criminal Acts Condemned

8. Alas, in this pitiful state of affairs, We sadly note that there is very often no respect for the sacred and inviolable character of human life; that actions and methods are employed which openly flaunt the moral sensibilities and customs of civilized people. In

this respect We cannot help but raise Our voice to defend the dignity of man and Christian civilization; to condemn secret and treacherous warfare, terrorist activities, the taking of hostages, and savage reprisals against unarmed people. These are crimes which debilitate man's awareness of what is just and humane, and further embitter the hearts of the combatants. These crimes can close off the paths still open to mutual good faith; or at least they can place more difficulties in the way of negotiations which, if conducted with sincerity and honesty, could lead to a reasonable settlement.

Concern For All People

9. As you well know, Venerable Brothers, Our deep concern over this state of affairs is not dictated by any narrow self-interest. Our sole desire is to protect those who are afflicted with misfortune and to promote the true welfare of all peoples. And We nurture the hope that awareness of the responsibilities they bear before God and men will be enough to make heads of government continue their generous efforts to preserve peace; to make every effort to forestall, so far as they can, the obstacles posed to safe, sincere agreement by the course of events or human attitudes.

Peace, A Gift from God

10. But peace, Venerable Brothers, is not solely the work of man. It is also, and primarily, a gift from God. Peace comes from heaven. It will truly reign among men when we have finally proved ourselves worthy to receive this gift from Almighty God. Just as the happiness and destiny of nations are in His power, so also are the hearts of men. And so we shall obtain this lofty

benefit by praying to God; by praying with constancy and watchfulness, as the Church has been wont to do from her very beginning; by praying, in particular, for the intercession and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is the Queen of peace.

11. So, Venerable Brothers, throughout this month of May, let us offer our pleas to the Mother of God with greater devotion and confidence, so that we may obtain her favor and her blessings. Even if the grave sins of men provoke God's justice and merit His just punishments, we must not forget that He is "*the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort*,"¹ that He has appointed Mary most holy as the generous steward of His merciful gifts.

Plea for Mary's Help

12. May she who experienced the cares and hardships of earthly life, the weariness of daily toil, the hardships and trials of poverty, and the sorrows of Calvary, come to aid the needs of the Church and the human race. May she graciously lend an ear to the devout pleas of those all over the world who beg her for peace. May she enlighten the minds of those who rule nations. And finally, may she prevail on God, who rules the winds and storms, to calm the tempests in men's warring hearts and grant us peace in our day. What we seek is true peace grounded on the sturdy foundations of justice and love – on a justice which recognizes the legitimate rights of the weak as well as those of the strong; on a love which keeps men from falling into error through excessive concern for their own interests. Thus each person's rights may be safeguarded without the rights of others being forgotten or violated.

¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 1.3.

Call For Special Prayers

13. We ask you, Venerable Brothers, to make known Our wishes and Our urgent pleas to the faithful entrusted to your care, in whatever way you deem most suitable. We also ask that you make provisions for special prayers in every diocese and parish during the month of May; in particular, on the feast of the Queenship of Mary, let there be solemn public prayer for the intentions We have mentioned.

14. You should know that We are relying particularly on the prayers of children and those suffering affliction, for their pleas have special power to penetrate heaven and soften God's justice. Since this is a perfect occasion, do not fail to put repeated emphasis on the recitation of the Rosary, the prayer so pleasing to Our Lady and so often recommended by the Roman Pontiffs. It affords the faithful an excellent means of complying effectively and pleasingly with our divine Master's command: "*Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*"²

15. Entertaining these benevolent feelings and confidently hoping that all will respond to Our pleas with speed and readiness, We lovingly impart Our Apostolic Blessing to you, Venerable Brothers, and to all those entrusted to your care.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, April 29, 1965, in the second year of Our Pontificate.

PAUL VI

² Mt. 7.7.

Notes

LATIN TEXT: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 57 (1965), 353-58.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: *The Pope Speaks*, 10 (Spring, 1965), 220-24.

Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council, with its Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, and its Decrees on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*) and the Oriental Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*), has contributed in a decisive way to the renewal of Catholic ecclesiology. The Supreme Pontiffs have also contributed to this renewal by offering their own insights and orientations for praxis: Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam suam* (1964) and John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint* (1995).

The consequent duty of theologians to expound with greater clarity the diverse aspects of ecclesiology has resulted in a flowering of writing in this field. In fact it has become evident that this theme is a most fruitful one which, however, has also at times required clarification by way of precise definition and

correction, for instance in the declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973), the Letter addressed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church *Communio in notio* (1992), and the declaration *Dominus Iesus* (2000), all published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The vastness of the subject matter and the novelty of many of the themes involved continue to provoke theological reflection. Among the many new contributions to the field, some are not immune from erroneous interpretation which in turn give rise to confusion and doubt. A number of these interpretations have been referred to the attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Given the universality of Catholic doctrine on the Church, the Congregation wishes to respond to these questions by clarifying the authentic meaning of some ecclesiological expressions used by the magisterium which are open to misunderstanding in the theological debate.

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS

First Question

Did the Second Vatican Council change the Catholic doctrine on the Church?

Response

The Second Vatican Council neither changed nor intended to change this doctrine, rather it developed, deepened and more fully explained it.

This was exactly what John XXIII said at the beginning of the Council.¹ Paul VI affirmed it² and commented in the act of promulgating the Constitution *Lumen gentium*: "There is no better comment to make than to say that this promulgation really changes nothing of the traditional doctrine. What Christ willed, we also will. What was, still is. What the Church has taught down through the centuries, we also teach. In simple terms that which was assumed, is now explicit; that which was uncertain, is now clarified; that which was meditated upon, discussed and sometimes argued over, is now put together in one clear formulation".³ The Bishops repeatedly expressed and fulfilled this intention.⁴

¹ John XXIII, *Address* of 11 October 1962: "...The Council ...wishes to transmit Catholic doctrine, whole and entire, without alteration or deviation... But in the circumstances of our times it is necessary that Christian doctrine in its entirety, and with nothing taken away from it, is accepted with renewed enthusiasm, and serene and tranquil adherence... it is necessary that the very same doctrine be understood more widely and more profoundly as all those who sincerely adhere to the Christian, Catholic and Apostolic faith strongly desire ...it is necessary that this certain and immutable doctrine, to which is owed the obedience of faith, be explored and expounded in the manner required by our times. The deposit of faith itself and the truths contained in our venerable doctrine are one thing, but the manner in which they are annunciated is another, provided that the same fundamental sense and meaning is maintained": AAS 54 [1962] 791-792.

² Cf. Paul VI, *Address* of 29 September 1963: AAS 55 [1963] 847-852.

³ Paul VI, *Address* of 21 November 1964: AAS 56 [1964] 1009-1010.

⁴ The Council wished to express the identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church. This is clear from the discussions on the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. The Schema of the Decree was proposed on the floor of the Council on 23.9.1964 with a *Relatio* (Act Syn III/II 296-344). The Secretariat for the Unity of Christians responded on 10.11.1964 to the suggestions sent by Bishops in the months that followed (Act Syn III/VII 11-49). Herewith are quoted four texts from this *Expensio modorum* concerning this first response.

Second Question

What is the meaning of the affirmation that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church?

A) [In Nr. 1 (Prooemium) Schema *Decreti*: Act Syn III/II 296, 3-6]

"Pag. 5, lin. 3-6: *Videtur etiam Ecclesiam catholicam inter illas Communiones comprehendendi, quod falsum esset.*

R(espondetur): Hic tantum factum, prout ab omnibus conspicitur, describendum est. Postea clare affirmatur solam Ecclesiam catholicam esse veram Ecclesiam Christi" (Act Syn III/VII 12).

B) [In Caput I in genere: Act Syn III/II 297-301]

"4 – *Expressius dicatur unam solam esse veram Ecclesiam Christi; hanc esse Catholicam Apostolicam Romanam; omnes debere inquirere, ut eam cognoscant et ingrediantur ad salutem obtinendam...*

R(espondetur): In toto textu sufficienter effertur, quod postulatur. Ex altera parte non est tacendum etiam in aliis communitatibus christianis inveniri veritates revelatas et elementa ecclesialia" (Act Syn III/VII 15). Cf. also ibid pt. 5.

C) [In Caput I in genere: Act Syn III/II 296s]

"5 – *Clarius dicendum esset veram Ecclesiam esse solam Ecclesiam catholicam romanam...*

R(espondetur): Textus supponit doctrinam in constitutione 'De Ecclesia' expositam, ut pag. 5, lin. 24-25 affirmatur" (Act Syn III/VII 15). Thus the commission whose task it was to evaluate the responses to the Decree *Unitatis redintegratio* clearly expressed the identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church and its unicity, and understood this doctrine to be founded in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*.

D) [In Nr. 2 Schema *Decreti*: Act Syn III/II 297s]

"Pag. 6, lin. 1-24: *Clarius exprimatur unicitas Ecclesiae. Non sufficit inculcare, ut in textu fit, unitatem Ecclesiae.*

R(espondetur): a) Ex toto textu clare apparet identificatio Ecclesiae Christi cum Ecclesia catholica, quamvis, ut oportet, efferantur elementa ecclesialia aliarum communitatum".

"Pag. 7, lin. 5: *Ecclesia a successoribus Apostolorum cum Petri successore capite gubernata* (cf. novum textum ad pag. 6, lin.33-34) *explicite dicitur 'unicus Dei grex' et lin. 13 'una et unica Dei Ecclesia'*" (Act Syn III/VII). The two expressions quoted are those of *Unitatis redintegratio* 2.5 e 3.1.

Response

Christ “established here on earth” only one Church and instituted it as a “visible and spiritual community”,⁵ that from its beginning and throughout the centuries has always existed and will always exist, and in which alone are found all the elements that Christ himself instituted.⁶ “This one Church of Christ, which we confess in the Creed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic [...]. This Church, constituted and organised in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him”.⁷

In number 8 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* ‘subsistence’ means this perduring, historical continuity and the permanence of all the elements instituted by Christ in the Catholic Church,⁸ in which the Church of Christ is concretely found on this earth.

It is possible, according to Catholic doctrine, to affirm correctly that the Church of Christ is present and operative in the churches and ecclesial Communities not yet fully in communion with the Catholic Church, on account of the elements of sanctification and truth that are present in them.⁹ Nevertheless,

⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 8.1.

⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.2; 3.4; 3.5; 4.6.

⁷ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen gentium*, 8.2.

⁸ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, 1.1: AAS 65 [1973] 397; Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 16.3: AAS 92 [2000-II] 757-758; Notification on the Book of Leonardo Boff, OFM, “Church: Charism and Power”: AAS 77 [1985] 758-759.

⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, 11.3: AAS 87 [1995-II] 928.

the word “subsists” can only be attributed to the Catholic Church alone precisely because it refers to the mark of unity that we profess in the symbols of the faith (I believe... in the “one” Church); and this “one” Church subsists in the Catholic Church.¹⁰

Third Question

Why was the expression “subsists in” adopted instead of the simple word “is”?

Response

The use of this expression, which indicates the full identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church, does not change the doctrine on the Church. Rather, it comes from and brings out more clearly the fact that there are “numerous elements of sanctification and of truth” which are found outside her structure, but which “as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel towards Catholic Unity”.¹¹

“It follows that these separated churches and Communities, though we believe they suffer from defects, are deprived neither of significance nor importance in the mystery of salvation. In fact the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as instruments of salvation, whose value derives from that fullness of grace and of truth which has been entrusted to the Catholic Church”.¹²

¹⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 8.2.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 8.2.

¹² Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3.4.

Fourth Question

Why does the Second Vatican Council use the term “Church” in reference to the oriental Churches separated from full communion with the Catholic Church?

Response

The Council wanted to adopt the traditional use of the term. “Because these Churches, although separated, have true sacraments and above all – because of the apostolic succession – the priesthood and the Eucharist, by means of which they remain linked to us by very close bonds”,¹³ they merit the title of “particular or local Churches”,¹⁴ and are called sister Churches of the particular Catholic Churches.¹⁵

“It is through the celebration of the Eucharist of the Lord in each of these Churches that the Church of God is built up and grows in stature”.¹⁶ However, since communion with the Catholic Church, the visible head of which is the Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Peter, is not some external complement to a particular Church but rather one of its internal constitutive principles, these venerable Christian communities lack something in their condition as particular churches.¹⁷

¹³ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 15.3; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Communio notio*, 17.2: AAS, 85 [1993-II] 848.

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 14.1.

¹⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 14.1; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint*, 56 f: AAS 87 [1995-II] 954 ff.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 15.1.

¹⁷ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Communio notio*, 17.3: AAS 85 [1993-II] 849.

On the other hand, because of the division between Christians, the fullness of universality, which is proper to the Church governed by the Successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him, is not fully realised in history.¹⁸

Fifth Question

Why do the texts of the Council and those of the Magisterium since the Council not use the title of “Church” with regard to those Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century?

Response

According to Catholic doctrine, these Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery¹⁹ cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called “Churches” in the proper sense.²⁰

The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ratified and confirmed these Responses, adopted in the Plenary Session of the Congregation, and ordered their publication.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 22.3.

²⁰ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 17.2: AAS 92 [2000-II] 758.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 29, 2007, the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

WILLIAM CARDINAL LEVADA
Prefect

ANGELO AMATO, S.D.B.
Titular Archbishop of Sila
Secretary



Message for the End of Ramadan: Christians and Muslims – Called to Promote a Culture of Peace

**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

Dear Muslim Friends,

1. It gives me special pleasure to send you for the first time friendly and warmest greetings from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on the occasion of your joyful feast of 'Id al-Fitr, with which the month-long fasting and prayer of Ramadan ends. This month is always an important time for the Muslim community and gives to each individual member a new strength for their personal, family and social existence. It matters that all of us witness to our religious beliefs with a life increasingly integrated and in conformity with the Creator's plan, a life concerned with serving our brothers and sisters in ever increasing solidarity and fraternity with members of other religions and all men of good will, in the desire to work together for the common good.

2. In the troubled times we are passing through, religious believers have, as servants of the Almighty, a duty above all to work in favour of peace, by showing respect for the convictions of individuals and communities everywhere through freedom of religious practice. Religious freedom, which must not be reduced to mere freedom of worship, is one of the essential aspects of freedom of conscience, which is the right of every individual and a cornerstone of human rights. It takes into account the requirement that a culture of peace and solidarity between men can be built in which everybody can be firmly engaged in the construction of an increasingly fraternal society, doing everything one can to reject, denounce and refuse every recourse to violence which can never be motivated by religion, since it wounds the very image of God in man. We know that violence, especially terrorism which strikes blindly and claims countless innocent victims, is incapable of resolving conflicts and leads only to a deadly chain of destructive hatred, to the detriment of mankind and of societies.

3. As religious believers, it's up to us all to be educators of peace, of human rights, of a freedom which respects each person, but also to ensure increasingly strong social bonds, because man must take care of his human brothers and sisters without discrimination. No individual in the national community should be excluded on the grounds of his or her race, religion, or any other personal characteristic. Together, as members of different religious traditions, we are called to spread a teaching which honours all human creatures, a message of love between individuals and peoples. We are particularly responsible for ensuring that our young people, who will be in charge of tomorrow's world, are formed in this spirit. It is above all the responsibility of families and then of those involved in the educational world, and of civic and religious authorities, all of whom have a duty to pay attention

to the spread of a just teaching. They must provide everyone an education appropriate to his or her particular circumstances, especially a civic education which invites each young person to respect those around him or her, and to consider them as brothers and sisters with whom he or she is daily called to live, not in indifference, but in fraternal care. It is thus more urgent than ever to teach to the younger generations, those fundamental human, moral and civic values which are necessary to both personal and community life. All instances of incivility must be made use of to remind the young of what is waiting for them in social life. It is the common good of every society and of the entire world which is at stake.

4. In this spirit, the pursuit and intensification of dialogue between Christians and Muslims must be considered important, in both educational and cultural dimensions. Thus all forces can be mobilised in the service of mankind and humanity so that the younger generations do not become cultural or religious blocs opposed to one another, but genuine brothers and sisters in humanity. Dialogue is the tool which can help us to escape from the endless spiral of conflict and multiple tensions which mark our societies, so that all peoples can live in serenity and peace and with mutual respect and harmony among their component groups.

To achieve this, I appeal to you with all my heart to heed my words, so that, by means of encounters and exchanges, Christians and Muslims will work together in mutual respect for peace and for a better future for all people; it will provide an example for the young people of today to follow and imitate. They will then have a renewed confidence in society and will see the advantage in belonging and taking part in its transformation. Education and example will also be a source of hope in the future for them.

5. This is the ardent hope I share with you: that Christians and Muslims continue to develop increasingly friendly and constructive relationships in order to share their specific riches, and that they will pay particular attention to the quality of the witness of their believers.

Dear Muslim Friends, once again I give you my warmest greetings on the occasion of your festival and I ask the God of Peace and Mercy to give you all, good health, serenity and prosperity.

JEAN-LOUIS CARDINAL TAURAN

President

ARCHBISHOP PIER LUIGI CELATA

Secretary

On the Human Security Act

CBCP

We are all for the pursuit of peace and we condemn terrorism as a glaring obstacle to peace.

Republic Act No. 9372, dubbed as Human Security Act of 2007, signed into a law by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on March 6, 2007, is to take effect two months after the elections of May 14.

Many voices are apprehensive about this law on the basis of constitutionality and provisions that may legalize objectionable methods of fighting and quelling opposition to the obtaining government. Hence there are calls for bringing the Human Security Act to the Supreme Court for review and for studying and discussing further this law in its contents and repercussions. Some sections have caused lawyers and others to question the effectiveness of this law such as:

- The definition of terrorism in Section 3 is broad and dangerous. It may serve and create a condition of widespread panic.

- Section 26 allows house arrest despite the posting of bail, prohibits the right to travel and to communicate with others.
- Provision for seizure of assets in Section 39 and surveillance or wiretapping of suspects in Section 7, investigation of bank deposits and other assets in Section 28 – raise up many eyebrows of lawyers and others.

Since we as pastors have to look more into the morality of this law and make a pronouncement in that level, we feel that the atmosphere created by this law and its impending implementations calls on us to appeal to those concerned to review this law so that in consultation and dialogue we may have a law that is truly relevant in promoting the security of the nation and in the pursuit of authentic peace.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines:

†ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO, D.D.

Archbishop of Jaro

CBCP President

July 8, 2007

ARTICLES

The Theological Virtue of Hope

FAUSTO B. GOMEZ, O.P.*

After twenty years or so of teaching bioethics, I am totally convinced that the basic approach to study Fundamental Ethics and Bioethics is the one that combines both ethical principles and virtues. In a personalist ethics, or bioethics, principles and virtues fertilize each other. Both are needed: subjective dispositions and objective guidelines. We need, in particular good attitudes or virtues. After all, the goal of ethics – of any kind of normative ethics, including bioethics – is to make people good, that is, virtuous (Peter Kreeft, 1986).

Among the virtues, and for a Christian, seven are considered generally important: the four cardinal virtues (prudence,

* For a more scholarly presentation of the topic, see Fausto B. Gomez, O.P., "The Virtue of Theological Hope," in his book *A Pilgrim's Notes: Ethics, Social Ethics, Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005), pp. 15-41. See also chapter 13 of the same book entitled, "Truth Telling: Bioethical perspective," pp. 227-248. For part 4 (hope in hospital setting), see Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma, *The Christian Virtues in Medical Practice* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), in particular, chapter 4 on "Hope and Healing," pp. 56-71.

justice, courage and temperance) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope and charity). St. Thomas Aquinas says that these seven virtues make a true Christian. My role here is to share with you some notes mainly on Christian or theological hope – and partly also on human hopes.

I plan to develop it in four parts. First, I shall discuss the basic points on hope; second, I will analyze some relevant properties of the theological virtue of hope; third, I speak of hope and hopes in a hospital setting, and, finally I open a bit my heart to speak of my hope and how I feed it.

What is the nature of theological hope?

1. NATURE OF HOPE

As citizens of this world, Christians – with other believing peoples – are asked to give a reason for their hope (I Pet 3:15) – their hope in heaven! Still many Christians today do not seem to live as hopeful people and are not able to give a convincing reason for their theological hope. For them – and for many of us, perhaps –, Peguy continues to be right: “Hope, little hope, moves forward between her two big sisters, and nobody notices her.” Christian hope is as important – if not more, in this life – as her other two sisters faith and charity.

Although *faith* is considered the most basic virtue, and *charity*, the most perfect one, hope is, perhaps, the most necessary in our earthly life. It was said: “*Dum spiro, spero*” – as long as I breathe, I hope. Saint Augustine said it well: “the life of mortal life is the hope of immortal life.” *What is the answer to the real situation of human existence?* It is mainly hope, that is, the virtue of the

status viatoris, the virtue of the 'not yet', the virtue of the pilgrim! After all, "People cannot live without hope... People can live without faith and apparently many do. Many also live without love. But without hope, something to move us onward, we simply cannot go on" (Michael Downey, 1998).

What is theological hope?

Description, Objects and Subjects of Hope

Hope is a summary of the whole Bible. God is the God of hope (Rom 15:13). Biblical hope begins with the Old Testament, which is "the classical book of hope" ((Albert Gelin, P.S.S., 1959). The new hope of the Christian is "a better hope" (Heb 7:19), a hope rooted in God the Father, in Christ, our hope (I Tim 1:1), and in the Holy Spirit and his gifts (Rom 5:5; II Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14).

St. Thomas Aquinas speaks creatively of three kinds of hope: the passion of hope in the irascible appetite, moral or rational hope (human hopes) whose objects are attainable though our natural forces, and the theological or supernatural virtue of hope.

Theological or Christian hope is traditionally defined as *the virtue infused by God in the will, through which he/she trusts with full certitude to be able to attain with the omnipotent help of God eternal life and the necessary means to attain it*. Hope is "expectation," "waiting," for Someone – for God! It is, as Dionisio Miranda, S.V.D. says well in his book *Pagkamatao: Reflections on the Theological Virtues in the Philippine Context* (1987), not only "looking toward," but also "going forward."

What are the objects of hope, then? The object of hope is objectively God himself, and subjectively, the beatific vision, or the vision of God by man in heaven. The *primary material object of hope* is eternal life (I Jn 2:25), which is always a veiled object for the human person. *Secondary but also important material objects* of Christian hope are all things related to God, including the objects of our legitimate human hopes, like health, happiness, end of political and financial corruption, love, etc., but as related to eternal beatitude.

The *motive or formal object of hope* is basically God's infinite faithful and merciful omnipotence for humankind: Christian tradition speaks of the fundamental motive of hope, which is God's helping omnipotence that connotes two attributes, namely, the mercy and the fidelity of God to his promises.

Secondary motives or formal objects of hope are divine grace and graces, the instruments of grace, including the humanity of Christ, the sacraments, the intercession of the saints, etc. Also our graced good works as expressions of love. Our Lady, Mother Mary is an important icon of hope – and unique intercessor before God: Mary is, according to Vatican II, *a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God* (Vatican II, LG, 68).

Who are the subjects of hope? The souls in purgatory hope. *The pilgrim hopes!* We hope. The human person is a rational animal, a loving being, a child of God – and a pilgrim! He or she is a pilgrim on the way to a thousand destinations. Human life is a narrative of hope and of hopes – of hope in the singular (theological hope) and hopes in the plural (human hopes). To be authentic, human hopes do

not contradict but are implicit in theological hope! Human hopes that unduly attach us to a person, or a position or a possession cannot be genuine human hopes: they are obstacles in the journey of life – our pilgrimage to the house of the Father! The human person hopes not as perfect human being, but as a vulnerable, fragile, finite, needy human being. He or she hopes precisely because he/she is weak, or sick or potentially a sick person. With God's grace and love, and, above all, with the *Gift of Fear* of the Holy Spirit, she/he will be able to journey hopefully and courageously to heaven.

What are the main dimensions of theological hope?

Hope: Theological, Christological, Eschatological

Hope is hope in *God*, a hope focused on God as our end and as our omnipotent and merciful grace for the journey. God is indeed the God of hope (Rom 15:13), the God of promise (J. Moltmann), God in front of us (J.B. Metz), God the ultimate future (W. Pannenberg), and God the absolute future (K. Rahner).

Hope is hope in the *Blessed Trinity*. Christian hope is *Trinitarian hope*. God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit founds a new hope, a supernatural hope that perfects natural hope.

Hope is hope in *Jesus Christ*. Christian hope is a *christological*, and christocentric hope, a hope in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, who points to us in the Holy Spirit the good of our hope. We live in Christ (Col 2:6), He is our foundation (I Cor 3:11), our hope (I Tim 1:1), and the hope of our glory (Col 1:27).

Christ is the Lord who is risen and is coming! Christian hope is based on the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. The resurrection of Jesus offers to humankind a new *eschaton* that puts death to death, and, thus, opens the door of hope to all human beings in particular. Death is, indeed, the greatest challenge of hope. To believe in hope implies to believe in the resurrection of the body. "Only an eschatology that is drawn through the needle's eye of death and resurrection can carry a hope in the face of death itself" (C. Braaten). The love of God will prevail over our death. *Eschaton* is the final coming of Christ, the redemption of creation. It is our *telos*, our end and the end of the whole creation redeemed by Christ.

Christian hope is not only eschatological but also *temporal*. It is hope for our time and for all times in history. It is a historical and social hope. It commits us to the present, to the transformation of the present for the future.

Theologian O.G. Cardedal explains this powerfully. The human being lives in the present rooted in his past and oriented to his future. Life is love of the present, memory of the past and promise of the future. The full present is built on the wholeness of the past (we are grateful for the good past, and sorry for the evil past) and the wholeness of the future (we accept it in hope and anticipate it in love). We have to live our time in anticipation of eternal life.

Indeed, our hope is not just a pie in the sky: "If we hope for pie in the sky, can we ever really look for potatoes on earth?" "This hope is not a pie in the sky; it is hope for the resurrection of our potato-hopes;" "the eschatological hope must be hope for all other hopes, or it is not eschatological" (R. Jenson).

The Christian, therefore, hopes in the "here-after" and in the "here-now." Christian eschatology is undividedly transcendent and immanent, *anticipation of the future in the present and anticipating present of the future*. The integral salvation of the human person begins now! *Is theological or Christian hope also communitarian hope?*

Hope: Personal and Communitarian

Theological hope is not only personal but also communitarian, or communitarian and personal.

Hope is *personal*. The subject of hope is the human being and the act of his hope is his personal act; subject and act, however, are open to the other, the community and the whole creation. I also want to be saved, and, therefore, I have to be continually converted – to God, to others and to nature. Each one of us is responsible for his salvation. God gives the gift of hope to each person, to each believer so that each one may know the God of hope by himself/herself. (See Is 54:13; Jr 31:34; Ho 2:22; Jn 2:27; 6:45). Each one of us is asked to live his/her hope. Living our hope is not transferable. We can only live it with others and for others.

Hope is *communitarian*. In *Homo Viator*, G. Marcel asks: *Is not "I place my hope in you," the most authentic formula of "I hope"?* The most adequate expression of the verb "hope" is, without doubt, "I hope in you for us." Indeed, "hope is only possible at the level of the *we*." *I plus thou*, M. Buber tell us, equal *we*; in the *we*, the *I* and the *thou* are mutually enriched. Moreover, one can only encounter and accept a *thou* when encountering and accepting the

Eternal Thou.” Truly, “the hope in which we live is not a hope for *me*, but a hope for *us*” (J.R. Wilson, 1998).

Christian life is a life markedly communitarian. To live means to live in Christ who died for all (II Cor 5:15), and to live in Christ implies to live in solidarity: “One in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28), “we are members of one another” (Eph 4:25), people who help each other to carry the burdens of life (Gal 6:2). Jesus Christ is, as E.H. Schillebeeckx put it, “the primordial sacrament” in whom men encounter with God and with one another.” The authentic Christian cannot be so unless he or she lives with and for others, and, therefore, hoping with and for others. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II, 1991) writes: “The pilgrim is not only an individual, but rather an entire people.” It was said at the beginning: *Solus christianus, nullus christianus!*

On the way to beatitude, Christians hope for the redemption of the world (Rom 8:19-25). Their theological hope is not only communitarian, but also *cosmic*. In a sense, the whole universe expects a new heaven and a new earth.

2. SOME PROPERTIES OF THEOLOGICAL HOPE

The notes or adjectives that unveil the nature of Christian hope are many. For our part, we shall develop three significant properties of hope, namely *certain* hope, *patient* hope and *prayerful* hope.

Why is theological hope certain?

Certain Hope

Certitude is an essential property of Christian hope. Peter Lombard included it in his classical definition of hope: *the certain expectation of the future beatitude*. Thomas Aquinas tells us that certitude belongs properly to the intellect – to faith –, which assents firmly to truth, and by participation to the will – to hope –, which directs the person to his end with certitude – a certitude that participates in the certitude of faith. As trust in God, hope is unconditionally certain: God’s faithful and merciful omnipotence will not fail us! “I have not lost confidence, because I know who it is that I have put my trust in, and I have no doubt at all that he is able to take care of all that I have entrusted to him until that Day” (II Tim 1:12; cf. Rom 5:5).

There is certitude in our hope, but there is also fear! The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines hope as “the confident expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision of God; it is also the fear of offending God’s love and of incurring punishment” (CCC, 2090). From the part of the human person, the Christians’ hope is not certain, but mixed with fear and uncertainty.

Can we pilgrims be sure of ourselves? Saint Albert the Great asked himself when he was already old and close to heaven: *Nunquid durabo? Will I endure up to the end?* We hope then with sure hope (I Pet 1:3) as well as with certain fear (Phil 2:13), with certain insecurity (I Cor 10:12): “The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall” (I Cor 10:12). In fact, we are sinners!

What are the sins opposed to hope?

Sins Against Hope

The main sins against hope are despair and presumption (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2091-2092). *Despair* is described today as anticipated failure, as inward death, as a voluntary renunciation of eternal beatitude deemed unattainable, as “the reverse of a masked pride.” It is against God’s mercy.

While despair is a sin against hope by defect, *presumption* is a sin by excess. Presumption is described as “anticipated fulfillment,” as “an excessive confidence to obtaining the salvation of the soul by means not sanctioned by God.”

What are the other sins against hope? Jurgen Moltmann (1970) believes that the sin that threatens most the believer is not the evil he does, but the good he does not do; not his misdeeds, but his omissions. For Dionisio Miranda, S.V.D. (1987), remorse is one of the greatest enemies of hope: remorse can suppress or destroy hope. Another sin against hope today is loneliness: loneliness and lack of hope are twin sisters; absolute solitude, or despair, is like hell (Felicísimo Martínez, O.P., 2002). Other sins against hope: some current superstitions against hope, including religious, scientific and ideological superstitions (Segundo Galilea, 1988).

In his book *The Virtues of the Vigilant Christian* (1993), Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, quoting Heinrich Schlier, points out some of the signs of lack of hope today. These are, among others, the following: giving in to ill humor, impatience, uneasiness, bitterness; every failure in calmness, excessive talking in empty speeches, being scattered in a multiplicity of things, lack of stability in the decisions of

life. Cardinal Martini mentions others: lack of clarity, lack of objectivity, incoherence, and dishonesty.

Will I be saved? Will you be saved? We are sure of God's mercy and love, but we are not sure of our cooperation with God: the perseverance of our will till the end. Saint John of the Cross advises us thus: "Fear God with confidence." A loving hope does not allow fear to dominate us because it is also patient!

Why is theological hope patient?

Patient Hope

The first Christians were impatient. Why? It would seem that they did not understand then that the Lord was delaying his Final Coming! With patience, they learned to hope as believers in the Christ who came and is to come!

In our age, the main problem it would seem is not impatience but passive resignation or not expecting eagerly the Coming of the Lord. Perhaps, many of us Christians want to delay Jesus' coming. After all, we are too busy, perhaps, and not hungry – just like those invited to the banquet (Mt 22:1-14; Dolores Aleixandre, 1996).

Biblical hope is *patient* (Heb 11:30; Rom 5:3-5; I Th 1:3; Jm 1:2-4, 11). Our faith asks from us to be hopefully patient facing suffering. Suffering comes in many ways: as a personal failure, the chronic illness of a child, the death of a loved one; as injustice, violence, and destruction; as our own death.

The crucified Lord invites us and empowers us to accept suffering and to be sensitive to the sufferings of

others. Our suffering may become *redemptive suffering*, if patiently bore and joined to the sufferings of Christ, our Redeemer (I Pet 2:21). Thus, our “crucified hope” (J. Moltmann) may be turned into a resurrection hope: “I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). “Blessed are the sorrowful, for they will find consolation” (Mt 5:4).

Paul boasts of his sufferings: sufferings bring patience, patience that brings perseverance, and perseverance, hope (Rom 5:3-4). Christians “follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ, in order to be made worthy of being partakers in his glory” (Vatican II, *LG*, 41).

In theological perspective, *patience* is an important virtue, or good habit, for hope. It is connected with the cardinal virtue of courage or fortitude. It is the moral virtue – an ally of courage – that enables us to bear the physical or moral hardships of life with tranquility, for the sake of greater goods – of eternal life. Patience is a needed virtue to control impatience, anger, and anxiety. Indeed, *la paciencia todo lo alcanza* – patience attains all things (St. Teresa of Avila).

Perseverance accompanies patience: hope is patient and persevering. This is clear in the Old as well as in the New Testaments. It is, indeed, necessary to persevere till the end (Mt 10:22). The virtue of perseverance aids patient hope to be constantly patient up to the end.

Hope is patient and persevering and also joyful. The Christian marches through life *in spe gaudentes* – joyful in hope (Rom 12:12). Happiness is not the opposite of suffering: “It makes me happy to suffer for you” (Col 1:24).

Hope is an essential ingredient of happiness in this life, and joy is a note of hope: "You have hope, this will make you cheerful" (Rom 12:12). The root of the hope of happiness is humility. Jesus said that "if we do not become like children, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:3), that is, we will not know God as Father and we will not be happy" (O.G. de Cardedal). The hope of happiness is rooted in being like children: being "little," was the root of the glorification of Christ (Phil 2:2-11), and is the ground of prayer.

Is theological hope also prayerful?

Prayerful Hope

Prayer is essentially linked to hope. Prayer interprets and follows hope, according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, and only asks from God what is ordered to God – to eternal life. "Commit to the Lord your way, trust in him, and he will act" (Ps 37:5).

Evangelical theologian J. Wilson, in chapter six of his book *Gospel Virtues* (1998) entitled *Sustaining Hope, the Practice of Worship*, has important points on prayerful hope. According to him, the virtue of hope is shaped in the practice of worship, which is one of the most powerful witnesses to the hope of the gospel. In worship, we are trained to look in hope to the *eschaton* of God as the source of our being and the fulfillment of our desires. What we learn in worship is that God has already given us everything in Jesus Christ. Commenting on Isaiah, Wilson cautions us against the worship God detests, that is, a worship done with bloody hands and corrupt lives (Is 1:

10-17; Ps 73). In our cultural situation, Wilson believes that worship is vulnerable to some kinds of corruption, including the practice of worship as *mass therapy sessions*, turning worship into a *quest for entertainment*, and turning worship into a *political rally*.

Certainly, hope ought to be celebrated and nurtured in our liturgical celebrations, in the celebration of the Sacraments, in particular the *Eucharist*, which is Sacred Banquet, perfect Sacrifice and Sacrament of Sacraments. The Holy Eucharist, “the fount and apex of the whole Christian life” (Vatican II, *SC*, 12), is nourishment for the journey of the pilgrim and strengthens our orientation to the future – to heaven: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54; see I Cor 11:26).

Christian prayer is communitarian, and also personal: “When you pray, go to your private room... pray to your Father who is in that secret place...” (Mt 6:6). Contemplative prayer in particular led the saints to holiness.

Prayer is a mediation of hope. The best mediating prayer is the *Our Father*, which, according to St. Augustine, contains all that is related to hope. The Lord’s Prayer is, above all, a communitarian prayer. In it, we oblige ourselves mutually to fraternity. As St. Cyprian put it: “We do not call *my Father*, but *our Father*, nor do we ask him *give me*, but *give us* the kingdom promised to us.”

3. HOPE IN A HOSPITAL SETTING

As a theological virtue, hope is closely connected with the other theological virtues, namely, faith and, above all,

charity: faith grounds and implies hope, and charity gives saving life to hope.

As a virtue hope is connected with all other human virtues, in particular courage and patience. In a hospital setting, the needed virtue of hope – human as well as Christian hope – is also closely connected with truthfulness and compassion.

Hope and the Terminally Ill

Hope is the virtue that believes in the future – in a better future! Human hopes expect healing from medicine and Christian hope helps in healing, and transcends illness and death. Human hope is necessary for physicians and patients – it has a healing effect. Hope is an important virtue for the physician, the nurse and all healthcare professionals, who cannot give hope to their patients if they do not have hope. Patients, including the seriously and chronically ill, need hope, too. “Sooner or later, Job’s lament and his complaint are voiced by every seriously or chronically ill person: ‘Why has this happened to me?’ ‘Why now?’ ‘What have I done to deserve it?’” In spite of the apparent hopelessness of these questions, they “betray a certain hope” that has to be nurtured (E. Pellegrino-D. Thomasma, 1996).

How to confront bad news about our health? In their book *The Christian Virtues in Medical Practice* (1996), authors Pellegrino and Thomasma write:

Every person confronts hope and despair with his or her own unique combination of cultural, psychological, and spiritual mechanisms. We

who presume to help are obliged to discern which modality best fits our patient. This is far more important than taking refuge from the difficulties by invoking some abstract principles such as autonomy, paternalistic beneficence, or therapeutic privilege.

In the face of suffering, compassion is the most important virtue for all those near the patient to practice. True compassion includes helping the patient – the believer – strengthen religious or Christian hope. *Hopeful compassion* calls all to reach out to God, the God of hope and compassion, in *prayer*.

How about the terminally ill? Is hope still possible? Humanly speaking, some kind of hope is still possible: a hope to live the last days – after understandable denial and anger and depression – with certain serenity. Christian – or religious – hope can be most helpful in this humanly fatal situation.

Telling Truth to Patients

Why should patients be told the truth? They should be told because it is their right, because they need it to take appropriate decisions concerning their life and to be able to fulfill their obligations of justice, piety and faith.

Is the physician obliged to say the whole truth to the patient – always? Generally, yes. Concretely, it depends on the capability of the patient to take it. The patient's right to the truth and the physician's/family's obligation to communicate it are "conditioned by the patient's existential reality.

The communication of the truth must be an edifying not a destructive act. In this sense, it is obligatory to keep silent or to postpone the communication of the truth when its disclosure may produce a reaction of despair or rebellion in the patient" (Marciano Vidal, 1991).

The doctor's duty to communicate the truth does not mean to give the whole truth at once: "There is no obligation to tell the whole truth all in one instance. The timing of revelation remains part of the art of healing, and should never be deceptive or consciously misleading" (Charles Cavagnaro, 1995). For the sake of beneficence, the physician may use what is called his/her "therapeutic privilege."

Truth Telling and Hope

How does one tell the truth to patients? He/she tells it truthfully, that is, with virtuous veracity, which is respectful, prudent, compassionate – and hopeful! Yes, with hopeful truthfulness. Hope is the virtue of the pilgrim, of the vulnerable, of all humans. Hope, to be virtuous, must be truthful, too.

But, *how may one give hope to a terminally ill patient?* Certainly, not by lying to him/her, and not by giving false but legitimate hope: by leaving the door open to hope. The physician, the nurse say the truth but emphasize the positive elements, the rays of light! After all, medicine is an inexact science, and the physician cannot know everything! However, truthful hope cannot deny death when it is clearly at the door.

To help his/her patients cope with impending death, the doctor and the other healthcare professionals have to

accept death, too. They do not leave the patient and family to themselves but accompany them. The physician can still do a lot: not curing but caring, and helping the patient mitigate pain and loneliness, and, perhaps, praying with him/her and, thus, strengthening the greatest Christian hope: hope in eternal life.

Another important point! The health care professionals and the significant others try to act according to the best interests of the patient – according to the patient!

In closing this part, let us quote the words of Pellegrino-Thomasma:

These perceptions of hope are relevant to the patient's predicament of illness and the physician's act of healing. They embolden patient and physician (and other health care professionals) to use what natural powers they possess and what human science affords them. But hope also means that if these measures fail, as too often they do, all is not lost; God's love will bring us into possessions 'beyond imagination'.

We are ready to face the last question: *How is my hope?*

4. THE HOPE OF A CHRISTIAN

I have this habit: Every summer vacation I examine my human hopes and, particularly, my Christian hope. This meditation – or dreaming awakened – has helped me, I think, animate and revive my hopes.

Some books and texts continue inspiring me as a pilgrim to eternal beatitude. I still remember – and go back

to them from time to time – some books from my youth. In the first place, I recall *The Little Prince*, by A. Saint-Exupery. Every time I read the dialogue between the Little Prince and the Fox I am moved. The Little Prince tells the fox that there are no hunters in his little planet. Unfortunately for the fox, there are no chickens either: “nothing is perfect,” the fox comments, before giving his simple secret of life to the Little Prince: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.” On the pilgrimage of life, theological hope is essential!

I also keep treasuring the book *The Parables of Peanuts* (well, above all, the *Peanuts* comic strip) by Robert L. Short that helped me understand the good humor and the theology of Charles Schulz’s *Peanuts Family* of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy and other wonderful kids (adults). Once Lucy and her brother Linus are watching the rain fall behind a window at home. Lucy comments: “Boy, look at it rain... What if it floods the whole world?” Linus answers: “It will never do that. In the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow.” Lucy: “You have taken a great load off my mind.” Linus: “Sound theology has a way of doing that.”

I continue enjoying *The Way of a Pilgrim* and the Russian Pilgrim’s continued mantra: “Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me, a sinner.” Continuing conversion from sin renews our hope in God. I love *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* (by R. Bach), the winged symbol of my hope. For Jonathan, “It was not eating that mattered but flight – more than anything else, he loved to fly! He was always on the way

to a more perfect flight.” During his novitiate in flying, Jonathan was hungry but happy, because he was hopeful. “The trick,” he said, “is that we are trying to overcome our limitations in order, patiently.” Once his mob of birds, interested only in eating, tried to kill him. Jonathan could not hate the mob of birds with little hope. On the contrary, he tried to help those hopeless seagulls – by loving them! Jonathan said: “You have to practice and see the real seagull, the good in everyone, and to help them see it in themselves.” This is love, or better, loving hope.

Another traveling companion is *The Prophet*, by K. Gibran: “The physical consciousness of a plant in midwinter is not directed towards the past summer, but towards the coming spring. The physical memory of a plant is not that of days that are *no more*, but of days that *will be*. If plants are certain of a coming spring, through which they will come out of themselves, why can’t I, a human plant, be certain of a spring to come, in which I will be able to fulfill myself? Perhaps our spring is not in this life... This life may be nothing but a winter.” Yes, but, in hope, a hopeful winter! (Gibran said once that if we would confess our sins to one another we would laugh at our lack of originality!)

In a deeper sense, the *Sacred Scriptures* continue to be the best word on hope for us. One of my favorite texts on hope is from Isaiah: “Those who hope in Yahweh will renew their strength. They will soar as with eagle’s wings; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and never tire” (Is 40:31). The *Gospels* in particular continue consoling us in the midst of the evil in the world and personal weakness and suffering. They present a portrait of Jesus Christ as our hope, and of his resurrection as

the foundation of our hope. Indeed, what better inspiring words than these: *In Christ we live; in Christ we shall die, and in Christ we hope to live forever* (cf. I Cor 15:20-22).

In the Gospels, we learn about Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Lady of the *Fiat* and the *Magnificat*, our Mother, who keeps telling us "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5). My Marian devotion, an essentially Christo-centric devotion, includes the Rosary, a contemplative prayer through which Mary guides us "to 'read' Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message" (John Paul II).

The saints are excellent traveling companions. Their lives and works strengthen our Christian hope. Like any saint, *Saint Augustine* was a hopeful Christian – and writes powerfully and elegantly on life as a pilgrimage. St. Augustine's *Confessions* is every time I meditate on it a renewed journey to deeper conversion – and hope! "Happiness, does not consist in having more, but in needing less;" "Thou has made us for thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee"; "All my hopes are in your great mercy and nowhere else. O love that is my God set me afire!"

As a Dominican, *St. Dominic*, my other spiritual father, the apostolic and evangelical man inspires my preaching and my life: the great Dominic, "never asking for reward, he just talks about the Lord." Reading *St. Thomas Aquinas*, the apostle of truth (according to John Paul II), one always learns something new: Every truth, he writes, "regardless who said it, comes from the Holy Spirit."

I continue feeding my roots – and my Christian life – with the works of *St. Teresa of Avila* and *St. John of the*

Cross. Teresa is a perennial teacher on prayer. She advises us all: "Never leave prayer. There is always remedy for those who pray." She consoles me: "Let nothing disturb you. / Let nothing frighten you. / All things pass away. / ... God alone suffices" – *Solo Dios basta!* *St. John of the Cross* is a guide on the dark night of life: "*Oh noche que guiaste. / O guiding night! / O night more lovely than the dawn! / Oh night that has united / the Lover with His beloved, / transforming the beloved in her Lover!*"

Among other helpful modern authors I wish to mention as messengers of hope for me are *Henri Nouwen*, *Thomas Merton*, *Anthony de Mello*, *Paulo Coelho*...

I am a pilgrim! I am on the way to God, the God of our hope. To be on the way means that we come from somewhere and that we go somewhere; that we are sent and expected by someone.

Christian Hope is Theological Hope. Where are you, dear God? Someone said: "Lord, if you are in all places, how come I am always in another place?" (Madeleine Delbrel). I know that God the Father, the Good Shepherd, is looking for me, and I know that God, the Father of the prodigal son and of his elder brother, is expecting us!

Christian Hope is Christian. It means following Christ. Only those who hope to see the Savior – like Simeon (Lk 2: 24-32) – will see him. Only those who go to the places where the Lord resides will see him. *Where are you today, Lord?* He is present in the Holy Eucharist: "This is my Body... This is the cup of my Blood." He is present in the praying and fraternal community: "If two of you are united in asking for anything, it will be granted to you by

my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:19-20). The Lord is also present in prayer, including private prayer – vocal and mental – as an encounter with the Lord.

Christ is present in the words of the Sacred Scriptures, particularly when these are proclaimed in the Church (Vatican II, SC, 7): "Lord, your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). He is also particularly present in the needy of the world: "I was hungry and you gave me food..." "What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me" (Mt 25:31-46).

Christian hope is prayerful hope. My hope is the hope of a vulnerable pilgrim, of a sinner loved by God. Life is at times – as for St. Teresa of Avila – like a bad night in a bad inn. Some times, I feel I am in the desert, alone facing the aridity and the loneliness of life. I try to realize then that my hope is a hope on the way – on the way of Christ, on the way of the cross! My Christian hope tries hard to be a patient and persevering hope, to hope with others and for others – particularly with and for the poor.

Christian hope is hope of eternal life: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... God... will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore. The old things have disappeared" (Rev 21:1, 4). Christian hope is not just "a pie in the sky," but authentic eschatological hope: "I hope that I may arrive at the resurrection from the dead" (Phil 3:11).

Christian hope is hope in the present. It is rooted in the past, oriented to the future and lived in the present.

Theological hope places the past and the future in God's merciful and provident hands. It concentrates on the "present," on the "now," for God is the eternal now (Heb 3:7-8). "Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor 6:2). The Zen master said: "The past is unreal, the future is unreal, too; only the moment is real. Life is a series of moments either lived or lost."

To be truly hopeful then is to be faithful to the "now," the only thing in our hands: St. Therese of the Child Jesus writes: "I just keep concentrating on the present moment. I forget the past, and preserve myself from the worries of the future. Let us turn one single moment of suffering to profit, let us see each instant as if there were no other. An instant is a treasure."

Therefore, let us try to live the present fully. How? By doing what we ought to do with love, for the quality of our now is measured by our love – for God, neighbor and poor neighbor. To love, according to Segundo Galilea, is to do good in every moment and to share this good with others. In the end, he adds, the only good that will accompany us will be the love we have accumulated through the pilgrimage of life, the journey of hope. St. John of the Cross says: "In the evening of life we will be examined on love." Only on love – on hopeful love or on loving hope!

May we all have a hopeful journey!

Growth Through Suffering: A Reflection on Human Love

NICHOLAS TONTI-FILIPPINI, Ph.D.*

The secular world is perplexed by suffering, though at the same time, secular understanding can appreciate, as the stoics did, the sense in which suffering can cause growth. The heroism of enduring suffering and gaining strength through that endurance is much appreciated, even though not much sought at a personal level. Most of us are cowed by suffering, fearful of it and demanding of the technology to relieve it.

As a philosopher I see it as my task to try to understand the human condition, but as a believer my understanding is informed by Revelation, by the *imago dei*, and, in the light of that revelation, the idea of a Trinitarian anthropology.

Christians have traditionally understood that suffering can be an agent of growth through breaking down the effects of sin (II Cor. 4:7-18; Rom. 7), so that the life of Christ

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can be “manifested” or revealed through the believer. This process is seen as important for victory over the power of sin (Rom. 7:24), and for effectiveness in ministry (II Cor. 4:12).

Central to our understanding of the role of suffering is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The effects of sin have been conquered by the redeemer. His suffering has significance for us and through him our own suffering has significance. (Rom. 4:25; Rom. 6:1-11; Lk. 9:22-24; Jn. 12:24; Rom. 8:13; II Cor. 1:4-9; Phil. 3:10-11; I Pet. 4:1).

The major effects of “sin” in the sense of the sin of Adam and Eve are death and separation from God. That separation from God is not total, but from the human side our relationship with God is significantly marred. In Christ’s death and resurrection these two principal effects are overcome. Death has lost its sting. Our lost humanity has been restored. It is now possible for us to begin the process of sanctification which leads to eternal life and ultimately to the Beatific Vision. However, the other “effects of sin”, (2 Cor 4: 7-18), are still to be experienced. We still suffer even though we have been redeemed. But we are now able to deal with these “effects” of sin in the context of God’s love. The link between sin and suffering, in the sense of actual sins committed as distinct from Original Sin, is contingent. John 9:1-3 makes it clear that the blind man’s blindness is not the consequence of his or his parent’s sin. It is connected with the Fall of Man and also with the idea of innocent suffering (vid. Job). However, that unmerited suffering is an opportunity for the display of God’s goodness.¹

¹ Rev. Dr. John Fleming, personal communication 24/1/07.

Suffering is also seen as a source of wisdom, strengthening faith, or deepening our understanding. One who has trusted God in the midst of suffering has experienced faith at the deepest level (Phil. 4:10-12; Job; Rom. 5:3-5; Jas. 1:2-5; II Cor. 1:4; I Pet. 1:6,7).

Suffering gives purpose to medicine. The cry of those in need draws a human response – to comfort, to relieve pain and distress, to sustain and to restore function. That human response is an expression of the human calling to love. It is a shared humanity. For the believer, though, there is the added dimension that this is a human life that is called to communion with God. Our human response then also is a witness to God's love, the love that Jesus manifest when he healed both physically and spiritually. The Christian physician remains ever conscious that his patient has an immortal soul and that suffering has a meaning which finds expression in human love.

Crucial to our understanding of suffering is the fact that we are embodied. Human bodiliness participates in the *imago Dei*. If the soul, created in God's image, forms matter to constitute the human body, then the human person as a whole is the bearer of the divine image in a spiritual as well as a bodily dimension. This conclusion is strengthened when the christological implications of the image of God are taken fully into account.²

In the words of the Vatican II, "In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery

² International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. Vatican, 2002.

of man truly becomes clear.... Christ fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling".³

Christ's suffering is thus pivotal in our understanding of the place of suffering in our lives, the meaning of suffering and the fact that its existence is not a challenge to divine benevolence. The question, "Why do the innocent suffer?" is answered in the person, the life, death and resurrection of Christ. It is not God's will that we suffer, but the effect of sin from which he came to redeem us. The simple answer to the mystery of suffering is that it is a consequence of the exercise of free will, the same free will that makes us capable of love.

The call to grandeur and the depths of misery, both of which are a part of human experience, find their ultimate and simultaneous explanation in the light of revelation.⁴

The human vocation is toward happiness, but we need also a theology of the opposite of happiness – suffering. Part of this puzzle is explained when Jesus responded to the question "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"⁵

Jesus answered in a way that shows a dynamic relationship between love and suffering, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

That prompts the question, could there be happiness if there were not also the possibility of suffering?

³ *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 13.

⁵ John 9:2-3.

Jesus in the Beatitudes names suffering as the path to the Kingdom (happiness) – poverty, affliction, mourning, hunger, thirst, persecution and calumny.⁶ Servais Pinckaers describes suffering as the concrete shape of the problem of evil.⁷ Moral values are a response to suffering. Suffering and evil are the crucible from which knowledge of goodness shines forth. Evil is the absence of goodness.

In himself and in his healing works. Jesus took many opportunities to show us his goodness, his love.⁸ In love suffering finds dignity. Love gives meaning to suffering.⁹

There is a distinction to be drawn between a secular understanding of suffering and a Christian understanding. For the faithful believer, suffering is not cause for despair, but rather the occasion of hope, and it draws a response of love.

I find suffering perplexing. Suffering diminishes, thus the topic of my presentation, “Growth through suffering” is something of a contradiction.

Suffering diminishes a person by reducing and even removing the capacity for rationality that is the distinguishing characteristic of a human being. The romantic idea of the saintly hero or heroine uttering paeans of praise and thanksgiving, as her flesh burns or he is strangled by his own weight on the cross, is not my experience of suffering.

⁶ Matthew 5, Luke 6.

⁷ Servais Pinckaers, OP. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Catholic University of America Press, 1995.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 17.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 97.

Rather suffering tends to reduce us to that which is instinctual and animal as our bodies revolt against it, our reason takes flight and our capacities become limited by disability. The opposite of suffering is joy, peace and reason. Suffering attacks all three.

In recent times I have had occasion to seek comfort in Mark's account of the death of Christ. His cry, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mark 15:34) has puzzled me as it has puzzled many others. To me this was an expression of the effects of extreme suffering, but did Jesus as God fully experience human suffering? Jesus' cry could not have been a cry of dereliction, despair and spiritual separation from the Father. That would be sin and Jesus could not have sinned.

The Catechism explains that Christ, having taken on humanity with all its sins, even though He Himself did not sin, makes the cry on behalf of sinful humanity. Nevertheless, having established Christ's solidarity with sinners, God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" so that we might be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son".¹⁰

St. Justin the Martyr claims¹¹ that the final cry of Jesus is the *purposeful* invocation of a psalm, denoting an act of prayer and implying a claim to prophetic fulfilment, and this view was taken up by many others including Irenaeus, Athanasius and Jerome.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 602-603.

¹¹ Dialogue with Trypho c. 97-99 in *Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho* edited by RPC Hanson, Lutterworth Press: London, 1963, pp. 56-59.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words
of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
And by night, but find no rest.”¹²

The Psalm then becomes an expression of praise for God. Thus the reference to the Psalm is an expression of praise for the Father, of connectedness and prophetic fulfilment, rather than of despair and spiritual disconnection. Jesus’ invocation of the Psalm would thus be, as all his acts were, an expression of his boundless love, even in extremis and in agony.

In my own contemplation of Jesus’ final cry, I have felt that it is important that Jesus’ cry be understood as a reflection of his humanity. For Jesus as man, it would not have been human suffering if it did not humanly diminish him. My experience of suffering is that it suppresses capacity to reason. It reduces function. I wonder whether in his human suffering Jesus too experienced that loss of self.

Last April, I suffered some complications of chronic heart disease. I have already had bypass surgery and recovered, when a chronic inflammatory disease caused inflammation of heart and lung tissue. While being taken to hospital by ambulance my condition worsened, I was in great pain, and my heart and lung function were affected. In the ambulance they were debating whether to give me a morphine infusion or adrenaline. Uppermost in my mind was to have the pain relieved. The paramedic, (whom I

¹² Psalm 22:1-2.

thought particularly clumsy), dropped the morphine and stood on it making it unusable. They had stopped the vehicle so that both officers could attend to me. My wife who had been following by car, came to the window and as a doctor asked if she could help. I thought then, as I have on several other occasions, that I was dying. I wanted to reassure Mary, but could not speak. Afterwards when I reflected on what happened, I was disappointed that I had not been capable of prayer. Confronted by the prospect of death, I just wanted the pain to stop. All the beautiful prayers, all the meaning to which I have tried in my life to give practical witness, deserted me at the moment when they should have been uppermost in my mind as I faced death.

On reflection, therefore, I take great comfort from the cry that Jesus gave. Rightly or wrongly, for me it represents his humanity in his capacity to suffer and to experience the incapacity that suffering brings. His cry seemed to me to signify the human loss that extreme suffering can cause. Nonetheless, his cry is perplexing for theologians because it reflects human suffering in one who, according to St. Thomas,¹³ at all times possessed the beatific vision. It is perplexing because it reflects the mystery that Christ as God is omniscient but as man can suffer, even this type of suffering which seems to indicate the solitariness of suffering. His final cry expresses the solitariness of suffering in his desire for the Father.

Jesus' cry also has significance because it testifies to both the separateness of the persons of the Blessed Trinity

¹³ See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 9, a. 2; q. 10, aa. 1-4.

and their relationship to one another. In dealing with this topic, I particularly want to focus on Trinitarian Anthropology and to try to develop a fuller understanding of the nature of suffering and of its companions of hope and love.

When I found myself suffering and unable to communicate, I recall two very strong desires. One was to be free of the burden of pain. The other was to be able to reach out to my wife to both reassure her and to receive the comfort of her nearness and support. These desires were related. Somehow reaching out to her would relieve my suffering. Somehow I needed and wanted her nearness, not just that I expected death and wanted to say farewell, but simply I wanted her with me.

A puzzle for me is that despite being confident intellectually in my relationship to God, despite my prayer life and the great gift of prayer, in that moment it was to Mary, rather than to God that I turned.

But the fact that it was another that I sought seems both very human and very Christlike. In his agony, it seems, Jesus cried out to the Father seeking, expecting, hoping for his presence, his nearness.

My failure to similarly seek the Father reflects my human imperfection. That I wanted to call out to Mary does however indicate her importance to me in the desire for her to be with me at that moment that I thought was a moment of transition from this life. This has led me to meditate upon the humanly limited parallel that there is between persons in marriage and the persons of the Holy Trinity.

In this I want to express caution. The idea of marriage as expressive of Trinitarian love, has not been uncontentious. It is, after all, a view that was rejected by St. Augustine. In *De Trinitate*, he rebukes those who purport “to discover the divine image of the Trinity in a trinity of persons which belong to the natural human order: an image which would be realised in marriage by the presence of man, woman and child.”¹⁴

However, despite Augustine’s rebuke, Pope John Paul II in his Letter to Families writes,

“Human fatherhood and motherhood, while remaining *biologically similar* to that of other living beings in nature, contain in an essential and unique way a “*likeness*” to God which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love (*communio personarum*).

“In the light of the New Testament it is possible to discern how *the primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself*, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. The divine “We” is the eternal pattern of the human “we”, especially of that “we” formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness.”¹⁵

I am venturing into stormy waters, but I am inclined to think that this difference between John Paul II and

¹⁴ Augustine, de Trinitate XII. V.5 *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 50 (1968) pp. 359-60. cf. Marc Cardinal Oellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*. Michigan: Wm. B Erdmans 2006, p. 21.

¹⁵ John Paul II Letter to Families (1994) n. 6.

Augustine reflects a difference between Plato's rationalism and Aristotle's empiricism, a difference that is then reflected between Augustine and Thomas.

As a Platonist, Augustine represents the view that knowledge is *a priori* (comes before experience) and that is reflected in Augustine's notion of the immateriality of the intellect. It is too simplistic, but one might say that for Augustine, God is central and unity is obtained by rejection of the material and thus coming closer to God. For Thomas Aquinas, the Aristotelian, knowledge is *a posteriori* (comes after experience). Thus for Aquinas' the human person is a unity of form and matter made in the image and likeness of God. We can then attempt to understand God through understanding man as form and matter within the *imago dei*.

Also too simplistically, following Augustine, we can seek to understand man by understanding God and, following Aquinas, we can seek to understand God by understanding man. John Paul II, by encouraging a Trinitarian Anthropology takes us in both directions. We can seek to understand ourselves as men and women through understanding the Trinity, but we can also try to understand the Trinity through our experience as men and women made in Their image and likeness. In my own weak way, I am proud of my own desire for Mary's nearness and her empathy, even though I do not profess to understand why her nearness should be so significant to me. But my frustration is that my cry did not include the sentiment of Psalm 130, the *De Profundis*, which I have recited as others neared death and have hoped would be the wish that I would express. Why was my appeal for Mary and not for God?

Recently, Mary and I were at Mass with our youngest child, who is thirteen. Unusually, instead of a sermon, our priest asked us to complete a survey that had been endorsed by the Australian Bishops. The survey was part of some research into the faith and practice of the faith of attending Catholics. One of the questions we were asked was who was most important to us. Our son, who was watching each of us, was horrified that we both had written that God was the most important person in our lives. Naturally, with a child's ego-centredness, he thought that he was far more important to us than someone whom, as he said, we had never met. What a shock it was for him. Even more of a shock was the news that after God, we ranked each other as next in importance. He has three siblings and began to wonder if in fact he came a distant sixth in the race for our love!

His puzzle though is a more of a puzzle for me than I would have thought for when tested, like Peter perhaps, it was not God whom I found myself desiring but Mary.

Even more perplexing though is the desire for her empathy. The desire for empathy is a puzzle. Sympathy is more understandable. We can want someone to understand how we feel and even that they feel the same way about something. It is a sense of fellowship and community. But to desire that someone should actually experience our feeling, our pain, our joy, our love is something else. Why would we want them to suffer, if we love them?

Suffering is both solitary in that only I experience my suffering, but through empathy it can cause the suffering of another. One only has to consider the anguish of a parent

of a child who is suffering. In my work with teenagers who have cancer, it often struck me that the suffering of the parents was greater than the suffering of the child who actually experienced the illness. More than that, often it is the dying child who leads the parent in acceptance and understanding.

One can understand a desire of a spouse to shield the other from one's own suffering, to make light of it, to withhold the truth. But equally, one can understand a desire for empathy. It is a desire not just for community, but for unity.

Blessed Edith Stein writes on the importance of empathizing with another. It is through that engagement that we come to a deeper understanding of our own psychic reality.¹⁶ The desire for empathy, is a desire for understanding. Suffering is a moment not just for growth in oneself, in a stoical sense, but through empathy it becomes a moment of mutual growth as the "I" becomes "we".

A puzzle for a married person is that as human beings made in the image and likeness of God, our vocation is to love God. We are called to communion with him. But our vocation in this life is to give ourselves completely in love for our spouse.

A celibate may give him or herself to God in witness to the life that is to come of perfect union with God, but a married person is called to express that love in union with another.

¹⁶ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*. Washington: ICS Publications 1989, pp. 88-89.

In recent times, some who have been inspired by Pope John Paul II, have considered the relationship between the persons of the Holy Trinity as a model for the relationship between spouses. The basis for such a thought is in part consideration of the *imago dei*, the fact that we are made man and woman, each in the image and likeness of God, and, of course, the fact that Christ described himself in terms of the marital relationship, the bridegroom and the Church as bride. The marriage relationship is also described as a covenant modelled on the covenant between God and his people, and finally we have the image of Christ's own suffering and death on the cross as a model for human love, including the love that spouses have for one another.

All this points to the essential holiness of the marriage relationship and its capacity to be an avenue for expressing the *imago dei*. Through marriage we can aspire to the perfection of a love that is truly expressive of being made in the image and likeness of God, and marriage is a relationship that Jesus used to describe himself. As Pope Paul VI expressed it, "...husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives." In this, it seems, Paul VI gave the first authoritative recognition that couples could seek perfection through their relationship. In fact, I found in some of the manuals in use in the first half of the last century, this view was described as heresy.

As Christians, we well understand marital love as the willingness to endure suffering for the other, the complete gift of self, and the overpowering idea of imitating Christ's

gift on the cross in that giving. John Paul II describes the family as the environment in which man can exist for himself by the unselfish gift of himself.¹⁷

A puzzle for me is the place of empathy in marital love. If I am suffering, I draw strength from the presence of my spouse. I want her with me, just as I would want to be with her if she were suffering. But how is it love to want her to be part of my suffering?

Ultimately, we are helpless to prevent our own suffering or the suffering of a spouse. Suffering, illness, loss of capacity through disease or simply ageing, and finally death are facts of human existence. But that suffering is ameliorated by love. In some way, by participating in the love of another, we seem to participate in God's love. In the person of the other, and the communion of persons that we form with another, we encounter Divine love.

In his dying Jesus calls for the love of his Father. My own experience of spousal love at a moment of suffering and in expectation of death, seem to provide some insight into a possible understanding of the nature of the cry. Looking at it from the opposite direction, Jesus' cry seems to indicate his need for empathy, his need for the presence of the Father in his suffering.

As spouses, though, we are helpless to prevent the end of our relationships through death. Dying separates us. The relationship between spouses is thus not a substitute for a relationship with God. But the gift that God gave to Adam and Eve was the gift of love, a gift that humanly introduces

¹⁷ *Letter to Families*, n. 11.

God's love to them. In the persons of one's spouse is the nearness and intimacy of God and the capacity for a communion of persons which is ultimately our vocation. Our spousal love leads us to God by giving us the opportunity for love that ultimately is love for God, and in empathy we can be united to the other in the way in which we hope ultimately to be united with God.

In *Lumen Gentium* the idea is expressed that through the sacrament of marriage, couples signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church.

"The description of sacramental grace of marriage allows us to catch a glimpse of the fact that the spouse's mission goes far beyond the natural order of procreation and education of children. A certain classic representation of this grace tended to describe it exclusively in function of nature, emphasizing the perfection of nature and its ends as all there is to say about sacramental marriage. However, Vatican II underlined more the personal dimension of the sacrament and of conjugal love. It expressed sacramental grace in terms of an encounter with Christ and a consecration in the Holy Spirit "...so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of marriage. He abides with them...."¹⁸

¹⁸ Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*. Michigan: Wm. B Erdmans 2006, p. 130.

As Marc Cardinal Ouellet expresses it, "by their marriage, every couple marries Christ". Death then is not an end to the gift of love given in marriage, rather it is the fulfilment of the vocation of marriage, the call to love God. The love of one's spouse is the love of God in whose image one's spouse is made.

One of my daughters when she was of pre-school age took part in a nativity play. We watched her proudly as, dressed in a white dress, veil and wings, she waited with the other angels for their turn to enter the scene. The time came and she began her demure walk across the stage, hands held in prayer before her and head piously bowed. When well across the stage she realised that the other angels, stage struck no doubt, were not following her. She turned to them and with a voice better suited to the playground shouted, "Come on", and waved them towards her. In our household since, when asked to do something, my response is often to say resignedly, "You have the voice of an angel". It seems always to be the case that angels are sent to tell people to do things.

There is some parallel in this to the gift of a spouse. I guess were it not for the fall, we would have had no need for angels. But in the state in which we find ourselves, the notion that the love of one's spouse is the love of God has many resonances. The particular resonance that motivated this paper is the desire for empathy and its significance in understanding human love in the context of human suffering.

The cry of love is a cry for communion. When a frustrated lover stands alone bewailing his fate, his solitary

pain is not necessarily the unhappiness of she who for whom he hopes. Rather it is his own unhappiness, his own lack of opportunity to give and receive love.

We reason with him, telling him to move on, to find another because his affections are misplaced. She does not reciprocate. But he, in lover's grief, finds no consolation in that advice. In his mind she is not substitutable. There is an element of comedy in that situation, because there has been no mutual gift of self. But when a man similarly cries for the nearness of his spouse in his suffering, and she is unavailable, that is not comedy but tragedy. My grandmother, Nancy, recalls arriving at St. Vincent's Hospital to hear the cries of her dying Italian husband, "Nensi, Nensi, Nensi...".¹⁹

If in his suffering, a husband were to say, do not inform her, as I do not want her to be with me in my suffering, that too would seem to be tragedy. Yet it seems quite rational to say, I do not want her to suffer simply because I am suffering. That prompts me to ask whether there is gift to another in calling on her to be near in one's suffering.

One can certainly understand how deeply she would be likely to resent being deprived of the opportunity to be with him in his suffering. It would not be a consolation to her to say, "But I did not want you to suffer because I was suffering". She may well feel a lack of love in the

¹⁹ Ann Beeching, *Nancy Takes the Stick: An Autobiography of Contessa Filippini Australian Opera Pioneer 1896-1987*, published by C. Tonti-Filippini NSCAN Technologies: Melbourne 1988.

exclusion, and no benefit at all in her being left in peaceful ignorance. The sacrament of marriage is unity. The gift of love is not one-sided but mutual. It is a oneness that transcends the bonds of friendship. It confers a right for her to be with him in his suffering. For him to wish to leave her in peaceful ignorance would have violated that unity. He does not have a right to that solitariness.

Were he to say, "I preferred to be alone with God in my suffering," would that have justified the exclusion? I would think it would not. The nature of the sacrament includes Christ, but in and through the relationship. Jesus does not replace the spouse in the relationship. He is loved in the person of the spouse.

This has been a very personal reflection and obviously every married person will have a unique experience of the spousal relationship. However it does seem to indicate that while every member of the human family is called to communion with God, and every member of the human family is made in the image of God, and has the model of communion of persons of the Blessed Holy Trinity as the model for human relating, married persons are called to a spirituality that essentially involves the other. The other uniquely forms the bonds of empathy so that our spirituality becomes not "I" but "we".

With the other we express our union with the Divine. With the other we find not only empathetic joy, but also empathy in suffering as we experience the trials and tribulations of this life, finding, in the spouse, the gift of the person of Jesus, and thus experiencing a unity that is not only an expression of our vocation to be in communion

with the Holy Trinity, but expressive of the interpersonal communion that exists between the persons of the Holy Trinity. The final cry of Jesus to the Father seems to express both his solitariness in suffering and his desire for empathy and unity. That desire for empathy and unity is a model for the spousal relationship in our vocation to express our witness to a human nature made in God's image. That sharing in Christ Jesus in the person of the other enlivens each day of our lives together, especially through the joys and sorrows of love, companionship and parenting, but it has particularly poignancy as we face diminishment through ageing and disease. Jesus as lover, as teacher, and as friend illuminates our lives, but it is Jesus on the Cross who brings us together in empathetic union with each other, just as he sought union with the Father.

The Archdiocese of Palo Ten Years after the First Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly (FAPA)*

RAMÓN STEPHEN B. AGUILOS, MSEM, STD

PART I: INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE, GOALS-SETTING, METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Background

To understand what kind of an assembly was the First Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly of the Archdiocese of Palo (FAPA),¹ I bring you first to Article Seven of the conciliar

* This article is an excerpt from the paper delivered by the author during the **Archdiocesan Pastoral Consultation for Church Renewal** held at the Sacred Heart Seminary, Palo, Leyte on November 28-30, 2006. The congress commemorated the 10th anniversary of the First Archdiocesan Pastoral Congress which took place on June 18-22, 1996. The author is presently the Archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools and the Rector of the Palo Metropolitan Cathedral.

¹ The pastoral assembly was convoked by Most Rev. Pedro Dean, DD, who was then the Archbishop of Palo. Archbishop Dean's pastoral leadership in the said archdiocese spanned from 1985 to 2006, or close to 21 years. His resignation was

documents of PCP II. It describes that the Second Plenary Council was convoked “to take stock of where we are; to look at where we are going; to re-animate our life in Jesus Christ; to unite all things in Him.”² These were four important features of PCP II. I wish therefore to borrow these words and use them in this particular presentation.

If the PCP II was convoked to take stock of where we were then, so, in a similar fashion though smaller in scale, we in the Archdiocese of Palo wanted to see where we had gone at that time, and where we stood. Those who were participants of that assembly ten years ago could attest that it was the best forum for the archdiocese to understand where it was standing five years after the epochal Second Plenary Council of the Philippines and thirty one years after the historic Second Vatican Council. In that gathering, there were two main reference points for renewal: the Vatican II and – like a circle within a circle – the PCP II.

It’s now forty one years after Vatican II, fifteen years after PCP II and ten years after FAPA. Have we changed since then? Well, without batting an eyelash, I must say we have changed, we have grown. Our task now is to assess where we have grown, how have we changed, and how have we been changed by FAPA.

These questions are not new to us. For in 2001 five years after FAPA, we had the Fourth Archdiocesan Planning and Evaluation Congress, better known as APEC IV. We gathered together as a local church and answered to the best of our ability this question: “Of the FAPA decrees, which of them have been fully

accepted by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI on March 19, 2006. His successor, Most Rev. Jose Palma, was installed on May 2, 2006.

² Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council*, Art. 7.

implemented, partially implemented and not yet implemented?" All of you who were participants of that gathering do remember that in that assembly, we were presented the nine point agenda of the Philippine Catholic Church, better known as the "Nine Priorities." So the results of the assembly was the status of the Archdiocese in so far as to what extent have the FAPA decrees been implemented along with our own version of the pastoral priorities which the archdiocese needed to address either in the archdiocesan level or in the parish level as would be the case.³

In the *Memorandum* dated October 26, 2006⁴ and sent to us, parish priests, by Rev. Isagani Petilos, the PAS Executive Secretary, it stated that this assembly is convened for the purpose of "celebrating the gains of the past and redefining the thrust for the future." The terms "past" and "future" refer to an action that is to be done at the present. It is to refer to where we are standing now, for how can we look back at the past and look forward into the future if not in the present?

"To celebrate the gains of the past..." What a positive way of looking at the experience of the Archdiocese since FAPA! It presupposes that, notwithstanding the limitations and the difficulties, the frustrations and the disappointments, there *ARE* gains from the first pastoral assembly ever held in the archdiocese. It presupposes that the FAPA was indeed a great event of renewal in the local church. It presupposes that we have been receiving and celebrating that renewal initiated by Vatican II, further

³ Cfr. Ramon B. Aguilos, "Planning and Evaluation Congresses in the Archdiocese of Palo: History and Future," in *Ichthys*, 2 (2002) 149-164.

⁴ Isagani P. Petilos and Joseph Cesar Diamante, "Archdiocesan Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (APCCR)," *Memorandum* #3-06 dated October 16, 2006.

intensified in the national level by PCP II and brought to its local applications by the FAPA.

This general objective, however, is still a little abstract. So, to reduce it into a more operational procedure, the committee has seen it fit to focus on the FAPA decrees themselves and determine by means of a survey to what extent have the decrees been implemented since their official promulgation on November 30, 1996. That is our way of looking at where we are standing now as a local church.

The FAPA Decrees Reviewed

The decrees of the FAPA can be sourced either from the two published volumes after the assembly: the “Acts and Decrees of the FAPA” and, in a separate publication, the “Decrees of the FAPA.” I prefer to take the latter.

There are 83 decrees. Some decrees, by reason of their wide scope, had to be subdivided into further provisions. If we include these subdivisions, there are all in all 146 decrees, and I hope I have counted them accurately. In the words of Archbishop Pedro Dean,

“The decrees are of different nature. Some decrees call for strengthening of existing commissions or structures, others mandate for the creation of new ones. There are decrees which are exhortatory in nature providing some orientation. Again the decrees are directed to different persons: some to all the faithful, others to priests or to the Archbishop.”⁵

⁵ Archdiocese of Palo, *Decree of Promulgation in First Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly Decrees*, Palo, Leyte, 1996, p. 1.

In planning for the implementation of the decrees, Archbishop Dean further explained in his message, the exhortation of the late Holy Father Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millenio Adveniente*, was taken into consideration. This way, all activities were intended to conform to the late Holy Father's plan of celebrating the Great Jubilee of Redemption in the year 2000. Thus, for the succeeding years, the archdiocesan congresses followed the Church's themes of the then-forthcoming millennium. They were our evaluation and planning years, rightfully dubbed as APECs 1, 2, and 3. In 1997 we celebrated the year of Jesus Christ; in 1998 the Year of the Holy Spirit and in 1999 the year of God the Father. The Jubilee Year was celebrated with some grand style in Ormoc Superdome, Ormoc City. APEC 4 in July 19-21, 2001 was an assembly to dovetail the results of the National Consultation for Church Renewal held in Manila on January 22-27, 2001, an assembly that commemorated the 10th anniversary of PCP II. Those were exciting years, not to say tiresome, but challenging.

We go back to the 83 decrees. They are clustered into four areas: 1) Education and Christian Formation, 2) Worship, 3) Social Concerns and 4) Temporalities.

The first three areas refer to the *tria munera* of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. This would be the theoretical framework upon which, heretofore, our local church would build in organizing our parish pastoral councils and commissions.

TABLE 1
Headings of the FAPA Decrees and
their Corresponding Decree Numbers

<i>Title</i>	<i>Decree #</i>
Evangelization and Christian Formation	1-50
General Provisions	1-2
Archdiocesan Commissions/Committees	3-9
Parish Commission/Committees	10-15
Laity	
General Provisions	16-22
Clergy	23-43
Priestly Life	23-27
Priestly Ministry	28-34
Commissions	35-36
Seminary Formation	37-43
Catholic Schools	44-47
Religious Institutes	48-50
Worship	51-66
General Provisions	51-53
The Commission on Worship	54-57
The Parish	58-66
Socio-Pastoral Concerns	67-75
General Provisions	67-71
Archdiocesan Commission	72
Parish Commission	73-75
Temporalities	76-83
General Provisions	76-78
Archdiocesan Commission	79-80
Parish Commission	81-83

Following the model of Christ as **Prophet**, the Education and Christian Formation component offers decrees that lead the faithful to understand that the entire community has the responsibility for

promoting the teaching mission of the Church. Thus the decrees have something to do with education and formation of the faithful of all ages in the archdiocese. It has provisions in reference to religious, sacramental and general educational policies that have to be formulated in the parish, vicariate or in the archdiocese.

The Worship component which follows Christ's function as **Priest** has decrees that strengthen, or mandate the creation of, commissions and committees, whether in the archdiocesan or parish level, that provide meaningful worship using current liturgical guidelines. There are decrees for the institutionalization of Worship chairman/coordinator, the extraordinary ministers of the Holy Eucharist, Lectors, Servers, Choir Members, among others.

The Socio-Pastoral Concerns comprise the third component. With the model of Christ as **King** these are decrees that enable the entire Archdiocese in putting the social teaching of the Church into action. There are decrees that empower the members of the Parish to fulfill the Church's mission of love, justice, freedom and peace by communally responding, in an organized way, to societal and individual human needs. Some decrees create and/or promote, be it at the level of the archdiocese or at the parish, programs which strive to address human needs and achieve justice whether locally or in the broader communities of Archdiocese.

The decrees pertinent to Temporalities introduce the idea of "**stewardship.**" In these decrees, commissions in the archdiocesan and parish levels are created so that these groups plan, recommend, if not implement actions on church's financial support and the effective management and use of resources. Some decrees have to do with construction of buildings, deeds of donation, taxes, and other matters related to temporal affairs.

With the promulgation of these decrees on November 30, 2006 by Archbishop Pedro Dean, they were put in force across parishes of the Archdiocese of Palo.

The Summative Evaluation

I mentioned earlier that in the year 2001, five years after FAPA, these decrees were subjected to a Formative Evaluation. The objective of the congress was to determine whether the FAPA decrees were *fully implemented* (FI), *partially implemented* (PI) and *not yet implemented* (NYI). The respondents – or the participants – were required to explain their answers briefly. Whatever their answers were, all parishes were expected to confront the obstacles/barriers towards the realization of these decrees. Parishes put up their own action plans citing varied strategies to arrest the snags or whatever intervening variables there were.

Ten years after FAPA in 2006 a summative test was conducted. Unlike the formative evaluation conducted five years earlier, this survey was to determine what actually were done in all the parishes as expected from their action plans in 2001.

In the latter part of July 2006 Rev. Isagani Petilos, the PAS Executive Secretary, called for a meeting of priests who would comprise the working force of this consultation. Archbishop Palma and Bishop Abarquez were also present. During the meeting, the group identified strategies, pinpointed activities and created task forces in anticipation of this three-day assembly, the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the FAPA.

Tool Development

I was tasked to head the Tool Development Committee. The committee was to design an instrument that would measure

the extent to which the FAPA decrees were implemented in the archdiocese.

For this I solicited the help of professionals whose training and experience in research are now established and whose career has been along this field. I refer to the expertise of Dr. Ma. Bella Dumas, Dr. Felipa Aboy, Dr. Arlene Salvo and Mrs. Carmelita Sustento. These ladies – educators all – have shown competence in research-related interventions like proposal writing, instrument development, data analysis, thesis advising and writing for publications, aside from their teaching and school management skills.

What these tool developers did was first to categorize the FAPA decrees according to respondents involved. The groups of respondents were identified as follows:

- 1) Parish respondents (they were the PPC members from the time the PPC's were organized in the parishes across time)
- 2) Pastoral Action Secretariat (they were the heads of the WESTY commissions in the archdiocesan levels as well as some other offices pertinent to the office)
- 3) Clergy (this refers to all the priests presently working the archdiocese, regardless of whether they were diocesan or religious)
- 4) Men and Women Religious (they were the members of the men and women religious congregations working in the archdiocese)
- 5) Seminaries (the respondents were the seminary fathers and selected lay members of the seminary faculty)

- 6) Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Palo (the respondents were the heads of the Catholic schools now operating in the archdiocese)

Each of these groups had a cluster of decrees assigned to them. The following table presents these groupings and the corresponding decree numbers which they evaluated respectively:

TABLE 2
Groups of Respondents and the Corresponding
FAPA Decree Numbers

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Decree #</i>
1) Parish Respondents	1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83
2) Pastoral Action Secretariat	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 22, 25, 26, 67, 68, 70, 72, 76, 79, 80
3) Clergy	23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 70
4) Men and Women Religious	23, 24, 48, 49, 50, 70
5) Seminaries	37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43
6) Catholic Schools	44, 45, 46, 47, 70

It might be noted that certain decrees were exclusive for a particular group. Other decrees, by their nature, were inclusive, that, in effect, they had to cut across some, if not all, groupings.

As soon as the members of the Tool Development Committee were ready with the survey tools, they submitted them to the PAS Secretariat which took care of fielding the same to the groups concerned. Except for the questionnaire meant for the Catholic schools, all others were distributed by the PAS Secretariat. It was I who personally gave out the survey tool for the Catholic schools during a special meeting solely for this purpose.

The Survey Tool

The instrument especially designed for this survey made use of the FAPA decrees as the “materia”, to determine the extent to which the FAPA decrees have been implemented. The committee fashioned these 83 decrees and their “sub-decrees” into declarative statements which the respondents were to rate.

There were two parts of the survey: the *quantitative part* and the *qualitative part*.

The quantitative part used the Semantic Differential as a measuring instrument. Here, each of the respondents was made to indicate his/her feelings or perceptions on the continuum of the scale with respect to the idea presented – in this case, the implementation or non-implementation of the decree. The tool developers decided a 10-point scale, where 0 meant “*Not Implemented*” and 10 meant “*Fully Implemented*”. Under this method, the usual scoring procedures are such that the greater the score, the more positive the attitude (or feelings or perceptions).

For the qualitative part, the respondent was made to write a brief confirmation of his/her perception rating in terms of *Lights* and *Shadows* for the same item.

It was expected from the respondent that if his/her perception rating for a certain item was lopsided to the “not implemented”

side, there were longer “shadows” cast (or there were more lengthy explanations on the “shadow” department than in the “lights”). On the other hand, if the perception rating was tilted towards the “fully implemented” side, then the “lights” were longer than the “shadows.”

Treatment of Data

The summarized data per groupings were first sent to the Pastoral Action Secretariat. The office turned them over to the Values Technology and Research Center, owned by Dr. Ma. Bella Dumas who herself is the professional training and coaching Consultant. Dr. Dumas was also a member of the Tool Development Committee. It was in this office that these data were subjected to statistical treatment, were interpreted and analyzed. The results were forwarded to me for the final drafting and eventual presentation to this body.

PART II: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Description of the Respondents

When we refer to “respondents”, we are not referring directly to the individuals who participated in the study. We are referring here to the clusters of individuals. Because we wanted to gather as much information as we could pertinent to the extent to which the decrees were implemented and what joys and pains each group encountered in doing so, the research group decided to take the entire population instead of just drawing samples. However, the “entire population” here does not mean individuals but clusters of individuals like the Parish Pastoral Councils, the

presbyterium, the member school administrators in the Catholic Schools Association in the Archdiocese of Palo (CSAAP), the Seminary Formators, and the priests in the Pastoral Action Secretariat.

So even if we only were given the perception of the group arrived at by consensus, we recognize the fact that individuals were involved in this study but not as individuals but as members of a cluster. Like in many researches, we expected some non-response. But that was expected. The number of those who participated far outweighed those who did not.

The table hereunder shows the list of parishes that participated in the research.

TABLE 3
Table Showing the List of Parishes that
Participated in the Research

PALO VICARIATE	1. Palo Metropolitan Cathedral, Palo, Leyte
	2. Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish Pawing, Palo, Leyte
	3. San Joaquin Parish San Joaquin, Palo, Leyte
	4. Assumption of Our Lady of Parish, Tanauan, Leyte
	5. St. Michael Archangel Parish, Tolosa, Leyte
	6. St. Anne Parish, Sta. Fe, Leyte
	7. St. Vincent Ferrer Parish, Canramos, Tanauan, Leyte
	8. St. Elizabeth of Hungary Mission Station, Libertad, Palo, Leyte
	9. St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Pastrana, Leyte
	10. Divine Lord and Savior Quasi-Parish San Salvador, Tanauan

**TACLOBAN
VICARIATE**

1. Sto. Niño Parish, Tacloban City
2. Sacred Heart Parish, Tacloban City
3. Perpetual Help Parish, Tacloban City
4. St. Raphael Archangel Parish, Sagkahan, Tacloban City
5. St. Joseph Parish, San Jose, Tacloban City
6. Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, V&G Subd., Tacloban City
7. Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Abucay, Tacloban City
8. St. Jude Parish, PHHC, Tacloban City
9. St. Vincent Ferrer Parish, Babatngon, Leyte
10. San Jose De Malibago Quasi-Parish, Malibago, Babatngon, Leyte
11. Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Mission Station, Marasbaras, Tacloban City
12. Virgen de La Candelaria Mission Station, Bagacay, PHHC, Tacloban City
13. San Josemaría Escrivá Mission Station, Apitong, Tacloban City

**CARIGARA
VICARIATE**

1. Holy Cross Parish, Carigara, Leyte
2. St. Francis of Assissi Parish, Jugaban, Carigara, Leyte
3. St. Joseph Parish, Barugo, Leyte

**ABUYOG
VICARIATE**

1. St. Francis Xavier Parish, Abuyog, Leyte
2. Alliance of Two Hearts Parish, Balocawehay, Abuyog, Leyte
3. St. Michael Archangel Parish, Mahaplag, Leyte
4. St. Michael Archangel Parish, Javier, Leyte
5. St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Mayorga, Leyte
6. Our Lady of Refuge Parish, Dulag, Leyte
7. St. Joseph Parish, San Jose, Dulag, Leyte
8. Blessed Pedro Calungsod Mission Station, Sta. Fe, Abuyog, Leyte

BURAUEN
VICARIATE

1. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Burauen, Leyte
2. St. Joseph Parish, Dagami, Leyte
3. St. Pascual Baylon Parish, Guinarona, Dagami, Leyte
4. St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Tabontabon, Leyte
5. St. Roch Parish, Julita, Leyte

ORMOC
VICARIATE

1. Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, Ormoc City
2. St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Linao, Ormoc City
3. Immaculate Conception Parish, Ipil, Ormoc City
4. St. James the Apostle Parish, Albueria, Leyte
5. Mother of the Redeemer Parish, Cogon, Ormoc City
6. San Lorenzo Ruiz De Manila Parish, Simangan, Ormoc City
7. Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Valencia, Ormoc City
8. Sto. Niño Mission Station, Damulaan, Albueria, Leyte

PALOMPON
VICARIATE

1. St. Francis Xavier Parish, Palompon, Leyte
2. St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Cantuha-On, Palompon, Leyte
3. Holy Spirit Chaplaincy, LIDE, Isabel, Leyte
4. St. Augustine Parish, Matlang, Isabel, Leyte
5. Holy Child Jesus Parish, Villaba, Leyte
6. St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Matag-ob, Leyte

The following Religious communities also participated in the research:

TABLE 4
Table Showing the List of Religious Congregations
that Participated in the Research

WOMEN	1. Daughters of Charity (DC)
CONGREGATIONS	2. Daughters of St. Therese (DST)
	3. Franciscan Handmaids of the Lord (FHL)
	4. Daughters of St. Paul (FSP)
	5. Franciscan Sisters Pro Infante et Familia (FSPif)
	6. Missionaries of Charity (MC)
	7. Oblates of Notre Dame (OND)
	8. Order of St. Benedict (OSB)
	9. Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration (OSF)
	10. Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM)
	11. Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God (SMIC)
MEN	Order of the Discalced Augustinians (OAD)
CONGREGATION	

The following schools were represented by their administrators:

TABLE 5
Table Showing the List of Schools that
Participated in the Research

1. Ace Learning Center, Palompon, Leyte
2. Assumption Academy, Tanauan, Leyte
3. Colegio de San Francisco Javier, Palompon, Leyte
4. Holy Child Parish School of Isabel, Isabel, Leyte
5. Holy Cross College of Carigara, Carigara, Leyte
6. Holy Infant College, Tacloban City
7. Holy Trinity College, Alang-Alang, Leyte
8. Notre Dame of Abuyog, Abuyog, Leyte

9. Notre Dame of Jaro, Jaro, Leyte
10. Nuestra Sra. del Refugio Parochial School, Inc., Dulag, Leyte
11. Sacred Heart College of Tacloban City, Inc., Tacloban City
12. Sacred Heart Seminary, Palo, Leyte
13. San Lorenzo-Immaculate Conception Parochial School Ormoc, Inc., Ormoc City
14. St. Joseph High School of Dagami, Dagami, Leyte
15. St. Therese Christian Development Center Foundation, Inc., Tacloban City
16. St. Vincent Ferrer Academy, Inc., Babatngon, Leyte
17. St. Therese Educational Center of Leyte, Tacloban City
18. St. Therese Educational Foundation of Tacloban, Inc., Tacloban City
19. St. Michael Development Center, Tolosa, Leyte

For the Presbyterium, over a hundred priests answered the inventory, while there were nine (9) Seminary Fathers who answered the questionnaire for the Seminaries.

Data Collection

In research, data retrieval equivalent to 60% is already satisfactory for valid conclusions to be made. In this research, more than 80% retrieval was arrived at although of course we had to cram to do the analysis because the data were not submitted as scheduled. Since we did not want to lose the wealth of information which we got from their responses. we had to re-compute over and over again as soon as new data came in. Thanks to the help of technology. We were operating virtually – emails, text messages, air parcels and the like.

So at this point we would like to honor all those who gave this survey their time because without them this report would not have been possible.

Parameters Set for Data Interpretation

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 12 was used in the processing of the perceptions of the different groups relative to the extent to which the decrees were implemented. The following distribution characteristics were obtained in order to better capture this.

Mean – to show the average perception per item

Variance – to show the degree of spread in the perceptions among the different clusters of respondents (this can detect whether the “0” responses were merely “Outliers” from the general perception)

Minimum – to show the lowest response given to an item

Maximum – to show the highest response given to an item.

These quantitative measures were then given qualitative equivalents in order to better appreciate the data. The equivalents are as follows:

0	Not Implemented
1 to 3	Barely Implemented
>3 to 6	Moderately Implemented
>6 to 9	Highly Implemented
>9 to 10	Fully Implemented

The qualitative data on the “Lights and Shadows” per item were first encoded straight from the raw data and were further summarized since some issues turned out to be common among the respondents.

(Author’s Note: Several tables are presented in this part of the paper. They show the tables of mean scores, variances,

minimum and maximum scores. Each table represents the results per group-classification. Also there are tables that contain the summary of the lights and shadows expressed by the respondents per grouping. For space-saving purposes these tables are omitted here).

The table hereunder shows a summary of the extent to which the decrees were implemented as far as the qualitative categories are concerned.

TABLE 6
Summary of Perceptions on the Extent to which
the FAPA Decrees were Implemented

<i>Extent of Implementation</i>	<i>Decree Numbers</i>
Barely Implemented (Average = 1 to 3)	74, 26.1, 42, 74, 75
Moderately Implemented (Average = >3 to 6)	12, 15, 18, 32, 26, 36.1, 26, 55, 56, 57.1, 58, 73.1, 73.2, 73.3, 81.4.
Highly Implemented (Average = >6 to 9)	1, 2, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 23.1, 23.3, 23.4, 23.5, 24, 24.1, 24.2, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 35.1, 38, 39, 40, 41, 48, 49, 50, 70, 52, 54, 59, 61, 62, 62.1, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 77, 78, 81, 81.1, 81.2, 81.3, 82, 83
Fully Implemented	23.2, 43, 51, 53, 60

Findings of the Study

1. Five (5) decrees were “Barely implemented”. These are the decrees on

- the establishment of the Parish Committee on Mass Media.
 - extending support for a Priest on sabbatical leave
 - a functional Seminary Board
 - ecological concerns
2. Sixteen (16) decrees were “moderately implemented”. These are the decrees on
- Establishment of the Parish Biblical Committee, Parish Youth Commission, Committee on Liturgical Music, Committee on Liturgical Art, Committee on Social Services, Management Information Systems for the Parish
 - Professionals giving their special talents and skills to help communities in the Parish
 - Concerns on the out-of-school youth
 - Translation of liturgical books into the vernacular
 - Conduct of regular liturgical formation seminars, programs for social awareness and action
 - a functional Personnel Board to take care of the assignment of Priests
 - allowing Priests to go on sabbatical leave every after five years of service in the Archdiocese
3. Fifty-nine decrees were “highly implemented”. These are the decrees on
- evangelization and Christian formation
 - conduct of Priestly life
 - ongoing formation of the Clergy
 - support for Priests to grow and persevere in their vocation
 - Basic Seminary Formation

- Formation of the would-be Priest in the internalization of and a deeper love for the liturgy and the sacraments.
4. Five decrees were “fully implemented”. These are the decrees on
- the celebration of the Eucharist by the Clergy
 - the Diaconal Program of the Archdiocese
 - celebrating liturgical celebrations properly, solemnly, and meaningfully
 - the Clergy delivering inspiring and well-prepared homilies/sermons which shed light on contemporary issues and are relevant to the day-to-day life of the people.
5. Issues emanating from the “Lights and Shadows” are as follows
- the character and drive of the Parish Priest and his Vicars as Servant Leaders
 - degree of participation and commitment of the lay faithful
 - time constraint
 - financial constraint
 - alignment of priorities
 - attitude of religious communities towards the activities of the Archdiocese
 - Clergy-Laity partnership

Conclusions

1. On the whole, there is indeed cause for celebration. Majority of the decrees were perceived to be either “Highly Implemented” or “Fully Implemented”. Noteworthy is the

fact that these decrees were on the Evangelization Concerns. Surely, we all did not take things “sitting down” so to speak ten years after the promulgation of the decrees.

2. In their own way, individual Parish Priests and their Vicars did their best to implement the decrees.
3. The lay members of the Parish Pastoral Councils thru their respective Committees contributed a lot to seeing to it that certain decrees would be implemented.
4. Though the lack of manpower was expressed all throughout, it did not become a deterrent to the implementation of the decrees. The Lord always provides two or three faithful servants who are each equivalent to ten or twenty others.
5. Complacency was never a character of the worker in the vineyard of the Lord here in this Archdiocese. Despite hectic schedules and other personal concerns efforts on getting the decrees implemented were very evident.
6. The “Lights” and “Shadows” are a part of any endeavor. We highlight the “Lights” to inspire us to move on. We acknowledge the “Shadows” to challenge us to make some improvements.

Let us praise God for all these. There is no basis here for concern. No Prophets of Doom can take their place in this Archdiocese that is very alive and energized by the desire to be of service to the Master.

PART III: REDEFINING THRUSTS FOR THE FUTURE

Where We Are Going

Our assembly's second objective exhorts us "to redefine our thrusts for the future." That is our way of asking: "*Where are we going?*"

We remind you, not to lose sight of these realities: the reality of Vatican II as the great event of renewal, or to use the oft-quoted term, *aggiornamento*, in the Church. In the Philippines the PCP II was convened in response to the need of the Philippine Church to renew herself in the face of the many changing realities. Then in our local church came the FAPA. Vatican II and the PCP II were the two major events that helped shape the first pastoral assembly of the Archdiocese of Palo held ten years ago.

After acknowledging the gains of the past ten years, we likewise realize that we as a people in the Archdiocese of Palo need to grow, especially in the face of the challenging realities, be they lights or shadows.

During the FAPA we had in mind the images of the PCP II. As a matter of fact we have carved them into our Vision-Mission statements. Let us move on into the future with these PCP II images: the image of the **Church as a Community of Disciples**, the **Church of the Poor**, and the Church's mission for a **Renewed Integral Evangelization**. I do not wish to belabor you with each of these images this time. It's beyond my competence. But just the same, as we have made them a part of our Vision and Mission, let us en flesh these images in the context of our situation, which, by the lights and shadows that we expressed during the survey, are also in need of renewal.

Uniting All Things in Christ

The official name of this gathering is **Archdiocesan Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (APCCR)**. Since PCP II was a council of renewal, so was our FAPA an assembly of renewal. It was to renew our understanding of the Church. We are asked to recognize and celebrate the gains of the past ten years of grace. We are asked to receive those gains in the situation of our parishes and communities. We are asked to revisit our Vision and Mission statements, to re-animate ourselves in Jesus Christ.

The theme of the PCP II in 1991 was **“Uniting all things under Christ.”** We cannot do otherwise in our own assembly today. Even the FAPA theme, **“Put your gifts at the service of another,”** (1 Pet. 4:10) cannot be understated. If, during the survey, we looked into the lights and shadows relative to the implementation of the FAPA decrees, our response is to share each other’s burdens and giftedness, and unite all things under Christ. The movement towards unity is seen on how we as a Church become a **Church of Communion**, how we become a **Church of the Poor, a Community of Disciples**.

HISTORICAL SECTION

Third Centenary of the First Bicolano Priest: Bachiller Don Gregorio Cabalquinto (c1682-1753)

DR. LUCIANO P.R. SANTIAGO

The Bachiller Don Gregorio Cabalquinto was ordained circa 1706 by Bishop Fray Andrés Gonzales, O.P. (1685-1709) of Nueva Cáceres. Cabalquinto was the first Bicolano as well as the second Indio priest and pastor of the old diocese (now an archdiocese).¹ The first Indio priest and pastor of Nueva Cáceres was Licenciado Don Martín Baluyot Panlasigui, a Kapampangan who was also ordained by Bishop Gonzales in 1705.²

Cabalquinto was apparently born on the feast of Pope St. Gregory the Great, March 12, 1682. His place of birth was most probably Paracale, Camarines (not yet then divided into two provinces), where the Cabalquintos of that era hailed from. Despite its great distance from Manila, Paracale was one of the

¹ Luciano P.R. Santiago, *The Hidden Light. The First Filipino Priest*. (QC: New Day, 1987) pp. 89-90 & 90-91.

² Ibid.

first settlements established by the conquistadors because of the lure of its gold mines. Although they had taken up a Spanish surname, Cabalquinto's parents almost certainly belonged to the native nobility like those of the other pioneer Filipino priests. Their original Malay surname is not known. Cabalquinto signed his name with the abbreviated title "Br." which stands for *Bachiller*. This meant that he had acquired the Bachelor of Philosophy degree most likely from the University of Santo Tomás in Manila.³

In 1708, when the Franciscan order gave up the administration of Capalonga, also called Capalongan, in Camarines. Cabalquinto became its proprietary parish priest.⁴ Capalonga was founded by the Franciscans in 1632 as part of Paracale. It separated from its mother parish two years later. Its titular is Santa Lucía, virgin and martyr and patroness of those with eye problems. In addition, the church of Capalonga enshrines a miraculous image of the Black Nazarene, which is venerated in the entire region. Because of its proximity to the Tagalog province of Tayabas (now Quezon), Capalonga's language is Tagalog and not Bicolano.⁵

³ There was another 18th century Indio priest of Nueva Cáceres named BD Hilario Cabalquinto, a native of Paracale, who was most probably his nephew. He graduated with a BA degree from UST in 1759 & entered the San Carlos Seminary in Manila in 1768. After ordination to the priesthood by Archbishop Sancho of Manila, he returned to his native diocese to work there. UST Alumni Association. *Graduate Listing 1611-1971*. (Manila: UST, 1972) p. 6-B; Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM). *Libro del Gobierno Eclesiástico* (LGE) 1767-71, doc. 125; "Año de 1778. Respuesta al Real Orden de 3 Agosto 1776 sobre el Real Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos." *Cedulario* no. 8, 1744-72. n.p.

⁴ Lorenzo Pérez, OFM, ed. "Diario del P. Francisco Hermosa de San Buenaventura." *Historicum*. 26-27 (1933-34): 11 (448). Courtesy of Dr. William Henry Scott.

⁵ Félix de Huerta, OFM. *Estado Geografico, Topográfico, Estadístico, Histórico-Religioso de la Sta. y Apostólica Provincia de San Gregorio Magno de*

A year after Cabalquinto's installation in Capalonga, Bishop Gonzales died on February 14, 1709. The Archbishop of Manila Fray Francisco de la Cuesta, OSH, became the apostolic administrator of the vacant see. He appointed Maestro Don Juan Gonzales de Guzmán as his Provisor and Vicar General in Nueva Cáceres. The indefatigable Maestro Juan at once made a visitation of the parishes of Camarines. He arrived in Capalonga on May 24, 1709. He subsequently reported to the Archbishop that the parish was very poor in material things. "Its church suffers from the grave lack of sacred vessels and other materials used for the Divine Service." Ironically, the wealth of the nearby gold fields of Paracale did not benefit Capalonga probably because of the greed of those who managed them. Gonzales therefore begged the prelate for alms for the local church. Despite its poverty, however, he was impressed by the deep piety of the people, a reflection of the character and example of their spiritual leader although he did not name the parish priest.⁶

Cabalquinto was not only an exemplary pastor but also a talented priest. Bishop Gonzales' successor, Bishop-elect Domingo de Valencia (1715-19), an advocate of the Filipino clergy, recognized this fact and appointed Cabalquinto concurrently as the diocesan secretary of Nueva Cáceres in 1717. He succeeded the Licenciado Don Martin Baluyot Panlasigui,

Filipinas. (Manila: Amigos del País, 1855) p. 585; Bruce Cruikshank. *Spanish Franciscans in the Colonial Philippines 1578-1898. Catalog & Analysis for a History of Filipinos in Franciscan Parishes*. (____ nd) 3: 48-49; Josephine Darang. "The Miraculous Black Nazarene of Capalonga." *Purely Personal. Sunday Lifestyle. Philippine Daily Inquirer*. May 7, 2000.

⁶ AAM. "Carta del Mro. Juan González de Guzmán, Provisor de Nueva Cáceres en sede vacante al Abpo de Manila. 18 Junio 1709." *Cartas al D. Fray Francisco de la Cuesta Arzobispo de Manila*.

the previous secretary (1715-1717) who probably retired or died by that time. Cabalquinto in turn was succeeded in 1719 by the younger B. D. Bartholomé Saguinsín (1693-1772) who later became the first Indio pastor of Quiapo, Manila (1728-72).⁷

Our principal information about Cabalquinto's extraordinary life and work consists of a notable entry in the diary of a Franciscan missionary, Fray Francisco Hermosa de San Buenaventura, O.F.M. in 1747.⁸

"We arrive on July 29 in Capalongan which is administered by the secular clergy. Here, we three religious note the outstanding case of Padre Cabalquinto, an Indio priest who has administered the said town for forty years. He has been even more exemplary in observing our standard of service than our own religious during the said span of forty years. The town had been ceded by our holy province to the Lord Bishop of Camarines and its last religious pastor was Padre Mayorga, another exemplary priest. The Most Illustrious Lord Archbishop of Manila, Don Fray Pedro Martínez de Arízala having passed here and seeing how old the said Padre Cabalquinto looked, brought him to Manila so that he could rest and he gave him a pension for his maintenance."

According to Fray Francisco, the unnamed Indio priest who replaced him *ad interim* in Capalonga unfortunately failed to live up to the high standard of his predecessor. The venerable

⁷ Santiago. *Hidden Light*. pp. 89-90 & 145-151; AAM. "Carta de D. Domingo de Valencia, Obispo-electo de Nueva Cáceres al Abpo. de Manila." 9 de Junio 1717. *Cartas al D. Fray Francisco de la Cuesta Arzobispo de Manila*. This letter was about BD Juan de Estrada y Aguero (a native priest) who was given the license to continue his studies in the 3rd year theology course in UST in Manila. This was certified and signed by "Br. Gregorio Cabalquinto" as the diocesan secretary.

⁸ Pérez. "Diario del P. Francisco."

Cabalquinto lived for six more years and died in his seventies in early 1753 in about the forty-seventh year of his priesthood. On May 2, 1753, he was succeeded by another native priest, BD Bernardino de Messa as the proprietary pastor of Capalonga.⁹

⁹ Ibid.; AAM. LGE 1753-55, f. 45v.

CANON LAW SECTION

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZÁLEZ, OP

DO EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES HAVE SUPERVISORY COMPETENCE OVER PRIVATE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE FAITHFUL?

I would like to get your answer to a question regarding a private association of the faithful with juridical personality and approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines as a national association and by the Pontifical Council for the Laity as an international association.

Canon 305 says: "Associations of every kind are subject to the supervision of the Holy See. Diocesan associations are subject to the supervision of the local Ordinary, as are other associations to the extent that they work in the diocese" (§2).

From this canon I can conclude that the private association is subject to the supervision of the Holy See in the international level and of the Residential Bishops in the diocesan level.

To whose supervision is it subject as a *national* association?

According to the Book *Code of Canon Law Annotated*, p. 254, commentary on canon 305: "*It must also be taken into account that no supervisory function is incumbent on the conference of bishops, even when an association is established by one (c. 312). Supervision is the exclusive competence of the Holy See and of the local Ordinaries for their respective dioceses.*"

I am convinced that this particular association has to be supervised also in the national level because its policies and programs of action and apostolate are determined by their national bodies, composed of delegates from the different dioceses, and these policies and directions are followed by their branches or chapters in the dioceses. If its national bodies go wrong, who corrects them? Only the Holy See? I think it is better that the National Conference of the Bishops does the supervision in the national level because it knows better this national association.

But, *does Canon Law allow it?*

* * * * *

In answer to the above consultation I say, first of all, that I find the inquiry very relevant and the advanced insights expressed in it quite reasonable.

Now, what is the stand of the Code of Canon Law on the supervisory competence of the Episcopal Conference, at the national level, over a private association of the faithful with juridical personality, approved by the Conference as a national association and by the Pontifical Council for the Laity as an international association?

Taking canon 305 §2 as departure point, the scope of my answer is limited (1) to express the mind of the legislator on this particular matter, and (2) to explore the possibilities offered or at least allowed by the Code on this regard; in other words, to see what could be done about it within the canonical framework.

1. What is the mind of the Code about Episcopal Conferences having a supervisory function on Associations?

The mind of the legislator on this point seems to have been clearly expressed in canon 305 §2, namely, that Bishops' Conferences *do not have* supervisory function on associations. Indeed "associations of every kind are subject to the supervision of the Holy See," the text reads, and "diocesan associations are subject to the supervision of the local Ordinary, as are other associations to the extent that they work in the diocese."

Thus the functions of *supervision* (which include canonical visitation, appointment of a commissioner, etc.) are directly assigned by the Code either to the Holy See, over all associations, or to the local Ordinary (cf can. 305 §2). Nothing is said in this canon about the Episcopal Conferences, despite the fact that one could have logically expected them to be mentioned at the national level. Was it a fortuitous omission or perhaps the result of oversight? Apparently it was not, but rather an intentional omission, for in the original *Schema Canonum Libri II De Populo Dei* (Rome, 1977) the role of supervision had been entrusted to the Bishops' Conference for regional associations (cf n. 34 at can. 44) and this was removed in the subsequent draft text. Furthermore, an attempt to restore it was expressly

rejected by the Revision Commission, not least because this would have created a “national curia” which was judged not to be opportune (cf. *Communicationes* 15 (1983), 84 at can. 679). The practical effect is therefore that associations, whether strictly diocesan or interdiocesan, are directly subject to the supervision of the local Ordinary to the extent to which they operate in the diocese; and all associations – local, national, international and universal – to the supervision by the Holy See.

Indirectly, however, some kind of supervision could be exerted by the Bishops’ Conference on Associations at the national level. For instance,

1. In the case of public associations:

a) by keeping “over all direction” on them, even if they are governed by their statutes (cf. c.315);

b) through the confirmation [or not!] or the appointment of a moderator (“*moderatore*”), and of a chaplain (“*cappellanus*”) or ecclesiastical assistant (“*assistentem ecclesiasticum*”), in accordance with canon 317; and

c) most specially, through the appointment of a commissioner (“*commissarius*”), “in special circumstances, when serious reasons so require, ...to direct the association in his name for the time being” (can. 318).

2. In the case of private associations: through the optional appointment of the spiritual counselor (“*consiliarium spirituale*”) mentioned in canon 324 §2.

This canon 324, which clearly underlines the autonomy of private associations, mentions the appointment of a spiritual counselor only at the diocesan level. However

some canonists, drawing a certain analogical parallelism with canon 317 (under public associations), think that there is nothing against a private association of either national or international character having also an “ecclesiastical counselor” at those levels, appointed by the Episcopal Conference or by the Holy, respectively. Thus professor Luigi Chiapetta, for instance, commenting on this canon, writes: “*Nulla impedisce che un’associazione privata di carattere nazionale o internazionale abbia anche a tale livello un suo ‘consigliere ecclesiastico’. In questo caso la sua conferma spetta per analogia con el can. 317 §1, alla Santa Sede o alla Conferenza Episcopale. Si richiede inoltre il consenso dell’Ordinario proprio del candidato*” (Promptuario, Roma, 1994, p.75, under “Associazione Privata”). (underline mine)

For the rest, the functions of Episcopal Conferences as regards associations of the faithful – at a national level – are almost exclusively limited in the canons to some specific ones which have directly to do with governance, specifically, their establishment (cf can. 312 §1: “*The authority which is competent to establish public associations is... 2° the Bishops’ Conference in its own territory, for national associations*”), which presupposes the approval of their statutes (cf. 322 §2), and their suppression (cf can. 320 §2: “*For grave reasons, associations established by the Bishops’ Conference can be suppressed by it.*”).

2. Would it be possible for National Episcopal Conferences to supervise national associations within the framework of the Code of Canon Law?

After having seen the mind of the Code on the non-competence of Episcopal Conferences regarding supervision

on private associations of the faithful at the national level, we may still ask whether that is (or could be) possible within the framework of the Code?

My answer is in the affirmative, as a possibility, with some steps to be taken and with the following elements as part of a justifying solution:

a) *First of all, there must be a reason for it*

Nothing in canon law is granted, dispensed or modified without a proportionate reason for it. In seeking a change in favor of Episcopal Conferences having supervisory functions on associations at the national level we must first have some valid reasons for it. Such could be considered the following:

➤ One valid reason could be the fact that the Code was promulgated almost 25 years ago and many things have changed since then. The fast development of trans-parochial communities, for instance, the rising of new forms of consecrated life, the participation of the laity in the power of governance, etc., are only samples to show that the 1983 Code of Canon Law has become “obsolete” on some matters and definitively too a narrow frame to look for solutions to new situations and issues. Obviously the Code could not possibly foresee all particular situations; and, given the new circumstances, this concrete issue might have very well been one of them.

➤ Another possible valid reason would be the one expressed in the above consultation regarding the convenience of this particular [national and international] association be supervised also in the national level “because its policies and programs of action and apostolate are

determined by their national bodies, composed of delegates from the different dioceses, and these policies and directions are followed by their branches or chapters in the dioceses.” In answer to the questions that followed “If its national bodies go wrong, who corrects them? Only the Holy See?” perhaps we would have to conclude that indeed “it is better that the National Conference of the Bishops does the supervision in the national level because it knows better this national association.”

➤ A third “valid” reason could be gathered from the fact that canon 305, being in the chapter of *general norms* on associations, deals explicitly with “all associations,” while the issue here deals exclusively with national associations, which might require specific, new normative. To this could be added the *need for clarification* regarding conflict of competences. As professor Navarro wrote in his commentary to this canon 305, “Although the CIC distinguishes between the functions of supervision and of governance, in practice, some acts of supervision and of governance occur almost simultaneously in time and often are connected. Consider, for example, the act of recognition of an association (act of governance) as a result of a review of the statutes (act of supervision), the suppression of an association as a result of the exercise of the supervisory function over the ecclesial order, and the supervision over the execution of pious causes may entail acts of governance on the part of the local Ordinary, and so forth. Therefore it may happen that there arise conflicts of competency between the various authorities. In order to overcome them, one should always seek the solution that is most logical in practice and that allows, while respecting the proper autonomy of each association, coordination of

the various levels of competence of the different ecclesiastical authorities" (*Exegetical Commentary on the Code*, vol. II/1, p. 474).

b) Possibilities offered/allowed by the Code

1) *The Episcopal Conference may request it from the Apostolic See and obtain a special mandate to do so.* In fact, canon 455 §1 states that "the Bishops' Conference can make general decrees [...] by special mandate of the Apostolic See, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Conference itself." (These decrees to be validly enacted at a plenary meeting would have to receive at least two thirds of the votes of those who belong to the Conference with a deliberative vote and then be promulgated after having been reviewed by the Apostolic See, in accordance with the provisions of can. 455 §2.)

2) *The Conference can act in the name of all the Bishops if each and every Bishop gives his consent.* This principle is applicable in cases where neither the universal law nor a special mandate of the Apostolic See gives the Bishops' Conference the power to make general decrees, while keeping intact the competence of each diocesan Bishop (cf can. 455 §4.)

3) *The Conference could act upon request formulated in plenary session by individual Bishops.* Although it is the Diocesan Bishop who enjoys the right of supervision over all associations "to the extent that they work in the diocese," if a Bishop has objections against an association of national level, he may request the Episcopal Conference to deliberate and eventually come out with a join decision of the Bishops affected.

4) *The Conference could exert some "indirect" and limited supervision through certain appointments.* For instance, of the "spiritual counselor" mentioned in can. 324 §2. But also, according to the opinion of some canonists who draw an analogical parallelism with the provisions for public association, through the appointment at a national level also of a "moderator," "chaplain" or "ecclesiastical assistant" within the parameters of can. 324, that is, in accordance with the statutes and observing some requisites. (And of a "commissioner" in special circumstances when serious reasons so require?). This point is a matter of opinion.

5) *The Bishops' Conference could, for sound pastoral reasons, suppress associations established by it [or prohibit them from operating in its territory?].* Obviously this extreme measure is beyond the limits of ordinary supervision, but still it is a possibility offered by the Code to Episcopal Conferences at the national level. The Code requires "grave reasons" to do it (cf. can. 320 §2) and even mentions three reasons for the suppression of an association: activity which causes harm to ecclesiastical teaching, or to ecclesiastical discipline, or which is a cause of scandal to the faithful (cf. can. 326 §1). In our particular case, however, being about a private association of the faithful with pontifical approval, common sense would advise bringing the matter to the attention of the Apostolic See before taking such a drastic decision.

3. Summarizing

In summary, we say that:

a) The Episcopal Conference (in this case the CBCP) has indeed no *supervisory* jurisdiction on an international