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## FAITH IN THE MIDST OF VIOLENCE



# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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## **Will We Ever Learn?**

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**ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, OP**

Simone Weil once wrote that violence turns a person into a thing. This statement must be taken in the most literal sense: violence makes a corpse out of a human being. Somebody was here, and the next minute there is *nobody* here at all.

To turn a person into a corpse need not mean killing him. When a man stands disarmed and naked with a gun pointing at him, he becomes a corpse even before the enemy pulls the trigger. The moment he realizes that the weapon pointed at him will not be diverted, he knows that even if he is still breathing, he is no different from a stone or any inanimate object. He feels he still alive, but it is a life that fear congeals before it is finally abolished by death.

In truth, even the man who pulls the trigger also turns into a corpse. Violence is as pitiless to the man who wields it, as it is to its victims. The former, it intoxicates;

the second it crushes. By its very blindness, violence establishes a kind of justice. He that takes the sword perishes by the sword.

Violence makes war a seesaw game. The victor of the moment feels himself invincible, he forgets to treat victory as a transitory thing. In Homer's *Iliad*, the victorious Greeks invaded Troy and were about to obtain the object of all their efforts, namely, *Helen of Troy*. But blinded by the violence they inflicted on the Trojans, the Greeks were no longer interested in the woman whose beauty lured them to war. Violence is a cousin of greed. They wanted everything: the riches of Troy, the palaces, temples, houses, the women and children as slaves, and men's corpses as their trophies. But at the next turn of events, Hector and his men routed the Greeks. And later, Hector was himself slain by Achilles.

Despite centuries of war, we still haven't learned our lesson. Violence obliterates everyone who feels its touch. Yes, all of us are fated to die. But to those living in relative peace, death appears as a limit set in advance on their future. For those at war, like the Iraqi soldiers and civilians, the American soldiers and their allies, the militant NPA's, the MILF's, the suicide bombers, the terrorists and mercenaries, death *IS* their future. The idea of having death as a future castrates life of all aspiration. It effaces the hope that war will have an end.

Violence begets more violence. The Americans have always been talking about winning the war, and eventually winning the peace in Iraq. They forget that war has its

own law that works in unpredictable ways. Violence exacts its own retribution according to a geometrical rigor that defies human reason. In the East, this idea of retribution lives on under the name of *karma*. The post-Christian West, however, has lost it, and no longer even has a word to express *karma* in any of its languages.

If language is the bearer of human meaning, then how impoverished has Western language become. Western words have become restricted to the vocabulary of technology: progress, invention, exploitation, conquest. Words such as those that pertain to *harmony*, the necessity of limits, divine justice and retribution, which ought to determine the conduct of life have become devalued to the point of meaninglessness.





# **The Bible or the Church: Both or Neither?**

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**JOHN LEE and FRANK BOMPAS**

Some Christians following Martin Luther's erroneous belief at the time of the Reformation, claim that the "Bible alone" (Latin: "Sola Scriptura"), is the sole source of revealed Christian truth. That is not correct.

Authentic Christian revelation has been entrusted by Christ to his Church through the process of Sacred Tradition. This does not mean "human tradition" which nullifies the Word of God (Mt 15:6-9). However, nowhere does the Bible state that it is the sole rule of faith. In fact, 1 Tim 3:15 states that the Church is "the pillar and foundation" of the truth.

## **†Scripture alone is not sufficient**

2 Tim 3:17, which some Christians quote to prove the Bible as the sole rule of faith, does not say that the Bible is all we need for salvation. Although it is profitable for four ends, the text does not say that Scripture is

sufficient. It says that the Bible is indeed inspired, but it does not say that ONLY the Bible is inspired. Also the text refers to the Old Testament.

The aid of Sacred Tradition (the Oral Word, that is not in the Bible, the “written Word”) is also required. See 2 Thess 2:15.

When Paul, in writing in 2 Tim 3:15 refers to the Scriptures which Timothy was taught from infancy, he is referring to the Old Testament. A good part of the New Testament was not written when these words were written by St Paul, and none of the New Testament books were placed in the Canon (official list) of the Bible yet.

The first official Canon of the Bible was only discerned by St Athanasius in his “Festal Letter” of 367 AD, by the bishops of the Catholic church at a Council held probably at Rome in 382 AD under Pope Damasus, and at the 4th century Councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD). The Catholic Church was preaching the good news of salvation for about three centuries before it discerned from among the many manuscripts in circulation which ones were truly inspired and were to become part of what we call the New Testament. Very few people could read at that time so the Bible was not of much use to believers.

### **†The Bible actually denies that it is the sole rule of faith**

John tells us that not everything concerning Christ’s work is in Scripture (Jn 21:25). Paul writes in 2 Tim 2:2: “What you have heard from me before many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others

also. "Nowhere is there any mention of writing the truths down for posterity.

That is not to say that the Bible is not important. It is God's love letter, given to us by the Church. It was the 4th century biblical scholar, St Jerome, who wrote: "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ."

### **†The oral word is supplemented by the written word**

The Church in the person of the apostles was given the authority by Christ to teach (Mt 28:19). This was done by preaching – oral instruction: "See how faith comes from hearing through Christ's Word (written and oral) (Rom 10:17). It is a mistake to limit Christ's Word to the Written Word only, or to suggest that all the teachings were reduced to writing. God, through Isaiah, promised a living voice in the Church (Is 59:21): "And this Word is none other than the gospel which has been preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25).

Note the word "preached", that is, oral. It would not be "supplanted" by a written word like the Bible. Supplemented, yes, but not supplanted. The New Testament is a "reflection" of what the Catholic Church had been teaching for the previous four centuries.

### **†The Church is protected by the Spirit from error**

The truths have been given primarily to the teachers of the Church (Eph 3:5), who with Christ form the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20). The Church is guided by the Holy Spirit who protects her teaching from corruption (Jn 14:16).

The “traditions” referred to by Jesus in Mt 15:3 were “human customs”, as were those mentioned by Paul in Col 2:8. In Mt 15:6-9 Jesus was condemning the Pharisees who were making pretended dedication of their goods to the Temple so that they could avoid using them to support their aged parents. By doing this they dodged the commandment to “honour your father and your mother” (Ex 20:12).

Elsewhere Jesus instructed us to abide by traditions that are not contrary to God’s commandments: “Do and observe what they (the Pharisees, the leaders occupying the chair of Moses) tell you, but do not imitate their (hypocritical) actions.” (Mt 23:2-3). Of Sacred Tradition, Paul, in 2 Thess 3:6, tells us: “... Live according to the Traditions we have passed on”. Also 1 Cor 11:2: “You have done well ... maintaining the traditions just as I passed them on to you.”

The Jews of old also believed in Sacred Tradition. There is no mention of the “chair of Moses” in the Old Testament, yet the disciples knew exactly what Jesus meant in referring to it (Mt 23:2-3). Paul is clear in 2 Thess 2:15: “So then brethren, hold on to the traditions you have been taught, either by word of mouth or what is written.

### **†The Magisterium (teaching authority) at the service of the Word**

The teaching authority, or “Magisterium” of the Catholic Church is at the service of the Word of God, not above it. For “there are many things in Scripture that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as

they do the other Scriptures to their destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). The Book of Proverbs states: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding". (Prov 3:5-6). See also Luke 10:16. In 2 Peter 1:20 we read: "... We must be most careful to remember that the interpretation of scriptural prophecy is never a matter for the individual." In Acts 8:30-31, St Luke writes: "When Philip ran up he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked: 'Do you understand what you are reading?' 'How can I', he replied, 'unless I have someone to guide me?'" And Neh 8:8 has it: "And Esra read the law of God, translating and giving the sense, so that the people understood what was read".

This has been the practice of the Catholic Church since the time of the Fathers of the Church (generations of holy men immediately following the apostles, such as St Clement (third bishop of Rome after St Peter (see his "Epistle to the Corinthians, 42:1-5, 80 AD).

The text from John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures" is no proof that the Bible is to be the sole rule of faith. With these words, Jesus was referring the Pharisees to the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, pointing to him as the Messiah.

The fact that the Bereans "welcomed the Word with all eagerness and examined the Scriptures day by day" (Acts 17:11) is no proof that all Christian truths are in the Bible. They had been taught Christianity orally in the normal way and were checking to see its claims matched the Old Testament prophecies. The text does not mean that early Christians were using the Bible as a check list for Christian truths.

## **†The Bible only: an invention of the Reformers**

The notion of “the Bible only” was invented by the 15th century Reformers who, in rejecting the papacy had nowhere else to look for a “sole rule of faith”.

Contrary to what some say, the Catholic Church has never forbidden its members to read the Bible. However, the Church has at times forbidden the reading of certain erroneous translations, such as the Tyndale and Wycliff translations which even Protestants never refer to today.

The Bible is a Catholic book nurtured within the influence of the Catholic Church who discerned the Canon. The first Bibles were all produced by Catholics. The first person to translate any part of the Bible into English was the priest, Bede, in the 8th century. Years later, even Martin Luther admitted that without the Catholic Church we would not even have a Bible.

## **†Deuterocanonical books**

The “extra” books at the back of the Catholic Old Testament, known as “deuterocanonical” or the Apocrypha (by Protestants), are not “extra” at all, but have been removed from Protestant Bibles. Catholics and Protestants agree on the number of books in the New Testament.

The early Church Fathers followed the lead of the apostles in using the “Septuagint” version of the Old Testament (Greek translation of the Jews of the dispersion made in Alexandria).

The Fathers peppered their writings with references from the so-called “apocryphal” Old Testament books because Jesus, his Apostles, the New Testament writers

and the early Church all used a Bible (Old Testament) that included the "Apocrypha" or deuterocanonical books. The Palestine Canon, which excluded these books, and which Protestant Christians use, had not been invented yet.

Interestingly, among the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered near Qumran in 1947, fragments of the deuterocanonical Old Testament books found in Catholic Bibles, but not in those Protestants use, have been uncovered in Hebrew.

### †Catholics study Scripture

Especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), more than ever, Catholics have been encouraged to read the written Word of God. Today there are study groups in many Catholic parishes.

Some will be surprised to learn that of a survey made in America, it was found that in most Evangelical churches 6% of their Sunday services were devoted to Scripture. The fundamentalist church surveyed was found to spend 2% of its Sunday service in Scripture. In Catholic parishes, which use a Sunday Missal containing the Scripture readings, countrywide and indeed worldwide, the use of Scripture was approximately 26% on a Sunday. During weekday celebrations of the Mass, it would be approximately 20%.

What is evident is that the Catholic Church holds the Scripture in very high regard. And individual Catholics are more and more studying the Scriptures, unlike some other unfortunate periods of history. All would be better served if non-Catholic Christians would freely acknowledge the fact.





# **Doctrinal Note on Some Questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life**

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**CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH**

*The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having received the opinion of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has decided that it would be appropriate to publish the present Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life. This Note is directed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church and, in a particular way, to Catholic politicians and all lay members of the faithful called to participate in the political life of democratic societies.*

## **I. A Constant Teaching**

1. The commitment of Christians in the world has found a variety of expressions in the course of the past 2000 years. One such expression has been Christian involvement in political life: Christians, as one Early Church writer

stated, “play their full role as citizens”.<sup>1</sup> Among the saints, the Church venerates many men and women who served God through their generous commitment to politics and government. Among these, Saint Thomas More, who was proclaimed Patron of Statesmen and Politicians, gave witness by his martyrdom to “the inalienable dignity of the human conscience”.<sup>2</sup> Though subjected to various forms of psychological pressure, Saint Thomas More refused to compromise, never forsaking the “constant fidelity to legitimate authority and institutions” which distinguished him; he taught by his life and his death that “man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality”.<sup>3</sup>

It is commendable that in today’s democratic societies, in a climate of true freedom, everyone is made a participant in directing the body politic.<sup>4</sup> Such societies call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good.<sup>5</sup> The life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone, “albeit

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<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Diognetus*, 5,5; Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2240.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Proclaiming Saint Thomas More Patron of Statesmen and Politicians*, 1: AAS 93 (2001), 76.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 31; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1915.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75.

in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks, and responsibilities".<sup>6</sup>

By fulfilling their civic duties, "guided by a Christian conscience",<sup>7</sup> in conformity with its values, the lay faithful exercise their proper task of infusing the temporal order with Christian values, all the while respecting the nature and rightful autonomy of that order,<sup>8</sup> and cooperating with other citizens according to their particular competence and responsibility.<sup>9</sup> The consequence of this fundamental teaching of the Second Vatican Council is that "the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in 'public life', that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good".<sup>10</sup> This would include the promotion and defence of goods such as public order and peace, freedom and equality, respect for human life and for the environment, justice and solidarity.

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<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles laici*, 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472. The present doctrinal *Note* refers to the involvement in political life of lay members of the faithful. The Bishops of the Church have the right and the duty to set out the moral principles relating to the social order; "Nevertheless active participation in political parties is reserved to the lay faithful" (*ibid.*, 60). Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests* (March 31, 1994), 33.

<sup>7</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 7; Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 36; Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 31 and 43.

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 42.

The present *Note* does not seek to set out the entire teaching of the Church on this matter, which is summarized in its essentials in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but intends only to recall some principles proper to the Christian conscience, which inspire the social and political involvement of Catholics in democratic societies.<sup>11</sup> The emergence of ambiguities or questionable positions in recent times, often because of the pressure of world events, has made it necessary to clarify some important elements of Church teaching in this area.

## II. Central points in the current cultural and political debate

2. Civil society today is undergoing a complex cultural process as the end of an era brings with it a time of uncertainty in the face of something new. The great strides made in our time give evidence of humanity's progress in attaining conditions of life which are more

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<sup>11</sup> In the last two centuries, the Papal Magisterium has spoken on the principal questions regarding the social and political order. Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Diuturnum illud*: ASS 14 (1881-1882), 4 ff; Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*: ASS 18 (1885-1886), 162ff; Encyclical Letter *Libertas præstantissimum*: ASS 20 (1887-1888), 593ff; Encyclical Letter *Rerum novarum*: ASS 23 (1890-1891), 643ff; Benedict XV, Encyclical Letter *Pacem Dei munus pulcherrimum*: AAS 12 (1920), 209ff; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo anno*: AAS 23 (1931), 190ff; Encyclical Letter *Mit brennender Sorge*: AAS 29 (1937), 145-167; Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*: AAS 29 (1937), 78ff; Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Summi Pontificatus*: AAS 31 (1939), 423ff; *Radiomessaggi natalizi 1941-1944*; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), 401-464; Encyclical Letter *Pacem in terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 257-304; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*: AAS 59 (1967), 257-299; Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens*: AAS 63 (1971), 401-441.

in keeping with human dignity. The growth in the sense of responsibility towards countries still on the path of development is without doubt an important sign, illustrative of a greater sensitivity to the common good. At the same time, however, one cannot close one's eyes to the real dangers which certain tendencies in society are promoting through legislation, nor can one ignore the effects this will have on future generations.

A kind of cultural relativism exists today, evident in the conceptualization and defence of an ethical pluralism, which sanctions the decadence and disintegration of reason and the principles of the natural moral law. Furthermore, it is not unusual to hear the opinion expressed in the public sphere that such ethical pluralism is the very condition for democracy.<sup>12</sup> As a result, citizens claim complete autonomy with regard to their moral choices, and lawmakers maintain that they are respecting this freedom of choice by enacting laws which ignore the principles of natural ethics and yield to ephemeral cultural and moral trends,<sup>13</sup> as if every possible outlook on life were of equal value. At the same time, the value of tolerance is disingenuously invoked when a large number of citizens, Catholics among them, are asked not to base their contribution to society and political life – through the legitimate means available to everyone in a democracy – on their particular under-

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, 46: AAS 83 (1991); Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, 101: AAS 85 (1993), 1212-1213; *Discourse to the Italian Parliament*, 5: *L'Osservatore Romano* (November 15, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, 22: AAS 87 (1995), 425-426.

standing of the human person and the common good. The history of the twentieth century demonstrates that those citizens were right who recognized the falsehood of relativism, and with it, the notion that there is no moral law rooted in the nature of the human person, which must govern our understanding of man, the common good and the state.

3. Such relativism, of course, has nothing to do with the legitimate freedom of Catholic citizens to choose among the various political opinions that are compatible with faith and the natural moral law, and to select, according to their own criteria, what best corresponds to the needs of the common good. Political freedom is not – and cannot be – based upon the relativistic idea that all conceptions of the human person’s good have the same value and truth, but rather, on the fact that politics are concerned with very concrete realizations of the true human and social good in given historical, geographic, economic, technological and cultural contexts. From the specificity of the task at hand and the variety of circumstances, a plurality of morally acceptable policies and solutions arises. It is not the Church’s task to set forth specific political solutions – and even less to propose a single solution as the acceptable one – to temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church’s right and duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or the moral law.<sup>14</sup> If Christians must “recognize the legitimacy of

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 76.

differing points of view about the organization of worldly affairs",<sup>15</sup> they are also called to reject, as injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism. Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are the underpinning of life in society.

On the level of concrete political action, there can generally be a plurality of political parties in which Catholics may exercise – especially through legislative assemblies – their right and duty to contribute to the public life of their country.<sup>16</sup> This arises because of the contingent nature of certain choices regarding the ordering of society, the variety of strategies available for accomplishing or guaranteeing the same fundamental value, the possibility of different interpretations of the basic principles of political theory, and the technical complexity of many political problems. It should not be confused, however, with an ambiguous pluralism in the choice of moral principles or essential values. The legitimate plurality of temporal options is at the origin of the commitment of Catholics to politics and relates directly to Christian moral and social teaching. It is in the light of this teaching that lay Catholics must assess their participation in political life so as to be sure that it is marked by a coherent responsibility for temporal reality.

The Church recognizes that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in

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<sup>15</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 43 and 75.

political choices, it succeeds only to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human *person*.<sup>17</sup> Catholic involvement in political life cannot compromise on this principle, for otherwise the witness of the Christian faith in the world, as well as the unity and interior coherence of the faithful, would be non-existent. The democratic structures on which the modern state is based would be quite fragile were its foundation not the centrality of the human person. It is respect for the person that makes democratic participation possible. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the protection of “the rights of the person is, indeed, a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration”.<sup>18</sup>

4. The complex array of today’s problems branches out from here, including some never faced by past generations. Scientific progress has resulted in advances that are unsettling for the consciences of men and women and call for solutions that respect ethical principles in a coherent and fundamental way. At the same time, legislative proposals are put forward which, heedless of the consequences for the existence and future of human beings with regard to the formation of culture and social behaviour, attack the very inviolability of human life. Catholics, in this difficult situation, have the right and the duty to recall society to a deeper understanding of human life and to the responsibility of everyone in this regard. John Paul II, continuing

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 73.



the constant teaching of the Church, has reiterated many times that those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a "grave and clear obligation to oppose" any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them.<sup>19</sup> As John Paul II has taught in his Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* regarding the situation in which it is not possible to overturn or completely repeal a law allowing abortion which is already in force or coming up for a vote, "an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at limiting the harm done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality".<sup>20</sup>

In this context, it must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good. Nor can a Catholic think of delegating his Christian responsibility to others; rather, the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives him this task, so that the truth about man and the world might be proclaimed and put into action.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, 73.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

When political activity comes up against moral principles that do not admit of exception, compromise or derogation, the Catholic commitment becomes more evident and laden with responsibility. In the face of *fundamental and inalienable ethical demands*, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person. This is the case with laws concerning *abortion* and *euthanasia* (not to be confused with the decision to forgo *extraordinary treatments*, which is morally legitimate). Such laws must defend the basic right to life from conception to natural death. In the same way, it is necessary to recall the duty to respect and protect the rights of the *human embryo*. Analogously, the *family* needs to be safeguarded and promoted, based on monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, and protected in its unity and stability in the face of modern laws on divorce: in no way can other forms of cohabitation be placed on the same level as marriage, nor can they receive legal recognition as such. The same is true for the freedom of parents regarding the *education* of their children; it is an inalienable right recognized also by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In the same way, one must consider *society's protection of minors* and freedom from *modern forms of slavery* (drug abuse and prostitution, for example). In addition, there is the right to *religious freedom* and the development of an *economy* that is at the service of the human person and of the common good, with respect for social justice, the principles of human solidarity and subsidiarity, according to which "the rights of all individuals, families, and organizations and their practical implemen-

tation must be acknowledged".<sup>21</sup> Finally, the question of *peace* must be mentioned. Certain pacifistic and ideological visions tend at times to secularize the value of peace, while, in other cases, there is the problem of summary ethical judgments which forget the complexity of the issues involved. Peace is always "the work of justice and the effect of charity".<sup>22</sup> It demands the absolute and radical rejection of violence and terrorism and requires a constant and vigilant commitment on the part of all political leaders.

### **III. Principles of Catholic doctrine on the autonomy of the temporal order and on pluralism.**

5. While a plurality of methodologies reflective of different sensibilities and cultures can be legitimate in approaching such questions, no Catholic can appeal to the principle of pluralism or to the autonomy of lay involvement in political life to support policies affecting the common good which compromise or undermine fundamental ethical requirements. This is not a question of "confessional values" *per se*, because such ethical precepts are rooted in human nature itself and belong to the natural moral law. They do not require from those who defend them the profession of the Christian faith, although the Church's teaching confirms and defends them always and everywhere as part of her service to the truth about man and about the common good of civil society. Moreover, it cannot be denied that politics must refer to principles of absolute

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<sup>21</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2304.

value precisely because these are at the service of the dignity of the human person and of true human progress.

6. The appeal often made to “*the rightful autonomy of the participation of lay Catholics*” in politics needs to be clarified. Promoting the common good of society, according to one’s conscience, has nothing to do with “confessiona-  
lism” or religious intolerance. For Catholic moral doctrine, the rightful autonomy of the political or civil sphere from that of religion and the Church – *but not from that of morality* – is a value that has been attained and recognized by the Catholic Church and belongs to inheritance of contemporary civilization.<sup>23</sup> John Paul II has warned many times of the dangers which follow from confusion between the religious and political spheres. “Extremely sensitive situations arise when a specifically religious norm becomes or tends to become the law of a state without due consideration for the distinction between the domains proper to religion and to political society. In practice, the identification of religious law with civil law can stifle religious freedom, even going so far as to restrict or deny other inalienable human rights”.<sup>24</sup> All the faithful are well aware that specifically religious activities (such as the profession of faith, worship, administration of sacraments, theological doctrines, interchange between religious authorities and the members of religions) are outside the state’s responsibility. The state must not interfere, nor in any way require or

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 76.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the 1991 World Day of Peace*: “If you want peace, respect the conscience of every person”, 4: AAS 83 (1991), 414-415.

prohibit these activities, except when it is a question of public order. The recognition of civil and political rights, as well as the allocation of public services may not be made dependent upon citizens' religious convictions or activities.

The right and duty of Catholics and all citizens to seek the truth with sincerity and to promote and defend, by legitimate means, moral truths concerning society, justice, freedom, respect for human life and the other rights of the person, is something quite different. The fact that some of these truths may also be taught by the Church does not lessen the political legitimacy or the rightful "autonomy" of the contribution of those citizens who are committed to them, irrespective of the role that reasoned inquiry or confirmation by the Christian faith may have played in recognizing such truths. Such "autonomy" refers first of all to the attitude of the person who respects the truths that derive from natural knowledge regarding man's life in society, even if such truths may also be taught by a specific religion, because truth is one. It would be a mistake to confuse the proper *autonomy* exercised by Catholics in political life with the claim of a principle that prescind from the moral and social teaching of the Church.

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

doctrine of the Church is not an intrusion into the government of individual countries. It is a question of the lay Catholic's duty to be morally coherent, found within one's conscience, which is one and indivisible. "There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called 'spiritual life', with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called 'secular' life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social responsibilities, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted to the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. In fact, every area of the lay faithful's lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God, who desires that these very areas be the 'places in time' where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility – as, for example, skill and solidarity in work, love and dedication in the family and the education of children, service to society and public life and the promotion of truth in the area of culture – are the occasions ordained by providence for a 'continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity' (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 4)".<sup>25</sup> Living and acting in conformity with one's own conscience on questions of politics is not slavish acceptance of positions alien to politics or some kind of confessionalism, but rather the way in which Christians offer their concrete contribution so that, through political life, society will become more just and more consistent with the dignity of the human person.

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<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 59.

In democratic societies, all proposals are freely discussed and examined. Those who, on the basis of respect for individual conscience, would view the moral duty of Christians to act according to their conscience as something that disqualifies them from political life, denying the legitimacy of their political involvement following from their convictions about the common good, would be guilty of a form of intolerant *secularism*. Such a position would seek to deny not only any engagement of Christianity in public or political life, but even the possibility of natural ethics itself. Were this the case, the road would be open to moral anarchy, which would be anything but legitimate pluralism. The oppression of the weak by the strong would be the obvious consequence. The marginalization of Christianity, moreover, would not bode well for the future of society or for consensus among peoples; indeed, it would threaten the very spiritual and cultural foundations of civilization.<sup>26</sup>

#### **IV. Considerations regarding particular aspects**

7. In recent years, there have been cases within some organizations founded on Catholic principles, in which support has been given to political forces or movements with positions contrary to the moral and social teaching of the Church on fundamental ethical questions. Such activities, in contradiction to basic principles of Christian conscience, are not compatible with membership in organizations or associations which define themselves as

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: L'Osservatore Romano* (January 11, 2002).

Catholic. Similarly, some Catholic periodicals in certain countries have expressed perspectives on political choices that have been ambiguous or incorrect, by misinterpreting the idea of the political autonomy enjoyed by Catholics and by not taking into consideration the principles mentioned above.

Faith in Jesus Christ, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (*Jn* 14:6), calls Christians to exert a greater effort in building a culture which, inspired by the Gospel, will reclaim the values and contents of the Catholic Tradition. The presentation of the fruits of the spiritual, intellectual and moral heritage of Catholicism in terms understandable to modern culture is a task of great urgency today, in order to avoid also a kind of Catholic cultural diaspora. Furthermore, the cultural achievements and mature experience of Catholics in political life in various countries, especially since the Second World War, do not permit any kind of ‘inferiority complex’ in comparison with political programs which recent history has revealed to be weak or totally ruinous. It is insufficient and reductive to think that the commitment of Catholics in society can be limited to a simple transformation of structures, because if at the basic level there is no culture capable of receiving, justifying and putting into practice positions deriving from faith and morals, the changes will always rest on a weak foundation.

Christian faith has never presumed to impose a rigid framework on social and political questions, conscious that the historical dimension requires men and women to live in imperfect situations, which are also susceptible to rapid change. For this reason, Christians must reject political positions and activities inspired by a utopian perspective



which, turning the tradition of Biblical faith into a kind of prophetic vision without God, makes ill use of religion by directing consciences towards a hope which is merely earthly and which empties or reinterprets the Christian striving towards eternal life.

At the same time, the Church teaches that authentic freedom does not exist without the truth. "Truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery".<sup>27</sup> In a society in which truth is neither mentioned nor sought, every form of authentic exercise of freedom will be weakened, opening the way to libertine and individualistic distortions and undermining the protection of the good of the human person and of the entire society.

8. In this regard, it is helpful to recall a truth which today is often not perceived or formulated correctly in public opinion: the right to freedom of conscience and, in a special way, to religious freedom, taught in the Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* of the Second Vatican Council, is based on the ontological dignity of the human person and not on a non-existent equality among religions or cultural systems of human creation.<sup>28</sup> Reflecting on this question, Paul VI

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<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 90: AAS 91 (1999), 75.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*, 1: "This Sacred Council begins by professing that God himself has made known to the human race how men by serving him can be saved and reach the state of the blessed. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church". This does not lessen the sincere respect that the Church has for the various religious traditions, recognizing in them "elements of truth and goodness". See also, Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 16; Decree *Ad gentes*, 11; Declaration *Nostra aetate*,

taught that “in no way does the Council base this right to religious freedom on the fact that all religions and all teachings, including those that are erroneous, would have more or less equal value; it is based rather on the dignity of the human person, which demands that he not be subjected to external limitations which tend to constrain the conscience in its search for the true religion or in adhering to it”.<sup>29</sup> The teaching on freedom of conscience and on religious freedom does not therefore contradict the condemnation of indifferentism and religious relativism by Catholic doctrine;<sup>30</sup> on the contrary, it is fully in accord with it.

## V. Conclusion

9. The principles contained in the present *Note* are intended to shed light on one of the most important aspects of the unity of Christian life: coherence between faith and life, Gospel and culture, as recalled by the Second Vatican Council. The Council exhorted Christians “to fulfill their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but

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2; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 55: AAS 83 (1991), 302-304; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 2, 8, 21: AAS 92 (2000), 742-765.

<sup>29</sup> Paul VI, *Address to the Sacred College and to the Roman Prelature*: in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, 14 (1976), 1088-1089.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Quanta cura*: ASS 3 (1867), 162; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*: ASS 18 (1885), 170-171; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quas primas*: AAS 17 (1925), 604-605; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2108; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 22.

seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfill these responsibilities according to the vocation of each... May Christians... be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God".<sup>31</sup>

*The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of November 21, 2002, approved the present Note, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication.*

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 24, 2002, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Joseph Card. RATZINGER  
*Prefect*

Tarcisio BERTONE, S.D.B.  
*Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli*  
*Secretary*

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<sup>31</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 43; see also John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 59.



# **Liturgical Translation: A Question of Truth**

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**BISHOP PETER J. ELLIOT**

Bishop Peter J. Elliot, new auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia, was appointed April 30 and consecrated on June 15. He has most recently served the diocese as episcopal vicar for religious education, and as director of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family. He is a consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, and was appointed an auditor at the World Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist in 2005.

Bishop Elliot, who entered the Catholic Church in the 1960s, served for ten years as an official of the Pontifical Council on the Family (1987-1997) and during this time lectured widely and wrote on marriage and family issues. He was a Vatican delegate at the United Nations conferences at Cairo and Beijing (1994, 1995).

Bishop Elliot's work is perhaps best known to Adoremus readers through his several popular books on the Liturgy

published by Ignatius Press: *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite*, a manual on the proper celebration of the Mass; *Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year*, on liturgical celebrations for the Feasts and Seasons throughout the year; and *Liturgical Question Box*, which addresses liturgical questions submitted to him as a columnist.

The address below was delivered at the international conference, *Sacrificium Laudis: The Medina Years (1996-2002)*, sponsored by the Research Institute for Catholic Liturgy in October 2005. It was first published in *Antiphon* in 2006 (vol. 10 no. 3), and appears here with the kind permission of Bishop Elliot, and *Antiphon*. – Editor

Pope John Paul II began his majestic encyclical on philosophy and ethics with two words, *Veritatis splendor*, challenging the world and encouraging many Catholics. Drawing on some of his other well-known words, the message was: Do not be afraid of “truth” for it always bears much splendor. Unfortunately, when we enter the complex domain of translating the sacred liturgy into the vernacular we find that there have been different understandings and applications of “truth”, and not all of them have been splendid.

## **Telling the Truth**

The first way of understanding truth in liturgical translation is obvious and has been raked over by various critics ever since the International Commission for English in the Liturgy [ICEL] produced its translations over thirty years ago. This is simply the question of whether *this* vernacular text tells the truth, the question of truthfulness or truthful accuracy in translation. Do these English words convey the

Catholic doctrinal meaning that is embodied in the words of the Latin original authorized by the Church?

Many of the negative responses to that question are based on examples of what might be called *mendacious banality*, that is, a translation that tells lies in a rather dull way. To be fair, it must be stated at the outset that this was brought about by good intentions, distorted by applying the flawed principle of translation known as dynamic equivalence. This principle was endorsed by the 1969 instruction of the Consilium for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Comme le prévoit*.<sup>1</sup> The old ICEL was faithful to much of that instruction, and even went beyond it.

Thirty years ago an Australian archbishop linked to ICEL told me that a religious, un-named, had translated the Sunday collects in use today. He praised this work. When I groaned, he scowled. They surely rank among the worst instances of liturgical translation. They are as brief as their Latin originals, but that is not what a vernacular version of a collect should be, for the compact Latin of a collect is a literary genre with its own conventions and structure, demanding rich expansion in the vernacular; otherwise a collect sounds abrupt, trite, even absurd, which is what has happened. Each collect has been reduced to something like this: "God! You are good. So do this for us", followed

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<sup>1</sup> *Consilium* for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Instruction On the Translation of Liturgical Texts for Celebrations with a Congregation *Comme le prévoit* (January 25, 1969), in Documents on the Liturgy 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts, trans. International Commission on English in the Liturgy (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982) §§ 838-880, no. 123, pp. 284-291, subsequent references refer to section numbers of the document.

by a slightly inaccurate version of the trinitarian ending. Yet, by eliminating any traces of the Latin “oratorical cursus, rhetorical-prose cadence”, the unknown translator had only followed *Comme le prévoit*.<sup>2</sup>

When we examine the specific content of the current ICEL collects, however, we find a more serious result of this ruthless paraphrase or *précis*: the virtual elimination of “grace”. It could be argued that this goes beyond *Comme le prévoit*. This serious falsification may be observed in the current translations of seven collects assigned to Sundays *per annum*, or in so-called “Ordinary Time”, that contain the word *gratia*.<sup>3</sup> Of these seven collects, not one has translated *gratia* as “grace”. *Gratia* is usually rendered as “love” or “gifts of love” (Sunday XXVI). Surely that is stretching the principle of dynamic equivalence beyond the limits.

For Sunday XXVIII, the beautiful collect about God’s prevenient grace, the grace that goes before us, has been hacked to pieces. The word “grace” has been excised and the meaning of the collect has been lost. Likewise, the word “grace” has effectively vanished in the four Sunday Prayers over the Gifts and the one Sunday Post Communion Prayer where *gratia* appears.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See *Comme le prévoit* 28.

<sup>3</sup> See *Collectae, Dominicae* V, VI, XI, XIII, XVI, XXVI, XXVIII *per annum*, *Missale Romanum*, third typical edition (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2002) pp. 455, 456, 461, 463, 466, 476, 478. The ICEL calendar title for *Tempus per annum* is yet another instance of mendacious banality. What is “ordinary” about sacred time?

<sup>4</sup> *Super oblata, Dominicae* IX, XVII, XXIX, XXXIII *per annum* (MR 2002, pp. 459, 467, 479, 483); *Post communionem, Dominica III per annum* (MR 2002, p. 453).



Taking the essential Christian word “grace” out of seasonal liturgical prayers is a symptom of the deeper doctrinal malaise underlying the current ICEL texts. As others have noted, this is a kind of Pelagianism. What *we* do is what matters. So *we make the liturgy*; it is no longer primarily a gift to us from God through the Church. By contrast, Pope Benedict XVI, when Cardinal Ratzinger, pointed out that the “liturgy derives its greatness from what it is, not from what we make of it”.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the current version of Eucharistic Prayer I blithely begins, “We come to you, Father, with praise and thanksgiving....” These are good words, but they have nothing to do with the majestic *Te igitur clementissime Pater* of the venerable Roman Canon, where the emphasis is on God and how the divine *actio liturgica* flows out of the Sanctus and preface – hence the *igitur*. The first lines of this current ICEL text would make a good hymn, which might be sung to a German chorale melody, but the shift from God to us in an anaphora is not only a violation of consistent tradition, but also a dangerous shift of emphasis that is characteristic of the current translations.

## Misrepresenting Our Lady

Striking examples of mendacious banality are evident if Latin references to Our Lady in the *Missale Romanum*

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “The Theology of the Liturgy”, in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger: Proceedings of the July 2001 Fontgombault Liturgical Conference*, ed. Alcuin Reid (Farnborough UK: St. Michael’s Abbey Press, 2003) 30.

are checked against the current ICEL texts. Here we find an amazing failure to comprehend a basic principle of christology and mariology: Marian adjectives are doctrinal, not poetic. The bland expression “the Virgin Mary” is used again and again by ICEL, but this does not truthfully translate references to Mary in the *Missale Romanum*. Nor does “blessed” accurately render *beatissima*, because this superlative, “most blessed”, is reserved for the Mother of God, proclaiming her as the pre-eminent saint, the Queen of All Saints. But here ICEL was in line with a specific critical reference in *Comme le prévoit* concerning *beatissima* Virgo or *beata et gloriosa*, which was followed by a curious comment: “Understatement in English is sometimes the more effective means of emphasis”.<sup>6</sup> The authors of the instruction were blissfully unaware of the mariological nuances not only of *beatissima* but, in terms of the Assumption, of *beata et gloriosa*. So these Marian adjectives had to be “understated”. *Comme le prévoit* confused understatement with the sobriety of the Roman Rite.

Dynamic equivalence became more destructive when Marian phrases that convey doctrinal truths taught by the Church were simply removed. In the first preface of Our Lady, two unequivocal Latin phrases expressing Mary’s perpetual virginity have vanished. The second becomes a paraphrase, “She became the virgin mother of your Son”, but does not carry the Latin *integritate virginitatis permanente*, literally “the integrity of her virginity remaining”. “She became the virgin mother of your Son” barely hints at Mary’s perpetual virginity as set out in the *Catechism*.

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<sup>6</sup> *Comme le prévoit* 12.

*of the Catholic Church* (see especially §§ 496-501). Here we touch on ideological motives reflective of the era when the ICEL translations were made.

One senses the hand of a translator or committee working away over thirty years ago and not wanting to offend someone. But who was this someone? Was this an imaginary non-Catholic Christian, to be respected out of misguided ecumenism? But the only groups beyond the Catholic Church who might ever use a Marian preface would be some high-church Anglicans and Lutherans, and they likely would be among the first to point out the defects and to regret devious paraphrases. The more recent translation of the beautiful new preface of Mary Mother of the Church is another example of a kind of protective censorship. A reference to Mary's immaculate heart has been excised. Why? Do the Catholic people need to be protected from something? Is it exotic language, or does that phrase hint too much of Fatima? In the collect for the third day before Christmas the adjective "immaculate" also vanished. In the collect for the memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the mystical representation of the Son of Mary as a holy mountain has also vanished, even if it is central to Carmelite spirituality. Why?

These examples of the destructive effects of ICEL following the principle of dynamic equivalence reveal a vernacular version of the text of the Roman liturgy that tells lies such that, at these points and many others, it is no longer the Roman liturgy. That demonstrable reality has helped recruit some English-speaking people to traditionalist circles and provided much fuel for traditionalist polemics.

## The Truth of the Mystery

Another dimension of truth in translation is asking whether a text maintains the mystery or a sense of the sacred. In the East, mystery in worship is maintained largely by the iconostasis. In the West, the Latin language functioned as a kind of iconostasis of language. Coupled with the celebration of Mass *ad orientem*, the Roman Rite retained the sense of a holy mystery that the East maintained through the universal liturgical paradox of concealing so as to reveal. The truth of the mystery came to be carried in the Latin texts.

It would have been possible to translate the Mass into our vernacular while retaining much of that gracious sense of linguistic mystery, as may already be seen in the unfolding work of the Vox Clara Committee and of the newly reconfigured ICEL, which seeks to reclaim the truth of the mystery. But that was not the prevailing mentality in the 1960s. The reasons for this attitude may be discerned by beginning with the obvious didacticism of the translations.

The didacticism of the current ICEL texts embodies a stage in history when communication was the key to everything – the era of Marshall McLuhan and the “global village”, when mankind reached for the stars and we could hear men talking from the moon. Clarity, comprehensibility, access to data and information, and the triumph of the Enlightenment were also marked by the jostling of ideologies, each claiming to carry the light and future whether of “modern man”, “secular man”, or “socialist man”, to use the language of the pre-feminist vocabulary of those times.

In such a social, historical, and political context, everything in the new *Missale Romanum* had to be reworked in modern translations, so as to be, above all, comprehensible. It was all a question of communication, understandable in the conciliar era when getting the message across to the people was paramount, and that emphasis dominated *Comme le prévoit*.<sup>7</sup> But there is little place for mystery if communication is based on being consciously modern and enlightened, hence in control of meaning. Mystery eludes human control. In itself, the liturgy finds its summit and source in the Eucharist, that is, the sacred Mystery of Faith ever stretching out beyond our control, ever inviting us into deeper union with God.

At the same time, because the ICEL translations reflected the principle of dynamic equivalence according to *Comme le prévoit*, the paraphrases had to bear a modernity that communicated a meaning instantly, in the language of common usage.<sup>8</sup> I would describe this as *immediately accessible meaning*. If I translate *gratia* as “love”, listeners immediately comprehend something: the word “love”. But in contemporary society, “love” is a polyvalent term. Therefore the faithful hearing “love” will not comprehend or retain much of the real meanings of *gratia*, which is another polyvalent word, but one suggesting another range of divine realities.

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<sup>7</sup> See *Comme le prévoit* 5-8, but 8 modifies McLuhan's maxim “the medium is the message”.

<sup>8</sup> *Comme le prévoit* 14-15, briefly citing from a message that Pope Paul VI delivered on November 10, 1965 to participants in a congress on translating liturgical texts.

*Liturgiam authenticam*<sup>9</sup> and the recent guidelines from Vox Clara have freed us from an obsession with communication, instant comprehension, or immediately accessible meaning, all of which destroy real meaning. A rearguard action against these welcome developments only reveals the lingering mindset that was established thirty or forty years ago, a mentality rooted in the Enlightenment and the confident modernity of the conciliar era. This may explain why the existing ICEL texts are being defended as more “pastoral”. By “pastoral”, the critics of the new ICEL mean that the existing texts are easily comprehended, that they convey rapid meanings. The proposed texts are deemed to be archaic and obscure because they draw on unfamiliar symbolic language and suggest a sense of mystery in worship.

## From Didacticism to True Pedagogy

Here we confront a widespread misunderstanding of liturgy that has set in throughout the Church, also obvious in the French translations.<sup>10</sup> It is assumed that Catholic worship is primarily a pedagogical device. This view effectively argues that public prayers addressed to God are in fact messages addressed to us, designed for our instruction, improvement,

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<sup>9</sup> Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Fifth Instruction on the Vernacular Translation of the Roman Liturgy *Liturgiam authenticam* (March 28, 2001), Latin-English edition (Washington DC: USCCB, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> It is instructive to compare the official French translation of the Ordinary of the Mass with that prepared more than fifty years ago by Dom Bernard Botte and Christine Mohrman, *L'Ordinaire de la Messe, texte critique, traduction et études, Études Liturgiques 2* (Paris: Cerf, 1953).

and edification. That misunderstanding has had a devastating effect on the very structure of the Roman Mass. At not a few celebrations of Mass, the Eucharistic liturgy becomes merely an extension of the liturgy of the Word, not its culmination as the divine mystery and gift evoking a human response.

Most Catholics would not be aware that a Calvinist theology of worship embodies this didactic approach. When I was a young Anglican theological student, I recall hearing an Evangelical Anglican theologian explain that all prayer in public worship is really a prolonged form of sermon. According to this theological perspective, God seems to be too majestic for us fallen creatures to dare to address Him directly, so when the godly ones pray, they are really edifying one another. Every dimension of worship becomes the proclaimed Word. This also explains the style and tone of much Evangelical *extempore* prayer, which, to the outside observer, sounds like people telling God what is on CNN tonight.

I am not arguing that liturgical language should be incomprehensible. But once we try to make a vernacular liturgical text an exercise in instructing people, we are caught in a destructive illusion. We imagine that we are conveying everything – nothing is concealed, no mysteries here – when in fact very little is being conveyed at all. When this happens, the Mass becomes boring, especially for the young. They are in front of a liturgical television set, and its patter and style sound little different from what they can hear at any time through the various forms of electronic media.

In the field of religious education, we place great emphasis on comprehensible meaning. I have spent the past eight years editing a series of thirteen Australian religious education texts, *To Know, Worship and Love*. We have tried to navigate the difficult field of helping children and young people to comprehend the content of faith without violating real meanings.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, we want them to grasp and love their own tradition, not only in words but through the signs and symbols of liturgy, art, and culture. That is the search for a true pedagogy as distinct from didacticism, an attempt to take up what Father Luigi Giussani, founder of *Comunione e Liberazione*, called the “risk of education”, an adventure in education that offers them the freedom and richness of our Christian culture and tradition, in the midst of a postmodern culture of meaninglessness, darkness, and despair.<sup>12</sup>

Now I would not presume to argue that all current ICEL translations are secularized to that extent, for obviously they cannot be postmodern. Moreover, it is easy to detect many hands at work in the currently used texts, for example in quite acceptable renderings of many prefaces and in various reasonable texts used for celebrating the sacraments. But it is important to set the rushed translation projects of more than thirty years ago not only in their historical, social, and political context, but also in the catechetical and theological *sitz im leben* [setting in life] of that now distant era.

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<sup>11</sup> See the Melbourne-Sydney religious education text project website, [www.kwl.com.au](http://www.kwl.com.au).

<sup>12</sup> See Luigi Giussani, *Il rischio educativo* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2005).



Beginning with the catechetical dimension, the ICEL style of translation to a certain extent reflected the influence of the then-dominant catechetical method, popularly known as the "life experience" approach. That method was based on existentialism and relied on a heterodox theology of divine revelation as subjective inferences or intuitions. This pastoral reworking of early modernism was derived from a misinterpretation of the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*.<sup>13</sup>

An obvious case of didacticism, derived from a secularized catechetical mentality, is the rendering of *beatus* as "happy". Currently, at every Mass people hear the trite words "Happy are those who are called to His supper". That will vanish with the new translations. But in the *Jerusalem Bible*, source of the Lectionary in Australia, we have "happy are those who mourn" (Mt 5:4). On face value this is nonsense, but it also is doctrinally mischievous, as it eliminates the eschatological and mystical significance of "beatitudes", derived in revelation from the very mind of Our Lord Himself who taught these *makarisms* or blessings within the Hebrew culture. I believe it may be possible on Old Testament grounds to interpret "mourn" as our sorrow for sins, but that is not what the people hear.

An opportunity to go beyond comprehension in favor of mystery may be discerned in how we might translate the word *oblatio*. This may be rendered as "offering", but

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the influential Gabriel Moran, *Theology of Revelation* (New York: Herder, 1966), where the author adds *Dei Verbum* as an appendix to a book which, it can be argued, actually contradicts the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.

why not the traditional English “oblation”, as in Cranmer’s Prayer Book? Offering might hint at secular concepts, such as giving money, that are not found in “oblation”. Nevertheless, the slightly incomprehensible word “oblation” sets up the mystery of the sacrifice. The very fact that it is not directly accessible suggests a meaning that is mysterious, something inviting us to go further, something provoking wonder, leading us deeper into the Mystery of Faith. Nevertheless, it is good to note that the *Oratio super oblata*, currently the “Prayer over the Gifts”, will be re-named the “Prayer over the Offerings”. That subtle change refutes so-called liberals and so-called traditionalists, who have told us, with very different agendas, that the “preparation of the gifts” is not a real offertory rite.

### Looking away from the Mystery

Another related problem has been language that distracts us from the Eucharistic Mystery. A good preface such as Weekdays III is ruined by one little English word, “too”: “we too rejoice with the angels”. This vulgar intrusion mars the moment of mystery because the word itself connotes distraction. Even if only for a split second, it reminds people to look in another direction. “Hey! We’re here too!”

A subtle example of distraction by diverging from accurate meaning is the paraphrase of *Mysterium fidei* as “Let us proclaim the Mystery of Faith”. That could have been tolerable had it been rendered “Let us proclaim *this* Mystery of Faith”. But at present it points away from what has been accomplished on the altar and what is now being proclaimed: the Eucharistic Mystery. Here I am not

sure that the proposed translation is much better: "The Mystery of Faith". Perhaps the meaning would be clearer as "*This* is the Mystery of Faith," which would also be slightly easier for the celebrant to sing.

## Truth and the "Sense" of Catholic Worship

ICEL's moments of vulgarity, distraction, and triteness lead into a more subtle dimension of this issue of truth and translation. The language of the liturgy is part of the whole shape and sense of what is happening. The sacred whole of the *actio liturgica* focuses not simply on liturgy, but on its essence: Christian worship of the triune God. The relevant Roman congregation is not named the "Congregation for Sacred Liturgy" but the "Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments".

This truth of the whole ought to be expressed in particular words and phrases, in a style and ritual pace that convey a sense of the whole action. This is not simply the truth of the liturgy, which may be understood in various ways. It is the truth of Catholic worship.

I would argue that the lack of a Catholic "sense" in worship in English-speaking countries today has been caused largely by the current ICEL texts. This is the result not merely of flattened-out language or jejune style, smooth though it usually is. It is the general impression of dullness, reinforced over thirty-six years of use, so that now our worship often seems to have a non-Catholic tone about it. In no way do I wish to identify that tone with Anglicanism or classical Protestantism. For in some of these circles there is an awareness of this issue, and they can be quite

scathing about the direction ICEL took, a direction some of their experts have taken even further, with bizarre effects, especially once the ideology of gender takes over.

The original ICEL project, however, preserved elements of something else that was very destructive and quite alien to a sense of Catholic worship. The translations we use have effectively perpetuated elements of a dead and discredited school of theology. I refer to the secularized theology of the 1960s. Some of my generation and those among us who are a little older can recall the “secular city” of Harvey Cox, the “God is dead” theology of Bishop John Robinson and the London “left bank”, when views such as “religionless Christianity” circulated, derived in part from an interpretation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

This radical theology bubbled up just before secularized liturgy and radical pastoral councils appeared in the Netherlands immediately after the council. By and large, the Thomistic philosophical base protected Catholic theology from the full impact of this liberal-Protestant-secularized theology. But through the current ICEL language, something of this destructive virus has been preserved, as it were, in an ecclesiastical Jurassic Park. The secular mood and tone of the English we use in worship carry that era into our times. Perhaps it sustains those who are still locked into its ideals, categories, and agenda. Some of these people are the loudest in decrying the work of Vox Clara and the new ICEL, perhaps because they sense that the existing language of ICEL is an echo of the mood of their era.

When liturgical language no longer speaks with dignity, reverence, and graciousness, we risk losing an

essentially *Catholic* way of how we relate to God, how we understand God and ourselves as persons. The fathers at the Synod on the Eucharist in 2005 were concerned about this desacralized mood which undermines the praxis of liturgy today. In the Anglophone world, for nearly forty years, the banal ICEL language has gradually insinuated a kind of neutrality into the minds of millions of Catholics, dulling their Catholic sense of public worship and prayer, failing to nourish holiness or to promote sound spirituality. Partly through inadequate language, a desacralized atmosphere has been created in many of our churches, and it is less than Catholic. The loss of sacral language may be seen as a betrayal of the Second Vatican Council's radiant vision of the liturgy. It can only serve the interests of what Pope Benedict XVI has identified as the false hermeneutic of the council.<sup>14</sup>

That false hermeneutic is not restricted to theological faculties, rectories, or religious houses. Recently I discussed this dimension of truthfulness and the imminent translations with a wise friend who pointed out that some middle-aged and elderly laity will probably resent the new *Vox Clara* and ICEL texts, not because they are new, but because they will seem to be "a reversion to the past". That will remind them that they are not living up to the doctrinal and moral norms of the Church, norms they want to consider locked in a past they never wish to see again. So we may also expect to hear the cry "archaisms!" or something similar from some lay people. Others accustomed

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<sup>14</sup> See Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia offering them his Christmas greetings (December 22, 2005), at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

to fast food may not wish to savor what is more substantial, subtle, and refined. Even if we find it hard to articulate exactly what happened, something went wrong in the language of Catholic worship, and that has caused harm among Christ's faithful.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Lying is a sin. Then, we may well ask, has our worship in the English language involved telling lies for nearly forty years? I regret to say that *to a certain extent* it has. This is evident, first, in many demonstrable instances at the obvious level of mistranslation through omission, distortion, or the blurring of language that bears doctrinal truth. Secondly, it may be discerned in more subtle ways – as the undermining of the truth of the mystery and above all as the creation of a dull mood that drains away the truth of Christian worship. This is why it is important to redefine the debate between the two contrasting ICEL translations in ethical terms.

Those running a rearguard action to salvage as much of the old ICEL as possible should face some ethical challenges. It is all very well now to take up the rhetoric about being “pastorally sensitive” to the people. There was not a word of that over thirty years ago when a hastily mistranslated liturgy robbed the people of much of their Catholic cultural and spiritual heritage. Here the ethic of strategic mistranslation enters a domain closely related to lying: stealing. Much is rightly made of robbing people of their ethnic, indigenous, or spiritual cultures, but something like this has been going on quietly among English-speaking

Catholics for years, through the banal, but calculated, ICEL translations.

The ethical questions surrounding mendacious banality raise yet another issue. Some will want to ask: who was responsible for this enterprise? But there is no place for apportioning blame for what happened so many years ago. That is not a Christian way to set right past wrongs, which were largely the result of sincere persons using a flawed principle of dynamic equivalence, even as they were inspired by the religious ideologies of the era. At the same time, as with the more serious ethical tragedies of the past century, it is important to say firmly and clearly, "Never again!"

Now is the time to look forward and "wait in joyful hope", if I may use one of the old ICEL's more felicitous phrases. Something better is emerging in this area of English liturgical language, a significant development that may also make it possible to face the wider challenges of an inevitable reform of the reform. Through the new translations, we hope to see something of the glory of the liturgy shine once more. May we recover the divine splendor of the truth, on the lips, in the minds, and in the hearts of a people worshipping the triune God "in spirit and in truth".





## The Roots of Our Eyes are in the Heart\*

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ROLANDO V. DE LA ROSA, O.P.

“If you look at something for the 100th time, you are in danger of seeing it for the first time.” G.K. Chesterton wrote this enigmatic line to remind us that familiar things become strange when we look at these intently. The most ordinary thing can reveal an extraordinary significance that we can grasp only when we focus on it with attention. Perhaps this is the reason why we say: **“Pay attention.”** Why not *give*, or *share*, or *spare* our attention? We say “pay attention” because attention is the price we pay in order to capture, even only in part, the superabundant meaning of reality.

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*\*Homily delivered during the Mass for Truth with former President Corazon Aquino and ZTE witness Rodolfo Lozada, at the UST Santissimo Rosario Church last March 2, 2008.*

Paying attention entails, not only the use of our eyes. Something monopolizes our attention when it captures our heart. That is why lovers say: "I only have eyes for you." In a very real sense, we only see those things that we want to see, and our way of seeing is determined, not so much by the clarity of our eyesight, but by the disposition of our heart. **The way we see things reveal, not the way things are, but the way we are.** A person with a clean heart will see beauty and peace around him. A person whose heart is clouded by suspicion and mistrust will see nothing but betrayal and deception. The roots of our eyes are in the heart.

In the first reading, God warned the prophet Samuel who was examining the candidates for the kingship of Israel: "Do not judge by his looks or by his stature. Yahweh does not judge as men judge. For human beings see with their eyes; Yahweh sees with the heart."

Despite the fact that David was barely a teenager, inexperienced and lacking in worldly wisdom, God chose him to rule over Israel. He saw something in David that made him fit to be a king. And even when he committed abominable sins that cried to heaven for justice, David remained "close to God's heart." What did God see in David? It must be David's humility. In moments of triumph, he would glorify God in songs and uninhibited dancing. In moments of defeat and utter failure, he would cry to God for mercy and pardon. Even when David was deserted by his army, cursed by his friends, and abandoned by his children, David had the humility to seek refuge in God. David had taught us this lesson: It is only in

utter humility that we realize God is all we need because, after all, God is all we have.

The blind man in the Gospel who was healed by Jesus had the same human quality that David had. He was humble. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that "humility is truth". Humility comes from the word "humus", which means soil or ground. A humble person has his feet set firmly on the ground of his being. A humble person accepts the truth about himself; he does not pretend to be somebody else. He does not wear a mask, unlike the Pharisees whom Jesus called "hypocrites" and "whitened sepulchers".

After he was healed, the blind man declared without equivocation: "I am the one". Take me for who I am: "This is me." When he was brought to the Pharisees, and was asked to testify about his healing, he simply stated the truth, without adornment or exaggeration. He said: "He put paste on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see." And when the Pharisees, the experts in the law subjected him to cross-examination, asking him: "What do you think of this man who opened your eyes?" His answer was straightforward: "He is a prophet."

It was his humility that made the truth of his statement unassailable. His humility also allowed him to see Jesus no longer as a man, or a healer, but as God. He exclaimed before the very human Jesus: "Lord, I believe." Not only did Jesus heal his blindness; he also led him to faith and conversion. From that moment on, he learned to see, no longer with his eyes, but with his heart. Like King David, the blind man had taught us a lesson: God

chooses people to witness to the truth, not because they are blameless but because **something has happened to them.**

We can see the truth only if we first have it in our hearts. Let us offer this mass for ourselves: to make us humble, truthful, honest, like David and the blind man whose sight was restored. If there is one word that can contain these three qualities, the word would be INTEGRITY. The word comes from *integer* which means "whole". A person with integrity has a sense of wholeness or consistency within him. His thought is consistent with his words, which in turn are consistent with his actions. Truth must be true in all its part. A half-truth is a whole lie. We cannot be warriors of truth if we are not men and women of integrity.

It would be simplistic and hypocritical to say the problem of our country is the President and the men and women who are behind her. This is, a dangerous misunderstanding of the crisis we are facing today. The integrity crisis involves not just the President and the men and women behind her. The integrity crisis involves us all. In the body of Christ, we belong to one another, we affect one another, and we cannot escape one another. St. Paul wrote: "If one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." Whether we like it or not, for better or for worse, we are all connected. **Sin, even the most private, eventually destroys society.**

The crisis of integrity involves us all. Who of us have a corner on virtue that we can say we have never

lied to other people? Or worse, lied to ourselves? Jesus said: Do not judge. His command is not against making a true and righteous judgment. It asks us to beware, lest in our haste to judge others, we might be like the hypocrites: judging others as absolutely corrupt simply because we are blinded by our exaggerated piety and moral smugness.

It is easy to tell the truth; but the next easiest is to believe our own lie. Self-deception is easy especially for people who know that the discovery of their bad deeds can be devastating to their self-image and sense of well-being. Self-deception is the most abominable species of lying. Why? Because a person can become so submerged in the intricate details and implications of the lie, that the continuation of the lie becomes second nature.

If we want to restore truth and integrity in society, government, and the churches, we must stop looking for scapegoats to ease our burden of guilt and failure. We seem to have a penchant for putting the blame on just one person or a group of persons in order to take the heat off ourselves. We tend to shift attention away from our inability to govern ourselves to our self-appointed role as a social critic and reformer.

Let's face it. We delude ourselves if we think that by driving Gloria Arroyo away from Malacañang, as we did with Marcos and Erap, integrity and honesty will be restored. The two previous People Power events have not produced this desired result.

It is true, we can now boast of our democratic institutions. Last Thursday, a successful Chinese businessman

told me how fortunate we Filipinos are. “People in China are progressing by leaps and bounds” he said, “but they do not enjoy the freedom that Filipinos have.” Ah, freedom. I muttered to myself: “We are so free, that’s why – we are so lost.”

Democracy exists where reciprocal bonds, governed by truth and justice, link people to one another. Democracy exhibits the belief that human beings are capable of making correct judgments and responsible human decisions. But take a look at our elections. This process is supposed to be our most palpable way of manifesting to the world that we are indeed a democracy. But Gore Vidal’s criticism of the American election also applies to ours: “Our system of electing politicians to office is rotten and corrupted to its core, because organized money has long since replaced organized and enlightened public opinion. And most of it comes from rich people and corporations, who now own our political process – lock, stock, and pork barrel.”

Many present-day elected officials are mere surrogates of hidden power-brokers who, after election, take back what they had invested in. This deeply entrenched system of patronage easily lures honest officials into the despicable practice of graft and corruption.

If we want to restore integrity and honesty in government, the best way is not through a rigodon of leaders who are forcibly removed through People Power, but through an enlightened, educated, and conscientious electoral process. WE HAVE 26 MONTHS BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTION. We have enough time TO PREPARE OUR-

SELVES SO WE CAN VOTE WISELY. Let us use People Power during election time, not only before or after. It has happened in the past, in Pampanga, in Isabela, and in other less known places in our country. We can make it happen again.

As early as now, schools, colleges, and universities, and conscientious government officials as well as churches, NGO's, and the rest of civil society can adopt this as their advocacy going into 2010.

You may object: The present government leadership will not allow us to do that. Well, this happens only because our brand of democracy is obsessed with leadership. We idolize our government leaders and place our destinies in their hands. In truth, democracy will not work without conscientious constituents. We have to discard that model of democracy which portrays government leaders as the active molders, and we their constituents as the passive clay. Our task as voters is not only to elect our officials but to keep them in their proper place, which is to be our SERVANTS, not our lords and masters. We have to make them aware that they are accountable to us.

What our country needs at this crucial stage of our history are voters with an enlightened will, voters who will not elect officials who will treat them like doormats, citizens who will not exchange their conscience for convenience, nor their principles for monetary gain.

Bertrand Russell once wrote that democracy, the leader cannot be more stupid than his constituents. For, the

more stupid he is, the more stupid still are his constituents for electing him.

People may again raise this objection: "The next election is still too far ahead. We have to settle this corruption mess immediately. We have to bring to the light those who are guilty right now." Indeed, we have to do that. But it seems that People power appears to be our way of saying: We want it bad and we want it now, not sooner or later, but NOW. We are obsessed with speed. We want everything quickly and instantaneously. Even our prayers are done in a fast forward mode to save time. We become impatient when we don't get what we want. Don't you notice? We are always in a hurry but always late. Life is not a matter of speed but **depth**. The faster we go through life, the shallower our understanding of it becomes. Quick successes usually are a fluke. Real and lasting victories take time.

Finally, why do we march for truth? What motivates us? Is it love for truth or are we simply furious at the people whom we want to punish? We must remember that *prolonged* and *habitual* anger can be very exhausting. Anger can turn even the most reasonable man into a fanatic. Fanatics are hopelessly one-sided. They are filled with an almost infallible certainty of their rectitude, and an equally infallible certainty of the iniquity of those whom they think are evil.

Unrequited anger festers into hatred. This is even more destructive because hatred makes it almost impossible for us to forgive. Contrary to what we think, forgiveness



is not the prerogative of all. Not everyone can forgive. A cockroach cannot pardon a horse for trampling it to death. The power to forgive is correlative with the *capacity to punish*. We exercise our ability to forgive when, even if we have the right and the power to inflict punishment, we show the strength of will to control our desire to destroy and humiliate our opponent.

Gandhi once asked: "What is victory if it is measured by the gauge of destruction?" Victory does not consist in conquering the enemy, but in conquering ourselves. As he beautifully puts it: "Strength does not come from physical power, but from an indomitable will to control our desire to retaliate."

As we continue with this Eucharistic celebration, it is good to remember the beautiful lines of Maya Angelou:

*History, despite its wrenching pain cannot be unlived.*

*And if faced with courage, need not be lived again ... Here on the pulse of this new day, you may have the grace to Look up and out;*

*And into your sister's eyes, into your brother's face, your country And say simply, very simply with hope: Good Morning.*

Good morning. It means a good beginning. In humility, honesty, and integrity, let us ask God to make this beginning happen to us and in our country, through his unending grace. Amen.



## Forgiveness for Evil Done and the Good Undone

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†OSCAR V. CRUZ, DD

It is not uncommon that specially during the Holy Week, a good number of the Christian Faithful sincerely and humbly asks the Good Lord for forgiveness for the wrong things that they have done – such as violating no less than His own Commandments. Needless to say, this option against the mandates of God Himself in exchange for the choice of the biddings of evil is not only challenging but also downright despising Him. For man to offend his fellowman is bad enough. For him to spit at God's Face by trampling upon His universal and timeless Commandments is insolent, contemptuous, and blasphemous.

One distinct reality that some Christian faithful may lamentably forget is that the forgiveness of the Good Lord must be equally asked with respect for the good things they fail to do. Sin has formal reference not only in conjunction with the evil done – but also to relation to the good undone. Thus it is that there are sins of commission and sins of omission. Truth to say, while there are many evil deeds that people may be guilty of, there are certainly much

more good works undone that they are also accountable for. It is advisable for anyone reading these lines, to examine his or her conscience well – to become aware and to be sorry for practically innumerable good deeds they forget, omit or refuse to do.

Let it be well said that in the matter of evil done and good undone or about the reality of sins of commission and sins of omission, none of these have no social dimension. In other words, a sinner does not only directly fight God and thus personally becomes a loser as a matter of course, but also in one way or another offends and/or despises one or more individuals precisely by doing what is wrong and/or omitting what is right. Thus it is that any sin necessarily involves three persons: The Person of God sinned against. The person itself of the sinner. The person/s of the one/those sinned to. In the same way, any sin rightfully produces threefold alienation: The alienation of God from the sinner. The alienation of the sinner from God. The alienation of the one/ones offended from the sinner.

Finally, let it be clearly said that the greater the authority, influence and resources the sinner has, the more accountability he or she has before God, the more responsibility the same has before others – considering that the more evil the sinner can in fact do, and the more good the same can in effect fail to accomplish. This principle holds true for parents, neighborhood heads, provincial leaders and national public officials – particularly the person occupying the highest office in the land.

The bigger the sinner, the more repentance is required, the bigger forgiveness is needed. In a special way, the bigger the thief, the more penance is needed, the bigger restitution is demanded.

Let those who have ears, listen!

# Freedom from Religion vs. Freedom of Religion Myth

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AUSTIN CLINE

## Your Guide to Agnosticism/Atheism

*Myth:* You have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion.

*Response:*

This claim is common, but it rests on a misunderstanding of what real freedom of religion entails. The most important thing to remember is that freedom of religion, if it is going to apply to everyone, also requires freedom from religion. Why is that? You do not truly have the freedom to practice your religious beliefs if you are also required to adhere to any of the religious beliefs or rules of other religions.

As an obvious example, could we really say that Jews and Muslims would have freedom of religion if they were required to show same respect to images of Jesus that Christians have? Would Christians and Muslims really

have freedom of their religion if they were required to wear yarmulkes? Would Christians and Jews have freedom of religion if they were required to adhere to Muslim dietary restrictions?

Simply pointing out that people have the freedom to pray however they wish is not enough.

Forcing people to accept some particular idea or adhere to behavioral standards from someone else's religion means that their religious freedom is being infringed upon.

Freedom from religion does not mean, as some mistakenly seem to claim, being free from seeing religion in society. No one has the right not to see churches, religious expression, and other examples of religious belief in our nation – and those who advocate freedom of religion do not claim otherwise.

What freedom from religion does mean, however, is the freedom from the rules and dogmas of other people's religious beliefs so that we can be free to follow the demands of our own conscience, whether they take a religious form or not. Thus, we have both freedom of religion and freedom from religion because they are two sides of the same coin.

Interestingly, the misunderstandings here can be found in many other myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings as well. Many people don't realize – or don't care – that real religious liberty must exist for everyone, not just for themselves. It's no coincidence that people who object to the principle of "freedom from religion" are adherents of religious groups whose doctrines or standards would be the ones enforced by the state.

Since they already voluntarily accept these doctrines or standards, they don't expect to experience any conflicts with state enforcement or endorsement. What we have, then, is a failure of moral imagination: these people are unable to really imagine themselves in the shoes of religious minorities who don't voluntarily accept these doctrines or standards and, hence, experience an infringement on their religious liberties through state enforcement or endorsement.

That, or they simply don't care what religious minorities experience because they think they have the One True Religion.

<http://atheism.about.com/od/churchstatemyths/a/freedomfrom.htm>

## **Separation: Is it Anti-Religion?**

*Myth:* This "separation of church and state" is anti-religion.

*Response:*

This argument is a common strategy among those who want to appear to support the right to the freedom of religion. They correctly point out that the government cannot be hostile to religion, but by twisting things around they make it seem as though attempts by the government to remain detached from religious issues is a form of hostility. In this way, they attempt to get government involved with religion and religion involved with government, as if that were a solution to what is in reality a non-existent problem.

What many forget is that the separation of church and state not only protects the state, but also protects their religion from government interference. And, just as importantly, it protects religion from being made trite and irrelevant by virtue of its involvement with the state.

In the first place, it is obvious even to most of those who deny that there should be any such separation that the state should not be allowed to interfere with churches. There simply cannot be any religious freedom if the state is allowed to dictate to churches what they may and may not teach, what permissible dogmas they can hold, and so on.

But what is not quite so obvious is how the state ultimately trivializes religion when the two get mixed together. The state is not permitted to promote particular religious doctrines as religious doctrines, that much is clear – but in the attempt to do it anyway, some really poor rationalizations are used. The most common is that we aren't really dealing with "religion" anymore and that the doctrine, symbol, or words have magically become "secular" over the course of time.

But do devout Christians really want their holidays, their religious symbols and quotes from their savior, Jesus Christ, treated by the state as irreligious, secular components of society? Does that really make any sense at all? There are two choices: argue that these religious symbols and words are secular in order to get government endorsement, or reject government endorsement in order to preserve their religious nature. Truly devout believers can only justify the latter option – which leaves open the question of the true motivation of those who follow the first choice.



Throughout American history, many Christians have recognized that the separation of church and state protects Christianity as well as other religious faiths. Roger Williams, for example, argued very explicitly that in order to try and keep the Church pure from the influences of evil, it is necessary to keep it separated from civil government. More than that, however, he also thought it was important for the state that it, too, be kept separate from the workings of the church:

Magistrates [officials of the civil government] have no power of setting up the form of Church Government, electing Church officers, punishing with Church censures, but to see that the Church does her duty herein. ...And on the other side, the Churches as Churches, (though as members of the Commonwealth they may have power) have no power of erecting or altering forms of civil government, electing of civil officers, inflicting Civil punishments (no not on persons excommunicated) as by deposing Magistrates from their Civil Authority, or withdrawing the hearts of the people against them, to their laws, no more than to discharge wives, or children, or servants, from due obedience to their husbands, parents, or masters; or by taking up arms against their Magistrates, though he persecute them for conscience. (Roger Williams, *Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (1644), pages 248-249).

James Madison expressed a similar sentiment when he said "Religion flourishes in greater purity without than

with the aid of government.” In a letter from 1819, he further noted that “the number, the industry and the morality of the priesthood, and the devotion of the people have been manifestly increased by the total separation of the church and state.” In neither case were these men expressing a position which was anti-religion. On the contrary, they both believed that religion is important to people and wanted to ensure that it would be able to continue doing good by separating it from the power of the state.

It is important to keep in mind the fact that the United States is a country where religious belief and religious diversity are usually greater than in most other places. In countries where there is an established church and/or official state support for religion, both belief and diversity is generally lower. If the separation of church and state was really anti-religion, it would have to be argued that religion has flourished here more than elsewhere in spite of separation rather than because of it.

I have yet to see anyone actually make a case for the former, while the case for the latter has been made quite often. Instead of even trying, books and articles attacking church/state separation normally ignore this issue and only focus on a few incidents where Christians have had problems due to separation claims.

[http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/cs/blcsm\\_sep\\_antireligion.htm](http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/cs/blcsm_sep_antireligion.htm)

## Message of His Holiness for the 45th World Day of Prayer for Vocations

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BENEDICT XVI

### Theme:

*“Vocations at the service of the Church on mission”*

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

1. For the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, to be celebrated on 13 April 2008, I have chosen the theme: *Vocations at the service of the Church on mission*. The Risen Jesus gave to the Apostles this command: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19), assuring them: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28: 20). The Church is missionary in herself and in each one of her members. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, every Christian is called to bear witness and to announce the Gospel, but this missionary dimension is associated in a special and intimate way with the priestly vocation. In the covenant with Israel, God entrusted to certain men, called by him

and sent to the people in his name, a mission as prophets and priests. He did so, for example, with Moses: "Come, – God told him – I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people ... out of Egypt ... when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you will serve God upon this mountain" (*Ex* 3: 10 and 12). The same happened with the prophets.

2. The promises made to our fathers were fulfilled entirely in Jesus Christ. In this regard, the Second Vatican Council says: "The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons ... To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By his obedience he brought about redemption" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 3). And Jesus already in his public life, while preaching in Galilee, chose some disciples to be his close collaborators in the messianic ministry. For example, on the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves, he said to the Apostles: "You give them something to eat" (*Mt* 14:16), encouraging them to assume the needs of the crowds to whom he wished to offer nourishment, but also to reveal the food "which endures to eternal life" (*Jn* 6:27). He was moved to compassion for the people, because while visiting cities and villages, he found the crowds weary and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (cf. *Mt* 9:36). From this gaze of love came the invitation to his disciples: "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (*Mt* 9:38), and he

sent the Twelve initially “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” with precise instructions. If we pause to meditate on this passage of Matthew’s Gospel, commonly called the “missionary discourse”, we may take note of those aspects which distinguish the missionary activity of a Christian community, eager to remain faithful to the example and teaching of Jesus. To respond to the Lord’s call means facing in prudence and simplicity every danger and even persecutions, since “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (*Mt* 10:24). Having become one with their Master, the disciples are no longer alone as they announce the Kingdom of heaven; Jesus himself is acting in them: “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (*Mt* 10:40). Furthermore, as true witnesses, “clothed with power from on high” (*Lk* 24:49), they preach “repentance and the forgiveness of sins” (*Lk* 24:47) to all peoples.

3. Precisely because they have been sent by the Lord, the Twelve are called “Apostles”, destined to walk the roads of the world announcing the Gospel as witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ. Saint Paul, writing to the Christians of Corinth, says: “We – the Apostles – preach Christ crucified” (*1 Cor* 1:23). The Book of the *Acts of the Apostles* also assigns a very important role in this task of evangelization to other disciples whose missionary vocation arises from providential, sometimes painful, circumstances such as expulsion from their own lands for being followers of Jesus (cf. 8, 1-4). The Holy Spirit transforms this trial into an occasion of grace, using it so that the name of the Lord can be preached to other peoples,

stretching in this way the horizons of the Christian community. These are men and women who, as Luke writes in the *Acts of the Apostles*, “have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:26). First among them is undoubtedly Paul of Tarsus, called by the Lord himself, hence a true Apostle. The story of Paul, the greatest missionary of all times, brings out in many ways the link between vocation and mission. Accused by his opponents of not being authorized for the apostolate, he makes repeated appeals precisely to the call which he received directly from the Lord (cf. *Rom* 1:1; *Gal* 1:11-12 and 15-17).

4. In the beginning, and thereafter, what “impels” the Apostles (cf. *2 Cor* 5:14) is always “the love of Christ”. Innumerable missionaries, throughout the centuries, as faithful servants of the Church, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, have followed in the footsteps of the first disciples. The Second Vatican Council notes: “Although every disciple of Christ, as far in him lies, has the duty of spreading the faith, Christ the Lord always calls whomever he will from among the number of his disciples, to be with him and to be sent by him to preach to the nations [cf. *Mk* 3:13-15]” (Decree *Ad Gentes*, 23). In fact, the love of Christ must be communicated to the brothers by example and words, with all one’s life. My venerable predecessor John Paul II wrote: “The special vocation of missionaries ‘for life’ retains all its validity: it is the model of the Church’s missionary commitment, which always stands in need of radical and total self-giving, of new and bold endeavours”. (Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, 66)

5. Among those totally dedicated to the service of the Gospel, are priests, called to preach the word of God, administer the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, committed to helping the lowly, the sick, the suffering, the poor, and those who experience hardship in areas of the world where there are, at times, many who still have not had a real encounter with Jesus Christ. Missionaries announce for the first time to these people Christ's redemptive love. Statistics show that the number of baptized persons increases every year thanks to the pastoral work of these priests, who are wholly consecrated to the salvation of their brothers and sisters. In this context, a special word of thanks must be expressed "to the *fidei donum* priests who work faithfully and generously at building up the community by proclaiming the word of God and breaking the Bread of Life, devoting all their energy to serving the mission of the Church. Let us thank God for all the priests who have suffered even to the sacrifice of their lives in order to serve Christ ... Theirs is a moving witness that can inspire many young people to follow Christ and to expend their lives for others, and thus to discover true life" (Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 26).

6. There have always been in the Church many men and women who, prompted by the action of the Holy Spirit, choose to live the Gospel in a radical way, professing the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. This multitude of men and women religious, belonging to innumerable Institutes of contemplative and active life, still plays "the main role in the evangelisation of the world" (*Ad Gentes*,

40). With their continual and community prayer, contemplatives intercede without ceasing for all humanity. Religious of the active life, with their many charitable activities, bring to all a living witness of the love and mercy of God. The Servant of God Paul VI concerning these apostles of our times said: "Thanks to their consecration they are eminently willing and free to leave everything and to go and proclaim the Gospel even to the ends of the earth. They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration. They are generous: often they are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives. Truly the Church owes them much" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 69).

7. Furthermore, so that the Church may continue to fulfil the mission entrusted to her by Christ, and not lack promoters of the Gospel so badly needed by the world, Christian communities must never fail to provide both children and adults with constant education in the faith. It is necessary to keep alive in the faithful a committed sense of missionary responsibility and active solidarity with the peoples of the world. The gift of faith calls all Christians to co-operate in the work of evangelization. This awareness must be nourished by preaching and catechesis, by the liturgy, and by constant formation in prayer. It must grow through the practice of welcoming others, with charity and spiritual companionship, through reflection and discernment, as well as pastoral planning, of which attention to vocations must be an integral part.



8. Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life can only flourish in a spiritual soil that is well cultivated. Christian communities that live the missionary dimension of the mystery of the Church in a profound way will never be inward looking. Mission, as a witness of divine love, becomes particularly effective when it is shared in a community, "so that the world may believe" (cf. *Jn* 17: 21). The Church prays everyday to the Holy Spirit for the gift of vocations. Gathered around the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, as in the beginning, the ecclesial community learns from her how to implore the Lord for a flowering of new apostles, alive with the faith and love that are necessary for the mission.

9. While I entrust this reflection to all the ecclesial communities so that they may make it their own, and draw from it inspiration for prayer, and as I encourage those who are committed to work with faith and generosity in the service of vocations, I wholeheartedly send to educators, catechists and to all, particularly to young people on their vocational journey, a special Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 3 December 2007.*



# Seeking the Truth, Restoring Integrity\*

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†ANGEL LAGDAMEO, D.D.

*Beloved People of God:*

Greetings in the peace of the Lord!

Today in the midst of restlessness and confusion, we come to you as pastors, for that is our precise role. We do not come as politicians whose vocation it is to order society towards the common good. Our message contributes to the flourishing of a democracy which must not be built only on political formulae.

We face today a crisis of truth and the pervading cancer of corruption. We must seek the truth and we must restore integrity. These are moral values needing spiritual and moral insights.

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\*A CBCP Pastoral Statement.

Therefore, we address this pastoral statement to everyone particularly you our beloved people and in a special way to our political rulers and officials.

We are convinced that the search for truth in the midst of charges and allegations must be determined and relentless, and that the way to truth and integrity must be untrammelled, especially at the present time when questions about the moral ascendancy of the present government are being raised.

For this reason, we strongly:

1. Condemn the continuing culture of corruption from the top to the bottom of our social and political ladder;
2. Urge the President and all the branches of government to take the lead in combating corruption wherever it is found;
3. Recommend the abolition of EO 464 so that those who might have knowledge of any corruption in branches of government, may be free to testify before the appropriate investigating bodies;
4. Ask the President to allow her subordinates to reveal any corrupt acts, particularly about the ZTE-NBN deal, without being obstructed in their testimony no matter who is involved;

5. Appeal to our senators and the ombudsman to use their distinct and different powers of inquiry into alleged corruption cases not for their own interests but for the common good;
6. Call on media to be a positive resource of seeking the truth and combating corruption by objective reporting without bias and partiality, selective and tendentious reporting of facts;

For the long term we reiterate our call for “circles of discernment” at the grassroots level, in our parishes, Basic Ecclesial Communities, recognized lay organizations and movements, religious institutions, schools, seminaries and universities. It is through internal conversion into the maturity of Christ through communal and prayerful discernment and action that the roots of corruption are discovered and destroyed. We believe that such communal action will perpetuate at the grassroots level the spirit of People Power so brilliantly demonstrated to the world at EDSA I. It is People Power with a difference. From the grassroots will come out a culture of truth and integrity we so deeply seek and build. We instruct our CBCP Commissions to take active role including networking for this purpose.

May the Lord bless us in this sacred undertaking to build a new kind of Philippines and may our Blessed Mother be our companion and guide in this journey to truth and integrity.

For and on behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conference  
of the Philippines:

†**Angel Lagdameo, D.D.**

*Archbishop of Jaro*

*President, CBCP*

*February 26, 2008*

# **Commentary on the CBCP Statement: Seeking the Truth, Restoring Integrity**

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†ORLANDO B. QUEVEDO, O.M.I.

May I provide some personal thoughts toward a better and more accurate understanding of the CBCP statement of February 26, 2008. These are my personal thoughts and do not necessarily reflect the thought of CBCP.

## *1. Emergency meeting? Special Meeting?*

The background of the meeting: The CBCP Permanent Council was going to meet in order to decide on the present situation. Wisely the CBCP President wanted to consult the Bishops so that the Permanent Council decision would reflect the mind of the “college of bishops.” When the Bishops finally met, they discussed the nature of the meeting. Would it be a consultation or would it be a regular CBCP meeting? At the end the Bishops decided: Let the assembly be a meeting of the CBCP rather than simply a consultative meeting.

2. *Is it true that it was the Mindanao Bishops who “saved” GMA?*

Absolutely false. There were 55 Bishops present at the meeting of February 26, 2008. Four of the 55 were non-voting. Of the voting Bishops, 29 were from Luzon, 17 from Mindanao (among those absent from Mindanao was Bishop Pueblos), 6 from Visayas. From the numbers alone one can readily see how evidently false it would be for anyone to claim that the Mindanao Bishops “saved” GMA. In fact, the Bishops’ statement was approved unanimously. Even the handful known to favour Gloria’s resignation approved the statement.

3. *It is often said that the Bishops are divided. Is this true?*

The oft-mentioned “divided hierarchy” is false. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines is made up of 115 Bishops. Of these, 100 are active voting members. Less than 10 of the Bishops are “pro-resign.” Such numbers do not make a “divided” CBCP. The unity of the Bishops has always been there even when they issued their statement on July 10, 2005 that they were not demanding the resignation of the President.

The image of a divided hierarchy could be a media creation. Four or five Bishops with a contrary opinion receive a lot of disproportionate media exposure and mileage. If one studies newspaper reports and interviews, their names appear again and again. Yet Bishops with this contrary opinion constitute less than 10% of the whole hierarchy.



4. *This time why did not the Bishops demand GMA to resign?*

Choose from the following:

- a) They are blind and cannot see reality;
- b) They do not listen to the people and specially to the poor;
- c) Many of them have received money from the President.
- d) They have no spine.
- e) All of the above.

Are these charges true? No they are not. Bishops do visit people in the barrios and listen to them. They know what the poor are saying. In the provinces people have problems quite different from those in Manila and are not as much affected by issues that the national media and various groups in Metro Manila project. Mindanao-based groups, for instance, try to project these issues unto the public but for various reasons, particularly ideological, the public does not favourably respond. Some groups in Manila might speak of massive rallies nationwide, but the Bishops do not see this happening in their own dioceses. And so the Bishops see the difference between Manila and their own provincial dioceses. Their people generally see things differently. Maybe, just maybe, it also takes a bit of courage for Bishops to go against the current "popular" political opinion and public clamor?

How about gifts and money from the President? My answer is quite simple. For how much could a Bishop sell his soul or conscience to someone else? 10,000 pesos? 20,000 pesos? 100,000 pesos? 500,000 pesos? One million

pesos? Five or 10 million pesos? That gifts or money would blind the eyes of Bishops and seal their lips to gross corruption when solidly proven would be a tragic contradiction to their experience as pastors at EDSA I and EDSA II.

*5. If the claims are only hearsay passed on from one to another, why then did the Bishops not go along with the “growing clamor for resignation”?*

What I sense from the Bishops is this. Very many believe that the present process of arriving at the truth is seriously flawed for several reasons, some of which are the following:

a) The Senate has become a partisan venue for the opposition to pile up charges upon charges, proven or not, for their own political interests;

b) Although many developments have taken place since the Garci tapes, these developments beg for proof, the truth, closure.

c) Senate work on the ZTE-NBN issue is “in aid of legislation.”

By its very nature the process – which is sometimes without the benefit of the other side being heard or witnesses being interpellated by “defense” – is not ultimately meant to determine responsibility and guilt. In fact some of the Senators are saying, “Enough. We already have enough facts to aid us in legislation.” Hence, the Senate may not really be the proper venue for seeking the truth;

d) All of the above.

6. *But does not the Lozano testimony in the Senate establish once and for all that GMA is guilty of the highest type of corruption? Isn't the testimony of Lozada similar to the testimonies against former President Erap leading to EDSA II?*

On these issues many Bishops would believe the following: In the case of EDSA II, there were Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearings. But the final stage of investigation was a formal impeachment process, with lawyers presenting and rebutting, etc. and with the Supreme Court Chief Justice presiding. Both sides were heard fairly. We saw on TV Governor Singson's ledger, a money trail right up to Clarissa Ocampo's riveting story of signature-writing by the former President – all irrefutable testimonies despite efforts by defense lawyers. The stage for EDSA II was set. The verdict of guilty was a foregone conclusion based on real evidences and not simply on stories. The non-opening of an infamous envelope was simply the trigger. There is, therefore, a great difference between the Lozano testimony and the testimonies leading to EDSA II. Today, lawyers would most likely dispute the truth of the Lozano testimony. Some people who are for the resignation of Gloria in fact have some reservations about it.

Considering today's political polarization it is unfortunate that the veracity of witnesses would also depend to some extent on the mind set of the observer. If I am anti-Gloria I would be very inclined to say that Lozada

is truthful. But even in the anti-Gloria group we find many who would rather go through a legal process of finding the truth. The pro-Gloria camp would say that no solid evidence has been presented. As a result of these divergent perspectives many Bishops believe that the truth is far from settled and that we must continue to seek the truth.

*7. Why do the Bishops say that the President and all the branches of government should lead in combating corruption from top to bottom?*

The Bishops' suggestion may not be as bizarre or as weird as it seems. Even today people, including some of our present senators, keep telling the President to do something about corruption in the different branches of government. The President should do this or do that, they say. In other words, she should take the lead. And yet many of these would say that the President is Ali Baba herself.

But should we not also wonder who should clean up corruption regarding the use of Pork Barrel given to the Senators and Congressmen. Should it be the Senate? The House? Strangely, it seems that the Senate Ethics Committee has made some inquiries into allegations regarding certain alleged corrupt practices within their ranks but we have not seen any reports on these inquiries. So who should take the lead? Or maybe there is no corruption regarding the Pork Barrel?

In their statement the Bishops go on official record that the President and all the branches of government

must take the lead. If nothing is done, there would really be no one else to blame.

Perhaps when all is said and done, despite the weirdness of the suggestion, the Bishops and ordinary people could be right. The President does have some role – other than herself being investigated, and every government official should be when charged – in rooting out corruption (if at all possible) in government. If not she, then who? Civil society? The Church? A junta? The military? The people? All of us together?

#### *8. Is the Bishops' statement political or moral?*

From the very beginning, we all knew that we had to take a stand from the moral point of view. The reasoning for our stand must be on moral grounds. That is why we insisted on the Gospel moral values of truth and integrity. But we also knew that from one united moral stand, varying political options could flow.

Let me present, for instance, a rhetorical moral argument. Corruption at the highest level is to be unequivocally morally condemned. But there is, indeed, corruption at the highest level. Therefore, it is to be unequivocally morally condemned. Let us also presume that the second premise is solidly supported.

The conclusion is a moral statement that is dependent on the usual circumstances (who, what, when, where, why, how, etc). It has political implications. Some will demand resignation. Others will demand impeachment. Still others will require the legal processes to proceed. Some will

wait for 2010 to give their political response. Etc., etc. It is quite clear that one moral statement does not peremptorily demand only one political option. This reality flows both from the nature of the given moral statement and from the contingent, relative nature of political decisions. This is why continuing discernment is necessary to arrive at the truth. From a dialogue both of thought and action one united political stand might prudentially emerge.

9. *Why did the Bishops “strongly recommend” the abolition of EO 464?*

The abolition of EO 464 will greatly help the process of seeking the truth. Many questions can be answered by Cabinet Secretaries and they can provide a lot of information related to the present controversies. Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J., informed the Bishops that even if EO 464 were to be abolished, “Executive Privilege” would still remain. To a Bishop’s question Fr. Bernas answered that the President cannot waive Executive Privilege since it is not given to her personally but is granted to the Office itself. (Many people think that “the President can waive this privilege if she has nothing to hide. If she does not waive it, she must be hiding something.”). But there are specific parameters, he said, to Executive Privilege. Therefore, without EO 464 a Cabinet Secretary can answer many questions and provide many kinds of information about alleged corruption cases as long as the questions are not about specific areas covered by executive privilege.

Hence despite its obvious limitations the recommendation to abolish EO 464 is a priority recommendation of the Bishops to help seek the truth.

*10. What is the most important recommendation in the Bishops statement?*

I believe it is a recommendation that unfortunately has been hardly mentioned by the media, although it was emphasized at the press conference. The Bishops recommend the formation of circles of prayer, discernment and action in parishes, religious organizations and movements, colleges and universities, and Basic Ecclesial Communities. This communal process/action focuses on the issues of truth and integrity facing us today, including their causes and remedies. The Bishops believe that from such circles of prayer, discernment and action at the grassroots a culture of truth and integrity will emerge and spread. It is people power at and from the grassroots. Concretely it would require of each diocese a pastoral program of moral conscientization. From reports in the media, it seems that the prayer rally in Zamboanga calls for action along this line.

**†Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI**  
*Archbishop of Cotabato*  
*February 29, 2008*





**Cradle of Ecclesiastical Sciences,  
Bastion of Moral Integrity:  
The University of Santo Tomas across Centuries**

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**SEM. NOEL VINCENT B. ABALAJON**

*"It is not the seminaries (diocesan or regional), your Excellency, from which the worst (priests) come, it is from those who study in the University (UST)... There is a great difference between those who have been educated in the seminaries and those educated in Sto. Tomas and other colleges. Every student from Manila who returns to the town of his province is a rebel... Just look at where those who took part in the past insurrection have studied; I do not know the facts, but without rashness I dare to assert that all or the great majority must have been students of the University, not of the seminaries. And if in the provinces there is any priest stigmatized as being anti-Spanish, it is one of those who have studied in Manila. It is not the seminarians, your Excellency, which are*

*going to lose the Philippines for Spain, it is the University, and many agree that this is the case.”<sup>1</sup>*

This obscure letter written more than a century ago to denounce the members of the Secularization Movement implicated the University of Santo Tomas as a breeding ground of “rebellious” and “dangerous” priests during the Spanish period. This veritable proof then purges this long-revered Catholic institution in the Philippines of some unfounded attacks and biased criticisms as a colonial academe where heroic figures like Rizal allegedly suffered oppression and discrimination, and as a conservative school where progress and ingenuity were purportedly hindered.

An honest and truthful look, however, at the venerable roster of alumni of the University of Santo Tomas, reveals a living testament of the almost four centuries of blessings which the University presently enjoys. This reality, though great and laudable, occasions us, students and alumni, to be more humble and more grateful, for indeed everything is but an epiphany of God’s unending grace.

The University of Santo Tomas can indeed claim to be a cradle of ecclesiastical sciences and a bastion of moral integrity. Since its foundation as “a college-seminary” in 1611, through Archbishop Miguel de Benavides, O.P.’s last will, “where the Religious of this convent [of Santo

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of Bishop Juan Aragones of to Gov. Gen. Rafael Izquierdo, May 7, 1872. From John N. Schumacher, S.J., *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology and Ateneo de Manila University, 1979), 255.

Domingo] must teach the sciences of Arts and Theology, and that the religious novices and the others who may desire to attend may do so, as may also the sons of the citizens of this City and Islands, and other persons....,"<sup>2</sup> this Dominican institution has borne forth innumerable men of cloth through generations.

The different titles of UST, as "Royal University" in 1785 through King Charles III, as "Pontifical University" in 1902 through Pope Leo XIII, and as "The Catholic University of the Philippines" in 1947 through Pope Pius XII,<sup>3</sup> show its enduring legacy and heritage in the heart of the Philippine Church. The three ecclesiastical Faculties of Theology (1611), Philosophy (1611), and Canon Law (1733) continue to produce numerous priests and missionaries for the Philippines, for Asia, and for the Universal Church.

As memoirs and acclamations attest, these priests, either religious or secular, were not only intellectual giants, but more importantly, spiritual figures and pastoral models of the priesthood. Many of them received the honors they really deserved. And in this article we remember these ecclesiastical luminaries who contributed a lot to the

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<sup>2</sup> The original Foundation Act in AUST, *Libros* 48, fols. 1-10. From Fidel Villarroel, O.P. *Miguel de Benavides, O.P. 1550-1605, Friar, Bishop and University Founder* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005), 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Prospectus of the Faculty of Sacred Theology* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2004), 2. See also Jose Victor Z. Torres, *In Transition: The University of Santo Tomas during the American Colonial Period (1898-1935)* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2007), 13-21; and *101 Filipino Icons* (Quezon City: Adarna House, Inc. and Bench, 2007), 76-77.

growth of the Philippine Church and the birth of the Filipino nation by serving in various capacities and offices in their respective dioceses. A number of these Thomasian priests where renowned for their exemplary leadership and personal excellence not only here but also abroad.

But a great number of them, who once walked in the hallowed halls of the University and once sojourned in the formative confines of the Central Seminary, bereft of any human recognition and record, had lived as good and holy priests in the solitariness of a far-flung parish or in the anonymity of a poor community. These forgotten ministers of Christ, who were once Thomasians, equally deserved our generous praises. For the Church of the Philippines, Asia and the world, they are those whom God promised to His people: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart who will feed you with knowledge and prudence" (Jeremiah 3:15). To these Thomasian priests of the past and the present we offer our fervent prayers!

### **A Company of Glorious Saints and Martyrs**

These are the acclaimed saints and martyrs who were students and professors of the University of Santo Tomas. Many of them were missionaries assigned to the Philippines during the Spanish Period since our country was the center for missionary expansion in the East. Some stayed in the Philippines for a long time to evangelize the natives, to teach in schools, and to serve in the parishes. Then afterwards, when the call of charity came like the martyrs of Japan (1629-1637) and Vietnam (1745-1862), they journeyed to distant isles to bring Christ's gospel, where they eventually offered their lives for the faith. Still others like the

martyrs of the Religious Persecution in Spain (1933-1937) chose to defend their faith in their native land. Though not a single of them was a Filipino, we can truly claim them as our own for it was in the Philippines where they served as ministers of the Church and where they prepared themselves for their eventual martyrdom.<sup>4</sup>

## UST Martyrs of Japan

These Dominican friars were companions of St. Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, the first Filipino saint, to the honors of the altar. They were beatified by Pope John Paul II on February 18, 1981, and were canonized on October 18, 1987.

### **St. ANTONIO GONZALES, O.P. (1593-1637)**

*(Rector of the University, 1636; Professor, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1632-1636)*

### **St. DOMINGO IBÁÑEZ DE ERQUICIA, O.P. (1589-1633)**

*(Professor, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1621-1623)*

### **St. GUILLAUME COURTET, O.P. (1590-1637)**

*(Professor, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1635-1636)*

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<sup>4</sup> See Noel Vincent B. Abalajon, "A Heritage of Saints, A Legacy of Martyrs: The University of Santo Tomas' Enduring Contribution to the Communion of Saints," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Vol. 83, No. 863, November-December 2007, 761-774. See also Pedro Gonzalez Tejero, O.P. and Noel Vincent B. Abalajon, trans., *The UST Martyrs of the Religious Persecution in Spain (1933-1937)* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2007); and Ericson M. Josue, Alfredo Versoza, *Obispo: The Life and Legacy of the Fourth Filipino Roman Catholic Bishop* (Lipa City: Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Heart, 2007).

**St. LUCAS DEL ESPIRITU SANTO, O.P. (1594-1633)**

*(Lecturer of Arts and Philosophy, 1623)*

**St. TOMÁS HIOJI DE SAN JACINTO, O.P. (1590-1634)**

*(Student, Faculties of Philosophy and Sacred Theology, 1620-1628)*

## **UST Martyrs of Vietnam**

These Dominican saints belonged to the different groups of Martyrs of Vietnam. St. Domingo Henares was beatified by Pope Leo XIII on May 27, 1900. St. Vicente Liem de la Paz, O.P., St. Pedro Almato, O.P., and St. Jerónimo Hermosilla, O.P. were beatified by St. Pius X on May 20, 1906 while St. José Ma. Díaz Sanjurjo, O.P. and St. Melchor García Sampedro, O.P. were beatified by Pope Pius XII on April 29, 1951. But they were altogether canonized by Pope John Paul II on June 19, 1988.

**St. VICENTE LIEM DE LA PAZ, O.P. (1731-1777)**

*(Student, Faculties of Philosophy and Sacred Theology, 1753-1758)*

**St. DOMINGO HENARES, O.P. (1765-1838)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1786-1789;*

*Lecturer of Humanities, 1786-1789)*

**St. JOSÉ MA. DÍAZ SANJURJO, O.P. (1818-1857)**

*(Student of Law, 1844-1845; Professor, Faculty of  
Sacred Theology, 1844-1845)*

**St. PEDRO JOSÉ ALMATO RIBERA AURAS, O.P. (1830-1861)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1848-1853)*

**St. JERÓNIMO HERMOSILLA, O.P. (1800-1861)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1825-1828)*

**St. MELCHOR GARCÍA SAMPEDRO, O.P. (1821-1858)**

*(Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, 1848)*

## **UST Martyrs of the Religious Persecution in Spain**

Twenty-one (21) Dominicans of the Holy Rosary Province were beatified last October 28, 2007. Six (6) of them studied, taught and served the University of Santo Tomas.

**Blessed BUENAVENTURA GARCÍA PAREDES, O.P. (1866-1936)**

*(Professor of Civil Law, 1899-1901; Director of  
"Libertas," the UST Daily, 1900-1901)*

**Blessed JESÚS VILLAVERDE ANDRÉS, O.P. (1877-1936)**

*(Professor, Faculties of Sacred Theology and Philosophy,  
1918-1924; Member, Council for Studies and Discipline,  
1926-1934; Treasurer of the University, 1929-1934;  
Acting Dean of Sacred Theology, 1932-1933;  
Dean of Sacred Theology, 1933-1934)*

**Blessed PEDRO IBÁÑEZ ALONSO, O.P. (1893-1936)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1916-1917)*

**Blessed MANUEL MORENO MARTÍNEZ, O.P. (1862-1936)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1884-1885)*

**Blessed MAXIMINO FERNÁNDEZ MARINAS, O.P.**

**(1867-1936)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1892-1893)*

**Blessed JOSÉ MA. LÓPEZ CARRILLO, O.P. (1892-1936)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1918-1919)*

## **The Saintly Filipino Bishops**

Of the several religious leaders UST has contributed to the Philippine Church, two were known for their life of virtues and holiness: Bishop Alfredo Ma. A. Obviar of Lucena (ordained on June 29, 1944), whose Process for Causes of Beatification and Canonization was granted a Nihil Obstat by the Vatican on March 6, 2001, and Bishop Alfredo F. Versoza of Lipa (ordained on January 20, 1917), whose cause is still under diocesan investigation as of the moment.<sup>5</sup>

**Servant of God ALFREDO MA. ARANDA OBVIAR (1889-1978)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1914-1919)*

**Bishop ALFREDO FLORENTIN VERSOZA (1877-1954)**

*(Student, Faculty of Sacred Theology, 1900-1904;*

*Doctorate in Sacred Theology, "Honoris Causa," 1917)*

## **A Japanese War Martyr**

In the history of the UST Central Seminary, almost nothing is known about the Japanese soldiers, who belonged to the Catholic unit of the Imperial Japanese Army during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines from 1942-1945 and became its residents, except for a memorial article published in the 1947 Benavides Yearbook.

According to the *Crónicas del Seminario* of Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P., the vice-economus of the seminary during

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<sup>5</sup> See Noel Vincent B. Abalajon, "A Heritage of Saints, A Legacy of Martyrs: The University of Santo Tomas' Enduring Contribution to the Communion of Saints," *Homecoming: 2007 ALPA Souvenir Magazine* (Manila: UST Alumni Priests Association, 2007), n.p.



the war years and later its spiritual director, five (5) Japanese sought admission and were accepted at the UST Central Seminary. They were Joseph Isamu Ikeda of Kagoshima, Leoncio Masatoshi Ikuta of Osaka, Michael Satoshi Kanematsu of Mizayaki, Andres Shuichi Mori of Nagasaki, and John Shikiji Nishimura. They stayed in the UST Central Seminary from June 1943 until 1945.

The most memorable was the person of Joseph Isamu Ikeda. Coming from Catholic roots in Japan, he decided to pursue an ecclesiastical vocation in his homeland despite objections from his family members. His strong desire was however abruptly interrupted by the bombing of the Pearl Harbor and the succeeding Japanese war activities. He was enlisted in the Japanese army and was sent to the Philippines. Even as a soldier, he displayed extraordinary prudence and kindness despite the hostile attitudes of his associates. In Manila he first enrolled at the San Carlos Seminary, where he gained the friendships of the Filipinos. Later in 1943, he entered the UST Central Seminary where he was a diligent student and an amiable companion, always mindful and never losing sight of his dream to become a priest. As a Centralite, he was always contrite for the cruelties of the Japanese, and in several occasions, he tried to be helpful to the Filipinos like saving the lives of his fellow seminarians from the dreaded clutches of the Kempeitai and preserving the archives of the Archdiocese of Manila from destruction.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Letter of Ernie A. de Pedro, Managing Trustee of the Lord Takayama Jubilee Foundation to Fr. Frederik Fermin, O.P., Rector of UST Central Seminary, December 16, 1997. See also Benjamin L. Marino, "Fr. Joseph Ikeda: An Appreciation," *The 1947 Benavides* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 1947).

Finally, as World War II raged and ravaged the Philippines, Joseph Isamu Ikeda was ordained priest by Archbishop Michael O'Doherty of Manila on January 6, 1945 at the UST Chapel. After celebrating his thanksgiving mass at the Santa Cruz Church the next day, Fr. Ikeda was immediately picked up by a military Japanese escort and forced upon him his new duties as a soldier of the *Hodobu* (Department of Information). With the grace of ordination still aflame and burning, this terrible reality brought another set of trials on him. But Fr. Ikeda never abandoned his priestly duties despite the real dangers of helping the Filipinos, warning them of attacks and giving them provisions for their survival. His ultimate sacrifice happened on February 3, 1945. While fleeing Manila with the Japanese forces and upon reaching Antipolo, Fr. Ikeda was able to save the image of the Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, his beloved heavenly Mother, from looting and desecration and entrusted it to safe hands. Because of this heroic act, he was murdered by his fellow Japanese. Up to now, the memory of Fr. Ikeda's martyrdom silently lingers in the freedom we, Filipinos, continue to treasure and the faith we strive to keep.

### **A Senate of Pioneering Filipino Priests**

From the intellectual bosom of UST were nourished the earliest ordained Filipino clergy (the first and second groups of native ordainees). These native priests studied for their ecclesiastical degrees at the University, while at the same residing at *Seminario de San Clemente* (later renamed *Seminario de San Felipe*), the first conciliar seminary of the Philippines established in 1702, and the forerunner of the

*Real Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos* (1786). Even until 1881, residents of the San Carlos Seminary still took up canon law and dogmatic theology at the University of Santo Tomas.<sup>7</sup> Many of these Filipino priests were respected and respectable pioneers of their ecclesiastical offices.

### **The First Group of Filipino Priests (1698-1706)**

**Fr. JOSEPH DE OCAMPO** (ordained 1699)

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1699; Licentiate in Arts, 1700)*

*The First Chinese Mestizo Priest and Chaplain*

**Fr. BLAS DE STA. ROSA** (ordained 1703, d. 1733)

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1692)*

*The First Filipino Parish Priest*

**Fr. JUAN MAÑAGO** (ordained 1705)

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1700)*

*The First Filipino Military and Hospital Chaplain*

### **The Second Group of Filipino Priests (1707-1723)**

**Fr. JUAN GUINTO** (ordained 1716, d. c1770)

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1706)*

*The First Filipino Seminarian (1705-1707);*

*The First Indio Vicar Forane*

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<sup>7</sup> See Luciano P.R. Santiago, *The Hidden Light: The First Filipino Priests* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987) and *Laying the Foundations: Kapampangan Pioneers in the Philippine Church 1592-2001* (Angeles City: Holy Angel University Press, 2002); Hernando M. Coronel, *Boatmen for Christ: The Early Filipino Priests* (Manila: Reyes Publishing, Inc., 1998); and Fidel Villarroel, O.P., et al., *UST Graduate Listing 1611-1971* (Manila, University of Santo Tomas, 1972).

**Fr. AGUSTIN BALUYOT DE SAN MIGUEL**

**(ordained 1714, d. 1737)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1706)*

*The First Filipino Seminarian (1705-1707)*

**Fr. EUGENIO DE STA. CRUZ Y MERCADO (ordained c1716)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1716)*

*The First Filipino Vicar General*

**Fr. MATHIAS DE STA. ANA (ordained 1717, d. c1749)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1712)*

*The First Filipino Priest-Sacristan of Nueva Segovia*

**Fr. NICOLAS MANALO (ordained 1720)**

*The First Filipino Priest-Sacristan of the Cebu Cathedral*

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1714)*

**Fr. SEBASTIAN FABIAN DE MOXICA**

**(ordained c1716, d. c1730)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1706)*

**Fr. DOMINGO DE GUZMAN (ordained c1717)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1706)*

**Fr. ROQUE THOMAS DE AQUINO (ordained c1716)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1712)*

**Fr. THOMAS MANALO (ordained c1720, d. 1746)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1712)*

**Fr. JOSEPH XIMENES (ordained c1720, d. c1764)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1714)*

**Fr. JOSEPH DE ORDOÑES (ordained c1719, d. c1764)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1714)*

**Fr. JUAN DE ESTRADA AGUERO (ordained c1718)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1714, Licentiate in Arts, 1716)*

**Fr. PAULINO PARAZ (ordained c1719)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1714)*

**Fr. ANDRES PASQUAL (ordained c1721)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1716)*

**Fr. PEDRO DIAZ MAÑOSCA (ordained 1718, d. c1736)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1716)*

**Fr. SIMEON MATHIAS (ordained c1720)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1716)*

**Fr. JUAN THOMAS (ordained c1721)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1716)*

**Fr. JUAN DE MERCADO (ordained 1723)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1716)*

**Fr. JUAN DE OCAMPO (ordained c1722, d. 1753)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1717)*

**Fr. FRANCISCO FABIAN DE STA. ANA (ordained c1716)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1712)*

### **Other Pioneering Filipino Priests**

**Fr. MANUEL FRANCISCO TUBIL (1742-1805, ordained 1771)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1767; S.Th.B., 1770;*

*S.Th.L., 1771; S.Th.D., 1772)*

*The First Filipino Doctor of Sacred Theology*

**Fr. JOSEPH DE VERGARA Y MASANGCAY**

**(1767-1820, ordained 1791)**

*(Bachelor in Arts, 1785; Licentiate in Arts, 1785;*

*J.C.B., 1785; Bachelor in Laws, 1785)*

*The First Filipino Priest Delegate to the Spanish Cortes (1813)*

## A Corps of Remarkable Nationalists and Heroes

These Filipino priests were the frontrunners of the Secularization and Nationalist Movements from 1850 up to 1903, a period which covers the Spanish and American colonial eras. These better trained and educated native clergy possessed advanced degrees from the University of Santo Tomas in theology and canon law. Their constant dream was to fight for equality and esteem with the Spanish regulars in terms of the administration of parishes, and to defend their rights and dignity against their oppressors. They suffered much in the hands of their adversaries – from betrayals and tortures, and even death in the case of the GomBurZa martyrdom of 1872, which awakened Rizal's patriotism.<sup>8</sup>

### **Fr. PEDRO PABLO PELAEZ (1812-1863)**

*(Bachelor of Arts, 1829; S.Th.B., 1833; S.Th.L., 1836; S.Th.D., 1844)*

*Principal Spokesman and Purveyor of the  
Beginnings of National Consciousness*

### **Fr. JOSE APOLONIO BURGOS (1837-1872)**

*(The Most Distinguished Alumnus of UST with 8 Academic Degrees:*

*Bachelor of Arts, 1855; S.Th.B., 1859; Licentiate in Arts, 1860;*

*S.Th.L., 1862; J.C.B., 1866; S.Th.D., 1868;*

*J.C.L., 1868; J.C.D., 1871)*

*Renowned Leader of the Secularization Movement,  
GomBurZa Martyr*

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<sup>8</sup> See John N. Schumacher, S.J., *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1981); and Fidel Villaruel, O.P., *Father Jose Burgos: University Student*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 1971.

**Fr. JACINTO ZAMORA (1835-1872)**

*(Bachelor in Canon Law, 1858; Bachelor in Laws, 1859)  
Collaborator in the Secularization Movement, GomBurZa Martyr*

**Fr. MARIANO SEVILLA (1839-1923)**

*(Bachelor of Arts, 1857; S.Th.B., 1861; Licentiate in Arts, 1861;  
S.Th.L., 1869; S.Th.D., 1871; Titulo de Profesor de Segunda  
Enseñanza, 1877; Maestro de Latinidad, 1881)  
Leader of the Loyalist-Nationalist Group  
(Nationalist but Loyal to Rome)*

**Fr. GREGORIO LABAYAN AGLIPAY (1860-1940)**

*(Student of the Faculty of Civil Law, 1881-1883)  
Founder of Iglesia Filipina Independiente*

## **A Synod of Distinguished Bishops**

Last November 28, 2003, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Central Seminary celebrated its Diamond Jubilee (75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary) as the Interdiocesan Seminary of the Philippines by virtue of the decree “Quod iam provide” by the Sacred Congregation on Seminaries and Universities issued in 1928, which was preceded by a proposal of the Philippine bishops in their annual meeting in 1926.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the humble beginnings of the UST Central Seminary can truly be traced back to the Colegio de Santo Tomas, as its forerunner, founded in 1611 as an institution which admitted some students pursuing the priesthood.

Furthermore, as early as 1905, there existed a “Central Seminary” which housed seminarians coming from the

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<sup>9</sup> See Fidel Villarroel, O.P., “The “Colegio de Santo Tomas”, Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary,” *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas*, Vol. 79, No. 835, March-April 2003, 235-262.

different dioceses of the Philippines, who were sent by their respective bishops to UST under the care and guidance of the Dominicans. This was acclaimed through a papal letter of Pius X, as well as Bishop Jeremias Harty's proposal and the Bases of Foundation drafted by the UST College Council in 1905.<sup>10</sup>

As recorded in pertinent sources, out of **around 213 bishops** produced by the Philippine Church since Bishop Jorge Barlin of Caceres (ordained on June 29, 1906), the first Filipino bishop, **111 of them (52%) came from UST and 80 (37%) were full-fledged Centralites** (from UST Central Seminary).

UST has already produced two Cardinals: **Zeferino Díaz Cardinal González, O.P., D.D.**, the famous Spanish neo-scholastic philosopher;<sup>11</sup> **Jose Tomás Cardinal Sanchez, D.D.**, the former Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy, two Papal Nuncios: **Archbishop Osvaldo M. Padilla, D.D.** (Costa Rica, ordained on January 6, 1991), and his brother, **Archbishop Francisco M. Padilla, D.D.** (Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, ordained on May 16, 2006); the first Filipino-American Bishop of U.S.A.,

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<sup>10</sup> See Noel Vincent B. Abalajon, "On the Shoulders of the Giants: The Great Legacy of the University of Santo Tomas to the Philippine Church," *Homecoming: 2005 ALPA Souvenir Magazine* (Manila: UST Alumni Priests Association, 2005), n.p. See also Charles Bransom, "The Seed was Sown in Good Soil: Filipino Bishops in the Service of the Universal Church," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Vol. 81, No. 848, May-June 2005, 360-375.

<sup>11</sup> Eladio Neira, O.P., Hilario Ocio, O.P., and Gregorio Arnáiz, O.P., *Misioneros Dominicos en el Extremo Oriente, Vol. 2: 1836-1940* (Manila: Provincia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores, 2000), 63-65. See also [www.catholic-hierarchy.org](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org).



**Bishop Oscar A. Solis of Los Angeles** (ordained as auxiliary on February 10, 2004); and three new Bishops of Asia: **Bishop John Baptist Lee Keh-Mien, D.D. of Hsinchu, Taiwan** (ordained on June 24, 2006), **Bishop Joseph Chusak Sirisut, D.D. of Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand** (ordained on February 10, 2007) and **Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom, D.D. of Sandakan, Malaysia** (ordained on October 15, 2007).

## **DISTINCTIONS:**

### *Cardinals*

**ZEFERINO DÍAZ CARDINAL GONZÁLEZ, O.P., D.D.**  
(1831-1894)

*(Licentiate in Sacred Theology, 1859;*

*Doctorate in Sacred Theology, 1860)*

*First Spanish Thomasian Cardinal*

*Episcopal Ordination: October 24, 1875 /*

*Elevation to the Cardinalate: November 10, 1884*

**JOSE TOMÁS CARDINAL SANCHEZ, D.D. (1920-Present)**

*(Licentiate in Sacred Theology, 1949; Doctorate in*

*Sacred Theology, "Honoris Causa," 1988)*

*First Filipino Thomasian Cardinal*

*Episcopal Ordination: May 12, 1968 /*

*Elevation to the Cardinalate: June 28, 1991*

### *Papal Nuncios*

**MOST REV. OSVALDO M. PADILLA, D.D. (1942-Present)**

*(Bachelor in Sacred Theology, 1965)*

*Apostolic Nuncio to Costa Rica (2003)*

*First Filipino Papal Nuncio*

*Episcopal Ordination: January 6, 1991*

**MOST REV. FRANCISCO M. PADILLA, D.D.**

**(1953-Present)**

*(Bachelor in Sacred Theology, 1974; Licentiate and  
Master of Arts in Sacred Theology, 1976)*

*Apostolic Nuncio to Papua New Guinea and  
the Solomon Islands (2006)*

*Episcopal Ordination: May 23, 2006*

### ***Filipino Bishop Abroad***

**MOST REV. OSCAR A. SOLIS, D.D. (1953-Present)**

*(Bachelor in Sacred Theology, 1978)*

*Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, U.S.A. (2004)*

*First Filipino-American Bishop*

*Episcopal Ordination: February 10, 2004*

### ***Asian Thomasian Bishops***

**MOST REV. JOHN BAPTIST LEE KEH-MIEN, D.D.**

**(1958-Present)**

*(Licentiate in Canon Law, 2000;*

*Doctorate in Canon Law, 2002)*

*Bishop of Hsinchu, Taiwan (2006)*

*Episcopal Ordination: June 24, 2006*

**MOST REV. JOSEPH CHUSAK SIRISUT, D.D. (1956-Present)**

*(Licentiate and Master of Arts in Sacred Theology, 2004)*

*Bishop of Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand (2007)*

*Episcopal Ordination: February 10, 2007*

**MOST REV. JULIUS DUSIN GITOM, D.D. (1957-Present)**

*(Licentiate in Canon Law, 2007)*

*First Bishop of Sandakan, Malaysia (2007)*

*Episcopal Ordination: October 15, 2007*

## PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY

I.	Total Number of Bishops of the Philippine Church (From 1581-2007)	= <u>318</u>
	*Number of Spanish Bishops (1581-1990)	= 103
	*Number of Filipino Bishops (1900-2007)	= 215
II.	Total Number of Thomasian Bishops of the Philippine Church (From 1581-2007)	= <u>138</u>
	*Number of Spanish Thomasian Bishops (1581-1990)	= 27
	*Number of Filipino Thomasian Bishops (1900-2007)	= 111
III.	Total Number of Living Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (2007)	= <u>138</u>
	*Number of Thomasian Bishops (Living Members of CBCP)	= 65
	*Number of Active Members of CBCP	= <u>106</u>
	*Number of Thomasian Bishops (Active Members of CBCP)	= 45
	*Number of Retired Members of CBCP	= <u>32</u>
	*Number of Thomasian Bishops (Retired Members of CBCP)	= 20
IV.	Total Number of Centralite Bishops of the Philippine Church (1900-2007)	= <u>80</u>
	*Number of Centralite Bishops (Living Members of CBCP)	= 45
	*Number of Active Members of CBCP	= 29
	*Number of Retired Members of CBCP	= 16
IV.	Percentage/Ratio of Thomasian and Centralite Bishops over Total Number of Bishops of the Philippine Church	
	<b>43%</b> (138 of 318 Total Number of Bishops of Philippine Church, both Filipino and Spanish)	

- 26%** (27 of 103 Spanish Bishops of Philippine Church)  
**52%** (111 of 215 Filipino Bishops of Philippine Church)
- 47%** (65 of 138 Living Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines)  
**42%** (45 of 106 Active Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines)  
**63%** (20 of 32 Retired Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines)
- 25%** (80 Centralites of 318 Total Number of Bishops of the Philippines, Filipino and Spanish)  
**37%** (80 Centralites of 215 Filipino Bishops of Philippine Church)  
**72%** (80 Centralites of 111 Filipino Thomasian Bishops of Philippine Church)
- 33%** (45 Centralites of 138 Living Members of CBCP)  
**69%** (45 Centralites of 65 Living Thomasian Members of CBCP)
- 42%** (45 Centralites of 106 Active Members of CBCP)  
**69%** (45 Centralites of 65 Active Thomasian Members of CBCP)
- 50%** (16 Centralites of 32 Retired Members of CBCP)  
**80%** (16 Centralites of 20 Retired Thomasian Members of CBCP)

## Cases and Inquiries

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JAVIER GONZÁLEZ, OP

### CONVALIDATION OF MARRIAGE

#### QUESTION:

*While visiting families as part of my apostolate I often encounter couples whose marriages are not recognized by the Church, that is, couples living in irregular marital situations. For instance, Catholic couples civilly married only or married under some impediment (previously married and no declaration of nullity had been given yet) or defective canonical form; mixed marriages contracted in the place of the non-Catholic without dispensation from the required form, etc. Some of them did so not because of any burdensome Church restrictions but because of other factors or circumstances (they were in a hurry; they thought the tribunal process would take too long or be too costly; they dreaded a scolding by the parish priest because they had not been practicing their religion, and so on). When informed of the benefits of having their marriage convalidated by the Church some of them showed opposition and indifference, while others wished to apply for it for*

*their peace of mind and reconciliation with the Church. Most of them, however, said that they did not know how to go about it, being unacquainted with the Church's procedures concerning validation.*

*Frankly speaking, I myself as a lay minister do not know much about the intricacies of convalidation. Hence my question: what kind of marriages can be convalidated by the Church and how does convalidation work?*

### **ANSWER:**

Marriage convalidation is an important matter most Catholics are not familiar with. It is common knowledge that baptized Catholics have the right to marry in the Church if they are truly free to marry and possess the discretion necessary to choose the life-long marital partnership. However, many simply do not know that when a marriage is invalid on account, for example, of an ecclesiastical impediment, such marriage may be revalidated by mere dispensation from it by the ecclesiastical authority, without intervention of the spouses.

There are Catholics whose marriages are not recognized by the Church because of *lack of canonical form*. Such is the case, for instance, of Catholic couples who contract marriage "outside the Church" in the presence of civil authorities only, and of Catholics who get married with non-Catholic partners in the presence of the ministers from other religious denominations, without previous dispensation from the form required by Church law.

There are also Catholics whose marriages are null or invalid because of the existence of either a *diriment impe-*

*dimment*, a *defective consent*, or a *defective canonical form*. Such is the case, for instance, of Catholic couples who get married "in the Church" but with one or both parties lacking actual legal capacity to enter such marriage due – in the case of a diriment impediment – to a standing previous marriage, the reception of sacred orders, close relationship of consanguinity or affinity, etc.; or – in the case of defective consent – to lack of sufficient maturity, incapacity to assume the essential obligations of marriage, positive intention of cheating, lack of freedom, etc. The description of the diriment impediments as well as of the grounds of defective consent and of defective canonical form is found in the Code of Canon Law (cf cc. 1073-1118).

Having been contracted in the Church, that is, observing the external formalities required by the ecclesiastical law, these marriages were presumably valid by virtue of the principle that "marriage enjoys the favor of the law." However, since presumption admits contrary evidence, once the presence of a diriment impediment is discovered or the existence of a defective consent is proven, the marriage is for all the effects considered null and invalid from the very beginning, even if some years have passed since it was contracted.

In view of this, some couples may opt to have their union officially validated by the Church. The juridical act that validates an invalid marriage is known, in technical terms, as *convalidation of marriage*. The validation of a marriage may be effected by the simple renewal of consent, when its nullity arises only from a defective consent in one or both parties. When, however, a marriage is invalid on account of some ecclesiastical impediments

or of lack/defect of canonical form, it may be revalidated by dispensation from them, whenever possible. That is why the Code of Canon Law provides two methods to make good the defects of marriages that are null or invalid, namely, *simple* validation and *retroactive* validation, the latter known also as *sanatio in radice* ("healing to the root").

## 1. The Simple Validation

a) Tony and Mary, both Catholics, began dating when they were college students. When they graduated they became engaged and started to plan their wedding. But some factors began to complicate matters. Tony got an employment and was spending the entire working week in a city far away from home. As a result, he and Mary had only brief moments together on some weekends and one week on Christmas vacation. While spending a vacation together they decided to skip a big wedding; they obtained a marriage license and immediately got married in a civil ceremony. Some years later, on the occasion of their house's blessing, the parish priest asked them whether they were married in the Catholic Church. When the couple responded negatively, he offered them an opportunity to have their marriage convalidated by the Church. Their uncomfortable feeling of not having been married in the Church surfaced and they gladly accepted the invitation. The remedy of their situation was relatively simple. They presented to the parish office their marriage contract together with their baptismal certificates and completed the standard prenuptial investigation. The actual exchange of consent took place before the parish priest at the parish Church in a "simple wedding" after one of the regular



Masses. Afterwards the family celebrated at a local restaurant. Tony and Mary are now the parents of three young boys, regular attendants at Sunday Mass and actively involved in the parish activities.

b) Paul and Susan, both baptized Catholics, had not attended Mass since their college graduation. When Susan tearfully announced that she was pregnant, they made quick plans to be married. Having not been active Catholics, and dreading a scolding by a priest, they opted not to have a Church wedding. However, after the baby was born they realized the importance of their faith and wanted to have their son baptized. This feeling and their wish to return to the Church in order to raise their son in the Catholic faith pushed them to make an appointment with their parish priest. After a long conversation, he helped them fix the date, the time and the rite of the convalidation of their marriage. The couple assented to have a simple ceremony during which they both renewed their consent to the marriage, reaffirmed their love for one another and their commitment before God and before the Church.

c) Aaron and Luisa also had their marriage convalidated. Aaron was a young Jewish man whose first marriage crumbled almost as soon as it started. Divorced after about one year, he found employment in a department store where he came to know Luisa, a young Catholic woman. After some time they started dating seriously. Eventually, she became pregnant. When Luisa was expecting her second child, they decided to marry. In a very private family ceremony Aaron and Luisa married before a

civil officer. Luisa's Catholic mother, troubled by these events, kept urging the couple to have their children baptized and their marriage convalidated by the Church. The problem for the convalidation, however, was Aaron's previous marriage, which needed a declaration of nullity. Eventually, after speaking with a parish priest, Aaron began the tribunal process. Moved by the desire to have his new marriage convalidated, Aaron petitioned for a declaration of nullity of his first marriage. When an affirmative decision was received, Aaron and Luisa set the date for a large Church wedding and reception.

These are random stories of *simple validation* of marriage. This kind of validation is effected by a renewal of consent (when the matrimonial nullity arises from a defective consent in one or both parties) or by a new celebration of marriage observing the canonical form. Specifically, following the provisions of the Code of Canon Law:

i. *If the marriage was invalid because of a diriment impediment*: If the impediment is **public**, that is, if it can be proved in the external forum, the renewal of consent must be done according to the canonical form (i.e., before an authorized ecclesiastical authority and witnesses); if the impediment is **occult**, it is sufficient that the consent is renewed privately and in secret by the party that is aware of the existence of the impediment, or by both parties if the impediment is known by both spouses. In case only one of the parties is aware of the existence of the impediment, the consent of the other party must persist at the moment of the renewal of the spouse's consent; otherwise the required exchange of consent as constitutive element of marriage would not exist (c. 1158).

ii. *If the marriage was invalid because of a defective consent:* The marriage is validated through the consent of the party who had not consented before. Also in this case the consent of the other party must persist. If the defect of the consent cannot be proven, then it is sufficient that the party who did not consent gives consent privately and in secret. If the defect of consent can be proven, it is necessary that consent be given in the canonical form (c. 1159).

iii. *If the marriage was invalid because of a defective canonical form:* The marriage must be contracted anew observing the canonical form (c. 1160).

The key factor in the simple validation of marriage is the renewal of consent, which, according to canon law, "*must be a new act of will consenting to a marriage which the renewing party knows or thinks was invalid from the beginning*" (c. 1157).

## **2. The Retroactive Validation or *Sanatio in radice***

Allan is a doctor who belongs to the Anglican Church. He is married to Marisa, a Filipino Catholic nurse. They got married in the Anglican Church without any dispensation. Twenty years later they came to the Philippines with the intention of settling down here permanently. Marisa's parents wanted them to legalize their union in the Catholic Church since the whole family is Catholic. She was willing to do so, but Allan did not wish to get married in the Catholic Church, with the reason that "we are validly married and there is no sense for getting married again." Nevertheless, he was a good man, not

objecting at all to have their children baptized and educated in the Catholic Church.

Not knowing what to do about it, Marisa and her mother consulted a parish priest about the status of such marriage and the possibility of its being validated, even without Allan's participation. In answer, the parish priest told them of the real situation: Allan was validly baptized and therefore the fact of being an Anglican did not constitute diriment impediment; their marriage was prohibited, but such prohibition did not in itself render their marriage null and void; it would have been a mixed marriage. However, what rendered their marriage null and void was its celebration in the Anglican Church "without any dispensation"; in other words, because of defective canonical form. That invalid marriage could obviously be validated by the Church by the couple's contracting it anew in the canonical form (*simple validation*). But the problem was that Allan did not wish to participate in the convalidation ceremony, considering in his own mind that the marriage was already valid because the two had publicly exchanged their mutual consent previously. "In such cases," the parish priest continued, "the Church can recognize the marriage on paper in what is known as *sanatio in radice*, which involves the dispensation from the canonical form. Such convalidation could be granted by the diocesan bishop."

And so it happened. The necessary documents were assembled and the diocesan bishop proclaimed in writing that the union was indeed valid. Once the canonical form had been dispensed, there was no need of going through any external celebration. Neither was the couple's renewal

of consent needed for it persisted ever since they got married in the Anglican Church. Allan was informed only some time later about the convalidation.

This example illustrates a typical application of the principles on retroactive validation offered by the Code of Canon Law in canon 1161:

§1 *The retroactive validation of an invalid marriage is its validation without the renewal of consent, granted by the competent authority. It involves a dispensation from an impediment if there is one and from the canonical form if it had not been observed, as well as a referral back to the past of the canonical effects.*

§2 *The validation takes place from the moment the favour is granted; the referral back, however, is understood to have been made to the moment the marriage was celebrated, unless it is otherwise expressly provided.*

From the text of the canon one can conclude that the *retroactive* validation is a wider feature than the *simple* validation. Unlike the former, the retroactive validation does not consist in a personal act of the spouses renewing their matrimonial consent, but rather in the intervention of the competent authority who grants the favor. Besides, this validation of marriage, which takes place at the moment of the concession of the favor, attributes the canonical effects retroactively to the moment of the celebration of marriage. That is why this validation is called and is *sanatio in radice*.

A *sanatio in radice* is in reality a canonical procedure to recognize a naturally valid consent as also valid in the

canonical forum. It is a pastoral tool to assist persons married without the canonical form of marriage to return to the sacraments by recognizing the validity of their marital consent without having it renewed according to the required canonical form. *Sanatio* is resorted to when there is urgent reason for not acquainting the parties with the nullity of their marriage, or when one of the parties alone is cognizant of the impediment and the other cannot be informed without grave consequences, or when one party would be unwilling formally to renew a consent that is presumably existent. It can be granted by the Apostolic See or by the diocesan Bishop “even if one or both of the parties is unaware of it” (c. 1164).

Thus the technical implications of the retroactive validation may be described as follows:

i. It is *applied* to those marriages invalid either because of a diriment impediment or because of a defect of the canonical form (c. 1161 §1). [Henceforth, marriages that are invalid because of a defective consent cannot be retroactively convalidated.]

ii. The *effects* of the retroactive validation are the following: (a) dispensation from diriment impediments and from the canonical form [whenever possible] retroactively to the moment of the “celebration” of marriage (c. 1161 §1); (b) the validation is actually effected from the moment of the concession of the favor (*ex nunc*), although through a *fictio iuris* the legislator extends the canonical effects to the moment of the celebration (*ex tunc*) (c. 1161 §2). [One of the most important effects of the retroactive validation is the *legitimacy* of the children, in accordance with cc.

1137-1138. It is not legitimization of the illegitimate children (cc. 1139-1140), but a true legitimacy.]

iii. The *authority* who grants the *sanatio* is, as a general rule, the Holy See (c. 1165 §1), but in determined cases it may be granted by the diocesan Bishop (c. 1161 §2). The limitations imposed to the faculty of the diocesan Bishop are the following: (1) in the *sanatio* of a mixed marriage the conditions of canon 1125 must be fulfilled; and (2) the Bishop cannot grant the retroactive validation if there is an impediment whose dispensation is reserved to the Apostolic See (i.e., the impediments of sacred orders, of public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute of pontifical right, and of crime), or if the impediment is of natural law or divine positive law.

[In connection still with the granting authority, it would be good to remember that, according to canon 1080 §2, also the parish priest, the sacred minister legitimately delegated, the priest/deacon who is present at the celebration of marriage in line with canon 1116 §2, and the confessor, have the power to validate marriages. Obviously, these clerics enjoy such power only when the requirements demanded by canons 1079-1080 are present. Besides, canon 1080 §2 refers to validation without distinguishing between simple validation and retroactive validation; therefore, the canon includes both kinds of validation.]

### 3. Summarizing

To the original questions (*What kind of marriages can be convalidated by the Church and how does convalidation*

work?) it is possible to answer summarily by making the following points:

1. The convalidation of a marriage in the Church takes place when the marriage is invalid because of either a diriment impediment, a defective consent or a defective canonical form. There are also a number of Catholic couples who marry outside the Church due to various reasons: not being active and practicing Catholics; unwillingness to go through a process of declaration of matrimonial nullity; hurrying up and pressured by various factors; etc. In all cases, the benefits of seeking a Church wedding or of having an invalid marriage convalidated are enormous: peace of mind, oneness with the Church, reception of the Sacrament of Marriage and other sacraments....

2. There are two kinds of validation, namely, *simple* and *retroactive* – the latter commonly known as *sanatio in radice* – each with its own characteristics and implications.

The *simple validation* implies the following elements:

- a) The *renewal* of the consent by one or both spouses;
- b) The *cessation* of all diriment impediments, if there was any;
- c) The *celebration* of marriage in accordance with the canonical form;
- d) The marriage with its legal effects begins to be valid from the moment of the validation.

The *retroactive validation*, on the other hand, implies the following:

- a) The *validation* of an invalid marriage;



- b) The *dispensation* from the obligation of renewing the consent (which is taken for granted) and from the diriment impediments, if necessary;
- c) The *dispensation* from the canonical form, if it was not observed;
- d) The juridical effects of marriage are *retroactively* applied to the past.

3. Convalidations may be handled differently from diocese to diocese. However, their general guidelines are governed by the Church's Code of Canon Law. In practical terms, the basic steps to convalidation start with the couple's making an appointment with their parish priest, who then will guide them to the next steps to be taken in terms of papers (marriage contract, baptismal certificates, etc) and procedures (dispensations, possible seeking of a matrimonial declaration of nullity from an ecclesiastical tribunal, etc.). Sometimes it is the parish priest himself who initiates the convalidation process by personally inviting the couple to undergo it.

4. The convalidation ceremony is not the time for a big Church wedding with bridesmaids, extravagant receptions and expensive gifts. The ceremony may take place at the main altar during Mass or in a shorter ceremony outside the Mass, depending on what the couple decide or is deemed most appropriate. Couples should be told that even in the shorter form, it is still a true wedding ceremony; and priests, particularly those open to elaborate ceremonies, that an actual wedding has already taken place prior to the convalidation. However, because celebrating the Church's official recognition of the marriage is still a joyous occasion,

a get-together may be planned to follow the liturgical blessing.

5. Validation or convalidation of marriage means, in simple terms for Catholics, bringing their marriages into the Church. Hence convalidation fulfills the need to get closer to the Church and to God and to build a strong foundation for the family. Indeed marriage is in the view of the Church a permanent covenant between husband and wife and, in the case of the baptized, a sacrament instituted by God.

## **Sunday Homilies for July-August 2008**

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**JULY 6, 2008 – FOURTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE  
YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Zech 9:9-10; Rom 8:9, 11-13; Matt 11:25-30**

### **STRANGE NEWS by Peter Hunter, O.P.**

Most of us prefer to surround ourselves with people who agree with us and who tell us that what we're doing is right and good. We recognize that it would be better for us to have around us someone who would tell the truth about us, challenge us, help us to face our faults and mistakes, but most of us are not brave enough for that.

And it was ever thus. The rulers of the Jewish people preferred the false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear, to the true prophets who told them what was uncomfortable and disturbing and, unfortunately for them, true. They preferred flattery to the hard sayings of prophets which might actually have helped them.

The true prophets were often persecuted, at least until people realized they were telling the truth. I expect that, humanly speaking, the reason the true prophets' writings ended up being preserved was because events proved them true.

Today's first reading from the prophecy of Zechariah, though, is not so much bad news as strange news. It might, indeed, look like good news, but not at all the sort of good news that would make any ruler feel comfortable.

Earthly rulers, with a few notable exceptions, believe in symbols of power. They might expect a king who is victorious, triumphant, to enter on a war horse, with a great retinue. The king in the prophecy comes riding on a donkey, on the colt, the foal of a donkey.

Most earthly rulers trust for their security in strength of arms. The king in the prophecy banishes chariots from Ephraim, horses from Jerusalem, banishes the bow of war. Most think that they must defend their borders, not thinking realistic a rule that stretches to earth's bounds; even if that is what they desire, they think it will come through conquest and war, not through 'peace for the nations'.

Why did people preserve such a prophecy? Certainly not because they could understand how such a world could come about. The situation it speaks of was so foreign to the situation Israel found itself in that it could hardly be taken seriously as a realistic prospect.

Our situation is not so very different; it is not possible humanly to see how this prophecy could begin to come true. Every hope that humanity could somehow lift itself

out of the mire, that nations could be friends, truly at peace, has shown itself to be the most naive sort of optimism.

Yet, the world spoken of in the prophecy chimed in with Israel's own self-understanding.

Some boast of chariots and horses, [wrote the Psalmist,] but we in the name of the Lord.

That was because the Israelites knew, again from their Psalms, that *the war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save.*

Conventional wisdom said that security came with a mountain fastness. But Israel knew that citadels and strongholds were not the ultimate way to safety, and that Israel's safety would be assured rather when every mountain was laid low. Israel was a small nation amongst mighty nations, but the Israelites knew their strength was not in numbers.

At its best, Israel hung onto the knowledge that the plan of God was not like the plans of the nations. God's plan hardly looked like a plan at all. From a human point of view, God's way of going about things often seemed foolishness, the very opposite of what people ordinarily think will bring success.

But time and time again, Israel saw that its hope lay in this strange god, not a god made in their own image but rather a God who confronted them with what it was possible for human beings to be.

Today's Gospel is no different. Jesus brings freedom. We might expect that will involve that he will 'break every yoke', as God tells us through Isaiah to do. Human wisdom

tells us that freedom is a solitary thing, me against the world, refusing to submit to those who would control me. As in so many things, it takes the foolishness of God to teach us that true freedom is to be had through being yoked to Christ.

*Fr. Peter Hunter teaches philosophy at Blackfriars, Oxford.*

**JULY 13, 2008 – FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE  
YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Isa 55:10-11; Rom 8:18-23; Matt 13:1-23**

**THE SEEDS OF THE KINGDOM AND THE POOR IN  
SPIRIT by Giles Hibbert, O.P.**

Jesus explains this parable, at least to his disciples. The seeds are 'the words of the kingdom' and where they fall is symbolic of those who do not understand them, those who respond over-enthusiastically, those who are turned aside by other cares, and finally those who hear the word and understand it.

This would not seem to be a preacher's charter. The sower is seen to be scattering his seeds somewhat indiscriminatingly: on rocks, the pathway, amongst thorns, and on the ground which has presumably been ploughed and prepared. The seed does not seem to have been dressed, nor is any care taken as to how it is broadcast. It is all somewhat haphazard – leaving it to chance. Odd.

A preacher – the sower of seed, surely – will normally prepare what he has to say about 'the kingdom' – God's kingdom – with care. He will try to explain it, to present it in such a way that his listeners *will* be able to understand it – not just leave it to chance whether it is understood.

That is all very fine, but if the parable has anything to say to him, should he not, by contrast, choose out those who are represented by the 'good soil'? It is somewhat

invidious if I, as preacher, am called on to decide who are worthy to receive my words of wisdom and who, by contrast, should be written off as not worth preaching to. I cannot think of a more disastrous approach for any preacher to take.

So what, then, *is* this parable about? The crowds who followed Jesus simply got the parable by itself. It was only the particular disciples who received the full explanation. Or is it in fact only half an explanation?

Even with the explanation it doesn't seem to follow right through. At the end of Jesus' words we can say, "Ah, yes. I can now see what he means." But is this so? What does it mean? That it's all luck (or God's arbitrary will) where the seed, the 'word of the kingdom', falls and flourishes?

I think this problem may well be caused by a misunderstanding of that phrase 'the words of the kingdom'. The sower seems to be a prototype preacher. Whether 'professional' or 'unprofessional' we prepare our words; we try hard to develop an understanding of the Gospel; to put it over; to coerce our listeners by guile or charm. We want them too to share our understanding. This is a fair use of the terms 'word' or 'words'; it is in fact what words are all about. But is it what 'word' means here?

What is this Word? It could be explanation, but we have already seen that this interpretation doesn't fit the parable, so it can hardly fit its explanation. Could it mean proclamation? This would certainly go with kingdom; in fact it would go far more profoundly with Kingdom than even appears at first sight.



What is the proclamation of the kingdom? It is surely the Good News – the Gospel. This is what all this great section of Matthew is about. It starts off with Jesus ‘sitting down’ on a hill top and declaring,

*Happy are the poor in Spirit.*

This is our context.

We have problems here, however. The life of neither the ‘poor in spirit’, nor simply the ‘poor’ (Luke’s version), would seem to be especially characterized by happiness. So back to the traditional reading: none of this unsuccessful modernizing!

But, *Yes!* The poor *are* happy, precisely because what Jesus is proclaiming is that the Good News *is* for them. They, who do not see themselves perhaps as worthy nor expect others to do so, are so in God’s eyes. This is the Good News, and it is the Good News of the Kingdom, which is for them, theirs.

What is this Kingdom? It is where God’s will runs, which means where his justice, love, peace, forgiveness and healing reign. The ‘seed’ is the ‘word of the Kingdom’ – its proclamation, and the whole point of the parable, surely, is that this either means everything, or nothing.

Unless it means everything – a hundredfold or more – it is not the Good News.

*Fr. Giles Hibbert is the manager of Blackfriars Publications.*

**JULY 20, 2008 – SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE  
YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Wis 12:13, 16-19; Rom 8:26-27; Matt 13:24-43**

**DISTURBING RUSTIC PARABLE by Peter Clarke, O.P.**

Jesus proposed that the Kingdom of Heaven was something like a field in which, as often happens, weeds were growing amidst the wheat.

To make some strong points about the Kingdom, Jesus introduces a strange conversation between the landowner and the servant. First, speculation from the servant as to where the weed has come from. Then an improbably reply – an enemy must be responsible.

The servant has a bright idea that would never occur to anyone who knew anything about farming – that the weeds should be uprooted. The landowner considered this foolishness – such zealous weeding would damage the wheat.

In the parable the Kingdom is like this total situation with the sower being the Son of Man, Jesus himself. The good seed is the subjects of the Kingdom; the weed the subjects of the evil one. The enemy who sowed the seed is the devil. Harvest time is the end of the world.

Again, in the parable the Kingdom of Heaven is the Christian community. It is each one of us personally. So much promising, wheat-like goodness co-existing with weed-like sinfulness.

Within the community there is speculation about the origin of sin. There is also zeal to eradicate sinners – misplaced zeal because in such a crusade many innocent people would be injured. In his own good time, the end of time, God will sort out the wheat for storage in barns of glory and weeds for destruction by fire.

What Jesus is advocating through this parable is entirely consistent with his own style of ministry. He was welcoming to everybody and did not purge from his presence those whom religious enthusiasts counted as sinners. He gave them the opportunity of being influenced by encountering him.

The Christian community should exercise the same optimistic tolerance. Any attempt to expel those suspected of being out of step with the values of the community would inevitably result in many innocent casualties.

At times this is hard to live with, but it is possible. This parable becomes disturbing, for me at least, once it is applied outside Church structures with an accepted idealism. I have lived through the Revolution in the small island of Grenada. I am now living in the ‘post-11 September’ era.

There is a marked similarity between the two – the Establishment determined to protect its internal security and stability at all costs. In both cases the policy of putting suspected subversives in security detention, for an indefinite period without justification for their incarceration being tested in the Law Courts.

Most certainly, in the case of Grenada, many innocent people were unjustly deprived of their freedom, their

right to normal life within the community. I suspect there must be many innocent victims of today's policy of 'Zero Tolerance' of suspected terrorists.

In the case of Grenada there was local and international protest against the institutional injustice of security detention without trial. In the case of the present crusade against terrorism this same policy is accepted with complacency. Perhaps self-interest tempers one's indignation.

So it would seem that the advocacy of the parable of the weeds and the wheat is reckoned as being too idealistic for the realities of the modern secular world. The imperative of removing suspected destabilizing weeds is paramount. At what cost to individuals, at what cost to the moral fabric of global society?

Does this parable have any relevance to these most pressing modern issues? Or is it only valid for the ordering of the Church community? And nothing more?

*Fr. Peter Clarke is Prior of the Rosary Priory in Grenada.*

**JULY 27, 2008 – SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE  
YEAR (A)**

**Readings: 1 Kgs 3:5, 7-12; Rom 8:28-30; Matt 13:44-52**

**THREE PARABLES by Peter H. Harries, O.P.**

Three short parables today. After a couple of weeks of long agricultural parables we get three short parables suitable for city dwellers, the world of work, of getting on in the world. The kingdom of heaven is like hidden treasure..., is like a merchant searching out pearls..., is like a net full of fish.

The first two parables, each a sentence long, call on us to decide. Now is the moment for action. Tomorrow may be too late. Buy the treasure-field now! Buy the pearl of great value now! Tomorrow, someone else may have bought them and we will be too late. The treasure will be gone, the pearl lost for ever.

Let us look at each of the parables. In the first we need to know that treasure belonged to the person legally responsible for “lifting” it out of the ground. For a laborer this meant the employer gained all.

If on the other hand the laborer owned the field the treasure would be the laborer’s own. There was apparently no obligation to tell the field’s previous owner about the hidden treasure. Sharp practice to us perhaps!

In the second the merchant sells everything to possess the pearl of great value. With this he can make his fortune. His dream is come true.

We can reflect that the message of the gospel is like a hidden treasure that we seek to discover, or like a fine pearl beautiful to look at in the light. These are secondary reflections. The main message is that we must seek our own long term advantage and act decisively now. Choose for God.

The third parable is slightly longer. The kingdom of heaven is like a net full of fish which must be sorted. The fishermen must sort out the good ones and throw away the useless ones.

The parable is perhaps not very ecologically sensitive at this juncture, but that is not the issue. Are the useless fish those without scales and creatures like crabs and so on which cannot be eaten under Jewish dietary laws? Whatever the details the fish can be sorted – some good – some not good.

The angels, we are told, will at the end of time separate good people from evil people and the evil will be thrown into the blazing fire where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Judgment is the theme. Just like last week where the wheat is kept and stored while the darnel is burnt, so today we read of separation – of reward and punishment.

In our first reading Solomon asks God for wisdom. David his father had been a great military leader, a poet and musician. David had known success as king of a united people, capturing Jerusalem the holy city; and failure, betrayed by one of his own sons.

Solomon asked not for long life or riches but for wisdom, to be able to discern good and evil so that he

could govern well. God gave him wisdom, a proverbial wisdom that would be remembered down the ages and that attracted the Queen of Sheba from the almost-legendary south.

Wisdom taught the merchant to throw aside caution and risk all to buy the pearl of great value. Wisdom taught the person to hide the treasure and seek to acquire it legally. In this world people are mixed up together like the fish in the net, good and evil. At the end everything will be sorted out by the angels – God’s messengers.

With wisdom we must leave much for God to sort out. Things can be rather a mess here and even with wisdom our judgment of good and evil can be confused. We cannot always know other people’s motives and weaknesses. We must seek the good. We must treasure the good like a pearl of great value.

So we must be like a scribe who brings out things old and new. We re-tell the parables again that people may seize upon their message and decide for God. We also bring out things new, as wisdom inspires us to interpret and judge the world we live in. We must seek the good and reject all evil. With wisdom we tell the old stories of the gospel and the new stories of God’s compassion and love.

*Fr. Peter Harries is chaplain to the University College London Hospitals NHS Trust.*

**AUGUST 3, 2008\* – EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF  
THE YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Isa 55:1-3; Rom 8:35, 37-39; Matt 14:13-21**

**MIRACLE OF MULTIPLICATION by Aidan Nichols, O.P.**

For today's gospel the Church has selected the episode of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. All the evangelists present this event as a miracle. This is important. It stakes out the claim that we are not dealing here simply with a human phenomenon. It draws attention to the divine power at work.

We've all seen a road sign that means 'men at work'. A miracle is a sign that says 'God at work'. Only if some kind of direct involvement of the Creator in his creation is going on could a miracle be possible.

But the occurrence of a miracle doesn't as yet tell us *what* God is at work to do, what his purpose is, what the new truth is which the miracle is helping to convey, why – in a deeper sense – the miracle is significant.

Road signs, signposts, flashing signals on the railway are useful things, even invaluable things, but they have a stereotyped meaning. They get their meaning from the system of transport and communications of which they're part. We don't say, 'A signpost! Goodness, how life-transforming!' or, 'A signal at a level-crossing! I must change my existence, my outlook on the world!'

But by contrast with this there *are* some signs in human affairs that don't belong to any system, because they



define themselves precisely by standing out over against a system, a predictable background.

Some breakthrough in human relationships, for instance, can be signalized by a dramatic gesture that breaks the deadlock and takes the whole thing up to a new, higher, better, plane of reconciliation and amity. Then one party sees the other party in a new way, a way that makes everything different for ever afterwards.

The miracles of Scripture are not only signposts in the sense of the highway code. They are signs that are dramatic gestures, telling us that *what God is working at* is novel, unexpected, extraordinary, breath-taking.

Unfortunately, we don't have one English word that stands for this aspect of miracles as acts of God that draw the world out of a previous system onto a new level of divine-human relations. Latin, however, *does* have a word for them. It calls them God's *mirabilia*, his wonderful works, actions so stupendous and comprehensive, so much re-setting the terms of our place in the universe, that even miracles can only be signals, signposts for them. Let us agree, then, to call them *mirables*.

What, then, is the mirable that today's miracle is *for*? The mirable to which today's gospel points is God's decision to make himself – to make his own life – the *food of man*.

As St Matthew presents it, Jesus is a new Moses, presiding in the desert at a feast for the poor. From among the illiterate masses, 'the crowd', God is forming at the hands of his Son a company of guests at his table. He is going to make himself humanity's nourishment, man's satisfaction.

He is not going to do this in favor only of clever people or of highly spiritual people, much less for the sake of important people. He will do it for everyone who will accept with humility his gift of himself, accept it with an expression of hunger for it, of basic need.

And so it should in fact be more easily appreciated by the disadvantaged, the uneducated, the failures, the forgotten, the tramps outside the door. That is why the Church is what the German theologians call a *volkskirche*, a popular Church, and not a network of intense little specialized high-level cells, intent on their committees and group discussions.

When will this mirable happen? Ultimately, the mirable of God's feeding us with himself will happen in the future, in glory, when by the Holy Spirit we shall see the exalted Jesus Christ face to face as who he is – God from God, Light from Light – but in a human form, in a humanly accessible way. We shall see him as God's very life poured out for us and into us, and we shall be supremely satisfied by that vision.

But secondly, and so in a subordinate way, the mirable is also happening now, in the time of the Church and her sacraments. In the Holy Eucharist we receive the sacramental foretaste of the food of heaven, the nourishment that heaven is.

*O sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received,  
the memory of his passion is renewed,  
the mind is filled with grace,  
and a pledge of future glory is given to us.*

*Fr. Aidan Nichols, a well-known writer and theologian, is John Paul II Visiting Lecturer at the University of Oxford.*

**AUGUST 10, 2008 – NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF  
THE YEAR (A)**

**Readings: 1 Kgs 19:9, 11-13; Rom 9:1-5; Matt 14:22-33**

**GOD AFAR AND NEAR by Jonathan Fleetwood, O.P.**

By giving us today's first reading about Elijah, the Church is inviting us to take up the resonances from the Old Testament which are present in Matthew's account of Jesus stilling the storm.

Elijah is up Mount Horeb. He wants to be in God's presence. Mount Horeb points to the firmament of the all-powerful God. God calls Elijah into his presence.

Against expectation, Elijah does not find God speaking in his most powerful effects, his signs and wonders: wind, earthquake and fire. Instead he finds God speaking in the ghost of a whisper of wind.

He finds God, not in his wonders from afar, but finds him near, at the entrance to the cave, the threshold, the place of greeting. God is not only an afar God, but also a very near God. He is present to Elijah in sign.

This is an incarnational moment having reference to both God afar and God near. The responsorial psalm (84) refers in its own way to something similar too: justice looks down from heaven and afar; the earth under our feet bears fruit. There is call and response.

The Gospel starts by distancing Jesus from the crowd and disciples. A bit like Elijah, Jesus arises and goes up

into the hills, apart, to pray to his Father. He then comes to the disciples both from the eye of the storm and from his Father. He is not only in unity with the Creator God from afar, he is the 'ghost' in the wind, but also the ghost of the wind as the wind calms.

He raises Peter over the gunnels of the boat, the threshold to the group of disciples. This is the place of greeting and the place of the disciples' response. Jesus is God, both far and near. He is one with the powerful Creator God and also one with God of the quiet presence, fruit-producing, faith-producing.

The reality of Jesus, as the reality of God, may not be at first apparent. Jesus has to be sought, as Elijah seeks God. Peter and the disciples seek him. The appearance of Jesus cannot be taken in at one go. Blurred perceptions have to be clarified. God is seen and not seen as he comes in sign. Here the sign is Jesus himself.

Elements within today's Gospel also have resonances with the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Both the disciples in the boat at sea and those disciples who meet Jesus after his resurrection are at first unable to identify Jesus. Elijah had problems identifying God on the mountain.

In each case, Elijah, the disciples at sea in the storm and the disciples meeting Jesus after his resurrection, there comes a threshold moment or identity point. For Elijah it is at the mouth of the cave and the ghost of the wind. For the disciples in the storm it is Jesus getting into the boat and the wind dropping. For the disciples after the resurrection it is in Jesus passing through a door, saying a blessing or giving a meal.

Jesus greets and becomes present. Sometimes his presence comes with the words, 'Be not afraid.' This is the call to temper the fear of awe arising from the fact that the all-powerful God could come to be present in this man. He is in this person Jesus at this point of meeting. Jesus raises the disciples over a belief threshold.

We all stand at moments of God's disclosure in our lives, thresholds in our life, points of being greeted. We need to see them as bearers of God's presence. We see and do not see. There is often obscurity, but also God's presence in reality is there. We may say with St Thomas Aquinas,

*O Godhead hid, devoutly I adore thee.*

This applies to all sacramental occasions, all events of meeting and greeting the Lord and acknowledgements of his presence.

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

**AUGUST 17, 2008 – TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF  
THE YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Isa 56:1, 6-7; Rom 11:13-15, 29-32; Matt 15:21-28**

**A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS by  
Columba Ryan, O.P.**

One of the threats that our opening millennium faces is an increasing division and misunderstanding between the three major religions of the West, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The murderous slaughter between Palestinians and the state of Israel, and the easy assumption of some Western die-hards that certain Arabic countries harbor and promote terrorism, may have little to do with religious convictions and more to do with political and financial ambitions, but they can all too easily be dressed up to look like the outcome of religious faith.

It has to be admitted that religious people themselves have in the past, and even now, shown extreme intolerance for one another. The very strength of religious conviction seems to debar any kind of compromise or allowance for different points of view. The history of mutual denunciation and inter-religious and inter-denominational persecution bears witness to this. Our history has not been a pretty one.

It is salutary therefore to have in today's readings glimpses of men reaching out to a larger vision. *My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.*

This passage is from the third part of the book of Isaiah, and was addressed, it seems, to those who returned from exile to Jerusalem in about the 5th century BC.

The returning refugees were a dispirited lot. They had come back to a city of ruins and one where many of the inhabitants were foreigners of non-Jewish, largely pagan extraction. The prophet accepts even these as people *whom I will bring to my holy mountain ... and whose holocausts and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.*

There was in Jewish history a long tradition of exclusivity, of confining God's choice to themselves alone, no doubt in the interests of preserving the purity of their One God. But from time to time there appear, as in this text, a more universalist understanding of God's salvation.

The difficulty of making this breakthrough was later found amongst the earliest followers of Christ when they had to decide whether their mission should be extended to non-circumcised, non-Jewish converts. The apostle Peter when confronted with the question of receiving Cornelius and his pagan household into the new Judaeo-Christian community made what was for him a belated discovery.

I now really understand that God has no favorites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:35)

Paul acknowledged the same: *Glory and honor and peace will come to everyone who does good – Jews first, but Greeks as well. There is no favoritism with God.* (Rom 2:10)

Both in fact were echoing a much earlier 'universalism' found in Deuteronomy, which they may not till then have understood: *Your God is God of gods, Lord of lords... free of favouritism. He it is who loves the stranger and gives him food and clothing.* (Deut 10:17ff)

In today's Gospel we find Jesus himself seeming to take the prevailing narrow view: when the Canaanite woman asked for the healing of her daughter and his disciples asked him to satisfy her (if only to get rid of her clamorous shouting after them), he said, *I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.*

He seemed to play into their old exclusivist ideas. But it turned out only to be a ploy, to let them see that she was capable of a faith greater than theirs. He said to her, *Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.*

Did that mean that the Jews were no longer the Chosen people? Paul, Hebrew of the Hebrews, struggled with this question in his epistle to the Romans. Were the Jews in some way rejected because of their rejection of Christ?

Certainly not, he answered: *God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice.*

Disobedient they may have been but they also will enjoy mercy; their disobedience was allowed only that pagans too might enter into the promises made to them. Paul has no doubt that Jews too, made emulous of what has been given to the pagans, will return to what he calls 'resurrection'.

We need to remember all these things if we are not to fall into intolerance. God has no favorites.

*Fr. Columba Ryan is the longest-standing member of the English Province, and lives and works at St. Dominic's Priory, London.*



**AUGUST 24, 2008 – TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF  
THE YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Isa 22:19-23; Rom 11:33-36; Matt 16:13-20**

**PETER'S KEYS by David Sanders, O.P.**

*If we have Jesus why should we bother about a church?* You sometimes hear this view expressed, especially when the Church has been accused of scandals such as child abuse or cover-ups by bishops. Is not a close relationship with Jesus enough? Is the Church with all its failings really necessary for our salvation?

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that not only is a Church necessary but that we also need a human leader to direct it. *Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.*

Jesus promises that his Church will be protected from the power of destructive evil, and then he gives to Peter, and we believe, to his successors, the power to govern, the keys which gives access to the kingdom of heaven. A power to bind and to loose. But how should we interpret this power?

Some understandings of it divide Christians into camps. On the triumphalist extreme there are some who see this passage from St Mathew as a guarantee that every word that comes from the pope's mouth is more or less infallible while, on the liberal wing, there are those who see the exercise of too much papal power as oppressive and stifling the initiative of local Churches.

The latter group insists that the Gospel passage today should have continued with the rest of the chapter and included the warning from Christ that Peter could not only be a rock but he could also become a scandal, that is, as soon as he started interpreting things from a worldly point of view. In fact he tells Peter to get out of his way: *Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling stone in my path.*

So why is this fallible Peter chosen? He is certainly presented as the first of the disciples but he is chosen to be the foundation rock of the Church not so much for the exercise of an absolute power but because he confesses the true faith about Jesus: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

It is Peter's confession of that revelation, given to him by the Father, which alone can be the foundation of Christ's Church.

But then what is the nature of the power of the keys which Peter is given? The first reading from Isaiah gives us a clue. The authority which is bestowed on the Prime Minister Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, gives him the power to give or refuse access to the king.

I place the keys of the house of David on his shoulder. Should he open, no one can close; should he close, no one shall open.

Keys still open and close doors. But they must be used with care. Unfortunately in the Church today extreme groups want to exclude their opponents from the Church and invite the Pope to use his keys to excommunicate them. But the power of the keys should be exercised more in

keeping with the way we see Peter fulfilling his role in the rest of New Testament.

We know that there were groups which fought one another in the early church. The conservative party of James in Jerusalem insisted that Christians should be circumcised and practice the Jewish law, while Paul, founding local Churches in his Gentile mission territory, objected to the attempt to impose that same law. Each disapproved of the other.

In this situation we are shown how Peter acted as bridge between the two parties. He was the leader who kept the others in communion with the wider Church. Peter's keys were a symbol of unity, not to be used to shut the door in the face of one group but rather to open the door to both and invite them to be part of the Catholic Church.

Some people think that the individual free spirit of Jesus was restrained and confined by the building up of a church. The spirit, they say, should guide each of us without too much ecclesiastical bureaucracy getting in the way.

But the New Testament itself shows us that Jesus message would never have survived without Church institutions which could preserve it and protect it from heresy. The work of the spirit is always to build up the Church.

So we should not give just a grudging acceptance to the Church which Jesus himself willed but learn to love it. It is too easy to try to get other members of the Church excluded because they do not share our views.

Today especially we give God's thanks for the gift of Peter and his crucial role of guiding and maintaining the unity of the Catholic Church. Our Church needs to be constantly reformed because of the sinfulness of us, its members. But if we are to receive that salvation that Jesus willed for us, today we see how necessary are his Church and its Petrine ministry.

*Fr. David Sanders teaches scripture at Blackfriars, Oxford, and is former editor of Priests and People.*

**AUGUST 31, 2008 – TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF  
THE YEAR (A)**

**Readings: Jer 20:7-9; Rom 12:1-2; Matt 16:21-27**

**PAINFUL CHOICES by John Orme Mills, O.P.**

We all know that self-denial is a thing unavoidable in this world sometimes. Self-denial is one of the most basic facts of life, part of being human. Because our lives are not composed of infinite realizable possibilities, every time we make a choice of any sort we deny ourselves something.

To take an obvious example, a human being cannot enter a genuinely deep love-relationship with somebody and at the same time chase after every charming face that happens to pass by.

In today's gospel reading Christ says: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it."

God confronts us always with a choice. Meeting God means facing up to a choice. And, because this is a choice that involves the whole of their existence, most human beings spend most of their time running as fast as they can away from meeting God, doing everything they can to avoid having to face that choice.

Accepting the lordship of Christ surely means forgetting ourselves and, indeed, sharing with him day by

day the pain of living in a world that chooses to reject him. Yet what is the point of it all – of self-denial of the sort Christ is asking for? What does it mean? Where is the end? In fellowship in his death, in his rejection – yes, in the ignominious rejection he predicts here, in this gospel passage.

Finding salvation is not a matter of winning points. Accepting God's initiative, opting for God, means opting for what our society labels failure. This, of course, sounds depressing, but is it so really?

The famous German mediaeval Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart said in one of his sermons: "Since it is God's nature not to be like anyone, we have to come to the state of being nothing (no thing) in order to enter in to the same nature that He is."

As Christ stated in today's Gospel reading: "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it."

"For my sake", notice. Dying to oneself, forgetting oneself, self-denial – this is, of course, completely meaningless and destructive and in fact phony if it is seen as an end in itself, or even as a useful tool for us to succeed in doing something. The genuinely great martyrs made neither of those mistakes.

There was, we Christians know, a death that brought life into the world, and it is that death which we are summoned to enter – a death in which there is no darkness but only light, the light of resurrection.

Loss and failure are the things many of us most deeply fear.

Yet, if we can see our loss and failure within the context of the message that has been addressed to us in this gospel text – in other words, if we will only allow God to let us see them (if just for a moment) within the overall shape of the divine plan for humanity's salvation – then we shall start to become free.

*Fr. John Orme Mills O.P. is a member of the Priory of St Michael Archangel, Cambridge.*

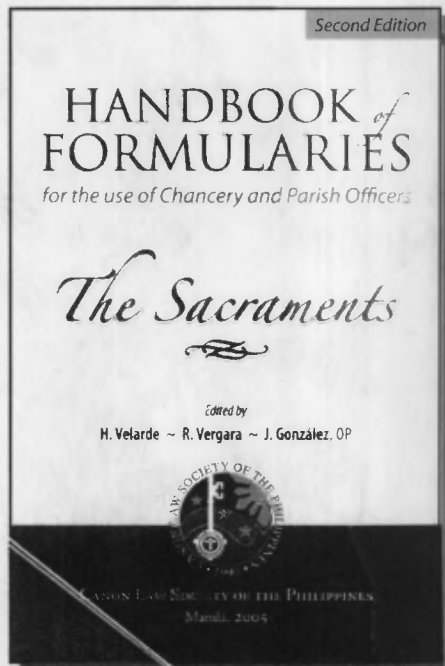
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