

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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*A World Without People*



**WILL THIS BE OUR FUTURE?**

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

## The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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## **Collateral Damage**

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

*Collateral damage* has become a convenient label for people caught in the crossfire between warring factions. The phrase also applies to innocent by-standers slaughtered by fanatical suicide bombers, victims exterminated by CIA agents and spies, the countless dead who perished in the war in Afghanistan as well as in other ethnic, religious, economic, and ideological conflicts.

Supposedly, collateral damage is an injury or harm that is not intended. When snipers shoot at their enemies, the killing of defenseless civilians is presumed a mistake. Their death is not deliberate but the unwanted consequence of a noble purpose: to protect oneself, abolish terrorism, save millions of people, or achieve peace. Their logic goes: "if you want to make an omelet, you have to break some eggs." That must have been in the mind of the pilots of *Enola Gay* when they dropped the atom bomb at Hiroshima. They considered the almost 100,000 dead Japanese civilians as collateral damage. After all, their intention for dropping the bomb was not to cremate the populace but to stop the war.

But judging from one of the pilots' recently auctioned logbook (which fetched a whopping \$350,000) it seems that calling murder with another name cannot appease a bothered conscience. Filled with remorse, he wrote: "*My God, what have we done?*" He must have realized that his victims, even when called by any other name, were just as dead.

The impact of violence is not measured by *more or less*. Mathematics is heartless. After pulverizing *My Lai*, American soldiers counted the bodies of the dead Vietnamese, compared these mentally with the number of American soldiers whose death they wanted to avenge. Then they calmly took their lunch break. The worst collateral damage is the loss of our moral sensibility.

Many women now say: "If I continue with this pregnancy, it will ruin my lifestyle." So they decide to abort the baby. They justify their action by saying that their intended purpose is to protect their body, their lifestyle, and their freedom of choice. The unborn child is mere collateral damage. After all, he cannot protect his life and body, and has surely no choice.

Some feminist groups would say: "Women with unwanted pregnancies will get abortion anyway, so to prevent them from going to the quack doctors, let us make abortion legal and safe." Their noble intention is to protect the safety of women. They are forgetting someone, though: the unborn child. No abortion is ever safe for him.

Some people would say: "Is marriage until death? Oh come on! That's not how marriage really is. Let's allow divorce to give troubled couples a way out."

The good intention is to view marriage *as it is*. Collateral damage is inflicted on our ability to see marriage *as it should be*.

Erika Harold, during her reign as Miss America, publicly advocated sexual abstinence. In a country famous for sexual permissiveness, Miss Harold asked young people to *wait until they are married* before engaging in sex. Expectedly, many of her listeners accused her of being terribly outdated. They snickered when she talked about the need for self-discipline, the restrictions necessary for nurturing true love, the anarchy that awaits a society devoted to the cultivation of desire and the relentless pursuit of pleasure. Although her advocacy did not sit well on many people, she insisted on the great benefits for waiting, and warned against the heavy price to be paid for not waiting, like teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, promiscuity, population explosion, abortion and contraception mentality.

Unfortunately, very few women supported Miss Harold's advocacy. They did not realize that women suffer the greatest collateral damage inflicted by a promiscuous society. When premarital sex does not lead to marriage, women are often at a disadvantage. Ann Landers' words describe their plight: "I met him, I liked him, I loved him, / *let him*... I lost him."





## **Celebration of Family and Life\***

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†ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO

We celebrate today the 40th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI on Human Life. Against the prevailing expectation of liberalization, that the Catholic Church would change her traditional teaching on conjugal and family morality and allow all forms of birth control, Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* (July 25, 1968) instead courageously re-affirmed the church traditional teaching regarding birth control and responsible parenthood.

What the Catholic Church teaches through the Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* is that human life, from the womb to tomb, is a gift of God. Only God is the author of human life. The child becomes God's gift to its parents and entire family. The dignity, the value and inviolability of human life must be respected and safeguarded at all cost.

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\* Homily of Archbishop Angel N. Lagdameo, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, at the Prayer Rally held on July 25, 2008, at the University of Santo Tomas.

There is pessimism and a certain panic deriving from the studies of ecologists and futurologists on population growth, which sometimes exaggerate the danger of demographic increase to the quality of life. Against such trends not only Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* but also Pope John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995) have restated that the Church has the mission to celebrate human life, as the Gospel of Life, by seeing life in its deeper meaning and beauty, by revering and honoring every person, by praising and thanking God for the gift of life, by preserving the gift of life.

At the hearts of the many threats to human life and threats to conjugal and family morality is the wrong concept of freedom which leads to complete relativism. Any reference to common values and to a truth absolutely binding on every one is lost. With the eclipse of the sense of God and of man, everything is negotiable, everything is open to bargaining, even the first and fundamental right, the right to life (EV 20).

There is a need in our society to restore the sense of God. When the sense of God is lost there is also the tendency to lose the sense of man's dignity and life. The result is practical materialism, which breeds individualism, utilitarianism... hedonism. (EV 21-22).

We in the Catholic Church, and I say this with reference to Paul VI's Letter on Human Life and John Paul II's Letter on the Gospel of Life, advocate only natural family planning methods as the only morally acceptable way of practicing responsible parenthood. The Church does not forbid the advocacy of the increase or decrease of population provided the freedom of the couple to exercise sexual and family morality, like the decision to have any number of children, according to their religious

conviction is respected.

Artificial birth control, which includes the use of contraceptives and abortifacients, are against the institution of marriage. Our Philippine Constitution in Art. II, section 12, specifies the function of the State: "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. The natural and primary right and duty of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the support of Government."

The family is the basic unit of society. If the Filipino family is destroyed, the Philippine society will likewise be destroyed. The protection and strengthening of the family is a concern not only of the Church, but of civil society and government as a whole.

The subtle attacks on family and conjugal morality through legislations that promote artificial methods of birth control, are couched in attractive but deceptive terminologies like Reproductive Health Care, population management, anti-discrimination of women and children, reproductive rights, patients' rights.

Pope Paul VI had predicted, and John Paul II confirmed that artificial methods of birth control open the way to a lowering of moral standards and lead to marital infidelity; they lead to the lowering of respect for women; husbands will regard their wives and other women as mere instruments to serve their bodily desires. And they are happening, increasingly happening today.

It has been said time and again in order to reduce world

poverty and the number of the poor, in order to improve the quality of life, the family must act “responsibly” and not have more than two children. Uncontrolled birth! Population Control!

Dr. Joseph Chamie of the UN Population Division had already commented in 1998 that the problem is not about population explosion but population implosion. In 51 countries the birth rates had fallen so low that it is nearly impossible for these countries to replace their deaths with births. Countries which succeeded to impose “two-child” policy are now worried by the continuous drop in population that have reached a point of no return. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the UN admitted in 2004 that indeed the world is aging inexorably. By 2030 the world population aged 45 and above will be much larger than the population 44 and lower. Few children and workers will be supporting a big number of aging seniors. The result in some countries is Euthanasia.

What of our country? While our government policy makers claim that our growth rate is 2.36%, both USAID and the UN have arrived at a much lower PGR. In fact, as of December 2004, the National Statistics Office had projected a population growth rate of 1.99%. The Philippines is slowly joining the countries with very low growth rate.

We have strong reasons to be alarmed. That instead of becoming “the last hope of a dying world,” we are joining the group of the dying world. This is among the reasons why the Church in the Philippines, (call her conservative, ignorant, too traditional) think differently.

If all the money that go to graft and corruption of government or are used for the wrong reasons, were spent for our increasing

poor population, we will have indeed both population and true progress, a population that is the resource and object of development.



# God's Gift of Life and Love\*

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ARCHBISHOP LEONARD FAULKNER \*\*

## A Pastoral Letter to Catholics on Family Planning

### Foreword

It is nearly thirty years since the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was first published. In that time, a number of marvellous developments have occurred. The work of researchers has refined methods of Natural Family Planning to a high degree of reliability making their practical application a great deal easier than was the case in the 1960s. We have seen, too, the emergence of movements and organisations of married couples who in various ways are exploring the intricacies of married love and assisting each other in the journey of married life. It is with hope and enthusiasm that we wish to draw the attention of the

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\*This article was taken from the January 1996 issue of "Christian Order".  
Published by Fr. Paul Crane, S. J. from 53, Penerley Road, Catford, London SE6 2LH

\*\* Chairman Bishop's Committee For the Family and For Life, Australia.

whole community to these developments and, in particular to the experience of those couples who have discovered for themselves the benefits of Natural Family Planning and the wisdom of the Church's teaching concerning the transmission of life.

At the same time, we recognise that many people harbour deep hurts relating to this area of Church teaching. Often these hurts have been aggravated by poor communication and confusion within the Church itself. At times couples have felt judged and criticised by church leaders. Conversely, many leaders have felt attacked by their own people. To all parties we offer our empathy and invite the channels of reconciliation to be opened up so that together we may examine this teaching afresh without recourse to blame and criticism.

We call all the people in the Church in Australia — married single, clergy, religious — to a renewed appreciation of the sacredness of married love and of the great sign of love and life which our couples witness to us. For it is only within the context of a deeper understanding of the meaning of married love that we can fully appreciate the Church's teaching on the transmission of life.

### **Planning Families: The Responsibility of Married Couples**

Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should recognise that they are thereby co-operating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. (*Gaudium et Spes*, N 50)

Planning a family is one of the responsibilities of married couples and they should always *be free to determine the size of*



*their family (Families: Our Hidden Treasure, p. 23).* The fertility of a couple is a special bond between husband and wife and part of the intimate, exclusive giving of themselves to each other in marriage. Some couples are happy to leave the size of their family to God's providence, generously choosing to raise a large family, exercising their freedom to take no action to avoid conception. There are other couples anxious to have a child or a further child, who find they are unable to achieve a pregnancy.

There are times when, for reasons relating to health, economic factors or the well-being of other children, a couple judge it would be wiser not to bring a child into the world at this time. In relation to such decisions, the Catholic Church recognises that natural family planning (referred to as 'NFP') is a legitimate means for regulating birth and an expression of responsible love.

In order to understand why the Church actively promotes natural methods of family planning and does not condone the use of contraceptives or procedures which lead to the termination of life already conceived requires an understanding of the sacred nature of the marriage bond and the role of marital love in the lives of couples.

### **Marital Love is Life-giving**

The communion of husband and wife through the act of conjugal love is a source of life, not just to the couple but to all who come in contact with them. Authentic love by its very nature extends outwards drawing others into its circle, thereby expanding the communion of love. Most of us know of married couples whose homes are places of warmth and hospitality. People love to gather there and draw strength from the love they share with the wider community: extended family, neighbours,

people in distress. Pope John Paul II refers to this dimension of married life as the *civilisation of love*.

The life-giving nature of marital love can be felt in many ways, but it has special significance in the procreative element of married life. When a couple express their love through the act of intercourse, they enter a language of love which speaks of chaste intimacy, permanency, faithfulness, unity and the willingness to 'surrender all' and 'accept all'. It is a fundamental statement of the meaning of the marital communion. Thus we speak of sexual intercourse not just as one act among many actions in married life (like working, doing domestic chores), but as a special kind of embodiment of all the love that the couple brings to the marital relationship. Through this one act, a couple says: 'I give my total self as a woman and call forth in you the fullness of your manhood'; 'I surrender myself completely as a man and acknowledge the fullness of your womanhood'

It is within this faithful 'yes' to one another at such a profound depth of human intimacy that the creation of new life becomes a possibility. Through this intimate language of love, God joins with the couple in being 'co-creators' of life by imparting the spark of divine life to the couple in the creation of a new human being.

Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination towards our most high calling to parenthood. (*Humanae Vitae*, N. 12)

It is within the context of this loving and life-giving communion that the Church affirms the inseparable connection between the two meanings of sexual intercourse in marriage: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.

The Church's great respect for the physical union that takes place between married couples and its unique place as a sign and source of communion in the fidelity of the marital relationship, provides the essential context for understanding the Church's teaching on family planning.

### **Married Love is Unifying**

"When my husband and I come together to physically express our love, I am conscious of something sacred happening. For us, sexual intimacy is a sacred 'rite' through which we renew and regenerate the love bond between us. This love is a delicate balance between the nourishment we give each other through our intimacy and the nourishment we provide to other people in our lives including our children." (Sue, aged 36 years)

The gift of married love is the unique and distinctive expression of human intimacy. Through the covenant of marriage, the life of a woman and the life of a man become intertwined in a profound and pervasive way. So total is their self-giving to one another that they live no longer as two individuals but as 'two in one flesh'. Furthermore, this intimacy is experienced in a profound way. Not just confined to the physical or genital act of intercourse, the married couple's intimate loving involves a way, of relating that permeates their entire lives. Through countless routine interactions in daily life, a husband is called to respond to his wife as 'the woman of his life', and she to her husband as 'the man of her life'. Their sexual way of relating and the unity

and permanency it implies makes their love different to every other man-woman friendship they may encounter. This is the 'exclusivity' of married love which sets it apart from all other human relationships.

### **Loving and Life Giving: A Dynamic Unity**

"Watching our three year old son play with his building blocks, at times I am tempted to interfere and help him. Yet somehow this would intrude on his discovery and diminish his accomplishment. Clearly the more loving action is to keep a watchful eye, ready to affirm and appreciate. I think the difference between family planning by natural means and artificial means can be described in similar terms. While contraceptive methods can control fertility, natural methods allow us to manage the gift of fertility which comes from God. controlling fertility engenders a sense of dependency and ultimately our sexual self-appreciation is diminished. Managing our fertility through natural methods empowers us to responsibly plan our family without undermining our need to be fully present to each other as sexual, fertile beings." (Chris, father of three children)

Many people ask 'What's the difference between choosing not to conceive through NFP and choosing not to conceive through contraceptive intercourse?' after all, they say, the result is the same: a pregnancy is avoided. In responding to such questions, the Church highlights the deeper meaning of the act of sexual intimacy rather than just its biological consequences.

The promotion of natural methods of family planning by the Church goes hand in hand with the promotion of an *attitude* to sex, to love, to life itself. Without this attitude it is possible that NFP will be used with a contraceptive mind-set. The letter

of the law will be adhered to, but the spirit could be lost. This is an inadequate expression of the Church's teaching on responsible family planning.

The Church cannot condone contraception because it alters the meaning of the sexual act itself. To deliberately and willfully cut off one's fertility in the very moment that life could begin creates an intrinsic contradiction. On the one hand, a spouse is surrendering his/her whole self. Yet in the midst of that surrender there is a denial experienced by the couple who, in effect, say to each other: 'No, I will not offer you all of me. No, I will not accept all of you'. In this way an implicit 'falsehood' becomes embedded in an activity which opposes its intrinsic value as a source and expression of unconditional love.

The very act which has the capacity to express the completeness of the couple's self-surrender instead becomes an act of holding back of one's deepest self. It is out of respect for this deep communication between a husband and wife in marriage that the Church cannot condone contraception. By its stance the Church is protecting the precious meaning of the marital covenant and the promotion of life.

## **Hope for the Childless Couple**

Sometimes great sorrow is experienced by many married couples who are denied the joy of children. Modern methods of natural fertility regulation have proved to be highly effective in achieving pregnancy in many situations.

By education in NFP, diagnosis and correction of reproductive abnormalities by competent doctors can be facilitated. Couples are given the best possible opportunity of conceiving by following the

natural indicators of fertility, particularly the essential ingredient of fertility, the cervical mucus secretion. Apart from being very successful in alleviating infertility, NFP avoids the physical and moral dangers of modern techniques of assisted reproduction.

### **‘Waiting’ is An Expression of Married Love**

What makes NFP unpopular to many in the community is that it involves abstinence, a time of ‘waiting’. We live in a society where we have grown to expect instant availability, fast food, fast service, quick-fix solutions, instant gratification. Even sex has become a commodity to be had—now! Our culture makes it difficult to appreciate the value of waiting. It is true that this is not always easy for couples and is part of the many sacrifices entailed in married living. The immediate frustration of waiting must never be allowed to eclipse the enduring value of waiting. Yet, the call to patiently endure is a feature of many aspects of the Christian life and is always aimed at bringing about an even deeper joy and love. There are times in marriage when intercourse may not be an act of love, e.g. when one partner is ill, just prior to or just after the birth of a baby, tiredness, or when there is illness in the family. The greater act of love in these circumstances might be to refrain from intercourse, to wait’ and just be with and for each other.

Abstinence calls for both husband and wife to communicate about their sex life and to appreciate its place in their overall marriage. In particular, it calls for the husband to be attentive and interested in the wife’s fertility—thus appreciating her womanhood in a deeper way. He feels trusted by being invited into an area of life born which he often feels excluded. She discovers a serenity in knowing that she is loved for who she is, without having to change or deny her fertility.

In their use of NFP, couples speak of abstinence as a way of developing mutual respect for one another. 'Waiting' can lead them to explore other non-genital signs of affection for expressing their love. There are many ways of saying 'I love you' and unless we use all these ways, the ultimate expression, intercourse, loses its significance. Special gestures of kindness, cuddles, kisses, loving caresses or just being held are all ways of showing love for one's spouse and can be a 'rediscovery' of the romance that first brought them together. Through appreciating their gift of fertility a couple grow in understanding and love.

### **Openness to Life is a Communal Affair**

Children have a special place in the life of the family and the life of the community. Their very existence testifies to the love of their parents, and is cause of joy in the community. (*Families: Our Hidden Treasure*)

In the Christian way of life, children are viewed first and foremost as a gift, not a burden. They are a sign of new life, openness and, hope to the whole Christian community. In asking couples to welcome the gift of children we as a Christian community must be prepared to encourage them in this task by giving moral and practical support such as financial and prayer support, baby-sitting, working for family-friendly policies and celebrating together the special times in the life of a family.

Often in our modern society parents can feel as though public institutions and policies oppose an openness to children. All too often communities adopt a materialistic ethic whereby things and objects are placed above people. 'Having' and 'doing' override the importance of 'being'. The special moments of human existence,

like conception and birth, thus become burdens which interfere with the efficiency of daily living. Sexual expression is reduced to the pursuit of pleasure and the possibility of conceiving a child seen as interference rather than as a gift of married love. Widespread promotion of contraception has led to acceptance of a mentality which separates procreative responsibility from the marital love-union. Through this separation we are experiencing a loss of appreciation of children who are sometimes portrayed as being an intrusion into one's lifestyle.

These attitudes affect us all. A prejudice has developed today, even in some Catholic circles, whereby large families are made to feel peculiar or unnatural. A fourth or fifth pregnancy is greeted with sympathy from well-meaning friends instead of joy and encouragement. Such attitudes can cause parents to lose heart and to consider something 'wrong' with their being pregnant or wanting more children. The community, both family and neighbourhood, needs to work together to help identify with the couple the psychological and practical tasks of child rearing and how the couple might receive the necessary support. To deny this need can lead to isolation and pull the couple apart at a time of bringing about new life in the family.

Faithfulness to the teachings of the Church concerning what Pope John Paul II has termed the *Gospel of life*, that is the sacred value of all human life from its beginning to its end, is something for which all are responsible (*Evangelium Vitae*). As a community our attitudes and actions must foster a life-giving climate conducive to the freedom couples need to welcome children and the possibility of children as a vital part of their relationship.



## **The Benefits of Natural Family Planning Methods**

Jennie, who was challenged by NFP, offers the following observation: "Six months ago we quit the pill and began instruction in using NFP. We were pretty nervous about it because none of our friends were using NFP and we had heard some of our parents' friends complain that it wasn't reliable. We changed because I was sick of the side effects of the pill so we weren't expecting the impact on our relationship that is already evident. Now our family planning is a shared responsibility. We communicate about our decisions more openly and I don't feel burdened like I used to when the onus was always on me. Also, I feel better, healthier. I like being in tune with my body ... and Neil does too!"

Many couples testify that by encouraging a 'lifestyle of communication', NFP positively fosters a deeper married love because the procreative responsibility rests not on one person alone but on the couple. Through learning about their fertility couples come to learn more about each other and in particular their capacity to be co-creators in new life. This awareness of fertility leads a couple to regard their sexual intimacy as significant, as a loving activity which has purpose and may be creative. In each cycle it invites them to reassess their decision about whether or not to extend their love to include a new child.

Natural methods are not complicated and can be taught to anyone. These methods foster self-awareness, self-control and, communication skills: all qualities which are essential for maturity and for establishing the stable relationship of marriage. Through encouraging the development of such qualities, the use of natural family planning has the power to strengthen marriages. Furthermore, these natural methods respect the health

of the woman who would otherwise be subject to the damaging side-effects of chemical contraceptives. Many couples with no particular religious persuasion have turned to NFP precisely for this reason. Disillusioned by the physical risks of contraceptives and attracted to a more 'holistic' approach of working with their bodiliness, many health-conscious people have embraced NFP.

### **The Way Forward—Step by Step**

Many factors affect a couple's capacity to undertake natural family planning: their communication, the stability of their relationship, stages of faith and maturity. Each couple is unique. As with all Her teachings, the Church recognises that while upholding the truths that guide Christian morality, we must also accept that a person's understanding and acceptance of the Church's teachings can be a gradual process.

The first step for a couple may be to seek accurate information about natural family planning methods and to learn how to use them. The inherent goodness of NFP works on the love in the relationship and draws the couple together as one. We cannot judge the suitability of couples who come to learn, they vary from indifference to God and to the child, through to deep devotion to God and God's loving plan for them. There are also couples who would reject any attempt at formation but who will always accept NFP teaching because that is what they came for however imperfect their motives for doing so. The task of our faith community is to bear witness to the truth in love and to lovingly invite others to seek and live the truth.

In writing this letter we wish to publicly acknowledge those couples who have faithfully followed the teachings of the Church

in this area. Your witness and experience have helped to bring the Church to greater depths of understanding about the sacred nature of married love. We also acknowledge those couples who have sincerely struggled with this teaching and have not, for whatever reason, been able to embrace this method with success. With compassion we recognise that at times some couples have felt burdened by the Church's position. With love, we invite you to explore afresh natural methods of family planning and join with us in this journey of growth and development as our Church learns more and more about the nature of married love.

We also acknowledge and thank all those researchers and teachers of NFP, many of whom have dedicated their life's work to making the teachings of the Church a practical reality. It is indeed heartening that all Australian couples now have access through a local NFP service centre or through telephone contact to professional teaching advice on natural family planning methods.

We conclude by calling upon all members of our faith community to do all that is within their means to affirm the life-giving nature of married love and to foster a climate which will give credence to the Church's teaching on the sacredness of married love and its openness to the transmission of life.



# **The Practice of Natural Family Planning\***

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**WILLIAM SAUNDERS \*\***

The following is a series on marital love and artificial birth control.

A question for you regarding Catholics who practice artificial birth control: What is their status in the Church? Are they committing mortal sin? I feel that this is a much misunderstood question by most Catholics, including myself. To further muddle the issue, what is the Church 's position when one's spouse does not want to practice NFP? — An ACH reader.

While condemning the use of artificial birth control, the Church recognizes that some couples face serious situations

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\* This article appeared in the October 26, 1995 issue of "The Arlington Catholic Herald." Courtesy of the "Arlington Catholic Herald" diocesan newspaper of the Arlington (VA) diocese. For subscription information, call 1-800-377-0511 or write 200 North Glebe Road, Suite 607 Arlington, VA 22203.

\*\* Fr. Saunders is president of Notre Dame Institute and pastor of Queen of Apostles Parish, both in Alexandria.

in their marriage and family which move them to postpone a pregnancy, even indefinitely. To assist couples, the Church implores couples to turn to a natural method of regulating birth, which God Himself has designed as part of the reproductive system. This method is simply called Natural Family Planning.

Actually, one of the earliest forms of natural family planning is breast feeding. If a woman breast feeds her baby consistently? she probably will not conceive for 18-24 months. Many tribal people naturally regulate birth this way.

In the 1930s, "calendar rhythm", was developed. This method was effective if the woman had regular cycles and if she were properly instructed. Actually, rhythm is about as effective as condoms or other barrier methods of birth control. Nevertheless, calendar rhythm was unreliable for many couples. Perhaps this unreliability is why many joked, "What do you call a couple who uses rhythm? Answer: Parents."

However, modern Natural Family Planning is technically called the sympto-thermal method. This method relies on three signs of fertility in the woman: basal temperature pattern, cervical mucus pattern and physical changes in the position of the cervix. These three signs inform a couple when the wife is in ovulation and possibly could conceive a child if the couple engages in marital love. Ironically, while many doctors prescribe artificial means to prevent a pregnancy, they prescribe the techniques of Natural Family Planning to help a couple who is having trouble conceiving a child identify the period of ovulation and thereby know when the possibility of conception is the greatest. Moreover, if one is worried about effectiveness, the sympto-thermal method is proven to be as effective as the pill and more effective than barrier methods if used properly.

Immediately, some people may honestly ask, "What is the difference between Natural Family Planning and artificial birth control? Both seem to do the same thing." While both means may have the same intent postponing pregnancy the difference lies in the means themselves. With Natural Family Planning, couples keep their covenant of life and love intact. They use only the means given to them by God, which are intrinsic to who they are. In expressing their marital love, they are mindful that this action not only unites them as husband and wife, but also may participate in God's creative love. Rather than suppress and ignore one dimension, they respect both dimensions. Therefore, if they decide for a serious reason to postpone a pregnancy, then both husband and wife make the decision and both share in the sacrifice of not expressing their marital love during the period of ovulation. Natural Family Planning is also safe and the burden shared by both husband and wife. Moreover the couple is open to the providence of God's will. If a child should come who "was not planned?" so be it—that is God's will and God's gift. With artificial birth control, where the couple has everything nicely planned and is in control, the surprise pregnancy oftentimes spells disaster. Remember that one of the arguments for legalized abortion is to correct "unplanned pregnancies."

Pope John Paul II addressed the anthropological and moral differences between artificial birth control and Natural Family Planning in "Familiaris Consortio" "The choice of the natural rhythms involves accepting the cycle of the person, that is the woman, and thereby accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control. To accept the cycle and to enter into dialogue means to recognize both the spiritual and corporal character of conjugal communion? and to live personal love, with its requirement of fidelity. In this context the couple comes to

experience how conjugal communion is enriched with those values of tenderness and affection which constitute the inner soul of human sexuality, in its physical dimension also. In this way sexuality is respected and promoted in its truly and fully human dimension and is never used as an object that, by breaking the personal unity of soul and body, strikes at God's creation itself at the level of the deepest interaction of nature and person" (No. 32).

Actually, Natural Family Planning has had great success. For example, in 1960, the government of Mauritius, a small island country in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar, wanted to commence a major contraceptive campaign to control the population. The bishop published a pastoral letter denouncing these plans. After discussing the issue with government officials, in 1963 an education program was started for Natural Family Planning. Doctors educated training couples who in turn taught the method to other couples. Today they train 2,000 couples each year. Each parish has a special program for educating couples in preparation for marriage and 85 percent of couples married in the Church complete that training. In all, 20 percent of women of child-bearing age use Natural Family Planning, of whom Hindus and Moslems account for 62 percent. Moreover, artificial methods are on the decline. The effectiveness of Natural Family Planning has been a convincing argument against legalizing abortion in the country. What Bishop Margeot fears today is the coalition of governments —America, Japan and Northern Europe—and foundations—Rockefeller and Packard—who are striving to impose artificial birth control throughout Africa, which in each case has eventually lead to abortion.

While this column cannot give a full explanation of Natural Family Planning, I would suggest that any couple who



is interested take the course. Rather than just brush aside the Church's teaching, investigate the teaching and inquire about Natural Family Planning. Ask the couple what the difference the two methods actually is. Courses for Natural Family Planning are offered throughout the Diocese of Arlington.

This whole issue concerns that covenant love between husband and wife, and God. It deals with the creation of life in union with God. Therefore, concerning the regulations of births, the Second Vatican Council stated, "It is the married couple themselves who must in the last analysis arrive at these judgments before God" ("Gaudium et Spes," No. 50). However, any faithful Catholic must first take into account the teaching of the Magisterium.

As has been emphasized, marriage is serious, marital love is serious, the creation of life is serious. The means of artificial birth control are intrinsically evil (Catechism, No. 2370). The violation of marital love through the use of artificial birth control is objectively a serious, mortal sin. Granted, grave circumstances may exist which in turn may reduce the culpability of a couple in this matter. If a couple is struggling with this issue, I advise them to see a priest or talk with one of the couples who teaches Natural Family Planning. Oftentimes, the teaching couple have used the artificial means and can best explain to another couple the differences between the methods and guide them through this issue.

Nevertheless, no one can cavalierly dismiss the consistent teaching of the Church on the issue. We cannot simply consider good intentions or motives. Moreover, we can't just go to the "Yellow Pages" to find the priest or theologian who will give us the answer we want to hear. We have to be honest and wrestle

with the truth and, by the grace of God, conform to it. As Pope John Paul II asserted, "As teacher, (the Church) never tires of proclaiming the moral norm that must guide the responsible transmission of life. The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this none. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection" (No. 33).

## **On Birth Control Again**

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**† TEODORO C. BACANI, JR. , DD**

There is again a flurry of comments and columns on the “population problem” and the question of birth control. Often, the Church has been blamed for the “population explosion” which is seen to threaten our country.. It is alleged that the Church blinds itself to the population problem, and does miserably little about it. The Church is sometimes seen to promote unbridled procreation, the multiplication of human beings like rabbits.

I will not waste much time here in showing that it is not the official position of the worldwide Catholic Church nor of the Church in the Philippines that there does not exist a population problem. Whether or not there is a population problem in the sense of the growth of the population outpacing a country’s capacity to provide for the integral human development of its people is not for the Church to decide. It relies on demographers and economists and other experts to determine the existence or non-existence of a population problem. The official documents of the Church have no difficulty admitting the presence of such a problem in some

parts of the world. The Church here in the Philippines has not affirmed or denied the existence of a population problem. This is an area of free opinion for Catholics and is in no way a matter of obligatory doctrine.

There are several things that the Church insists on, and which bind the conscience of its members. First, parents must exercise responsible parenthood. Among other things, this means that they should be generous in the procreation of new life, but they should also strive to bring forth only those children whom they can raise up in a human way. The purposes of marriage, according to traditional Catholic teaching are: the procreation and education of children, and the growth in loving intimacy of the couple. Notice that procreation and education are always coupled together. Children are not only to be brought into the world. They are to be raised up in a manner befitting human beings who have a vocation to be children of God and heirs of His kingdom as well.

Couples can be irresponsible in the procreation of children when they engage in sexual intercourse without giving any thought to their capability of raising up their children (those born and those yet to be born) in a human way. Mindless procreation is as big a violation of God's will as contraception. In other words, couples can be irresponsible not only when they engage in contraception but also when they give birth to too many children.

The Church insists also that it is only the married couples themselves who have from God the right and the duty to decide on the number and spacing of their children. Neither the Church nor the government has competence in this matter. While the Church or the government may propose some ideals in this matter, they cannot oblige the couples nor substitute their decrees

for the couples' responsible decision. The Church will, in the name of God and of our humanity protest strongly against any attempts to dictate to couples when or how many babies they can procreate. The Church will not oppose any non-coercive attempts to convince people to keep the number of their children at a certain level, but she will fight attempts to pressure them into doing so by subtle or crass means.

It is well known that the Church allows only the Natural Family Planning method for practicing responsible parenthood. Others feel that contraceptive devices or pills should be allowed the couples as well.

I wish to suggest two ways in which both the Church and government can cooperate in the sensitive matter of birth control. First, they can, each in its own way and together propagate the idea of responsible parenthood among the populace, but especially among the poor. If this idea is inculcated well in our people, they themselves will search for the appropriate means to achieve this idea. In my opinion, it is the men more than the women who need to be made to understand this idea.

Second, the Church and the government can collaborate in the promotion and propagation of Natural Family Planning. The Church can secure the collaboration of the government for this morally legitimate way of promoting responsible parenthood. The Church also can give its collaboration to the government by way providing values formation to couples. In the past, the Church did not accept such collaborative efforts because Church leaders were afraid that the Church would be coopted into the population control program of the government. The Church and the government can collaborate under the aegis of responsible parenthood rather than population control. The government and

the Church should collaborate to the fullest extent they can while disagreeing in some matters.

Let not the sad experience of the past, and the suspicions which they have bred tie the hands of the Church and the government which should work together in promoting God's desire, responsible parenthood, which if achieved by couples will result in an optimal population for our country.

# **Communion, Solidarity and Mission: Response to the Breakup of the Family of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples**

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†ORLANDO B. QUEVEDO, OMI

## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of migrants and itinerant peoples of various kinds from workers to refugees has been discussed thoroughly in the past few days at this seminar. Through various conferences we have become more aware of their social, political, cultural, religious, and economic situation. The litany of problems seems to be endless. The problems differ, sometimes in kind and sometimes in degree, from country to country. All these constitute the pastoral situation of migrant workers and itinerant peoples.

My subject matter is limited, namely, the issue of the breakup of the family of migrant workers and itinerant peoples. And the question is simple – what can we do to respond to family breakup?

May I attempt to develop a general pastoral response to this tragic situation.

The pastoral perspective that I shall assume is inspired by three decades of pastoral reflection on various pastoral challenges by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). The Federation is composed of all the bishops in Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia – from Kazakhstan to East Timor.

The themes that FABC uses to reflect on the pastoral situation include the following:

- 1) in the light of the Asian pastoral situation the mission of announcing the Gospel of Jesus is by way of a triple dialogue – dialogue with the peoples of Asia especially the majority poor, dialogue with the various cultures of Asia, and dialogue with the different religions of Asia;
- 2) for the common task of social transformation in the Asian situation of religious pluralism, a common basis for action is the universal Reign of God;
- 3) the local church is the acting subject of mission;
- 4) international collaboration is necessary to face the challenges in the common journey to God's Reign;
- 5) According to the 7th and 8th FABC Plenary Assemblies, the situation of itinerant and migrant workers is one of the major pastoral priorities in Asia.

The pastoral response I wish to present may be summarized in the following way: In the light of the universal mission of the Church to announce the Gospel of Jesus, relevant family ministry should be set up in every local church with the task of building communion and solidarity among members of families, among families and local churches. Such ministry should have a



perspective of the Reign of God. It should respond to the needs of families in special situations, such as the families of migrants and itinerant peoples.

### **1. A Family Ministry in Dialogue with Migrants and Itinerant Peoples.**

Without doubt the great majority migrants and itinerant peoples leave their homes and work in other countries without referring themselves to their local church. They go to recruiting agencies and work out their travel and immigration papers directly through them. In many cases they receive only a minimum of information about the receiving countries, the people and their cultures, the employers that hire them, conditions of work, the customs of the people among whom they will work. If they go to countries with a predominantly different religion, they have only little knowledge about the risks to their own faith, the problems of practicing their faith, the pressures on them because of differences of faith.

In general they are aware of the problems of living apart from their families for an extended period of time, the pressures on the brothers, sisters, and parents they leave behind, and particularly on their spouses and children. At the end as Ecclesia in Asia (1999) says, "In the countries to which they come, these people often find themselves friendless, culturally estranged, linguistically disadvantaged and economically vulnerable" (no. 34).

But all these they have decided to go through for the sake of a better future for their families. The future of their family is uppermost in their minds.

As migrants leave for work the temporary break-up of the family of migrants and itinerant peoples becomes actual. In the duration of their work contract, the separation of the members of the family will be keenly felt, even for those who have worked for several years away from their families with brief periods of vacation. Intermittent reunions will not completely assuage the loneliness of being separated from their families.

But it is not only loneliness or homesickness that is of concern to families. It is the negative impact that the absence of perhaps a key member of the family (e.g., a father or mother, an older brother or sister) would have on the family itself, on the natural growth and development of the children.

Moreover in the experience of many families, a permanent breakup is not only possible. It can be real, as when the migrant or itinerant worker falls into other relationships either casually with many persons or permanently with one person. These relationships can ruin the relationship that the migrant worker has with the family that is left behind.

Given the above situation of temporary and permanent family breakup, possible or actual, and the many other social, cultural, religious, economic and legal problems that have been mentioned at this seminar, the setting up of a family ministry at the churches of origin and destination is imperative. Among its tasks would be to help migrants and itinerants regarding legal cases and to be their advocates regarding their rights. But family ministry has to go beyond these tasks.

Family ministry has to be in dialogue with migrant workers and itinerant peoples. Pastoral workers have to know them, their life situations, their conditions of work. Dialogue with them will reveal their real pastoral situation, their priority needs, and the

ways by which effective response can be given to their situation. Through such dialogue an effective family ministry with the proper social dimensions on behalf of migrants and itinerant peoples can be set up. Without such dialogue a pastoral response can be misdirected and irrelevant.

## **2. A Family Ministry that Cares and Serves**

Family breakup contradicts the nature of marriage and family. The Lord of families calls the local churches to do the task of explaining in a credible and convincing manner the nature of marriage and of family as a communion of love and care.

This task also aims at educating members of families to reflect in their lives and relationships the communion that they are called to be. The family is a sanctuary within which the unity of husband, wife and children is fostered. It is God's gift to them for the sake of salvation. In this way their natural desire for unity in love is consciously brought to the realm of the spirit and of the Reign of God. Such formation in faith given by the local church regarding marriage and family builds communion and solidarity within the family. It prepares them to live up to their family commitments while one or more members of the family depart for work in a foreign country.

The task of formation and education requires a family ministry that cares for and serves families of migrants and itinerant peoples.

When migrants and itinerants actually leave for their places of work, the local church of origin still has the task helping maintain and promote the communion and solidarity of the family. Through pastoral guidance and encouragement, the local

church provides the spiritual resources that give them strength to bear and cope with separation.

On the other hand, in communion and solidarity with the local church of origin and with the migrant and itinerant worker, the church of arrival has to provide a similar ministry of care and service. It begins with a “ministry of welcome” (see *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, no. 40). In this way the “stranger” will find a home away from home – in the Lord’s household that is the Church. The local church of arrival is not only a place where migrants and itinerant peoples go for worship. It should be a place where they find “family” belongingness, friendship and fellowship in community. Simple celebrations of birthdays and other anniversaries take on greater meaning when celebrated within such fellowships.

Concretely, this means the active presence and ministry of chaplains and pastoral workers to whom migrant workers and itinerant peoples can refer their problems and find a listening ear and caring hand. Letters of introduction would also help. It is important for pastoral workers to know a little bit of the cultures of migrants and itinerant workers and be able to speak to speak to them in a language they understand. The lack of ability to communicate in a language that is understood is one of the most serious causes of loneliness and alienation. Associations of migrants and itinerant peoples will add to the spirit of common strength, belongingness and fellowship they find in the church.

Such pastoral care was envisioned by the FABC at its 8th Plenary Assembly held in Daejeon, Korea in 2004 on the topic: “The Asian Family towards a Culture of Integral Life.”

One of its pastoral recommendations is the setting up of family ministries in Asia that “form and empower,” “care and

serve,” and “promote social transformation.” Among the special programs of a caring and serving family ministry, the Plenary Assembly recommended “setting up programs for families with migrant workers abroad and helping migrant workers before they leave and when they return” (Final Document, no. 119).

The FABC vision of family ministry in Asia calls for pastoral programs that should “make the inner resources of our faith (the sacraments, liturgy, prayer, day-to-day spirituality) available to couples and heir families in their striving toward a culture of integral life... and should empower families to become evangelizers, such that ministry is not only for families but by families” (no. 116).

### **3. A Family Ministry that Forms and Empowers**

Beyond the simple idea of receiving pastoral care is the universal mission, valid also for migrants and itinerants, to evangelize others. For this reason, a family ministry should form and empower in the faith. In communion and solidarity both the church of origin and the church of destination have to work on empowering migrants and itinerant peoples to become evangelizers.

It is well known that by the dynamism of their religious faith migrant workers and itinerant peoples have impressed peoples with weakened faith or with hardly any practical faith. Domestic workers in many countries of Europe bring the children of their employers to church on Sundays, teach them how to pray and what the basic tenets of the Church are.

In the churches of origin faith formation and empowerment can be done through the regular catechetical and biblical programs

at the parish level in collaboration with the family ministry of the parish. The local church should especially emphasize formation to a spirituality of communion in the family:

... at the heart of the family is Communion, communion with God, communion of the spouses, communion of young or elderly parents and their children, communion with grandparents and other members of the extended family.... It is a union of hearts and minds that in a human way reflects the communion of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the Triune God from whom the family came to be.... Communion within the family, however, reaches out to the wider community and impels the family toward a mission of service for the sake of the Reign of God. This outward movement enables the family to share the Trinitarian communion that it is gifted with. A spirituality of communion infuses vigor and enthusiasm – life – into the dynamics of the family, the relationship between spouses, between parents and children, between members of the extended family (8th FABC Plenary Assembly, Daejeon, Korea, August 17-23, 2004, Final Document, nos. 105-106).

A spirituality of communion, unity, and solidarity will definitely help spouses and children cope better with the aches and pains of temporary separation. Kept alive through prayer and communication, it would also serve to overcome temptations to permanent separation.

In the churches of arrival, migrant workers and itinerant peoples could follow a designed program of catechesis and have on-going faith and biblical formation. For instance Filipino migrant workers who come together for Mass and socialization

every Sunday could have on-going faith formation for an hour after the Mass and before their socialization and fellowship activities. [In Rome student priests at the Pontificio Collegio Filipino are assigned to various churches on Sundays where Filipino migrants and itinerants gather for Mass and fellowship. They act as chaplains providing religious services, giving spiritual conferences, helping organize them, and bringing them together for various events, social and religious. This is a practice that can not be replicated in other places, simply because of the lack of chaplains].

But on the issue of on-going formation and empowerment, an initiative in some countries like the Philippines is significant in the light of the concerns of migrants and itinerant people. This is the training of pastoral workers. A week-long course was started six years ago by the Scalabrini Migration Center in Manila in collaboration with the Philippine Bishops' Commission on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. This was designed to train pastoral workers for migrants. Last January the course was attended by 46 pastoral workers from Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines. They went through learning modules covering the migrant situation in Asia, church teachings on migration, the mission with migrants in Asia, specific issues on the care of migrants, networking and planning future programs.

The more programs there are to train pastoral workers, the better for the mission of caring and serving migrants and their families.

My suggestion is for pastoral care and activities to go beyond worship, socialization and fellowship and into ongoing formation and empowerment for integral evangelization.

Evangelizing by migrants and itinerant peoples may seem to be idealistic but for many Filipino migrant workers this is already a lived experience. Already many Filipino migrants who belong to various lay religious movements such as El Shaddai, Couples for Christ, and other charismatic groups follow the faith formation sessions of their lay groups.

It is a matter simply of consciously bringing the missionary or evangelizing dimension into the on-going faith formation session and continuing what may already have been started at the local church of origin.

Here again we see the great need of collaboration – of communion and solidarity for mission among migrants and itinerant peoples, between them and the local churches of origin and arrival.

#### **4. In Dialogue with Other Cultures and Religions**

What has been said so far would seem to apply only in places where migrants and itinerant peoples can practice their own religion freely and where local churches of origin and destination play a great role.

But the great majority of Asian migrants and itinerant peoples live and work in countries where they cannot freely and safely practice a religion different from that of their host country. In such countries temporary separation from one's own family becomes even more acute. They are deprived of the strength and consolation that religious faith and fellowship could provide even when a celebration is merely a birthday or anniversary.

It is in this situation that prior formation and empowerment in the local church of origin is important and imperative. Prior



faith formation can help migrant workers and itinerant peoples cope with the pressures of work in a country of different religious persuasion and where religious conversion in order to have better work conditions and higher compensation is always a severe temptation.

Only a dialogue of life is possible in such situation. For domestic workers, more restricted to the home of employers perhaps not even this is possible. Friendship and fellowship with peoples of other faiths and cultures would certainly ease the aches of homesickness and being separated from families.

Moreover, dialogue – solidarity and collaboration (or diplomatic arrangement) – between governments with peoples of predominantly different religions will go a long way to make migrants and itinerant peoples feel at home in their countries of work.

## **5. Solidarity and Collaboration at the International Level**

Beyond decent and humane working conditions is a mutuality and reciprocity of rights, especially of the fundamental freedom of religion, based on the universal golden rule – “Do unto others what you want them do unto you.” Recent appeals by the Holy Father for such reciprocity of rights and freedom of religion have raised the consciousness of people around the world regarding this human rights issue. It has also raised the bar of inter-religious dialogue a bit higher.

To promote this reciprocity of rights and to ensure that peoples of different faiths practice their religion freely and safely everywhere would be a paramount responsibility of international decision makers. It needs dialogue, solidarity, and collaboration

between States. It would also be necessary for the United Nations to act determinedly on this issue in accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Dialogue towards recognizing and practicing reciprocity of the freedom of religion is a task needing the utmost mutual respect, openness, persistence and determination. For if States do not recognize such freedom for their own citizen-minorities, how much more difficult it would be for States to recognize the same freedom to migrants and itinerant workers.

Dialogue, solidarity and collaboration at the international level should also address another burning issue – the issue of reuniting the families of migrants and of recognizing their rights as families, according them the same protection as other families (see the Holy See's Charter of the Rights of the Family, 1983, Article 12).

Granted that there are many obstacles that prevent effective resolution, including concerns about internal security, economics and demography, the obstacles are not insurmountable. The pastoral care of migrants and itinerant peoples would call for local and international advocacy on these issues regarding family unification and family rights.

To be highly commended is the work of non-governmental organizations both at the local and international levels, such as the International Catholic Migration Commission, that pushes the advocacy of the Church and its dicasteries forward at various fora. Advocacy is part and parcel of pastoral care and strives to press forward ethical decisions on migrants and their families in accord with the teachings of the Church.

## **6. A Common Basis for Pastoral Work toward Communion and Solidarity – the Reign of God**

In a situation where peoples of different religious traditions and their governments are involved, the pastoral care of migrant workers and itinerant peoples would require a common perspective. We who believe in Jesus Christ are guided in our work by this belief in Jesus and by the mission of proclaiming him as the Lord and Savior of the world. This is our unique perspective. We need to keep this perspective in our consciousness. It should always motivate and energize our pastoral work.

But in the care of migrant workers and itinerants, collaboration and solidarity with other religious traditions and their governments would require a common perspective. This is provided by the perspective of God's Reign. Brothers and sisters under the one God are on a journey together towards God's Reign which comes definitively at the end of time. We are in the "now and not yet" dimension of God's Reign. We are called to make this one globalized world a safe home for all, a home to be built on justice, truth, freedom, peace, and love. These are fundamental values of the Reign of God.

It is this perspective of God's Reign, of God's loving dominion over us, that pulls together efforts of various religions and ideologies to respond to the family breakup of migrant workers and itinerant peoples.

## **Conclusion**

To the question how can we respond effectively to the breakup of the family of migrant workers and itinerant peoples, I have attempted to provide a pastoral response in the light of reflections of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

The response concretely calls for a triple dialogue – with the poor, with cultures, and religious traditions. It calls for the setting up of a family ministry that is in dialogue with migrants and itinerants, with their cultures and religious traditions.

It is a family ministry that cares and serves, forms and empowers for mission. Formation towards a spirituality of communion which is at the heart of marriage and the family is the key element of this pastoral response.

The response also calls for solidarity and collaboration between churches of origin and arrival, and between States at the international level. The crux of the matter is reciprocity and mutuality of rights, particularly of the freedom of religion. When migrant workers and itinerant peoples enjoy freedom of religion, they are able to avail themselves of the spiritual resources of their faith. They are better able to cope with pressures of temporary family breakup and the severe temptations to permanent family break-up.

The common basis of action for such solidarity and collaboration is the universal journey of all peoples towards the Reign of God, a journey towards justice and truth, peace, freedom and love.

## **A Recommendation to the Pontifical Council**

In two full days we have listened to 22 conferences on the situation of various kinds of migrant workers and itinerant peoples. For us who are new to this ministry of pastoral care, the conferences have given us an excellent panoramic view of the pastoral situation. But due to time constraints we may not have been able to explore major issues in depth.

In a certain sense, migrant workers and itinerant peoples constitute a global “diocese” or even a number of global “dioceses.”

Therefore, for a better and more effective collaboration and solidarity, may I respectfully recommend that those responsible in regional and continental Episcopal assemblies come together every two or three years under the leadership of the Pontifical Council for the purpose of discussing in depth two or three burning issues affecting migrant workers, itinerant peoples and their families.

Thank you.

†Orlando B. Quevedo, O.M.I.  
*Archbishop of Cotabato*  
*FABC Secretary General*  
*Rome, May 15, 2008*



## **The Family Rosary: Practicality in Family Prayer**

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**CHRISTOPHER PADGETT\***

How can we practically involve our children in family prayer? What are ways that we can teach them the beauty of communing with Jesus in prayer, even though homework needs to be completed, dishes washed, pajamas put on little ones, and we may even want to reserve a few moments of peace and quiet for ourselves after a busy day? In my last article dealing with the Family Rosary I identified the need for parents to make the call of the family Rosary heard, knowing the result will at times be met with resistance and indifference. For the encouragement of parents, I reminded the reader that the suffering encountered in family prayer is redemptive, and that its application in the home ensures that spiritual goods soak into the little hearts and minds of their children, even if parents feel their efforts are not making a great deal of difference.

In this article I want to offer a variety of ideas to parents of a practical nature for engaging our children in prayer, so that they

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approach prayer with a sense of expectancy. This is not to say that I am imparting approaches that are always a success with my family; rather, it is advice and insight I too am trying to implement daily within our home. The success is found at the finish line, not during the race itself.

## **Consistency in Prayer**

We must begin with a consistent prayer time. There are some families that struggle, due to the crazy schedules of life, to even have regular dining experiences, but I suggest that having a consistent time for prayer will help establish the rhythm your family needs to accomplish this task.

Every night after dinner the kids will clean off the table, and pajamas will be brought down and put on the younger ones while we settle in the living room for evening prayer. Even if it has been a busy day with lots of homework left to complete, our children know that Rosary time is not some novel one-time event nor one which can be ignored. Every day we try and pray five decades of the Rosary, establishing a consistent rhythm, which over time becomes accepted by the older ones, and becomes commonplace for the younger ones, who don't know anything different.

## **The Designation of Responsibilities**

The designation of responsibilities will help make family prayer a bit more peaceful. The older ones in our home have the responsibility of putting the pajamas on the smaller ones, changing diapers, while a couple of the younger kids usually begin to argue about who will bring out the Rosaries for prayer. Sometimes it will be three kids at once running into the back room, climbing upon one another in order to create the greatest amount of chaos in what



would otherwise be a preparation for peace. In the end it is usually the one who exemplifies the greatest calm who finally gets the privilege of passing out the beads to their battered siblings. This practice of making sure everyone has their Rosary is a beautiful, and exhausting, ritual. As a parent, seeing your children's tempers flare over who will bring out the Rosary seems to prove the uselessness of this prayer in family life, which is already so difficult. Be encouraged though, because this frustration is common to most families, and I am sure it is one of the greatest ploys of the enemy to cause families to give up on prayer.

So after intervening and settling who will have the task of gathering the beads, expect a new commotion to break out at the other side of the room as the desire to light the candle degrades into arguments and accusations of insensitivities and great injustices. With the amount of kids we have, there is always one crying, sleeping, bleeding or burping by the time Rosary begins, ensuring that our night remains interesting. Knowing this turmoil will take place helps us to avoid a few of the upcoming problems by designating responsibilities ahead of time, but certainly not all storms will be calmed in time, and that's okay.

## **Good Intentions**

There are two points I wish to make concerning good intentions. First, most parents who want to pray the Rosary with their family should know from the start that this is a noble and beautiful service to their homes and to the Church as a whole. It isn't an easy task, but certainly these good intentions do not go unnoticed by our loving God.

My second point is a play on the word intention. Praying the Rosary for some specific intention helps to make this event one

which has purpose for all. We will go around the room and ask for what should we pray, and from young to old there is always something and someone to be included in this time of intercession. We have heard the call for intercession on behalf of those who are having children, for an end to abortion, and even requests for divine assistance for “cool guy,” who just happens to be my son’s imaginary friend. Parents who long for their families to be families of prayer, coupled with the intentions brought to the forefront by the family through the Rosary, become a beautiful fragrance of self-donation and sacrifice to God the Father.

### **Engaging the Senses**

It is a proven fact that individuals learn in very unique and specific ways. Some are tactile and hands on, while other people can simply read from a book and everything makes complete sense to them. Prayer is a very personal experience, both in learning to intercede and participating in its impact. This habit of dialogue with God will be more meaningful if the child is able to approach it from their area of comfort. Certainly this exploration in prayer has to be within the rhythm of the family setting, but let’s press this out a bit more for practicality. Allowing the child to pick from the pile of Rosaries the one that he or she wants, is an excellent practice. They can consider it theirs for the evening. The colored beads and size of the Rosary engages their sense of sight and touch. For my little children it also impacts their sense of taste as they try to eat the Rosary before completing the Apostles’ Creed.

Many times we will allow our children to hold and look at gigantic picture books which depict the mysteries through paintings, drawings or photos. We have also purchased picture cards for each mystery of the Rosary, laminating them so they can be passed around with greater durability. It is a way for them to “see” what

we are praying about. Usually one child will lead a mystery and at times I have asked them before or after that mystery why they chose to pray that particular one. I will sometimes ask what stood out for them during that mystery, or what new thought occurred to them that night. This is not a common practice, because there are nights that we as parents were ready for the kids to be in bed hours ago, and so don't have the patience for it, but we have learned to be creative in finding ways to get kids involved in prayer. Sometimes we will describe the mystery a bit more for a deeper perspective, occasionally a Scripture passage will be read or a question asked to draw them into the mystery. You know your family, so apply this time to their needs.

## **The Importance of Discipline**

Even if we have done all of these things, settled into the room filled with reminders of our faith, passed out Rosaries and picture books, lit the candles, offered intentions for the upcoming prayer, along with small reflections and discussion during the decades, the truth is that before we know it an avalanche of chaos breaks loose. This happens far more often when praying the Rosary than having any experience of profound peace, which we as parents are always waiting and hoping for. Why does this chaos happen? For starters, if this is a new practice in your home than give yourself a break and realize that it took you years to establish the current habits and rhythms in your family life, so it will likely take more then a few weeks for this practice of prayer to become the norm.

We also have to remember that family prayer is a supernatural force the enemy would like to stop at all costs. For a family to pray together, not only will they stay together, but they will impact all of eternity together. Your intercession may make all the difference in a person's recovery to health, conversion to Christ, or endurance

in difficult times. Your family prayers together may in fact deliver countless souls from Purgatory, all because of the sacrifices made in waging this constant battle to pray the family Rosary. Being disciplined in prayer does not mean that we will have a warm and fuzzy feeling accompanying us after every decade. In fact, expect the dark night of the soul in family Rosary time; but realize your persistence in prayer without consolation will be an incredible example to all involved, and the ramifications of disciplined action in prayer and intercession are eternal!

There is another aspect of discipline that we may need to apply too, and that being the moments when we must break from prayer to deal with children who are not paying attention or otherwise disrupting the prayer. Here are practical examples for these moments of inevitable breakdowns. If you find that one child is choking the other with a rosary instead of assisting them in finding their place in prayer, take the rosary away and place them in the “happy bed.” In our home we have a crib set up in another room called the “happy bed” reserved for just those times when our little ones go a bit bonkers. This gives them time to regroup and become “happy” without disrupting the whole family. There are occasions when the little ones are so crazy with exhaustion or sugar that we put them in bed a little early. There are moments when only the threat of being placed in bed sobers them up, because praying the Rosary is certainly preferable to going to bed early. Your family is unique and I can’t know what exactly will work for you, but I am sure the Lord will give you graces to succeed in this area. He wants our families to be given over to Him in prayer, and certainly Our Lady will also teach us how this can work in our home. We need to realize that it is okay if we experiment with all books, candles, pictures, different rooms for prayer, etc. If your prayer is a struggle in one room but works better in another, then modify your place of

prayer. If you feel that kids are more behaved and settled a couple hours after dinner instead of at earlier times, than pray later.

I remember the first time I experienced the family Rosary. I was a guest in someone's home and was invited to come and pray with them that evening. Parents and children gathered into one bedroom with tons of bunk beds and chairs, pillows and blankets all over the floor; the lights were off, and all were settling in as the Rosary began. Within moments the little kids were sleeping while the older ones continued to pray with their parents. I was blown away by the experience. It made me realize that every family needs to adjust to the discipline of family prayer in a way that works for them. If I were to do prayer in my home exactly as that family, I would be out cold every night just after the first Our Father is prayed. The lights need to be on or I am out to la la land. In our family we have found that everyone is together and relatively alert after dinner, so prayer during this time just makes sense for us. You will realize what works in your home as you experiment.

## **The Place of Prayer**

In the room where we pray there are many pictures of Mary and Jesus, along with statues of St. Jude and St. Joseph, the Pieta, and even some relics of our favorite saints. My goal for our place of prayer is for the children to be constantly reminded of the presence of God, even if they are not consciously engaged in the Rosary, and I believe that they are positively affected in this way, even subconsciously, from all that is around them, even if they'r not paying particular attention to their prayers. It helps our family prayer together to have these Biblical images and Catholic reminders at every turn.

## What We Want

In conclusion I will simply say that if we want the family Rosary to be a part of our life then it will become a part of our life. Look at it like this: If our kids want to be in sports, they try out and do whatever it takes to get to practices and games. If we want to go to a movie, have a certain food for dinner, or need a little time to ourselves, than we do what it takes to try and make these wants a reality. As parents, if we want the family Rosary to become more than an idea, it's going to take lots of work, but it will become more natural the more you work at it. The amazing fruit of the Rosary is attested to by countless saints. Some found it difficult to pray and others seemed to pray it constantly, effortlessly. For most of us, the family Rosary will probably always be a battle of some sort, but realize you are not alone in this heroic effort to raise your children in the presence of Christ.

I have in my mind the ideal Rosary night with my family, and honestly it so rarely happens. What is so beautiful, though, are the small surprises of the family Rosary. Children helping their siblings find the mystery in a picture book, the littlest one praying a decade of the Rosary, when for the last two years he has seemed completely indifferent to the whole experience, moments when a child finally begins to follow the beads along with the prayers being prayed. It is unexpected and beautiful to find these moments of victory along the way. You will notice them too. Please don't give up. The victory line comes at unexpected times, but it does come. You may not realize the ramifications of what you are doing now, but the consequences of your actions are eternal. Hang in there and know that Mary is ready to shower your family with graces, to shower them with the grace and beauty of her Son himself.

# The Greatest Marian Prayer\*

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MARK MIRAVALLE

“The Rosary is my favorite prayer, a marvelous prayer. Marvelous in its simplicity and depth. It can be said that the Rosary is, in a certain way, a prayer-commentary on the last chapter of the constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, of Vatican II, a chapter which deals with the wonderful presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Against the background of the words, *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary), there passes before the eyes of the soul the main episodes of the life of Jesus Christ, and they put us in living communication with Jesus through, we could say, His mother’s heart. At the same time, our heart can enclose in these decades of the Rosary all the facets that make up the life of the individual, the family, the nation, the Church and all mankind, particularly of those who are dear to us. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary beats the rhythm of human life.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Angelus Message, October 29, 1978, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Thus spoke the great Marian pontiff, Pope John Paul II, about his favorite prayer, the Rosary. He described the tremendous value of the Rosary for the Christian life in this address delivered within the first weeks of his pontificate.<sup>2</sup> The Rosary does in fact “put us in living communication with Jesus... through his mother’s heart” and “beats the rhythm of human life.”

As Pope Leo XIII said in one of his eleven encyclicals written exclusively on the Rosary: “Among the various methods and forms of prayer which are devoutly and profitably used in the Catholic Church, that which is called the Rosary is for many reasons to be especially recommended.<sup>3</sup> The pre-eminence of the Rosary (after liturgical prayer) is also confirmed by Pope Pius XII: “the Rosary, as all know, has pride of place.”<sup>4</sup>

The Rosary, the greatest Marian prayer, has been championed by the Church as the most highly recommended prayer form, second only to the liturgical prayer of the Church which centers around the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In his 2002 Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, John Paul II makes clear that while the Church’s Liturgy retains a primacy of place, the Rosary is in no way contrary to the Mass, but actually serves to “sustain it”:

There are some who think that the centrality of the Liturgy, rightly stressed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, necessarily entails giving lesser importance to the Rosary. Yet, as Pope Paul VI made clear, not only does this prayer not conflict with the Liturgy, *it sustains it*, since it serves as an excellent

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Salutaris ille*, December 24, 1883.

<sup>4</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947, No. 174; AAS 38, 1947.



introduction and a faithful echo of the Liturgy, enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives.<sup>5</sup>

## What Is the Rosary?

The Rosary is a beautiful combination of vocal prayer and meditation that centers upon the greatest Gospel mysteries in the life of Jesus Christ and secondarily in the life of the Lord's Mother. It is an "incarnational" prayer, a prayer consisting of both vocal and mental prayer that serves to incorporate both body and soul into spiritual communion with Our Lord and Our Mother.

The basic structure of the complete Rosary consists in the praying of twenty sets of ten Hail Marys, referred to as *decades*, with an Our Father prayed at the beginning of each decade and a "Glory Be" at the end of each decade. During the praying of each decade of ten Hail Marys, one of the central Gospel mysteries of Jesus Christ is meditated upon. This prayerful pondering of the life of Jesus imitates the spiritual practice of Mary herself who, Scripture tells us, interiorly made her own the sacred events in the life of her Son: "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). What possibly passed unnoticed by others, did not escape the attention of the Mother of Jesus in regards to salvation history. Mary continually pondered the salvific events and mysteries of her Son in her Immaculate Heart.

Technically, the term "Rosary" refers now to the full twenty decades (with the recent inclusion of the "Luminous" mysteries by John Paul II),<sup>6</sup> with a Gospel mystery associated with each

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<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, October 16, 2002, No. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 21.

decade. The twenty mysteries are categorized into four sets of five mysteries, known as the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. In these four sets of mysteries, we prayerfully meditate upon the great general mysteries of our salvation as accomplished by Our Lord Jesus Christ: the Incarnation, the Public Ministry of Jesus, the Redemption, and Eternal Life.

Commonly in the English language, the term “Rosary” refers to a fourth of the full Rosary, consisting of five decades or one set of mysteries, whereas expressions such as the “complete Rosary” or “full Rosary” signify the entire twenty decades. This is not always the case in other cultures and languages. For example, in French the term “rozaire” usually designates the complete Rosary and a different word, “chapelet,” is used to signify one-fourth of the Rosary.

The *Joyful Mysteries*, which center upon the event of the Incarnation of Jesus, consist of: the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary (Lk 1:26ff), the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (Lk 1:39ff), the Birth of Jesus (Lk 2:7, Mt 1:25), the Presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:22ff), and the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:42ff).

The new *Luminous Mysteries*, which center on the key events of Christ’s public ministry: his Baptism in the Jordan (Mt 3:13), his first public miracle at the Wedding in Cana (Jn 2:1), the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Mt 4:17), the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor (Lk 9:28), and the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (Lk 22:19).

The *Sorrowful Mysteries*, which focus on the Redemption of Jesus by his Passion and Death, consist of: the Agony of Jesus in the Garden (Mt 26:36), the Scourging of Jesus at the Pillar (Jn 19:1), the Crowning of Jesus with Thorns (Mt 27:29), Jesus’

Carrying of the Cross (Jn 19:17), and the Crucifixion of Jesus (Jn 19:18).

The *Glorious Mysteries*, which center upon the mystery of Eternal Life through the redemptive victory of Jesus, consist of: the Resurrection of Jesus (Lk 24:6), the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven (Mk 16:19), the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:2ff), the Assumption of Mary into Heaven (cf. Ps 131:8; Gen 3:15; Lk 1:28) and the Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven (cf. Rev 12:1).

We see then that the Rosary constitutes a form of prayer-creed of the central mysteries of salvation history. As one theologian explains:

The Rosary is a *Credo* (creed): not an abstract one, but one concretized in the life of Jesus who came down to us from the Father and Who ascended to bring us back with Himself to the Father. It is the whole of Christian dogma in all its splendor and elevation, brought to us that we may fill our minds with it, that we may relish it and nourish our souls with it.<sup>7</sup>

The Rosary, then, comprises a beautiful blend of vocal and meditative prayer that leads the person into the joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious events of the life of Jesus our Redeemer.

### **Brief History of the Rosary**

Traditionally, and in several papal documents, the origin of the Rosary has been traced back to the person of St. Dominic Guzman

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<sup>7</sup> R. Garrigou-LaGrange, O.P., *Mother of Our Savior and the Interior Life*, tr. Bernard Kelly, C.S.Sp., Golden Eagle Book, Dublin, Ireland, 1948, p. 293.

(d.1221), founder of the Dominican Order. St. Dominic had been sent to southern France to preach against the Albigensian heresy which was spiritually ravaging the region. The Albigensian heresy (being a later development of Manichaeism), denied the infinite goodness of the one God and held that all matter was evil. Albigensianism attacked both Christian morality and Christian doctrine as well. This heretical sect followed Manichean dualism in seeking to solve the problem of evil. They believed in the co-existence of two ultimate principles, a good God who created spirit and light, and a bad deity who created matter and darkness. They therefore condemned marriage and procreation as demonic.<sup>8</sup> Since matter was mistakenly conceived as evil (and a deity unto itself), the Albigensians held that God the Son could not truly have taken on a material human nature to redeem humanity.

It was, therefore, as a spiritual instrument to battle the moral and dogmatic errors of Albigensianism (as well as an instrument against future errors and difficulties) that St. Dominic received, under the inspiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a unique combination of preaching and prayer that would constitute the basis of the prayer form later known as the Rosary. One account of how St. Dominic received from the Blessed Virgin the root form of the Rosary was explained by the renowned Dominican theologian, Fr. Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange:

Our Blessed Lady made known to St. Dominic a kind of preaching till then unknown, which she said would be one of the most powerful weapons against future errors and in future difficulties. Under her inspiration, St. Dominic went into the villages of the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. John Hardon, S.J., "Albigensianism," *Colliers Encyclopedia*, 1994, Vol. 1, pp. 495-496.

(Albigensians), gathered the people, and preached to them the mysteries of salvation – the Incarnation, the Redemption, Eternal Life. As Mary had taught him to do, he distinguished the different kinds of mysteries, and after each short instruction, he had ten Hail Marys recited – somewhat as might happen even today at a Holy Hour. And what the word of the preacher was unable to do, the sweet prayer of the Hail Mary did for hearts. As Mary promised, it proved to be a most fruitful form of preaching.<sup>9</sup>

Although there are several diverse theories as to precisely what St. Dominic contributed to the origins of the Rosary, the basic concept of uniting the praying of Hail Marys with preaching and meditation on the Gospel mysteries of Jesus Christ can most likely be attributed to the founder of the Dominican Order through the specific inspiration of the Blessed Virgin, a supernatural Marian origin to which, once again, several papal documents refer.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Rosary devotion is rightfully associated with St. Dominic, solid contemporary scholarship maintains that the foundational components of the Rosary date back to the Apostolic Church. The celebration of a fundamental cycle of Marian mysteries was already evident in the early first century

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<sup>9</sup> R. Garrigou-LaGrange, O.P., *Mother of Our Savior*, p. 297.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical *Octobri mense*, September 22, 1891, No. 8; AAS 24; Pius XI, Encyclical *Ingravescentibus malis*, September 29, 1937, No. 12; AAS 29, 1937; George Shea, "The Dominican Rosary," Juniper Carol, O.F.M., ed., *Mariology*, Vol. III, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1961. For diverse opinions, cf. Michael O'Carroll C.S.Sp., "Rosary," *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Delaware, Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983.

Church in Palestine, and especially in Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> The cycles, evidently prefiguring what were to become known as the Sorrowful, Joyful and Glorious mysteries, were associated with three great liturgies: that of the sacred triduum of Holy Week or Paschal Triduum, that of Epiphany or Christmas, and that of the Ascension-Pentecost.

These three cycles reflected Our Lady as 1) Mother of Mercy (in Greek *Eleusa*), or what the Latins termed the Mater Dolorosa, or Mother of Sorrows; 2) Guide to Christ (in Greek *Hodigitria*) or in Latin Mater Dei, Mother of God; and 3) Advocate (in Greek *Paraclitos*) or in Latin Mater Orans, the Mother Praying. These celebrations were localized in three “luminous” grottoes (where the *lucinaria* or vigils were celebrated): that of Golgotha, of Bethlehem and of Mt. Olivet, over which Constantine erected the three great Basilicas of Jerusalem. These three cycles in the celebration of the mystery of Mary left an impression on all Marian devotion, liturgical and para-liturgical, throughout the Church since that time.<sup>12</sup> They also set the foundation for what St. Dominic then received as a supernatural inspiration by Our Lady which constitutes the heart of the Rosary.

A further element of the development of the Rosary is the Marian Psalter. In the Marian Psalter one hundred and fifty Hail Marys were recited by the laity to model the one hundred and fifty psalms prayed by monks in the Psalter, or “Divine Office.” The use of beads was incorporated for the counting of the prayers in an effort to incorporate the laity (the vast majority of whom were illiterate), into praying the liturgical prayer of the clergy

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Emmanuele Testa, O.F.M., *Maria Terra Vergine*, Vol. II: *Il Culto mariano palestinese*, Jerusalem, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

and religious. This Our Father and Hail Mary-based prayer form became known as "Our Lady's Psalter," or the "Marian Psalter."

After this initial inspiration of the Rosary from the Blessed Virgin to St. Dominic, the structure of the Rosary went through a period of gradual development from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, where the specific Rosary mysteries used by the faithful appear to have gone through a process of historical development. At given times in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, up to one hundred and fifty mysteries were meditated upon during the reciting of one hundred and fifty Hail Marys (in some cases having one specific mystery for each Hail Mary). Gradually, the number of mysteries was reduced from as many as one hundred and fifty down to fifteen. The first clear historical example of what is basically the Rosary form used today is found in the mid-fifteenth century writings of Alan of Rupe, O.P., also known as Alan de la Roche, (d.1475).<sup>13</sup> Alan of Rupe was a great Dominican propagator of the Rosary devotion and a significant historical force in restoring the practice of the Rosary to the faithful.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1569 Apostolic Constitution, *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*, Pope St. Pius V, a Dominican pope, officially approved what is the basic Rosary prayer form of today. By the time of the 1569 official papal approval, the second part of the Hail Mary, an ecclesial prayer added during this same general historical period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, was also present.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. Walz, O.P., *Compendium Historiae Ordinis Praedicatorum*, ed. 2, Romae, 1948.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Shea, "The Dominican Rosary," *Mariology*, III.

Two years later, before the historic Battle of Lepanto in 1571, when a Muslim Turkish naval fleet threatened the Western Christian empire and Western civilization, Pope St. Pius V called upon the Christian world to pray the Rosary to aid the smaller Christian naval fleet against the massive Muslim fleet. The miraculous victory of the Christian fleet was directly attributed by St. Pius V to “Our Lady of Victory” and the powerful effects of praying the Rosary.

The only substantial change to the Rosary’s fundamental structure since the sixteenth century occurred in 2002, when Pope John Paul II introduced the new set of Luminous Mysteries to the existing Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries,<sup>15</sup> which positively adds the key event of Our Lord’s public ministry to the Rosary’s Gospel Meditations. The addition of the Luminous Mysteries fills in the historical gap in the life of Jesus from his childhood finding in the Temple (last Joyful Mystery) to the initiation of his Passion with the Agony in the Garden (first Sorrowful Mystery). As Pope John Paul explains:

I believe, however, that to bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary it would be suitable to make an addition to the traditional pattern which, while left to the freedom of individuals and communities, could broaden it to include *the mysteries of Christ’s public ministry between his Baptism and his Passion*. In the course of those mysteries we contemplate important aspects of the person of Christ as the definitive revelation of God. Declared the beloved Son of the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, No. 19.



is the one who announces the coming of the Kingdom, bears witness to it in his works and proclaims its demands. It is during the years of his public ministry that *the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light*: "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5).

Consequently, for the Rosary to become more fully a "compendium of the Gospel," it is fitting to add, following reflection on the Incarnation and the hidden life of Christ (*the joyful mysteries*) and before focusing on the sufferings of his Passion (*the sorrowful mysteries*) and the triumph of his Resurrection (*the glorious mysteries*), a meditation on certain particularly significant moments in his public ministry (*the mysteries of light*).<sup>16</sup>

What is essential to the structure of the Rosary, as discussed by Pius V in granting the indulgence for the praying of the Rosary,<sup>17</sup> is the praying of the Our Fathers and the Hail Marys with vocal prayer (at least the word formation by the lips) while meditating on the Gospel mysteries. Over time and in diverse cultures, several prayers have been added to the Rosary by the faithful. In several countries (including France, parts of Germany and the United States), the Rosary begins with the Sign of the Cross, the Apostles' Creed, an Our Father, three Hail Marys (oftentimes prayed for an increase in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity), and a Glory Be. This is not always

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

<sup>17</sup> Cf. St. Pius V, Apostolic Constitution *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*, 1569.

the universal practice, however. In several Spanish-speaking countries, the Rosary ends with these same prayers.

The praying of the Glory Be to the Holy Trinity at the end of each decade may have been an effort to imitate the praying of the psalms of the Divine Office, which end with this same prayer of Trinitarian praise.

At the end of each decade various additional prayers have also been recited by the faithful. Presently, the most universal prayer added to the end of each decade is the one requested by the Virgin Mary during her 1917 apparitions at Fatima, Portugal. During her third apparition of July 13, 1917, the Blessed Mother appeared under the title of "Our Lady of the Rosary" and asked that the following basic prayer be said at the end of each decade: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need of thy mercy." Many of the faithful from around the world permanently incorporated this prayer request from Our Lady of Fatima at the end of each Rosary decade.

The *Salve Regina* or "Hail, Holy Queen," a majestic prayer to Mary as our Advocate, Queen, and Mother of Mercy, has been attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d.1153) or to one of his contemporaries. The Hail Holy Queen is normally prayed at the end of five decades of the Rosary.

We see then that the Rosary is the fruit of a peaceful combination of both heavenly inspiration and historical human development as prayed and practiced by the living Church.

## ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF THE ROSARY

### The Rosary Is Scriptural

The Rosary is by nature a scriptural prayer. Pope Paul VI refers to the Rosary as “the compendium of the entire Gospel.”<sup>18</sup>

The twenty mysteries of the Rosary comprise the best possible summary of the Gospel events of the Lord. They start at the beginning of the New Testament salvation history with the Annunciation (Lk 1:26) and recall each central Gospel mystery of Our Lords’ infancy, public ministry, passion, and redemptive victory, ending with its glorious effects for the Mother of Christ, that of her Coronation in Heaven (Rev 12:1). The mysteries of the Rosary provide a sublime but succinct summary of the greatest Gospel mysteries contained in the New Testament.

Beyond the scriptural nature of the Rosary mysteries, the specific prayers of the Rosary are also essentially scriptural. The Our Father is the celestial prayer revealed by Jesus Christ in answer to the request of the disciples to “teach us how to pray” (Lk 11:1ff; Mt 6:7ff). The Our Father is the perfect prayer of praise and petition revealed by God the Son made man.

The Hail Mary, for centuries called the “Angelic Salutation,” is also fundamentally a scriptural prayer. The first part of the Hail Mary is a joining together of two scriptural greetings to the Blessed Virgin: one to Mary by the Angel Gabriel, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Lk 1:28); and the second by her cousin Elizabeth, “blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Lk 1:42). With the additions of the

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<sup>18</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, February 2, 1974, No. 42.

names of Jesus and Mary, these two scriptural greetings to Mary comprised the essence of the Hail Mary for at least the first twelve centuries.

During the Middle Ages,<sup>19</sup> the Church added the second part of the Hail Mary, the ecclesial prayer to the Mother of God beseeching her intercession for “us sinners,” “now,” and “at the hour of our death.” The second portion of the Hail Mary reflects the humble prayer of sinners for the heavenly aid of the Mother of God in a manner resembling the ancient *Sub Tuum* prayer. Both Marian prayers reflect Mary’s Divine Motherhood and her extraordinary intercessory power, which are also scripturally based (cf. Gen 3:15; Lk 1:28; Jn 2:1; Jn 19:26).

By means of both its Gospel mysteries and its scripturally based prayers, the Rosary is properly understood as an authentic “compendium of the Gospel.” John Paul II confirms the scriptural centrality of the Rosary in *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*:

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the *depth of the Gospel message in its entirety*, of which it can be said to be a compendium (*Marialis Cultus*). It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial *Magnificat* for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people *sits at the school of Mary* and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant

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<sup>19</sup> In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a commentary on the Hail Mary that consisted of a treatment of what we today consider to be only the first part of the prayer, concluding with the name, “Jesus.”

grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.<sup>20</sup>

## The Rosary Is Christ-Centered

Another essential quality of the Rosary is that it is a Christological prayer. By means of the Gospel mysteries and of the prayers themselves, the focus of the Rosary is centered first and foremost on the person and life of Jesus Christ and his Redemption of the human family. As Pope Paul VI explains in his 1974 Marian document, *Marialis Cultus*:

As Gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany-like succession of Hail Marys, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the angel's announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1:42).<sup>21</sup>

The great majority of the twenty Rosary mysteries are explicitly dedicated to the life of Jesus. As for the last two mysteries, the Assumption and Coronation of Mary, these mysteries illustrate the application of the graces of the victorious Christ to Mary, the first and greatest disciple of the Lord. In a certain sense, the last two Glorious Mysteries foreshadow what all faithful disciples of the Lord will receive (although to a lesser

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<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, No. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, No. 46.

degree than the Immaculate Mother of God). The Assumption of Mary foreshadows the Resurrection of the Body which all the faithful await on the last day (cf. Mt 22:29ff; Lk 14:14; Jn 6:39). The Coronation of Mary foreshadows the heavenly crown that, as St. Paul tells us, all children of God can expect upon running the race (cf. 1 Cor 9:24-25; 2 Tim 4:8). The last two mysteries therefore are a type of foretaste of what all Christians can expect in due measure when they remain faithful to the first eighteen mysteries of the Lord.

The prayers of the Rosary are likewise Christ-centered, with Jesus as the source of the Our Father and the ultimate object of praise of the Hail Mary. As Paul VI pointed out, the prayerful repetition of the Hail Marys makes up “an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object of both the angel’s announcement and the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist.”

### **Vocal and Meditative Prayer**

A third principal quality of the Rosary is its harmonious blend of vocal prayer and meditation. In one of his numerous Rosary encyclicals, Pope Leo XIII explained:

(The Rosary) is comprised of two parts, distinct but inseparable—the meditation on the mysteries and the recitation of the prayers. It is thus a kind of prayer that requires not only some raising of the soul to God but also a particular and explicit attention, so that by reflection upon the things to be contemplated, impulses and resolutions may follow for the reformation and sanctification of life.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Iucunda semper*, September 8, 1894, No. 7; ASS 27, 1894-1895.

The Rosary, again, is an incarnational prayer that encompasses both vocal prayer and mental prayer, both head and heart, both soul and body. The physical use of beads and formation of the words in vocal prayer are important in this body-soul complement of the Rosary. As we count the prayers by the physical use of beads, the soul is freed from the practical distraction of counting and able to focus upon the prayers and meditations.

Beyond fulfilling this practical need for counting, the physical involvement of the body, coupled with the physical formation of the words by the lips (even when sound is not possible), helps to keep the body at the disposition of the soul, to keep the body focused and subordinated to the soul's higher soaring in prayer. St. Louis Marie de Montfort strongly emphasized the value of fingering the beads while in spiritual conversation with God during the praying of the Rosary prayer.<sup>23</sup>

Meditation can, therefore, be considered the "soul" of the Rosary, while vocal prayer (coupled with the physical use of beads) can be considered the "body" of the Rosary. As one author succinctly put it, "the beads are there for the sake of the prayers, and the prayers are there for the sake of the Mysteries."<sup>24</sup>

## **Christian Meditation**

What exactly is meditation? Meditation is the prayerful pondering of the mind and heart on some supernatural truth or object. Generally, authentic Christian meditation has at least three basic elements: consideration, application and resolution.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *Secret of the Rosary*, Ch. 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Maisie Ward, *The Splendor of the Rosary*, 1945, p. 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Blessed Louis of Granada, O.P., *Summa of the Christian Life*, Vol. I.

Consideration is when the mind intellectually but prayerfully considers the spiritual subject in question, for example, pondering prayerfully the event of the Annunciation.

Application is when the person in meditative prayer applies the truths of the spiritual subject, for example, a mystery of the Rosary, to one's own spiritual life. It is to answer questions like, "What does the Annunciation have to do with me and my own spiritual life? How do I, like the Virgin of Nazareth in answer to the Angel Gabriel's message, respond to God's daily and oftentimes surprising manifest will?"

Resolution is to make some practical resolve in my own spiritual life based on the truth and application of the Gospel mystery. It is to say, for example, I resolve with the help of God's grace to be more receptive to God's daily will and to meet it with the "fiat" of Mary to the best of my ability.

Although generally there need not be an explicit step by step use of these elements of meditation as just described, the acts of consideration, application and resolution are nonetheless organic parts of authentic Christian meditation and, thereby, parts of the praying of the Rosary.

Some have perceived the Rosary as a monotonous, even boring prayer of repetition that incorporates nothing more than a rather redundant type of vocal prayer. Several popes have responded specifically to this objection to the Rosary. Pope Pius XI responded to the issue of monotony with these words:

They are in error who consider this devotion a boresome formula repeated with monotonous and sing-sing intonations....



... Both piety and love, although always breathing forth the same words, do not, however, repeat the same thing, but they fervently express something ever new which the loving heart always sends forth.<sup>26</sup>

In a similar voice, Pope Pius XII confirmed:

The recitation of identical formulas, repeated so many times, rather than rendering the prayer sterile and boring, has on the contrary, the admirable quality of infusing confidence in him who prays, and brings to bear a gentle compulsion on the motherly heart of Mary.<sup>27</sup>

Even for those who find it challenging to meditate consistently during the praying of the Rosary, the prayerful repetition of vocal prayer is not a fruitless practice, since for vocal prayer to be considered prayer at all, as St. Teresa of Avila points out, it still must be coupled with some attention and devotion.<sup>28</sup> When meditational prayer is a consistent ingredient in praying the Rosary, this favored Marian prayer becomes a spiritual open door into the revealed Gospel mysteries of God, a means of prayer as unlimited in spiritual depth and efficacy as the mysteries are themselves.

John Paul II offers this description of this profound meditational dimension of the Rosary:

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<sup>26</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Ingravescentibus malis*, Nos. 12, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical *Ingruentium malorum*, September 15, 1951, No. 9; AAS 43, 1951.

<sup>28</sup> Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, First Mansion.

The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the “prayer of the heart” or “Jesus prayer” which took root in the soil of the Christian East.<sup>29</sup>

This is why the unlimited nature of Gospel meditation in the Rosary prayer can be a springboard even beyond meditation to authentic Christian contemplation. In this regard, Garrigou-LaGrange calls the Rosary:

...a true school of contemplation. It raises us gradually above vocal prayer and even above reasoned out or discursive meditation. Early theologians have compared the movement of the soul in contemplation to the spiral which certain birds—the swallow, for example—move when they wish to attain to a great height. The joyful mysteries lead to the Passion, and the Passion to the door of Heaven. The Rosary well understood is, therefore, a very elevated form of prayer which makes the whole of dogma accessible to all.<sup>30</sup>

The maxim is therefore true, if correctly understood, that to “grow bored” of praying the Rosary is to grow bored of meditating on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The combined effect of vocal prayer and meditation makes up a powerful and efficacious means of spiritual growth, but also an effective instrument of physical and emotional tranquility.

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<sup>29</sup> John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, No. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Garrigou-LaGrange, O.P., *Mother of Our Savior*, p. 294.

One author describes both the spiritual and physical/emotional peace that comes from this vocal-mental prayer harmony of the Rosary:

Isn't it fascinating that scientists are now turning to meditation in our "hectic" age when so many of us have thrown it out? We have discarded one of the most powerful of all forms of meditation, the Rosary. It is so perfectly designed to fulfill our meditative needs. It is physical—our fingers move over the beads. God has given His children the gift of the Rosary beads on which to count His love. Fifteen mysteries spell it out in a way we can understand. The mind, like a velvet bee droning over a rose, draws the honey of comfort from the story of God. The running rhythm and the repetition, Hail Mary, Holy Mary, steady the mind and settle the heart on God's work in His powerful mysteries. With Mary's glance, through the eyes of the heart, we view it afresh. One of the therapies for soldiers who had survived the stresses of World War I was, of all occupations, knitting! It was recognized that the nervous energy of the body passes out through the fingers.... Our worries, tensions, joys and pains are surrendered to God with the Rosary as the rhythmic repetition of the Our Father and the Hail Mary focuses our hearts in peace on the central mysteries of Christ's life, death and glory which alone offer direction and meaning to our lives.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Rev. Gerard McGinnity, *Celebrating with Mary*, Dublin, Veritas, 1987, p. 28.

Hence the emotional life as well greatly benefits from the holistic prayer of the Rosary.

### **Fruits of Praying the Rosary**

The inestimable spiritual benefits of praying the Rosary daily are such that they can in no way be comprehensively treated or categorized. At best, we can see indications of the tremendous greatness of this Marian prayer by taking a glimpse of the responses to the Rosary by popes, saints, and even the Mother of God herself in her apparitions to the modern world.

The popes have been nothing short of superlative in their praises of the Rosary and its spiritual benefit. The vicars of Christ consistently place the Rosary second only to the Mass and the liturgical prayer of the Church as the most highly recommended prayer form. When one considers the ubiquitous forms of diverse prayer within the universal Church of Christ for the last two thousand years, the popes' placing of the Rosary second only to the liturgy bespeaks its sublime spiritual value.

Many Roman pontiffs have exhorted the Christian faithful to pray daily and frequently the Rosary by embellishing the prayer with generous Church indulgences.

A Church indulgence is a partial or complete pardon for the remaining atonement needed for sin after the guilt and the eternal punishment for sin has been forgiven. If atonement is not made for sin in this life, "temporal punishment" for sin must be expiated in Purgatory (cf. 2 Mac 12:42-46; Mt 12:32; 1 Cor 3:15).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos., 1031-1032, 1471-1479.

Apart from the negative association that indulgences received in a time of disciplinary abuse during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Church indulgences remain an extremely valuable spiritual gift of the Church, and the popes have been particularly generous in endowing the praying of the Rosary with Church indulgences.

The Church's Magisterium has granted plenary indulgences (full remission of temporal punishment due to sin) under the appropriate conditions for the praying of the Rosary. A plenary indulgence may be gained by praying the Rosary (five decades said continuously, with meditation on the mysteries) in any of the following manners: 1) praying the Rosary together as a family; 2) when members of a religious community or pious association pray the Rosary together; 3) praying the Rosary in a church or public oratory. All acts for plenary indulgences must also include Holy Communion, Confession, prayers for the intentions of the pope, and a complete detachment from sin.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Family Rosary**

The Magisterium has also strongly praised the profound spiritual effects of praying the Family Rosary. Since the Family Rosary is endowed with particularly rich indulgences and most highly recommended, the popes have tried to lead Christian families to the spiritual graces and protection received when the family prays the Rosary together daily. As Pope John Paul II (quoting Pope Paul VI) says in his 1981 document on the Christian family:

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<sup>33</sup> *Handbook of Indulgences: Norms and Grants*, 1985 English edition, 1988, No. 48.

While respecting the freedom of the children of God, the Church always proposed certain practices of piety to the faithful with particular solicitude and insistence. Among these should be mentioned the recitation of the Rosary: "We now desire, as a continuation of our predecessors, to recommend strongly the recitation of the Family Rosary.... There is no doubt that...the Rosary should be considered as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite. We like to think, and sincerely hope, that when the family gathering becomes a time of prayer, the Rosary is a frequent and favored manner of praying."<sup>34</sup>

John Paul's 2002 Rosary document contains the plea to families to make the Family Rosary a daily event, with the assurance of these extraordinary effects for today's family:

*The family that prays together stays together.* The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God.... It could be objected that the Rosary seems hardly suited to the taste of children and young people of today. But perhaps the objection is directed to an impoverished method of praying it.

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<sup>34</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, November 22, 1981, No. 61.

Furthermore, without prejudice to the Rosary's basic structure, there is nothing to stop children and young people from praying it—either within the family or in groups—with appropriate symbolic and practical aids to understanding and appreciation. Why not try it?<sup>35</sup>

The special means of spiritual protection and spiritual grace received from the daily praying of the Family Rosary should not be underestimated. This daily practice performed by the family as the *Ecclesia Domestica*, or Domestic Church, is of tremendous spiritual efficacy and is strongly encouraged by the universal Church.

Further, the testimony by the saints over the last half millennium has provided enthusiastic praise of the efficacy of praying the daily Rosary. Saints of the spiritual stature of St. Teresa of Avila, doctor of the Church on Prayer, St. Francis de Sales, St. Louis Marie de Montfort, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Don Bosco, St. Bernadette, and many more, have not only extolled the ineffable graces received in praying the Rosary daily, but have also identified the Rosary as their favorite prayer.

### **The Rosary Call in Marian Apparitions**

A primary source bespeaking the great spiritual value of the Rosary, particularly in our present age, is the testimony of the Blessed Virgin herself through her apparitions to the modern world.

At Lourdes, France in 1858, Mary invited the world to pray the Rosary by her own example. In the first Marian apparition to

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<sup>35</sup> John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Nos. 41, 42.

Bernadette Soubirous on February 11, 1858, the visionary reported that the Blessed Virgin was offering the world the example of praying the Rosary: "The Lady dressed in white...ran the beads of hers through her fingers." Bernadette prepared for each of the seventeen following apparitions of Mary by praying the Rosary, a practice also adopted by the surrounding crowds.<sup>36</sup>

At Fatima, Portugal in 1917, Mary appeared to three Portuguese children under the title of *Our Lady of the Rosary*, to make clear the crucial importance of this prayer for the contemporary world quest for salvation and peace. Our Lady of the Rosary explicitly exhorted the world to the daily praying of the Rosary in order to obtain peace for the world and the end of World War I: "Pray the Rosary every day in order to obtain peace in the world and the end of the war" (May 13, 1917). In her last Fatima apparition in 1917, Our Lady of Fatima called the human family to continue always the practice of praying the Rosary daily: "I am the Lady of the Rosary. Always continue to pray the Rosary every day" (October 13, 1917).<sup>37</sup>

More recently, in several reported contemporary apparitions of Mary, the emphatic Marian call for daily Rosary, and even for the full twenty decade daily Rosary, for the conversion of the world has reached an historical climax.

In the reported apparitions of the *Queen of Peace* at Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina (presently under Church investigation), the Virgin Mary has requested the daily praying

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<sup>36</sup> René Laurentin, *Lourdes, Documents Authentiques* as translated in Alan Heame, *The Happenings at Lourdes*, London: Catholic Book Club, 1968, pp. 82-131.

<sup>37</sup> Sr. Lucia, *Fatima in Lucia's Own Words: Sister Lucia's Memoirs*, Fourth Memoir.



of the fifteen decade Rosary for both spiritual and global peace. Her reported message of August 8, 1985 underscores the spiritual power and protection of the Rosary against Satan, Our Lady's ancient adversary (cf. Gen 3:15):

Dear children, today I call you to pray against Satan in a special way. Satan wants to work more, now that you know he is active. Dear children, put on your armour against Satan: with Rosaries in your hands, you will conquer.<sup>38</sup>

And on June 25, 1985 from the Queen of Peace:

I invite you to call on everyone to pray the Rosary. With the Rosary you shall overcome all the adversities which Satan is trying to inflict on the Catholic Church.<sup>39</sup>

### **Protestant Christians and the Rosary**

A final indication of the efficacy and value of the Rosary can be seen today in the new openness by many Protestant Christians, probably as never before since the Reformation, to the praying of the Rosary. As summarized by one author:

Protestants are now coming to recognize the value of the Rosary as instanced by a number of favorable writings, the formation of Rosary circles in Anglican churches and the active propagation of the Rosary by the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. A

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<sup>38</sup> Miravalle, *The Message of Medjugorje: The Marian Message to the Modern World*, University Press of America, 1986, Ch. I.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

German Lutheran minister, Richard Baumann, stated in the early 1970s: "In saying the Rosary, truth sinks into the subconscious like a slow and heavy downpour. The hammered sentences of the Gospel receive an indelible validity for precisely the little ones, the least, to whom belongs the Kingdom of Heaven.... The Rosary is a long and persevering gaze, a meditation, a quieting of the spirit in praise of God, the value of which we Protestants are learning more and more." A Methodist minister, J. Neville Ward, praises the Rosary as a strong support to prayer and meditation in his book *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy* and admits that Protestants have lost much in their neglect of this prayer.<sup>40</sup>

In sum, the Church's Magisterium, the writings of the saints, and even the realm of Marian private revelation have singled out the Rosary as the greatest Marian prayer in history, a supernatural prayer which sanctifies, protects, and saves. We conclude with this moving passage by Bl. Bartolo Longo, modern "Apostle of the Rosary," with which John Paul II likewise ended his monumental *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*:

O Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death: yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary

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<sup>40</sup> McGinnity, *Celebrating with Mary*, p. 30.

of Pompeii, O dearest Mother, O Refuge of Sinners,  
O Sovereign Consoler of the Afflicted. May you be  
everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in  
heaven.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bl. Bartolo Longo, *Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary*, 1883.



# **A Response to Anti-Marianism**

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**GERARD MORRISSEY\***

The primary purpose of this article will be to refute two principal elements of anti-Marianism: Mary as the rival to Christ and Marian devotion as unecumenical.

Let us begin with Mary as “the rival.” Underlying this element of anti-Marianism is a fundamental presupposition: devotion to Christ is one thing (let us call it A), and devotion to Mary is another thing (let us call it B).

This assumption rapidly evolves into a psychological compartmentalization. Since they are all “B,” and, therefore, not “A,” the “Marian” things – Marian devotion, Marian dogmas, etc. – are filed in Compartment B. The “Christian” things are put into Compartment A. Separate residences having been established; it is remarkable how quickly the question of compatibility arises.

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\*Gerard Morrissey is the pen name used by a priest who has promoted devotion to Our Lady for more than thirty years. This article was excerpted from *For the Love of Mary: Defending the Church from Anti-Marianism*, Americans United for the Pope, 1999.

This Compartment A-Compartment B split is not a conclusion, not something to which a person affected by anti-Marianism reasons, but, rather, the automatic assumption from which he (or she) reasons.

For example, I have in my files the statements of five dissenting theologians who were prominent at the time of Vatican II.

The first theologian (Rev. Hans Kung) is irate because he is absolutely certain that devotion to Our Lady is “swamping the thought of Christ.” Such thinking clearly depends on the two-compartment theory. In Fr. Kung’s mentality, there is this room on my left called “devotion to Our Lady”—there is that other room down the hall on my right known as “the thought of Christ.” Having assumed the two separate compartments, Fr. Kung is annoyed with those who are emphasizing Our Lady (Room B). Such people, in his view cannot care about Jesus—because Kung “knows” that Jesus is not in Room B but down the hall in Room A.

As with Fr. Kung, so with the others. Theologian 2 emphasizes that catechists must give priority to Compartment C, where the Holy Spirit is, and not to Compartment B, where the Blessed Virgin is (and where, apparently, the Holy Spirit is not). Theologian 3 informs us that many in the Church do not understand the value of Compartment A. As a result, seeking some compartment, they gravitate toward Compartment B. (In other words, if they did grasp the value of Compartment A, they wouldn’t come so often to Compartment B.) Theologian 4 warns us that the very process of explicating the advantages of Compartment B can be quite dangerous to Compartment A. Finally, theologian 5 (Rev. Gregory Baum) contends that the “B”

things emphasized by the Church in recent years are, after all, not in the main body of the house, but in a wing – the “not directly connected with our salvation” wing, wherever that is.

Presupposing the Compartment A-Compartment B split, the anti-Marian mentality deduces an air-tight case. The crime – not enough “Compartment A-ism.” The criminal – too much “Compartment B-ism.” All right. Let us accept this challenge. In a moment we will test how “air-tight” that case actually is, by presuming that Marian devotion is different from Christian devotion and proceeding from there.

But, before we start, it is crucial to realize how important this question of presupposing is. It is easily 90% of the game.

To demonstrate this point, let us compose a complete speech. (1) While making all else (facts, logic, etc.) identical with the case the anti-Marian mentality presents on devotion to Mary, we will select a situation in which no follower of Jesus will assume that A and B are different compartments. Instead, all orthodox Christians presuppose the opposite. Much as the traditional viewpoint does on Mary, they will, on this topic, assume that Compartment A and Compartment B are the same. *For that reason, faithful Christians must of necessity reject the following statement:*

### **“A Warning from a Non-Christian ‘Ecumenist’”**

*Danger!*

*The dangers of devotion to Jesus Christ are clear. Excesses and exaggerations abound on all sides. How should we account for the extraordinary growth of the cult of Christ among the faithful? Can we not discover at its root a pernicious conception of the Father? God the Father loves us – but do the masses understand*

*this love? No – on the contrary, they fear the Father. For them He lurks in the night as a shadowy, sinister figure, puffed up with wrath and vengeance.*

*Once we meditate on this distorted “God” image, we immediately apprehend the reason for the enormous growth of the Christ cult. The masses naturally seek a figure of love, a Mediator, to save them from the figure of wrath. Therefore, they gravitate to this other “love” figure, this human whom they can see, to protect them from the God they cannot see.*

*Look around us – everywhere we uncover evidence that the over-emphasis on Christ is swamping devotion to the Father. The name of Jesus is constantly invoked by the people – but how often do they mention the Father? Visit any “Christian” Church – you will be immediately confronted by a statue or a crucifix or some representation of Christ, ornately decorated and enthroned in the prominent place. Then search for, not a prominent place, but any place where the Father is depicted. How often will you find it?*

*Down through the ages we encounter the same story. How frequently in medieval times did artists paint pictures of the merciful Christ wresting our salvation from that ogre, the Father? How many stories to the same effect – the fierce God would have destroyed us, but the loving Christ held back that hand of wrath?*

*Such is the inevitable result of the pernicious devotion that Christ is our Savior. Christ is not our Savior – God is our Savior. The difference between us and the others may be summed up in one sentence. We say “God”; they say “God and Christ.” Those two little words “and Christ,” which they invariably add, contain a threat to the primacy and transcendence of God that we cannot ignore. The others try to justify themselves by claiming that “God*



*and Christ” actually means “God through Christ,” but this latter formula is, if anything, more dangerous than the first. For the doctrine of Mediator necessarily places a third person between God and His people, and implies that this third person is closer to us and loves us more than the Father Himself. It is the ultimate in anthropomorphism, the glorification of the created over the Creator.*

*Such glorification we can never condone. But we do realize that devotion to Christ is useful in its proper place. Christ Himself was a faithful servant of God. He would have been the first to repudiate the excesses now performed in his name. Did he not humbly exclaim, “The Father is greater than I”? (A passage explained away by modern Christians, who, while claiming to follow Christ, do not follow him in this belief.)*

*We should honor Christ, but we must exercise eternal vigilance lest his cult usurp the primacy of God, and we must realize that the very process of formulating statements about Christ can encourage such neglect of the Father.*

*In this connection, the dawn of the ecumenical age brings encouraging signs. In seeking reunion with the Jewish people, Christian ecumenists are publicly recognizing what a tremendous barrier and obstacle to reunion the Church has erected in its dogmas on Christ. Such ecumenists are increasingly desirous of showing us that their Church, too, is anchored in the fundamental belief in God, our Father. It used to be the fashion for Christian apologists (and perhaps the day will come when the very name “Christian” will be replaced by one emphasizing the more fundamental belief they hold) – it used to be their fashion to deny that devotion to Christ could distract from devotion to the Father. Increasingly, this is no longer the case. We appreciate this candor,*

*and we extend our best wishes to Christian ecumenists as they battle against the erection of further obstacles. To them we suggest that a clear-cut warning on the dangers of devotion to Christ, especially if coupled with an emphatic proclamation of Christ's total subordination to the Father, would constitute a significant advance along the ecumenical road on which all followers of God now seek to travel. But in all charity we must also advise our brothers that any re-emphasis on Christ as Mediator or Savior, whether it comes now or in a hundred years, can only mark the end of dialogue."*

How should Christians respond to this statement?

While admitting the existence of superficial and sentimental devotion to Christ, admitting also that some Christians may neglect the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, the followers of Jesus should consider the speech a disturbing one. Why? Because it associates emphasis on the Father with de-emphasis on Christ, whereas Christians associate emphasis on the Father with emphasis on Christ.

Philip said to him: "Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known me? Philip, he who sees me sees also the Father" (John 14:8, 9).

What about the evils being perpetrated in the name of Christ? We reply that the hypocrisies and fanaticisms spring from an inadequate devotion to Christ.

Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21-22).

The danger comes from the lack of commitment in the hearts of men, not from the fact that “Lord, Lord” is on their lips. Far from decreasing the number of times one calls on the Lord, we must increase the number of times one calls on Him and means it. For we believe with St. Paul that there is only one name in which we are saved.

Now let us step back for a moment. Do we really expect these arguments to convince our non-Christian “ecumenist”? Perhaps, for they convince us. If we do, however, we are in for a shock. Barring a miracle of God’s grace, they will have little positive impact.

Why?

Not because of any lack of intellectual ability, but because of our different *a priori* categories.

So it is with Mary. On the plane of cold, objective logic, there is no more reason to fear devotion to her as a threat to the primacy of Christ than to fear devotion to Christ as a threat to the primacy of the Father. In both cases, if – and that is the operative word – if one approaches the problem with a two-compartment psychology, if his mind identifies deficiencies with excesses and superficiality on the part of the subject with too much attention given to the object, then he can deduce a million reasons to confirm his suspicions.

The tendency of the mind to split into two compartments and then to view Compartment B as a rival to Compartment A is by no means confined to Compartment Christ versus Compartment God or Compartment Mary versus Compartment Christ. Throughout the ages the Church has battled it in a thousand forms. Depending on historical and cultural conditions, the compartments have

varied – emphasis on the Church versus emphasis on Christ, devotion to the Scriptures versus devotion to the Church, the Old Testament versus the New Testament, love of God versus love of man, the desire to know God through the intellect versus the desire to love God through the will, etc.

In every one of these instances, grant us only the two-compartment psychology and we can construct a line of argument paralleling the one that so dominates the consciousness of today's anti-Marianists.

Since logic is not really at stake, a logical refutation may be of limited value in convincing anti-Marianists to change their outlook (2). An argument can be debated. But how in the world do you debate a fear or even, as it seems in some cases, a nightmare? To paraphrase an epigram, for the two-compartment man no defense is possible; for the one-compartment man no defense is necessary.

The fact that the basic division is pre-logical can make communication between “one-compartment” and “two-compartment” people very difficult.

For example, suppose a Protestant inquires of an orthodox Catholic: “In approaching truth, which is more important for you – the voice of your conscience or the voice of your Church as expressed in her official teaching?” The Protestant considers that to be a valid question because for him there are two compartments involved – conscience (in Compartment A) and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church (in Compartment B).

But for the orthodox Catholic, the terms of the Protestant's question force him to choose between alternatives that for him are not alternatives. Realizing his Protestant friend is expressing a fear that Catholics neglect the importance of conscience, the

Catholic may evade the actual query and emphasize the sacredness of the individual's conscience. In other words, he judges the true question to be "Do Catholics surrender their consciences?" or "Is the individual conscience important in Catholicism?" But, were he to respond directly, he could only say, "For the Catholic, conscience and the teaching of his Church conform. That's why he's a Catholic."

In the same way, when someone asks me, "Shouldn't we emphasize devotion to Christ more than devotion to Mary?," I know no response.

If I seem to evade the question, I may multiply his fears of a threat to Christ's primacy. But, if I reply "yes," I have said what actually I do not believe, for I have accepted two-compartmentism and confirmed the rivalry image.

Today that question is repeatedly put to orthodox Catholics by two-compartment anti-Marianists. Proposed (often sincerely) in a thousand different forms, it remains the same question, and it runs through all their statements.

I can give no answer to such anti-Marianists except this one – that, in my heart, I know no devotion to Mary except devotion to Christ, and I know no devotion to Christ that is divorced from a deep, conscious love of the one who remains always His Mother.

## **A Competitor?**

In the last section, I stated my belief that there are two steps in anti-Marianism's construction of the "rival" category:

- 1) The a-priori assumption that A and B are different compartments.

- 2) The short, quick hop from there to Compartment B as a competitor of Compartment A.

The purpose of the last section was to deny Step 1 by maintaining that A and B are actually in the same compartment. In this section, however, let us meet the anti-Marianists on their own ground. Although the difference between the anti-Marianists and ordinary Catholics is fundamentally a struggle between psychological “two” and “one” compartmentism, let us, for the sake of the discussion, accept two-compartmentism. Let us – for the sake of this section – assume that a vast chasm separates devotion to Mary from devotion to Christ, that, in reality and not only in concept, the two are totally “other,” that they differ as radically as an enthusiasm for Shakespeare differs from an enthusiasm for Scripture or as a passion for hot-dogs differs from a passion for Beethoven. Presupposing this split, the goal of this section will be to suggest that there is just the bare possibility that a lack of interest in Beethoven may not be attributable to an intense involvement in frankfurters.

We “assume,” therefore, what the anti-Marianists assume – that Mary is a living reality for many people and Christ is not. That is the problem we will consider.

At the outset we must be wary of the dangers of language. Thoughts are both communicated and influenced by words, words which can often be ambiguous. As I crawl beneath the sheets tonight, I say to myself, “All I did today was go into town and buy a new suit.” While this is a natural way of speaking, that one phrase covers two very different possibilities: 1) “All I did today was go into town and buy a new suit.” Meaning: this occupation took up the major part of the day. There really wasn’t time and effort for any other major activity, e.g., “All we did today was

drive from New York to Chicago.” 2) “All I did today was go into town and buy a new suit.” Meaning: this activity might have taken only an hour, but it was the only significant thing I did. There was time and effort for other interests, but, to put it bluntly, I wasted the rest of the day, e.g., “All we did today was write a brief note to Uncle Elmer.”

Now when we encounter statements such as “All these Christians do is love God. They don’t love their fellow men” or “All a certain group of Catholics do is love Mary. They don’t particularly love Christ,” the entire discussion depends on the way in which the “all” statements are conceived.

In both cases I believe the first sense is a completely invalid way of viewing the problem. It is a false problem; it simply doesn’t exist. Granted – if Christians spent twenty-four hours a day inside a Church edifice, then it would be metaphysically impossible for them to be in hospitals caring for the sick or in slums supervising housing projects or in parliaments working for social justice. If they thought of God – and “only” of Him – every single waking second, then Christians wouldn’t be able to talk to other people or teach children or read a book or do anything at all.

But, apart from those called by God to the “contemplative life” (and such contemplatives bring great graces to the rest of us by their prayers and sacrifices), this situation simply does not exist. Yes, there are “Catholics” who pray to God but who seem to neglect their fellow men, but there are also a vast number of apostolic Catholics. Furthermore, the apostolic Catholics spend far more time praying to God than the “Catholics” who fail to help the poor and dependent. The conclusion? Far from keeping us from loving our neighbor, love of God is what motivates Catholics to a true love for the poor and sick. (Can any atheist or

agnostic match the love of the poor shown by Mother Teresa and her sisters?)

Exactly the same is true of Marian devotion. Those who fear it believe that there are “Catholics” who love Mary but not Jesus. It is debatable whether such a group of “Catholics” actually exist. Even if they do, however, it is indisputable that there are millions of other Catholics (including hundreds of canonized saints) who love Jesus with all their hearts and who are far more “Marian” than the “Catholics” who neglect Jesus. Therefore, a great emphasis on Mary cannot be the cause of a lack of devotion to Jesus.

Then how does such a false idea arise? In the next two sections, we turn attention to the psychology of the critics of Marian devotion.

## **The Process of Choosing Negative Symbols**

Why is devotion to the Mother of God so feared in certain quarters?

I believe the answer lies in a psychological process, a process so common that it occurs every day in many areas. Here is just one example.

### **Anti-Shakespearianism**

The Scripture professor at my seminary was much disturbed by the neglect of the Bible. To further Scriptural devotion was a great ambition in his life.

So far we have “pro-Scripturism” and our professor shares this with probably every other Scripture teacher on the globe.



When he expressed himself on the subject, however, he invariably contrasted the lack of interest people had in the Bible with the interest they had in Shakespeare.

“Why don’t people study the Bible the way they study Shakespeare!”

“If people spent less time on Shakespeare and more time on St. Paul, we wouldn’t have the sorry situation we have today.”

“I passed the library the other day and I saw a man reading one of Shakespeare’s plays. I couldn’t help thinking, ‘Would he have gone to the library to read the Bible?’”

In his psychology a deep interest in Shakespeare symbolized all the things people did instead of being interested in the Bible.

This same professor was an avid tennis player. When he passed by the courts on which his fellow-enthusiasts were competing, he was not reminded of the lack of enthusiasm people had for the Bible. He felt no irritation, no sudden urge to ask them which was the most important – playing tennis or reading the Word of God. Why not? Because in his psychology an interest in tennis did not represent the forces of anti-Scripturism. When this same professor, racket in arm, re-entered the building and passed by the music room, he did not speculate whether the group listening to records devoted the same time to the Bible. But, if three steps later he came upon a man reading Shakespeare, then he could not help wondering why people did not put first things first.

His mentality, therefore, was something more than pure pro-Scripturism. It was also anti-Shakespearianism, insofar as devotion to Shakespeare symbolized the negative forces opposing and obscuring Biblical devotion.

Now one can easily visualize another Scriptural professor, as passionately pro-Biblical as our first, but whose psychology is in no way anti-Shakespearian. Perhaps he is a scholar, deeply interested himself in Shakespeare, but one who, over the years, has increasingly resented the fact that those who devote so much time to athletics are so little interested in the affairs of the mind and the soul, particularly in the Word of God contained in the Scriptures. For this person, the situation is exactly reversed. In passing by a student reading Shakespeare, he is not vaguely annoyed. On passing the tennis courts he is, and he cannot help wondering which is more important to these people – tennis or the Bible. He cannot help wondering because for him an interest in sports represents all the things people do instead of being interested in the Word of God.

His complete psychology is pro-Scriptural, anti-tennis. As such, it differs notably from a pro-Scriptural, anti-Shakespearian mentality, not in the way Scripture is treated, but in what happens to Shakespeare or tennis.

## **X Versus Y**

Having presented an example of this process, let us try to give the general laws governing its operation:

We start with something we are committed to. Call this  $x$ . We passionately desire the success of  $x$ .

But  $x$  is not succeeding. To put it in algebraic terms,  $x$  should be attaining the level of capital  $X$ . Hard as we try,  $x$  is not becoming  $X$ —it remains on the level of small  $x$ . There is disappointment and frustration.

As time goes by, we notice another something – call it  $y$ . This  $y$  is succeeding – at least proportionately more than  $x$ . We

observe that *y* is attaining the level of capital *Y*, while *x* remains *x*.

Our frustration that *x* is not becoming *X* begins to express itself in a resentment that *y* is becoming *Y*. We tell ourselves – and this may be true enough – that *x* is more important than *y*. What we are really saying is that *y* has no right to become *Y* if *x* cannot become *X*.

*y* has now become for us the rival of *x*. Whatever our intellectual opinion, emotionally we consider the success of *y* to be responsible for the failure of *x*.

Another way of putting this is that *y* is really no longer *y* for us – it is primarily *anti-x*. No longer does our mentality conceive the problem simply as promoting *x* to *X*. No, the focus has shifted; the problem is now conceived as making sure that *x* is greater than *y*.

When a person with such a psychology comes upon *Y*, he immediately suspects he will not find *X*. He looks for *X*. If he finds it, he does not credit *Y*. *X* is *X* for reasons totally independent of *Y* – possibly even in spite of it.

If, on the other hand, he finds *x*, then his fears are confirmed – *x* is *x* because of *Y*.

With *X* and *Y* so linked, there is a psychological block to encouraging *Y* for such encouragement only increases the forces (*anti-X*) that must be overcome before *x* can reach its proper place. When *Y* succeeds, we feel uneasy. When *Y* fails, we feel somehow more secure.

As we have said, this process is common enough. It lies behind the phenomenon of jealousy. Why do I instinctively feel elated when that neighbor down the street – the one who is a bit

too good-looking or successful or intelligent – falls flat on his face? Is it not because I feel that his failure somehow elevates me, *x*?

*xy* is a psychological process, in which *y* comes to symbolize the forces of *anti-x*. It may or may not be also a logical process. In the Shakespeare example, it was not. In other words, if you asked the professor this question: “Is the lack of interest in the Bible caused by the interest in Shakespeare?,” he would respond: “Don’t be ridiculous – of course not. Shakespeare has nothing whatever to do with it. Nor would I think of denying that he has great worth. I simply use this as an example of the interest people frequently have in secondary things, while neglecting the primary.”

Thus, the professor recognizes logically that *Y* is in no way responsible for *x*. In spite of statements which express the psychological opposition, “what we need is less interest in Shakespeare and more interest in the Bible,” when he thinks it over rationally he understands that no opposition exists.

### **When He Thinks It Over Rationally!**

But most of the time we are not thinking things over rationally. Our dominant attitude towards an object is formed not only by what we know to be logically true about it but also by what it represents symbolically to our minds.

A child in bed “knows” logically that he is in no more danger in the dark than he was a minute before in the light. But he is still afraid and, given the opportunity, will avoid the dark as much as the lad who firmly believes that, whenever the lights are extinguished, hundreds of goblins fly into his room.

I have been informed that a piece of candy will collect more germs if it falls on the average living-room rug than if it falls on the sidewalk. I "know" this. But, if a chocolate peppermint fell on the sidewalk outside my home, I would not pick it up and eat it. If it fell on my rug, I would. Why? Because, no matter what I "know," I have an inhibition about eating the candy on the sidewalk that I do not have about the candy on the rug.

The key point that should always be remembered is this: no matter how much I approve of an object logically, if psychologically I fear it and psychologically it represents forces I seek to avoid, I will avoid that object. I may not form any intention of avoiding the object. I may not plan to avoid the object. I simply will avoid it.

In summary, to emphasize that  $x$  is more important than  $y$  is not only to denote logically that  $x$  is, in fact, more important than  $y$  – it is also to connote that closeness to  $y$  is dangerous for  $x$ , else why the emphasis at all!

Furthermore, there are four possible attitudes (not two) which a person may have toward an object:

- a) He may logically approve of it and psychologically approve of it.
- b) He may logically approve of it and psychologically disapprove of it.
- c) He may logically disapprove of it and psychologically disapprove of it.
- d) He may logically disapprove of it and psychologically approve of it.

Applying this to Marian devotion, A is the attitude of Jesus Himself. A is also the official and traditional position of the Catholic Church – the attitude of the Popes and the saints. B and C are the two kinds of anti-Marianism. D is rarely found (except as a passing stage when a person is being converted from non-Christian to Christian – or, if already a Christian, is moving from Position C to Position A).

### **Mary as “Unecumenical”**

As an example of “ecumenical anti-Marianism,” here is a statement made by Hans Kung at the time of Vatican II.

... Useless definitions which would risk accentuation and deepening divisions would tend by that very fact to make the Council deviate from its major end. From this point of view, it is obvious that the definition, for example, of a Marian dogma, would be a disservice to the cause of reunion. It must be said in all clarity; it is not a question of opportunism, but a matter of genuine moral responsibility. A confession must not give special emphasis to what is particular to it unless there is an over-riding necessity; otherwise it would be forgetting its share of responsibility for divisions, and its duty to do everything possible to reduce obstacles. St. Paul demanded that everything be avoided that might constitute a stumbling block for his feeble brethren and their faith in Christ. Are we to forget this and neglect the requirements of this fraternal charity that Our Lord has so strongly prescribed?

Decades after Vatican II, such “ecumenical anti-Marianism” continues to be very powerful within the Church.

What is wrong with “ecumenical anti-Marianism”? A variety of things. I believe I can list them under five main headings.

***I. This so-called “ecumenical” attitude actually springs from false ecumenism, not from true ecumenism.***

What attitude? The belief that charity demands that the Catholic Church avoid all free, significant statements on Mary because such statements might offend non-Catholics. (Free statements – those the Church is not absolutely required to make. Significant statements – those which stand out, and, therefore, might cause trouble).

Let us think this one out. The “ecumenists” say the Protestants would be offended by our Marian statements.

Why?

Presumably because they do not share our beliefs.

I see. Others do not have our beliefs. Therefore, it is uncharitable for us to have them. Or, at least, it is un-Christian for us to say we have them.

This “love me, love my doctrine” mentality – what is it but a subtle kind of religious bigotry? Well might we respond to such “ecumenists”:

“If *you* loved *us*, you would not make us choose between conscience and friendship. You ecumenists say to us now: ‘Those who love Protestants will avoid speaking of Mary as Mediatrix.’ What in God’s world does that have to do with love?”

Finally, if loving non-Catholics means I should forget about Mary as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix, why shouldn’t loving me

mean they should forget about their objections to Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix and hold the doctrines?

***II. While the 'ecumenists' think this way about Mary, they emphatically reject the identical attitude when applied to any subject they consider important.***

At Vatican II, did these same "ecumenists" strip away references to Our Lord as Redeemer in order to be "ecumenical" to non-Christians?

As mentioned earlier, the thought would never have entered their minds. Yet this is exactly what they sought to do with regard to the Blessed Mother.

***III. Thus, hidden behind an ecumenical smokescreen lies the true dividing point. Is Marian doctrine and devotion peripheral, secondary, optional? Many anti-Marianists presume the answer is yes.***

For example, in the quote just presented from Hans Kung, note that he starts out with the assumption that any definition of a Marian dogma would be "useless." Everything else flows from that.

Therefore, while anti-Marian "ecumenists" say that they oppose talking of Mary as Mediatrix because of their concern for Protestants, this is only partially true. Such "ecumenists" actually oppose speaking of Mary as Mediatrix because they do not believe it is important to speak of Mary as Mediatrix<sup>3</sup>.

They then apply this principle: "One should not do unimportant things which offend Protestants"<sup>4</sup>. But if a person believes Marian doctrines are important, then love of Protestants can no more influence him to surrender these doctrines than it does



the ecumenists to abandon what they believe to be essential.

#### ***IV. The ecumenists set no apparent limits on this policy***

A) *As to extent*

B) *As to time*

In practice, the anti-Marian “ecumenists” oppose *all* free, significant expressions on Mary. Not only defining new Marian doctrines, but any important doctrine, devotion, title, gesture, or action of the Pope. At the time of Vatican II, for instance, even so personal a thing as John XXIII’s private pilgrimage to Loreto was stigmatized as “highly unecumenical.”<sup>5</sup>

Where does it all stop? Apparently, it does not, and that is another reason Marian devotion is endangered by the false ecumenists.

I can sacrifice lunch on Wednesday or dinner on Thursday without serious effects. But I cannot sacrifice lunch and dinner on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday without serious effects. What may be done in an isolated instance can be fatal as a policy.

And a policy, not an isolated action, is what the anti-Marian ecumenists are urging with regard to Church statements on Mary. It is not merely one particular occasion – let us say, the 7th of March, 1968 – when they urge the Church to avoid a Marian action. No, they follow this course, not only for March 7, but for April 7, July 7, December 7, for 1969, 1989, 2009, etc. They apply it to every Marian situation<sup>6</sup>.

Listen to the words of Robert McAfee Brown, presenting an anti-Marian “Protestant” position in his book *An American Dialogue*:

Catholic theologians are already talking about the inevitable next step in the development of Mariology, which will be the doctrine of the *co-redemptrix*, Mary as co-redeemer with Jesus Christ of mankind. There seems to be a kind of ineluctable necessity about this next step, as unfolding from the implications of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Dogma of the Assumption (1950). The new dogma may not come for the space of another ninety-six years, but when it does, Protestants will have to say that the Roman Catholic faith has finally become another faith than the faith of the holy Catholic church. Even to consider the dogma of the co-redeemer seems to the Protestant not only to minimize, or simply to jeopardize, but actively to destroy, the Christian belief in the sole efficacy of the redemption procured for men by Jesus Christ in his cross, death, and resurrection.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Brown emphasizes that the policy pursued by Catholic “ecumenists” will give little comfort to Protestants if it represents only a moratorium for a few decades. Non-Catholics must come to believe in it, not as a temporary tactical maneuver, but as a commitment for all time.

Which raises another question. The anti-Marian ecumenists are constantly explaining that the Pope must avoid defining Marian dogmas “at this time.” What is meant by “at this time”?

Fifty years from now, will Catholics still be informed that the Pope must avoid Marian definitions “at this time”? Will the ecumenists of 2100 look back at today’s Church and write: “Can we be less ecumenical than they? Dare we consider reversing the precedent our predecessors so happily established, breaking our

implicit promise to the separated brethren, jeopardizing by a few unnecessary and rash acts all we have laboriously built up for centuries? No—we must avoid Marian dogmas at this time.”

As I evaluate the arguments of the anti-Marian ecumenists, I am more and more convinced they are trans-temporal. The reasons they advance for avoiding Marian dogmas rest on nothing peculiarly confined to our age. In the centuries since the Protestant revolt, I can discover no moment in which one could not, with equal cogency, have urged the same arguments. More important, in the next four centuries, so far as can now be foreseen, can we envision any period in which the same arguments could not be made? To accept such an “ecumenical” policy now is to run the risk of making it a permanent policy for centuries.

#### ***V. Two problems with the “inconvenient” argument.***

While some anti-Marianists will argue against a proposed Marian dogma by denying it, other anti-Marianists do not care about the truth or falsity or degree of development of a dogma, but oppose its proclamation because it is inconvenient.

The philosophy of this second group could be stated as follows: “Whether or not Our Lady is Mediatrix or Co-Redemptrix is not the question. Even if she were, for the Church to proclaim so at this time would be to multiply barriers to ecumenism.”

I find two things wrong with this attitude. *The first is that it attempts to out-God God.*

Unity among Christians, if achieved, will be first and foremost a work of the Holy Spirit.

Assume now that a Marian doctrine is true and theologically mature. We would then face another activity of the Holy Spirit.

Working in men, the Spirit has produced in His Church this insight at this time.

In effect, the ecumenists are telling us that we cannot achieve the first work of the Holy Spirit without ignoring the second.

Poor God! He has made a mistake. But we, clever creatures that we are, will correct it.

Just as Peter saved Christ from all that nonsense about suffering and dying.

Second, *this position makes man the measure of God. God's Word is tailored to conform to man's desires, when it should be the other way around.* Like Procrustes, the "ecumenists" achieve a perfect fit, but by shaping the man to the bed and not the bed to the man.

What are these people actually saying, these people who argue that, even if Mary be Mediatrix, to proclaim it would offend Protestants?

They are saying: "What Christ thinks about Mediatrix is not crucial. What is crucial is what Protestants like Barth and Tillich think about it."

Have we meditated on the effrontery involved in suggesting to God that His Word may spoil our efforts? That we have decided things for Him, and, even if He chooses to speak, we are not prepared to listen?

When pressed on the subject, the anti-Marian ecumenists often stress how peripheral Marian doctrines are. They appear to be arguing that it doesn't matter whether the Spirit is speaking. He may be, but if He is, He's wasting His time. (Perhaps He's taking a coffee-break from communicating important stuff, idling

away a few hours with tiddly-winks.) We can safely overlook Him on this subject.

## Notes

(1) Perhaps a word about method is in order here. This particular section will repeat a couple of times (although in a slightly different form) the refutation of anti-Marianism that was already touched on in the first section. The reason for such repetition is that the anti-Marian mentality, like any prejudice, is not easily rooted out. One can logically refute it on page 5 and page 10, only to find, on page 15 that it is still psychologically in possession of the field.

Furthermore, the anti-Marianists will constantly be repeating *their* principal themes (Mary as “rival,” “unecumenical,” etc.). This means that those who want to defend devotion to Mary must be prepared to re-state their pro-Marian defense. In fact, they should repeat their defense as often as “the other side” repeats its attack.

I believe that this section can help pro-Marian people to do this. However, if any readers find the repetition involved to be either unnecessary or irritating, then I would urge them to skip this section and go on to the next.

In summary, anti-Marianism is a prejudice. Battling a prejudice is something like flattening a sturdy oak door with a battering ram – one backs up, attacks, and then has to repeat the same action many times until, hopefully, the barrier finally falls.

(2) But such a logical refutation can be of great value in keeping Christians from falling into anti-Marianism in the first place.

(3) To confirm this, let us look again at this quotation Fr. Kung takes from St. Paul: “I will eat flesh no more forever (an unimportant activity, since a man’s vegetarianism in no way lessens his Christianity) lest I scandalize my brother”

So Fr. Kung is right. His quotation is perfectly applicable – assuming only that proclaiming Mary as Mediatrix has roughly the same relevance to Christian life as consuming a pound of round-steak chopped.

(4) The anti-Marian “ecumenist” Fr. Gregory Baum illustrates well this attitude. An influential voice at Vatican II, Fr. Baum gave an interview that appeared in *The Sign* of November 1963. Fr. Baum states:

“There is no doubt that Mariology, or the Catholic teaching on Mary, is a tremendous obstacle to the ecumenical movement, because it developed since the Reformation. The two Marian dogmas on the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are obstacles, because they are new and concern a subject not directly

connected with our salvation and also because they are the only doctrines defined by the pope alone" (p. 21).

He later tells us: "There cannot be any ecumenical movement, in the Christian sense of the word, with Jews, because it is the person of Christ about which we disagree. Nevertheless there can be a great deal gained through discussion with Jews about human values and our understanding of the role of men and society in the world" (p. 23).

Fr. Baum makes two things clear:

1) We must engage in ecumenical dialogue with Protestants, and, in this dialogue, our Marian dogmas are enormous obstacles.

2) But, whatever ecumenical dialogue is, it is something we cannot hold with Jews. Why? Because with Jews it is on Christ we differ, and Christ is central.

Ecumenical dialogue, therefore, cannot be synonymous with loving our brethren, talking with them, appreciating their insights. For this type of activity could, and should, be employed with Jews.

Nor can ecumenical dialogue mean explaining our doctrines in terms that would avoid false interpretations, while in no way lessening their importance. If this were all, then things central could be included (in fact, precisely because of their significance, one would demand that things central be included). Who could object to eliminating references to Christ as Redeemer if another term could be substituted which would clear up difficulties while preserving the doctrine's full meaning and importance? Who could oppose attempts, not to reduce Christ's mediation, but to present it in such fashion that Jews would realize it contained no threat to the Father?

Father Baum, however, will not allow ecumenical dialogue on Our Lord precisely because of the importance of Jesus. On the other hand, one of the reasons why Marian dogmas are tremendous obstacles to the ecumenical movement is that they "concern a subject not directly connected with our salvation."

Now why must one eliminate the central from dialogue? Only if *ecumenical* dialogue (as opposed to the type Fr. Baum would allow with Jews) concerns more than clearer statements or different phrases. Only if it involves the real possibility of doctrinal concessions, either on the dogma itself or on its importance. Only if ecumenism means, "I will eat flesh no more forever ..."

(5) One who objected to such intolerance was the Protestant observer, Dr. George A. Lindbeck (Cf. his letter to *Commonweal* – issue of January 22, 1965, p. 550). Lindbeck wrote:

"This is but another instance of how easily we deny to others the very things we seek for ourselves. A successful revolution for freedom can quickly turn intolerant and deny freedom to all who would question its least whim. And this ruthless suppression will be carried out in the name of freedom! Or, as we have here, a movement to respect the consciences of other Christians ends up in a condescending frown at the journey of an old man to a church!"

In addition to the foregoing, there is another incident involving Pope John XXIII that is applicable to our present discussion of "false ecumenism." According to the December 1989 edition of *30 Days*, Pope John XXIII's secretary, Msgr. Luigi Capovilla, recalled an occasion when John XXIII was approached by "an eminent prelate" who was also a well-known theologian. This prelate-theologian advised the Pope to leave out a prayer to guardian angels that the Pope was planning to read to the Catholic faithful. John XXIII later remarked: "A fine fellow, this theologian! In order to please him, I'm supposed to snub my guardian angel!" Similarly, in order to please them, the "false ecumenists" are insisting that the Popes (and all the rest of us) take steps that amount to public snubs of the Blessed Virgin Mary!

(6) The way in which anti-Marian "ecumenists" catalogue past papal actions as terrible barriers confirms this impression. Had their standards of ecumenism prevailed in the past, one can safely say we would have had no Church action on the Immaculate Conception in 1854, no definition of the Assumption in 1950, no Marian year in 1954, etc. (After all, if a private pilgrimage of the Pope is taboo, what of these actions?).

(7) Pp. 100-101, Anchor Books edition (New York: 1961).





# ***Principalmente a la Misa: A*** **Pastoral Letter on the Veneration** **of Our Lady of Peña de Francia** **in Devotion and Tradition**

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## **1. The Origin of Devotion**

The devotion to Our Lady of Peña de Francia was initiated through the vow of Fr. Miquel de Covarrubias to have an image of Our Lady made for veneration. This vow fortuitously took form through the request from those called *cimarrones* to have an image of our Lady for their own.<sup>1</sup> The more public veneration of the image is attested to in Fr. Miguel's letter on May 1, 1710:

The image of Our Lady, under the *title of Peña de Francia*, was brought in *solemn procession* to the

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<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Gainza, F., OP. (1921, 46-47). *El santuario, De Nuestra Senora de la Peña de Francia de la Ciudad de Nueva Caceres en las Islas Filipinas*. Manila: Imp. La Pilarica. The 1921 text is a reprint in Bishop McGinley's time. Bishop Gainza's work dates to 26 October 1866.

chapel completed. And there, she did many *favours to all, all who made a visit, and principally at the Mass on Saturdays.*<sup>2</sup>

Since the date, the devotion has endured and spread in the city, province, region and the world over. It has described the fervor of Bicolanos and has become a gift of faith for Christians everywhere that, as Bishop Gainza foresaw, is for the good of the Church and Mary's cult and glory.<sup>3</sup> Through the centuries and across the globe, devotion to Our Lady has been marked by characteristics of its origin: Mary's tutelage under the title of Peña de Francia, her image brought in solemn processions, acts of homage for favours through visits and pilgrimages, and especially the Mass.

This devotion calls for a continuing reflective practice. On one hand, the object of devotion is God; it is to love God.<sup>4</sup> It actively comes from the inward attitude of deep fervency and intimacy of dedication. On the other, at the core of devotion, is the fact still of God providing and caring for all creation. Passive in the sense of abandonment to God's own will and work, devotion is really a gift of the Holy Spirit. While then the love of God directs acts of devotion in the midst of daily life to be righteous, frequent and immediate and, at the same time, requiring detachment from things finite – never in order to get something back for deeds

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<sup>2</sup> The text reads: "*Concluida la ermita se llevó á ella con solemne procesión la Imagen de Nuestra Señora, con el titulo de la Peña de Francia. Y allí (prosigue Don Miguel en su carta) ha hecho muchos favores a todos, siendo de todos visitada, y principalmente los sabados a la Misa.*" Gainza, 47. Emphasis supplied.

<sup>3</sup> Gainza, 77.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of devotion in spirituality, see Waaijman, K. (2005, 345ff). *Spirituality*. Leiden, NL: Peeters.

done – it is also active in celebrating God’s provident care since creation. God himself is the source and summit of devotion; God is the beginning and end of devotion.

In the experience of communion with God, interiority in devotion is externally objectified, in devotionals, e.g. novenas; practices, e.g., relics and images. They blend altogether in a ritual action of sacred time and space. The ritual becomes a communal expression of perspectives, powers and possibilities. Consistently observed, it becomes a tradition effectively binding persons to the history of one’s past and to the future of the next generation.

## 2. Reflection on Tradition

### 2.1 *The title of Our Lady of Peña de Francia and her tutelage in the novena*

Let us then renew our faith in celebrating the devotional tradition of Our Lady of Peña de Francia –

*2.1.1 Title and tutelage.* The desire of Fr. Miguel de Covarrubias to promote the devotion to Our Lady of Salamanca found at the mountains of Peña de Francia in Spain resounded in the supplications of those called *cimarrones* (*montaraces*) at Mt. Isarog to have their own place for worship. The image carved in local form and color by a native artisan eventually came to be venerated as Bicol’s own Lady of Peña de Francia. Here, one sees the indication, even of old, for the essential link of devotion to the liturgy. The veneration of Mary leads the community to worship.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See P. Paul VI (1974). *Marialis cultus*: The right ordering and development of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary – biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological (MC), 29ff. In the case of Our Lady of Peña devotion, the ecumenical

The orientation to liturgy and worship is through Mary's title. Bishop Gainza accounts for Our Lady of Peña de Francia being the Queen of Angels.<sup>6</sup> This title is related yet to two other Marian feasts: the Nativity of Our Lady and the Most Holy Name of Mary. The Nativity of Our Lady indicates the imminent transfer of the image of Our Lady of Peña de Francia from her shrine to the Cathedral through the *traslacion*. The feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary marks the return of the image from the Cathedral to its shrine through the *embarcacion*, *sakay* or the fluvial procession. Bishop Gainza especially underlines the principal feast of Our Lady of Peña de Francia to be on the Sunday after the fluvial procession.<sup>7</sup>

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aspect is especially seen, from of old, in the desire of the *cimarrones* (*montaraces*) to be incorporated into the Church. In present days, ecumenism is seen in developing a Church for the good of all, i.e., in a Church of the Poor, no one is above poverty nor beneath the generosity of faith striving for peace across religions and social sectors. The harmony of the devotion to Our Lady of Peña de Francia with the other directives of MC is similarly striking and instructive.

<sup>6</sup> *Grande es la devocion que los indigenas profesan a la santisima Virgen... por esto es que agredcidos a las finesas de la Reina de los Angeles... procesinalmente a santa iglesia Catedral, en donde se celebra un solemnisimo novenario on gran concurso de fieles.... Por la tarde del sabado que precede al domingo en que se celebra la fiesta del dulcissimo Nombre de Maria, es el momento destinado para la somne traslacion de la sagrada imagen desde la santa iglesia Catedral a su Santuario por el rio.* See Gainza, 64. *El santuario*. Emphasis supplied. See also the novena included in the same work: *Novena del Dulcissimo nombre de maria Publicada en Bicol por los excmos. e ilmos. sres. D. fr. Manuel Grijalbo y D. fr. Francisco Gainza* (1921). Trad.en Castellano por un sacerdote devoto de la Virgen de Peñafrancia). Raon, Sta. Cruz, Manila: Imp. la Pilarica.

<sup>7</sup> *Como el santuario esta un poco retirado y es pequeno, se trae la Virgen en procession, l el viernes antes de la fiesta del dulcissimo Nombre de Maria a la santa catedral... hasta el sabado en cuya tarde se hace la traslacion para celebrar en el santuario el domingo y ultimo dia, que es fiesta principal...* See Gainza, 63.

Significant in the titles and observances for Our Lady of Peña de Francia is the fuller title for Mary as the Queen of Heaven (and the Angels).<sup>8</sup> This title itself was introduced into the divine office by Clement VI in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a preparation for Easter recalling Mary's part in the reopening of heaven to men and reigning as the Queen of Angels.<sup>9</sup> By papal decree, the feast for the Most Holy Name of Mary has also been determined as the octave of the feast of the Nativity of Mary.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the veneration of Our Lady of Peña de Francia describes her birth, her participation in redemption, and finally her Queenship.

The Easter imprint on Mary's queenship readily leads further to understanding it as the fruit of her assumption into heaven.<sup>11</sup> The intercessions of Our Lady of Peña de Francia need no longer

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<sup>8</sup> Attributed to the first line of *Ave Regina Coelorum* as found in St. Alban's Book of the 12<sup>th</sup>, in a Munich manuscript in the 13<sup>th</sup>, in a Sarum breviary of the 14<sup>th</sup>, and in the York and Roman breviaries of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>9</sup> See Th. Bernard. *Le Breviaire* (1887, II, 454 ss), Paris. The aspirations therein of many doctors of the church, e.g., Athanasius, Ephrem and Ildephonsus, seem to be the *doctores, predicadores y santos padres, devotos y afectuosos en obras, palabras y escritos*. See Gainza, 77. *Introduccion, Modo de hacer la novena*.

<sup>10</sup> The feast of the Holy Name of Mary was instituted in 1513 at Cuenca, Spain with its proper office assigned for 15 September, the octave of the Nativity of Mary. After a number of reforms on the breviary, Pope Innocent XI extended the feast of the Holy Name of Mary to the universal church on the Sunday after the Nativity of Mary through the decree of 25 November 1683. A later Decree on 8 July 1908 was on this feast be kept on 12 September whenever it cannot be celebrated in on its proper Sunday on account of a feast of a higher rank. This accounts for Bp. Gainza affirming Sunday being the *fiesta principal* for Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

<sup>11</sup> "...the Virgin Mary has been designated as the New Eve... in that most complete victory over sin and death...and, that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven, where as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages (1 Tim. 1:17). See Pope Pius XII (1950). *Munificentissimus Deus* (MD), 39 and 40.

be traced to circumstances at the carving of her image.<sup>12</sup> Rather, the marvel God had done is for the *cimarrones* to have faith by desire and their being attentive to the value of life. By her assumption, Mary is after all, “the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come”<sup>13</sup> and is the sure hope and solace to the People of God on its sojourn on earth.”<sup>14</sup>

Sunday, the Lord’s Day, being the last day for the traditional novena, brings all of Mary’s intercessions “to gather all things in him (Christ)” in whom all “things in heaven and on earth” have their fullness.<sup>15</sup> Our Lady of Peña de Francia is a figure of the communion of the faithful with Christ for the renewal of creation. This eventual link of the titles of Our Lady of Peña de Francia to the assumption, seen even before dogmatic definition,<sup>16</sup> makes the Peña de Francia devotion truly an insight of faith among Bicolanos. It is, more so, a call for the continuing maturity in faith as a gift and pledge for all in the Christian community and society, the nation and the world.

**2.1.2 The novena.** Describing the role and work of Our Lady of Peña de Francia draws attention to how the devotee

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<sup>12</sup> In Bishop Gainza’s account, tincture for the craven image was the blood obtained from a dog slaughtered for the purpose. The dog, however, observed to revive, swam from the river to return to the house of its master. See Gainza, 47, 51.

<sup>13</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 68.

<sup>14</sup> LG, 68; also, Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 966: the assumption as Mary’s singular participation in the resurrection of her Son and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians.

<sup>15</sup> Eph. 1:10

<sup>16</sup> Extant documentary record of Marian titles for Our Lady of Peñafrancia is in the work of Bishop Gainza in 1921. The dogma of the Assumption was defined by Pope Pius XII in MD on 1 November 1950.

conforms his life to God in the Church and in society. In this, devotion is inspired and guided through a narrative largely known as the novena. It is the novena that also directs expressions in ritual acts meaningful for the devotee and significant for the community.

Based on the widely used novena to Our Lady of Peña de Francia in the vernacular,<sup>17</sup> the following elements are edifying –

1.1.1.1 It is addressed to Mary as Blessed Virgin and Queen. These titles speak of Mary's role and work according to the plan of God for salvation and for the glory of the Blessed Trinity. Mary's role is fulfilled through her co-operation in the redemption by Christ enduringly present and salvific through the Holy Eucharist.

1.1.1.2 Throughout the novena, Mary brings the devotee to hope in the singular goal of salvation. This hope concerns the individual devotee and the devotee's relations. For the individual devotee, to hope is to have a stronghold for healing and help through all uncertainties or threats, sin and weaknesses, pain and death. For the devotee's own relations, to hope is to extend the same help, comfort and protection through Mary to one's family, relatives and associates, and all devotees especially those in need of mercy.

1.1.1.3 Salvation, as the goal in the novena, speaks of submission to and judgment in the mercy of Christ, in the love of God and for the glory of the Trinity. Confidence in

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<sup>17</sup> See Yllana, Msgr. F (1945). *Novena sa Nstra. Sra. de Peñafrancia, parisorog nin Cabicolan*. Sorsogon; also, other versions of the novena. The variety in versions of the novena indicates a need for a unified form.

divine glory must be the disposition of the individual devotee and for those whom the graces of Mary are to be extended. It is the contrite heart needing forgiveness, renouncing sin and its allures that places Mary with *Kabikolan katood mong anan* – the entire communion of the faithful – confident of divine glory.

Edifying as the novena is, it urges further attention. First, the nature of devotion precludes attachment to finite things, and even so, relations. This urges the devotee to actively seek the good of others. This is not merely from superfluous altruism, but from an alterity of respect and compassion with the other. For, is it not in giving that we receive, in loving our neighbors that we really love?<sup>18</sup> Second, the novena to Our Lady of Peña de Francia offers a way towards a transforming human-divine relationship. The devotee is to grow into his relationship with God, with Mary's help, through stages beginning, and not only with, the human heart contrite before the mercy of God, but still towards peace in the love of God till the joy of union in divine glory.<sup>19</sup> The devotee is to aspire and has to be guided to progress in spiritual maturity.

The nine-day novena prayers, especially at the Cathedral, on the festivities for Our Lady of Peña de Francia, underscore the need for progress in spiritual maturity. These prayers, from a commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke and the Most Holy Name of Mary, depict the intercession of Our Lady of Peña de Francia for the devotee conforming

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<sup>18</sup> Mt. 19:19

<sup>19</sup> That is, a transformative spirituality. For a discussion of mercy in mutual relations especially in lay spirituality, see Waaijman, 86ff; for the transformative process in divine-human relations, 455ff.



his/her life to God's will.<sup>20</sup> Prayers speak of the soul seeking enlightenment about its origin and grateful for divine favors in public and in private,<sup>21</sup> protection from the perils of the world on the journey of becoming an imitator of God,<sup>22</sup> being faithful to one's state of life and obligations, and finally attaining eternal happiness grateful of Mary's intercession.<sup>23</sup>

The novena prayers are an instruction on the dignity and destiny of persons. They are a pedagogy for the transformation of persons from creation to conformity with God's love and will onto communion in God's glory.<sup>24</sup> In the devotee being drawn towards a community-for-others to the glory of God, the prayers encourage him/her to break from the usual and comfortable perspectives and powers. It leads him/her to being touched by God in

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<sup>20</sup> See Gainza, 78. The commentary is attributed to the exegete Silveira: *Estas nueve oraciones continent nueve interpretaciones que entre otras dan al nombre de Maria los santos Padres, como se ven el expositor Silveira en sus Comentarios sobre el evangelio de san Lucas, capitulo primero en aquellas palabras: Et nomen virginis Maria.*

<sup>21</sup> From "...la luz clara del origen nobilísimo de mi alma" to "...humildemente me comuniquéis gratitud rendida a mi Dios de tan alto beneficio como hizo al linaje humanos..." (first to third days of the novena).

<sup>22</sup> From "...para guiarlas en el mar proceloso de ester miserable mundo hasta llevarias al puerto seguro de la gloria" to "...me alcanceis ser imitador de aquel Dios tan benigno, que hace salga el sol sobre buenos y malos..." (fourth to sixth days of the novena).

<sup>23</sup> "...repartiendome las que necesite para cumplir con mi estado y respective obligacion..." and, "a fin de logar de feliz bienaventuranza para fuimos criados y donde eternamente vivremos agradecidos a vuestra ponderosa intercession." (sic), the seventh to ninth days of the novena.

<sup>24</sup> See Waaijman, 455-481.

ordinary even daily events of existence<sup>25</sup> to give one's part for the good of the church and society.<sup>26</sup> The novena, affirming the Eucharist as really present and salvific, points to the Eucharist being made more meaningful in today's pressing conditions and concerns.

## ***2.2 The tradition of solemn processions:***

*The traslacion and the embarcacion or the fluvial procession*

**2.2.1 The solemn processions.** The break from ordinary life only to rebound to a more ordered way of living is observed in the power of ritual action in devotion, particularly in the solemn processions in honor of Our Lady of Peña de Francia.

Present observance of the feast of Our Lady is in fact introduced by the novena to the Divino Rostro<sup>27</sup> and is concluded

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<sup>25</sup> Particularly for religion, the liminal experience provides individuals/groups the occasion to touch God, but more to be touched by God through all issues and concerns affecting faith-life; hence, mysticism

<sup>26</sup> The re-aggregation phase in the process of liminality varies in dynamic. Either the individual/group goes back or returns to the liminal experience, e.g., to the feast of the Mary's nativity or novena, or the individual/group goes on or rebounds for the renewed sense of cognitive, moral and physical powers for their more vigorous actualization in the church and society, e.g., in the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. The Peñafrancia devotion, due to its orientation for transformation unto the glory of God, e.g., the principal feast day of Sunday emphasizing agape or communion, seems to suggest the reinforcement of its rebounding dynamic. See works of Wolf, *E. Prey into Hunter*.

<sup>27</sup> The novena to the Divino Rostro was initiated by Fr. Pedro de la Torre, VG upon the approval of Bishop Casimiro Herrero, OSA (1880-1886) due to the *cholera morbo* epidemic then ravaging Manila and Bicolandia in 1882. On 26 August of that year, the bishop caused the faithful to pray before its image and that of Our Lady of Peña de Francia at the Cathedral. The following September, with the epidemic

by the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday. This frame of reference unites the festivity for Our Lady to the mission of Christ. The novena to the Divino Rostro vividly recalls the redemption of man in Christ. The Eucharist makes its graces really present for the individual, for others and for the entire Christian community.<sup>28</sup> Done still within the feast of Mary's nativity upholding her to be the Mother of God, the novena to the Divino Rostro sees in the Eucharist a prophetic message: God is always faithful to his covenant. Mary is the attentive virgin faithful to this love of God for his people. Uniting yearnings of peoples old and new, Mary sings the *Magnificat*, the song of the chosen people who, through the overshadowing of Mary by the Holy Spirit, continue their journey to become the People of God, the Church.<sup>29</sup> In this way is the image of Our Lady of Peña de Francia said to follow the image of the Divino Rostro.

2.2.2 *The traslacion* – the transfer of the image of Our Lady from its sanctuary to the Cathedral – is penitential in character. Bishop Gainza attests to the *traslacion* being, on one hand, “*para cortar algunos abusos*” – to end self-interests by both the *cimarrones* and the *espanoles*, even the *sacerdotes*.<sup>30</sup> On the other, it was to accommodate the greater number of people visiting Our Lady. Traditions are not built on abuses, rather upon the aspirations of persons. People visiting Our Lady venerate and seek her intercession that the community of faith serves for the

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dispelled, the clergy vowed to thenceforth have the image of the Divino Rostro carried with the image of Our Lady of Peña de Francia on all occasions. See Abella, D. (1953, 185). *Bikol Annals*. Manila.

<sup>28</sup> See the fruits of the Eucharist.

<sup>29</sup> See Ratzinger, Card. J. (1983, 82). *Daughter Zion*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

<sup>30</sup> See Gainza, 54; especially, 68.

good of all. Penitence is for the failings of the community to act as the redeemed people of God by persistently clinging to self-serving interests.

Still, at the *traslacion* the Holy Spirit, who showed the Father's loving faithfulness in sending Jesus for man's salvation, calls to the People of God. He calls them to the freedom of the poor of the Lord that for Mary, the Virgin-in-prayer,<sup>31</sup> meant the freedom to praise and to faithfully love God in response – "I am the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to his word."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the *traslacion* and the *boya*, can now be seen as that "sea of humanity" – and, not of rowdy "self-interests" – bearing the image of Our Lady. The *traslacion* is an intercessory procession.<sup>33</sup> Rather than taking any of the fineries and adornments from the image of Our Lady, it is to give Mary fitting signs of thanksgiving that the deeds of the Lord may be fulfilled in us, as it was for her. It is to pray with her to praise and love God faithfully, as she did; and, to be a servant of the Lord for the community, as she is.

While at the Cathedral, Mary is the Virgin-Mother. She is the type and exemplar of the Virgin-Church that by preaching and baptism brings men to new life,<sup>34</sup> renewed as disciples of Christ.<sup>35</sup> Thus at Cana, when Mary interceded for the temporal

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<sup>31</sup> For this and figures of Mary in worship, see MC, 16ff.

<sup>32</sup> Lk. 1:38.

<sup>33</sup> There are ordinarily three (3) types of processions: the general, meaning precedence by the rank of participants; intercessory, according to a particular need or intention, e.g. penitential; and, stationary, according to pauses in procession for purposes of contemplation and prayer at certain designated places or stations.

<sup>34</sup> See LG 63, 64.

<sup>35</sup> See St. Leo the Great. *In nativitate Domini*. Tractatus 25, 5: CCL 138, 123; *SCh.* 22, 132; also, Tractatus 29), 1: CCL 147; *SCh.* 178; *De passione Domini*, Tractatus 63, 6; CCL 386; *SCh.* 74, 82; also, Jn. 2:1-12.

needs of the occasion, Jesus worked the first of his signs that confirmed the faith of the apostles and the community on him as the one sent by God.<sup>36</sup> This is the same faith Jesus entrusts to Mary and John at the foot of the cross.<sup>37</sup> The Church cares for disciples as they care for the Church.

*2.2.3 The embarcacion or fluvial procession.* The mutual care between the Church and disciples is further enacted at the *embarcacion* or the fluvial procession bringing back the image of Our Lady to its present Basilica. Mary is the virgin-presenting-offerings. At the presentation of Jesus in the temple,<sup>38</sup> Mary's "heart pierced with a sword"<sup>39</sup> is oriented to Jesus' being "a sign of contradiction."<sup>40</sup> The Christ-child, according to Simeon's greeting, is "...a light for all nations and the glory of the people Israel."<sup>41</sup> Just as Mary offered Jesus to be the light for all nations, so all disciples – devotees now – have to be reconciled with God by restoring all things in Christ.<sup>42</sup>

Hence, Our Lady's principal feast day on Sunday, celebrates the Virgin-Mother in union with her Son in the work of redemption.<sup>43</sup> As Jesus "offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God,"<sup>44</sup> "Mary "...united herself with a maternal heart to this

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<sup>36</sup> Jn. 2:1-12.

<sup>37</sup> Jn. 19:26.

<sup>38</sup> Lk. 2:22-35.

<sup>39</sup> Lk. 2:35.

<sup>40</sup> Lk. 2:34.

<sup>41</sup> Lk. 2:32.

<sup>42</sup> See St. Bernard. *In purificationem B. Mariae, Sermo* III, 2: PL 183, 370; See Leclercq, J. and Rochais, H. (1966, 342). *Sancti Bernardi opera*, IV. Rome.

<sup>43</sup> LG 57, 61.

<sup>44</sup> Hb. 9:14.

sacrifice...”<sup>45</sup> In the Sunday Eucharist Jesus perpetuates his sacrifice on the cross and entrusts it to the Church.<sup>46</sup> The Church continues to pray in union with Mary who, assumed into heaven (as Queen of Heaven and the Angels), has never abandoned her mission of intercession for salvation.<sup>47</sup> The Eucharist on Our Lady’s feast day celebrates the eternal love of God. It challenges the Church – especially the devotees of Mary – to imitate her,<sup>48</sup> to act in the solidarity of charity.<sup>49</sup>

### 3. The Continuing Challenge: The Practice of Tradition

Bishop Gainza was edified by the fervency devotees give to their visits, prayers and adornment of the image of Our Lady, by the order *bogadores* (*voyadores*) give in assuring solemnity at processions, and by the involvement personalities in government and society give for the fitting celebration of Our Lady’s feast.<sup>50</sup> These observances have, however, dimmed severely, diminishing tradition and darkening the vision of faith and culture. Still, from the foregoing, the Spirit calls to the vision of faith: the Church at the service of salvation in society. The tradition resounds in a cry: “*Viva la Virgen!*” – it is the veneration of Mary, Our Lady of Peña de Francia as the Queen of Heaven and of Angels; she is the hope for our union with God in the restoration of all things to Christ.

The tradition becomes the means to promote the vision. It is through the renewal of the devotee’s identity and vocation, of

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<sup>45</sup> LG 58, 61.

<sup>46</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> LG 62, 63.

<sup>48</sup> See SC 102, 106; 125, 126.

<sup>49</sup> See P. Benedict XVI (2005). *Deus caritas est*; LG 40.

<sup>50</sup> See Gainza, 60 and 64ff.

the inter-relationships in the Church, and of its service in society. Some key activities can be named without precluding other ways and initiatives.

### *3.1 The renewal of the devotee's identity and vocation*

In this aspect crucial is the formation toward the development of devotion and Christian maturity, such as offered for Marian spirituality in Our Lady of Peña de Francia being the Queen of Heaven and of Angels. Toward this formation is the renewal of the novena itself; it is still largely allegorical and subjective in affection. Further, it means promoting an education of faith especially seen as a pedagogical process from birth to finally a communion with God, as seen in the life of Mary. That is, a continuity of instructions for children, youth and adults and other circumstances, such as for instance in the adaptation of the rite of Christian initiation. In particular, with the performance of devotion still beset by self-interested affections, complicated yet by the breadth of history and distances, renewal means a habituation of the heart. That is, learning by the performance of devotion in its prayers and acts, e.g., processions, and no less of the liturgy and the sacraments, through training and practice especially in the home, in communities, school and the parish. This renewal is a discipling of the devotee, a formation of heart. Else what would the eye see or the ear hear, or enter into the human heart unless taught and trained for what God has prepared for those who love him?<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See 1 Cor. 2:9; also Is. 64:4

### 3.2 *The renewal of inter-relationships in the Church*

In this aspect significant is the imaging of the Church as a sacrament of unity. The devotion is intimately oriented to salvation made real through the Eucharist. However, the immediately observed inordinate conduct particularly at processions works against the Church being seen an effective instrument of unity. Nonetheless, the same failing points to the task of the Church: to promote a moral vision among the faithful.<sup>52</sup> Immediately urgent certainly is for devotees, especially the *bogadores*, to organize themselves for the sake of order in the procession and devotion. They themselves at their best are the “guardians of honor” for Our Lady’s image. One way is to prevent any defilement of Our Lady’s image and her fineries. Another is to gather in “stations of prayer” to greet her and her Son with signs of praise and thanksgiving; for instance, flower-offerings, lighting of candles, waving of handkerchiefs, etc. particularly during the processions.

Indeed, inculcating vision among the faithful is to build them up to care for Mary as she cares for the Church. In building-up the faithful together as groups or communities in the Church, spiritual guidance and direction, such as in retreats and recollections, is vital. In building-up the services of the Church, pastoral direction is critical. For incorporating individuals into the Church, the liturgy and preaching, and catechesis have to be intensive; for improving the lives of people, social action and mission have to be extensive.<sup>53</sup> Facilities may get to be improved and programs coordinated, but there need not be the “crossing of

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<sup>52</sup> See Prov. 28; also, the work of Weber, M. A source of social action. Pals, D. (2006). *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 149ff.

<sup>53</sup> See Van der Ven, I. (1998). *Education for reflective ministry*. Leuven, BE: Peeters.



boundaries” to have more activities. Rather, paramount is to build up the infrastructure of resources in the Church -- the priests and religious, lay elders and workers, cooperators and volunteers, and the new leaders of the future after them, with the local and global participation of devotees. It is no longer far-fetched to even set up centers for the spiritual-pastoral care of devotees abroad. Bishop Gainza nonetheless noted reluctance among the *cimarrones* (*montaraces*) as well as of the *espanoles* and *sacerdotes* to render, among other things, accounts of Our Lady’s action in their lives. Preserving and transmitting Our Lady’s interventions will enable the Church to grow in devotion. Indeed, after St. Thomas, is it not that ceremonial precepts help to obtain justice in relations among persons for them to attain to the peace of God?<sup>54</sup>

### ***3.3 In the renewal of the Church’s service in society***

In this aspect, needed is the collaboration between the Church and the state. Public officials and personalities from social sectors have been present at the festivities of Our Lady of Peña de Francia. Their presence is a representation by the people. People giving public expression to their religious faith, especially through the processions across the city, inaugurate a sacred time or season and dedicate a sacred space, a place of pilgrimage.<sup>55</sup> The city – together with it, the province and the entire region – is reminded by Mary’s assumption that it is also on pilgrimage.

As in a place of pilgrimage, leaders are seen as elders of the faith, the feast of Our Lady of Peña de Francia calls upon public leaders to give the time and space conducive to

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<sup>54</sup> See *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q.105, art. 2.

<sup>55</sup> See MD 29; LG 68/9.

the faith-expression of the people. This means the Church and state working together for the solemnity of the celebration. In the least, it is to have less of commercialization. Instead, it is to challenge and direct agencies and corporations to offer services for the increase of social and spiritual capital. Unchecked, commercialization is a distraction from religious motivations and an eventual destruction of the intellectual, moral and cultural fiber of society.<sup>56</sup> Seen as immediately appropriate alternatives are activities celebrating the learning, values and cultural genius of a people; for example on communication-technology as well as in the regeneration of cultural heritage, etc. Strategic initiatives are far more lasting on ecology and livelihood security and sustainability, etc. In sum, recommendations negative and positive are to raise the capacities of people<sup>57</sup> for their faith to bear fruit in quality of life. The efforts – by the Church and the State together – are a solidarity of charity especially for the most vulnerable.<sup>58</sup> In the faith attaining to a quality of life, is this not the healthy attitude towards possessions that assures life, security and liberty?<sup>59</sup> In raising the capacities of people, is this not for their aspiration to equality, freedom and dignity under God that democracy is all about?<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See works of Turner, V. and Geertz, C. on the role of religion in society.

<sup>57</sup> That is, capacitation. See works of Nussbaum, M. and Sen, A. on the quality of life.

<sup>58</sup> See Nb. 3: 53-54; Lv. 25: 13-16; Dt. 14: 28-29; 1 Tm. 6: 17-18.

<sup>59</sup> See United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 3; also, the *International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, Part II, Art. 2, Section 2; and, their relation to ST I-II, Q.105.

<sup>60</sup> See the *Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 1.

## A Concluding Prayer

These reflections and recommendations are to promote veneration of Our Lady of Peña de Francia. The observance of its devotion and tradition is narrated by the novena and the ritual action of processions and other acts. They are oriented to and completed by the memory of Jesus' redemption perpetuated principally at Mass, in the Eucharist, to assure our salvation. Thus, the true mark of Our Lady's devotee is the prayer and service for the good of the other in the care by the Church for salvation in society. This becomes the source of his/her own sanctification. The devotee unites him/herself with Mary as she united herself with the sacrifice of her son Jesus. So, to her we pray –

“Offer your Son, Holy Virgin, and present to the Lord  
the blessed fruit of your womb.

Offer for the reconciliation of us all the Holy Victim  
pleasing to God”<sup>61</sup> Amen.

*Given at the Archbishop's Residence, City of Naga, Republic  
of the Philippines, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of August in the year of Our Lord  
2008.*

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<sup>61</sup> The Prayer of St. Bernard.



## **Reproductive Health Bills to Weaken Filipino Family**

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**CBCP**

Reproductive Health bills pending in the legislature would weaken the Filipino family, a former ambassador said.

The Filipino families' fidelity to the values of human life and their strong opposition to the anti-life Reproductive Health bills in Congress will weaken the family, society's basic unit, said former ambassador to Vatican, Henrietta T. de Villa.

House Bill 812 or known as the Reproductive Health Care Act is now pending in Congress.

The bill is a combination of four measures establishing a reproductive health and population management policy. A highly contentious issue is the provision on artificial family planning methods for women and couples.

Citing studies abroad, pro-life groups warned that some of these methods would involve the use of pills and intrauterine devices.

The same groups also feared that even if the bills declared abortion as illegal, the mere inclusion of the term “reproductive health” would embrace abortion as had been supposedly agreed in a global conference years ago.

The bill is authored and sponsored by Albay Representative Edcel Lagman and supported by others legislators.

A census done in August 2007 showed there were 88.6 million Filipinos, with an annual population growth rate of 2.04 percent since 2000.

The country’s population is projected to reach 90 million this year, 102 million in 2015, and 110 million in 2020.

De Villa is the head of organizing committee of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life (ECFL) of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) prayer rally/celebration dubbed “HUMANAE VITAE @ 40: BIYAYA NG BUHAY, BIYAYANG PAMILYA” to be held on July 25, 2008 at the Parade Ground of the University of Santo Tomas at España, Manila.

The objectives of the event are to thank Pope Paul VI for his clarity and courage in proclaiming the inviolable truth on the responsible transmission of life within the family in his encyclical “*Humanae Vitae*”, and promote and protect the sacredness of family and life in the Philippines, in adherence to *Humanae Vitae*, said De Villa.

Pope Paul VI issued the *Humanae Vitae*, titled as the Encyclical on the Regulation of Birth, on July 25, 1968. It was controversial from the beginning because of its unwavering stand on the prohibition of the use of artificial contraception and its reiteration of the Church’s downright condemnation of abortion.

It is a controversy that goes on to this day in the Philippines where the Catholic Church in the country has staunchly been opposing proposed legislation on reproductive health that promotes the use of artificial contraception, De Villa added.

The prayer rally will gather lay people, religious, priests and bishops from more than 45 lay organizations, several Religious congregations and schools and dioceses especially those in the National Capital Region.

According to ECFL, archdioceses and dioceses all over the Philippines are holding similar prayer rallies on separate dates.

The archdioceses and dioceses which have earlier signed on to the event include Archdioceses of Manila, Lipa and San Fernando, Pampanga, dioceses of Antipolo, Kalookan, Cubao, Novaliches, Pasig, Malolos, Imus, San Pablo, Balanga, Tarlac and Legaspi.

The lay organizations include: CBCP Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas and its 45 affiliate national lay organizations (specifically Christ Family Mission Movement, Couples for Christ, Catholic Women's League, Familia, Federation of Free Farmers, Focolare Movement, Knights of Columbus, Legion of Mary, Ligaya ng Panginoon Community, Marriage Encounter Enhancement & Team Services Foundation, Marriage Encounter Foundation), Alliance of the Two Hearts, Anawin Forum for Life, Bukas Palad Foundation, Catholic Nurses of the Philippines, El Shaddai, FLA Mindanao, Friends of Mary Mediatrix, Kilusang Kabataan Kay Kristo (San Pablo), Neo-Catechumenate, Prolife Philippines Foundation, Inc., SAFE, Salt & Light for Christ Community, and Teresiana Association.

Among the Church offices involved are the CBCP Office for Women, and the Archdiocese of Manila's Lay Formation Center, Ministry for Family and Life and the John Paul II NFP Center.

Those attending the prayer rally will be converging from several parts of the metropolis among them Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City, Loreto Church and St. Anthony Church in Legarda, and Plaza Lawton.

The program of the day would be assembly praying of Holy Rosary at 2:00 – 2:30 p.m. animation by El Shaddai and ACM Catechists and welcome by Fr. Melvin Castro, ECFL Executive Secretary at 3:00 pm, *Humanae Vitae* and Life Testimonies by Wawel Mercado and Mila Mercado, Dr. Fidel and Rica Caligayahan and Joey and Tess Gabilanga at 3:30 pm, talk on “*Humanae Vitae* and the Reproductive Health Bills by Dr. Ligaya Acosta, Human Life International (HLI) Asia” at 3:55 p.m., talk on “US International Policies on Population Control and Intervention in the Philippines” by Dr. Brian Clowes, HLI at 4:12 – 4:22 p.m. and celebration of the Mass by CBCP president and Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo along with Manila Archbishop Gaudencio B. Cardinal Rosales and Archbishop Edward Joseph Adams, Papal Nuncio to the Philippines.



## **CBCP Commission Reiterates Family Planning Stand**

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**CBCP**

Archbishop Paciano Aniceto of the Archdiocese of San Fernando, Pampanga, chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) appealed to all the advocates of population control to "hold a moratorium on population control legislation targeted against women disguised as "reproductive health projects, suspend judgment and allow truth and conscience to prevail" in a press conference on November 3 at the Pius XII Catholic Center in Paco, Manila.

Archbishop Aniceto also lauded President Gloria Macapagal – Arroyo for recognizing the stand of the Catholic Church on the sacredness of human life through her declaration that she will use the UN funding for reproductive health projects and protect the health of women by propagating the use of Billings Ovulation Method. "We thank your Excellency for recognizing the stand of the Catholic Church on the Natural Family Method for promoting Catholic values," Aniceto said.

President Arroyo made the declaration in her speech at the United Nation General Assembly before the meeting of Leaders on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace on September 13 and before the High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of the 60 th Session of the United Nation on November 15.

## **The Billings Ovulation Method**

Archbishop Aniceto stressed that the Billings Ovulation Method is what the Catholic Church has been advocating since the first government attempt at population control in the Philippines during the time of Ferdinand Marcos.

He also explained that “the adoption of Billings Ovulation Method is dependent on the couples’ state according to the conditionalities defined by the encyclical, *Humane Vitae*, where Paul VI reiterated and updated the teachings of the Church about life and regulation of birth control.

The Billings Ovulation Method was first introduced by Dr. John Billings and Fr. Maurice Catarinich in 1953. They were later joined in the program by Dr. Evelyn Billings. The Billings Ovulation Method teaches women to identify and recognize their fertility as well as infertility. It has also undergone extensive scientific research and effective trials and is taught throughout the world to people of all cultures.

According to its proponents this method is highly effective and morally sound, and enhances the loving relationship of husband and wife and their children.

## **Population Growth and Poverty**

Dr. Bernardo Villegas, an economist and president of the University of Asia and the Pacific in the same conference said “there is no scientific evidence that it is population growth that is to blame for the poverty that we are suffering.”

Poverty is not the very reason why our country is suffering, he said. The Philippines after World War II followed an enormous economic policy where billions of pesos were spent in the wrong industries that never grow and are now dying one by one. This is the reason why we never develop agriculture, he added.

Villegas pointed out that another reason for poverty is corruption. According to the World Bank about P400 billion are wasted in corruption in the government and in private sectors. The money goes into the pockets of the officials while the others do not pay their yearly taxes. “These money can be use to build infrastructures, educate people and precisely address poverty in direct way,” Villegas said.

He cited some of the most effective solutions to address poverty without having to propagate artificial contraception as population control.

- address poverty directly
- improve the quality of basic education (especially elementary and secondary education)
- providing a nut of technical schools the skills the children of the poor (especially those who are out of school youth)
- Micro credit programs that make credit available to the poor.

- integrated mass housing – provided by Gawad Kalinga of the Couples of Christ
- health programs especially maternal and child health to avoid the risks of motherhood
- using natural family method

# **Pastoral Statement on the Jubilee of St. Paul 2008-2009**

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**CBCP**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!” (1 Cor 1:3)

We, the Bishops of the Philippines, welcome with eagerness the announcement of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, that the universal Church would celebrate a special Jubilee Year of the Apostle Paul. On June 28, 2007, during the celebration of the solemnity of the holy apostles Peter and Paul in the Basilica of Saint Paul outside the Walls, the Pope said: “I am happy to announce officially that we shall dedicate a special Jubilee Year to the apostle Paul, from 28 June 2008 to 29 June 2009, on the occasion of the bi-millennium of his birth, which historians have placed between the years 7 and 10 A.D.”

Together with the rest of our fellow Asian Catholic Christians, how can we Filipinos not be moved to greet with enthusiasm the commemoration of the man who made it possible for the Gospel

of Jesus Christ to go beyond the confines of Israel and reach the rest of us, “Gentiles”?

## **The Apostle to the Gentiles**

Saul, who later became Paul – the man we call “the Apostle to the Gentiles” – was formerly known as a rabid persecutor of Christianity before he became its most avid propagator. He was the arch-enemy of that fledgling sectarian movement of the early first century that claimed that Jesus of Nazareth, the man whom Pilate had executed on the cross, had been raised by God from the dead and was in fact the Messiah the Jews had long awaited. This zealous Pharisee saw the nascent Jesus movement known as “The Way” as a threat to Judaism, and took upon himself the task of destroying it – until that fateful day on the road to Damascus. That experience would effect in him a complete turn-around; he became a whole new person, like one who had been totally possessed by Christ. Dazzled by the blinding light of Christ, he received an entirely “new sight” that would make him see as rubbish what he formerly held to be of utmost importance, “in view of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Phil 3:8)

Many of our present-day nominal Filipino Catholics who experience conversion at some late stage in their life and turn into active participants in the Church’s work of evangelization, cannot but relate with Paul’s moving story of spiritual transformation. Unfailingly, they often also find themselves drawing from Paul’s writings to sustain their process of renewal as disciples of the Risen Lord, as is the case with many members of our Catholic Charismatic communities.

Paul considered the Damascus event as a revelation and a call from God. His description of it echoes the prophetic call of Jeremiah and the Servant of God in Isaiah: "God, who from my mother's womb called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles..." (Gal 2:15-16; cf. Jer 1:4, Is 49:1). From then on, his life was given fully to Christ and the Gospel. He traveled the Mediterranean world, preached the Gospel especially to the Gentiles, founded churches and wrote letters that would become Sacred Scriptures. His toil and hardship for the Gospel would easily equal, if not surpass, those of any follower of Christ. And so would his success. It would be claimed that the conversion of Paul was second only to the Christ-event in importance to the Christian faith. But Paul would consider himself only as a "servant of Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:1). What he was, all his toils, was due to the grace of God which was at work in him. Paul's life was then crowned with his martyrdom; like Simon Peter he shed his blood in Rome. The two apostles are considered the two pillars of the Church of Rome which would become the mother of the churches.

### **Liturgical, Cultural and Ecumenical Initiatives**

Pope Benedict XVI has proposed various activities for the Pauline Year, some of which would take place in Rome in the Basilica of St. Paul. Others can easily be carried out in various places in the world, and concerning these we invite the initiative and involvement of the Filipino faithful. The Holy Father notes that initiatives like penitential pilgrimages, study conventions and special publications on the Pauline texts can be implemented in the dioceses, shrines and places of worship, by the Religious and

by the educational institutions and social-assistance centers which are named after St. Paul or inspired by him and his teaching.

Let us together mobilize the Filipino faithful so that the Pauline Year may turn into a *kairos* – a graced occasion – to know and imitate Saint Paul more in his consuming love for Christ and his zeal to spread the Gospel. We call upon all dioceses to come up with their own specific programs for the Pauline Year. The Bishops can designate churches dedicated to St. Paul where the faithful can go on pilgrimage and earn the gift of indulgences after following the requirements of the Church. We call upon Bible scholars to help us appreciate the Pauline Letters, the most precious legacy of the Apostle to the Church, but which many Christians remain unfamiliar to. We especially call upon the “Pauline” religious congregations, institutions and shrines to take special initiatives in leading the people to a greater awareness, love, and imitation of St. Paul whose life was wholly directed to Christ. The apostle would tell his converts: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). May these initiatives help us make “St. Paul alive today” and propel us in our common apostolic mission as Filipino Catholics towards the rest of Asia!

In particular, the OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) among our faithful can draw a lot of inspiration from the Apostle Paul, who took every opportunity at each time he came into contact with people of other nations, to witness to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, often even at the price of so much suffering, persecution, and imprisonment.

Lastly, the Holy Father points to one aspect that must be paid attention to during the celebration – the ecumenical dimension. “The Apostle to the Gentiles,” the Pope noted, “who was especially committed to taking the Good News to all peoples, left no stones



unturned for unity and harmony among all Christians.” While ecumenical initiatives are usually carried on the level of Church authorities, the faithful could always appreciate the universal and encompassing spirit of the apostle Paul which would like all believers to be one mind and one purpose (1 Cor 1:10). He himself became “all things to all... for the sake of the gospel” (1 Cor 10:23). In the words of the Holy Father, may the apostle help us “to progress in the humble and sincere search for the full unity of all members of Christ’s Mystical Body.”

May the universal Church and the Filipino faithful experience God’s abundant blessing during this year of the Apostle’s Jubilee!

For and on behalf of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines,

**† ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO, D.D.**

*Archbishop of Jaro*

*President, CBCP*

*July 6, 2008*



## Cases and Inquiries

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JAVIER GONZÁLEZ, OP

### THE GIFT OF INDULGENCES

#### QUESTION:

*From time to time, like recently with the opening of the Pauline Year (June 28, 2008) or on the occasion of the World Youth Meeting in Australia (July 2008), I read in some newspapers that the Pope granted "Special Indulgences" to the faithful. Perhaps due to my ignorance or lack of understanding about indulgences, skepticism and uneasiness fill me whenever I hear something about them. Does talking about indulgences really make sense today? Are not indulgences something obsolete or rather inventions of a past that we Catholics would better forget? Besides, what is the point of indulgences: are not sins completely forgiven through the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Why then these 'partial' and 'plenary' "discounts"? I wish I could have some enlightenment on the matter.*

## **ANSWER:**

While reading these questions regarding Indulgences it was not difficult for me to understand the feelings of the signatory of this inquiry since they seem to coincide with the feelings many Catholics have today toward that same matter judging from the several letters I have received asking for clarifications or guidance on the Indulgences. The good thing, however, about these inquiries is the positive interest shown by their authors in being enlightened or clarified on the issue. Definitely many misunderstandings on the doctrine of Indulgences need to be corrected and a more positive attitude towards them is needed!

I also acknowledge that this topic – actually more theological than canonical – is a delicate one, not so easy to explain and on which I can hardly be original. That is why in some previous instances I have simply referred the inquiring persons to some of the official sources on Indulgences, particularly the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992), the Code of Canon Law (1983), some Theology manuals, and primarily Paul VI's Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum doctrina* (1967), which contains an updated revision of the doctrine on Indulgences. Even the Internet can provide good materials on Indulgences. To all these sources I also refer our readers in the hope that they may better understand the nature of indulgences.

In deference to our readers, however, I will offer the following explanations on the meaning of Indulgences and try to answer those formulated (and other related) questions.

### **Two Illustrative Examples**

Let us begin with two parables:

1) One day, a mischievous child was walking by the home of a man who treated him very badly, or so he thought. With his immature sense of justice, the child felt that he should punish the man by throwing a rock and shattering one of his windows. So he picked up a stone, hurled it, and watched with glee as it flew through the air and broke the glass. As soon as he heard the glass breaking, he began to think that this probably was not the wisest thing to do. The enraged home owner, running out of the house towards him, felt the same way as well. The child, in an act of sincere regret, begged for forgiveness. The man, being very merciful, accepted his apologies, forgave him and even promised not to tell his parents what he did, thus sparing the child another painful lesson in morality. But the man said that even though he forgave what he did, the little ruffian would still have to pay for the damage.

2) A student managed to snatch out of his University Library a priceless volume of a rare collection, a coveted thing he took home with no intention of returning. Some time later, however, thinking of the harm caused to other students and researchers who were deprived of access to such book, and also of the damage caused to the library, he felt guilty about his action and regretted having done it. To get rid of such guilt he went to confession and asked God for forgiveness. The confessor gave him the absolution (God's forgiveness) and at the same time reminded the student of his obligation to return the book to the Library to repair somehow the damage caused.

In both stories there was repentance and there was forgiveness; but there was also the remaining obligation to make up for the damage caused. In each case the boy and the student were reminded of the pending obligation of "restitution" (paying back) implied in true repentance.

Now, what do these two examples have to do with indulgences? Something very important follows the further development of the two parables: In the first story, the boy was willing to pay for the broken glass, but he had no money to do so; in the second case, the student was willing to return the stolen book, but was unable to do so because, due to some unforeseen accident, the book had by now been lost. Suddenly, to the delight of both, a friendly hand appeared in the scene and offered to the boy the amount due for his payment of the broken glass; and to the student, a new copy of the volume lost so that he could return it to the Library. Thanks to this friendly person both of them were given the chance to accomplish the due restitution. There were no strings attached on the friend's side – the offer was real and for free. There was only one condition as an external sign of their sincere repentance as well as of their gratitude towards that friendly hand. Both were to perform some prescribed actions (e.g., say a prayer, visit a nearby church) as indicated by that good friend.

### **Application to the Indulgences**

The second part of these two stories somehow illustrates the nature and role of indulgences. The indulgences granted by God through the Church are not intended to cause forgiveness for sins – such forgiveness comes exclusively from the merciful heart of those (God and man) offended – but they are rather connected with the pending restitution, reparation and healing due after having been forgiven.

Indulgences are like the standing offer of the good friend in both cases: they are simply “gifts” (opportunities) freely offered to everyone by the Church (the friendly hand) enabling us to

“restitute” or “pay back” for the damage caused by our offenses after they have been mercifully forgiven. Such restitution and healing are something due in justice, but that we are unable to do by ourselves alone. Furthermore, the performance of the additional prescribed prayers or actions is not a magic payment or a substitute for the restitution: they are just expressions of gratitude and of good will on our part. Let me reiterate: indulgences do not cause forgiveness for the offenses committed (God’s mercy does!); they are not payment to buy the forgiveness for the sinful actions (“pardon” is a gift *par excellence* and a previous condition to gain indulgences); and they are not magic or indiscriminate (good disposition and positive cooperation is needed).

Indulgences then are not an unimportant or trivial (restitution is not a choice!) so as to look at them with indifference or even disdain, as often is the case with some Catholics!

### **Theological explanation behind this application**

The background of this application to indulgences from a theological point of view is the following: When we sin yet have truly repented, and have asked for forgiveness with true regret for our sinful actions, God, in his mercy, forgives us. But on our part there is still the remaining obligation to help heal the wound opened and to restore the broken order; in short, to somehow “repair” the damage caused by our sin. Such damage is the “stain” that remains in our souls after having been forgiven.

This has been traditionally explained by theologians in this way: sin produces two effects on our souls, namely, the debt of *guilt* (grave sin deprives us of communion with God: such deprivation is called ‘eternal punishment’) and the debt of *pain* (every sin entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which

must be purified either here on earth or after death: this purification frees us from the “temporal punishment” of sin). When we repent of our sin, the debt of guilt is removed but the debt of “pain” remains. [The souls in Purgatory do not have any stain of guilt, but they have the stain of “pain” which must be removed in order for them to enter heaven]. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.

An indulgence then is the remission of the debt of “pain” due to sin; in other words, it is a “payment” to remove the stain of pain from our souls. The payment is not in a monetary sense because we cannot purchase our salvation or truly repair the damage unjustly caused (imagine, for instance, a person’s good name destroyed by a false accusation), but it can be made through prayers, works of mercy, and acceptance of the suffering one endures throughout their lives.

## **Teaching of the Church on Indulgences**

Having said this, we are now ready to understand the teaching of the Church on Indulgences as found in her *Catechism*, promulgated by John Paul II in 1992. *Catechism* points 1471-1479, devoted to Indulgences, open with a very rich definition of the latter: “*An indulgence is the remission in the sight of God of the temporal punishment due for sins, the guilt of which has already been forgiven.*” (Thus, a member of Christ’s faithful who is properly disposed and who fulfills certain specific conditions, may gain an indulgence by the help of the Church, which authoritatively dispenses and applies the treasure of the merits of



Christ and the Saints.)

The Catechism then stresses the following points on Indulgences:

a) *Their connection with the effects of the Sacrament of Penance.* This point has already been explained: "The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the "old man" and to put on the "new man" (CCC, 1473)

b) *Their link with the Communion of Saints.* To say that indulgences are linked with the Communion of Saints is tantamount to saying that the Christians who seek to purify themselves of their sins and to become holy with the help of God's grace are not alone. Their life is joined in Christ and through Christ to the life of all the other Christian brethren, living or dead. In the communion of saints, "a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. Between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things." In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others. Thus recourse to the communion of saints lets the contrite sinner be more promptly and efficaciously purified of the punishments for sin." (CCC 1474-1475).

c) *Their being granted through the Church.* Indulgences are obtained from God through the ministry of the Church: "An

indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity” (CCC, 1478).

d) *Their application for the dead.* Finally, indulgences can also be obtained for the faithful departed now being purified, since they are also members of the same communion of saints. Actually this is a good way to help them so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted (CCC, 1479).

### **Provisions of the Code of Canon Law on Indulgences**

The Code of Canon Law also says something about Indulgences, specifically in canons 992-997, which are appended to those on the Sacrament of Penance. The Code, in line with its legal nature, makes only some practical points on Indulgences:

a) First, on their *types*: Indulgences are ‘partial’ or ‘plenary’ according as they partially or wholly free a person from the temporal punishment due for sins. (Can. 993).

b) Second, on *those who can gain indulgences*: All members of the faithful can gain indulgences, partial or plenary, for themselves, or they can apply them by way of suffrage to the dead. (Can. 994).

c) Third, on *who can grant indulgences*: Apart from the supreme authority in the Church, only those can grant indulgences to whom this power is either acknowledged in the law or given by the Roman Pontiff. (Bishops and their equals in law have the

faculty to grant them with certain limitations.) (Can. 995).

d) Fourth, on the *personal condition to gain indulgences*: To be capable of gaining indulgences a person must be baptized, not excommunicated, and in the state of grace. (Can. 996).

e) Fifth, on the *requirements to obtain indulgences*: In order to gain indulgences, the person who is capable must have at least the intention of gaining them, and must fulfill the prescribed works at the time and in the manner determined by the terms of the grant. (Can. 996). The basic requirements to obtain indulgences are: interior disposition of complete detachment from sin; sacramental confession, reception of the Holy Eucharist and prayer for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

### **Random Questions on Indulgences**

Many questions may be raised regarding Indulgences, in addition to those already mentioned in the inquiry. The following are some answers to “most frequently asked questions”:

#### ***Indulgences: Medieval Invention?***

Indulgences are not an invention of the Middle Ages. As John Paul II said in 1999, they have their “historical origin in the ancient Church’s awareness of being able to express the mercy of God by lessening the canonical penance required for the sacramental remission of sins.” This mitigation, however, was always balanced by personal and communitarian responsibility, which would take on, by way of substitution, the “medicinal” function of the penalty.

### ***Indulgences: Automatic Mechanisms to get Forgiveness or Conversion?***

No. Indulgences are not automatic mechanisms to obtain forgiveness. To begin with, indulgences do not forgive sins at all, but they *presuppose* already such forgiveness: they are only concerned with the remission of the temporal punishment due for sins. Neither are indulgences “substitutes” for the obligation of conversion. “It is not a question of rituals that automatically confer forgiveness or conversion,” Pope John Paul II explained; “they require a total interior attitude and a way of conversion.” In fact, in order to receive an indulgence, the Church requires as a spiritual condition the exclusion of all attachment to sin. “It would be a mistake to think that this gift can be received by simply carrying out some exterior deed. On the contrary, the deeds are required as an expression and support on the road to conversion.”

### ***Can Indulgences be “bought” or applied to future sins?***

Indulgences are not “things” subject to manipulation. The Council of Trent introduced radical reforms on the practice of granting indulgences and, because of previous abuses, Pope Pius V abolished in 1567 all the concessions of indulgences that were in any way related to stipends or other monetary transactions. Indulgences developed based on a deep reflection on the Sacrament of Reconciliation as ways to shorten the sacramental penance and were in use centuries before the appearance of problems related with money and with Luther. On the other hand, indulgences are not applied to sins not yet committed. An indulgence is neither license to sin nor an advanced forgiveness for future sins; it is related to past offences already forgiven.

### ***Indulgences: Discounts from days in Purgatory?***

The fact that until the time of the Second Vatican Council partial indulgences had attached a fixed number of days (e.g., one could gain "300 days of indulgence," etc.) lead many to think that those days referred actually to days in Purgatory that were mathematically discounted. However, the number of days associated with the indulgences never really meant that such amount of "time" was discounted from the total length that a person was eventually to spend in Purgatory. (For one thing, time as we have it here does not exist in Purgatory and besides nobody knows how long the Purgatory may last for a particular person.) Instead, the time associated with the indulgences was a reference to the period of penance that one could perform during the earthly life; in other words, the indulgence would gain an indefinite but partial amount of remission, proportionate to what the earlier Christians would have received by performing pious work during that number of days. To solve this confusion Pope Paul VI approved in 1968 the so-called *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum* or Handbook of Indulgences, prepared by the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary. Since then no number of days is attached to indulgences; they are just either 'plenary' or 'partial'. Only God knows exactly how efficacious a partial indulgence may be or if a plenary indulgence has actually been obtained.

### ***Indulgences: Still relevant today?***

Contrary to popular opinion, or at least to what many Catholics would have expected, the Second Vatican Council did not do away with indulgences. This doctrine was reviewed and, as we have just said, it was made public through the *Enchiridion* (Collection) released in 1968 by the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary

and approved by Pope Paul VI on June 15th of that year. Certainly indulgences are as relevant today as is the obligation to retribute for injustices committed or the obligation to heal the wounds opened through unhealthy relationships.

### **The New *Enchiridion* or ‘Collection of Indulgences’**

“The revised *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum* (‘Collection of Indulgences’) is a delight. It is a masterpiece of renewal in the Spirit.”

Such words were the opening salvo of a column written by T.M. Sparks, O.P., in the Weekly Edition of the *L’Osservatore Romano* (12 December 1968, p.11) featuring the newly published edition of the “Collection of Indulgences: Norms and Concessions” that followed Pope Paul’s Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* of January 1, 1967. I bring here some of Fr Sparks’s comments on that occasion, which may be quite enlightening for us today:

“This 1968 edition of the *Enchiridion* is a remarkable fulfillment of the Holy Father’s injunction. It is especially noteworthy because of its evangelical simplicity, its emphasis on Holy Scripture and contemporary expression of Church teaching, and above all in its insistence on the supreme importance of the individual’s devout, loving acts.”

A plenary indulgence supposes that one’s soul is entirely free from affection for sin. Only one each day can be gained – the sole exception being the day one dies. There is constant stress on the Holy Father’s declaration that a partial indulgence is a “*matching grant*.” The Church uses her “power of the keys” and

opens “the treasury of the Blood” – the merits of Christ, Our Lady and the Saints, to *match* whatever remission of the temporal punishment due to sin results from an individual’s careful, loving performance of an indulgenced work.”

The concessions are distributed into *two* categories:

The first category contains three “more general concessions” of partial indulgence granted to that individual among the faithful: (1) who, in carrying out his duties and bearing with the trials of life, raises his mind in humble trust to God, adding – even mentally – some pious invocation; (2) who, led by a spirit of faith, mercifully expends himself or his goods in the service of needy brethren; and (3) who, in a spirit of penance, freely abstains from something licit and pleasing to himself.

The second category of concessions lists *seventy* devotional and penitential prayers and practices. Some of the seventy are sweeping in content. For example “The Use of Pious Objects” reads this way: “That individual among the faithful who devoutly uses an object of piety (a crucifix or cross, a chaplet, a scapular, a medal) rightly blessed by any priest, is granted a partial indulgence.”

Four of the seventy devotional practices are singled out for special mention. To these are attached a plenary indulgence daily. They are: (1) Adoration of the *Blessed Sacrament*, for at least a half-hour; (2) pious reading of *Sacred Scripture* for at least a half-hour; (3) the *Stations of the Cross*; and (4) the *Rosary* [five decades] said in common.

Among others, there is an indulgence for hearing the Word of God; for prayers to the Angels, St. Joseph, the Saints; for the Souls in Purgatory; for the catechetical apostolate; for mental

prayer; for prayers for Church unity; for the Sign of the Cross; for prayers to the Holy Spirit; for the acts of faith, hope, love and contrition; for the *Miserere*; for a spiritual communion; for a monthly day of recollection; for prayers for the Holy Father; for various episcopal and parochial acts; for prayers for vocations.

The *Enchiridion* states that “the main concern has been to attach greater importance to a Christian way of life and to lead souls to cultivate the spirit of prayer and penance and to practice the theological virtues, rather than merely to repeat certain formulas and acts.” It makes sense. St Thomas Aquinas preferred to give alms (a free gift given to help relieve the poor) before fasting and penance. St James also placed a great deal of emphasis on action by saying how a person can be “justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24). Prayer is a wonderful thing, but we also need to get our hands dirty and perform acts of charity for God as well.

The *Enchiridion of Indulgences* is a worthwhile reading book, a must for those who would like to learn which prayers and works have indulgences. (The document is also freely available on Internet at various web sites). A book like this can only bring people closer to God.

### **Closing words: The gift of indulgences**

The issue of indulgences has gone through endless historical debates, with negative effects on the cause of ecumenism. “This is a delicate topic not lacking in historical misunderstandings which have had a negative impact on Christian communion. The Church recognizes how important it is in the current ecumenical context for this ancient practice to be well understood and accepted as the meaningful expression of the mercy of God which it was intended



to be,” wrote Pope John Paul II, after recalling that “Jesus crucified is the greatest ‘indulgence’ that the Father has offered humanity, allowing the forgiveness of sins and the possibility of filial life.” Over the last few years, steps have been taken among Christians to understand indulgences. Hopefully these pages may encourage us, Catholics, to deepen our search on them.



## **HOMILIES**

### **Sunday Homilies for November-December 2008**

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**ENRICO GONZALES, O.P.**

<p><b>NOVEMBER 1 – SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS</b> <b>Mt 5:1-12</b></p>
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#### **WHAT'S SO AMAZING WITH GRACE?**

Grace is so amazing because of its ordinariness. We always expect grace to be found in extraordinary places. Now here comes Jesus naming grace in, of all people, the poor (Lk 6:20) and the poor in spirit (Mt 5:3). Well, the poor are everywhere so that we have taken their presence for granted. To us, they have become cellophane people. They are right in front of our eyes yet we cannot see their presence. Jesus points to them and in one incredible statement testifies that his very own kingdom is there. Unbelievable! And yet is there anything more shocking than the Roman Centurion's proclamation of his faith in the dying man whom they crucified as "truly the Son of God"? (Mk 15:39) Faith in contrast: the situation of pain, misery and helplessness which

is the ordinary ingredient of our daily life instead of evoking despair has elicited hope from the faithful of God. Grace on the cross – is there any event so outstanding in contrast than this? Now, should we still wonder why ordinary people who carry their cross and follow Christ in the routine dreariness of their lives can be saints?

Ordinary people persevere in grace even if their lives call for no achievement attracting attention to their greatness. It is just plain kindness which for being so ordinary makes the presence of God so casual and indeed, scandalously trite. Thanks to these ordinary people we discover that we don't need to be a Batman or a Spiderman to be a hero. Thanks to them the global skies are clear, for the ordinary people who are imperceptibly holy are just down-to-earth personalities who walk the ground and never fly. Yet, they will be assumed into heaven. Theirs is the kingdom of God, after all. They may not be raised to the altar as canonized saints, for the altar is such a limited space. In heaven though there is space for every boy and girl whose life is graceful: life as small as a cup alright but filled to the brim with love. They too are saints who just cooperate with God's grace without expecting to be known. That is why we celebrate today's solemnity. We dedicate this day to all the unknown saints: the ordinary saints to whose group we may one day belong.

Happy feast day to us all!

**NOVEMBER 2 – COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE  
FAITHFUL DEPARTED**

**Mt 25:31-46**

**LOVE MEANS NEVER SAY “DIE!”**

There is a one-sided consideration of what religion means in our present society. The contemporary man speaks of religion exclusively in terms of the afterlife. Religion is about afterlife alright but it is only such because it is preoccupied with love. And love means never say “die!” Thus, it is never just a euphemistic device to refer to cemeteries as memorial parks. Cemeteries are in fact libraries: depositories of memories which refuse to die. These defy death because they are memories of love. No tomb can bury love forever. On the contrary love lives forever because this is the very nature of love: eternal. Love has no boundaries in time and space. Again, it is not just empty rhetoric to profess love with such classical expression: “My love for you is high as the sky and deep as the ocean.” Why this? On a clear day, we will see the picture of love. We look up at the blue sky and for being cloudless, it offers a vision without an end. The endless sky simply projects eternity. So, why not adopt it as a poetic but realistic metaphor for love? From height to depth, we image the same eternal love with the profundity of the ocean for no matter how deep we dive, we cannot touch its floor. The depth of the ocean is so abysmal so that just like the sky it can intimate to us the eternity of love.

The Solemnity of All the Faithful Departed is a celebration of love, not of death. It emphasizes the fact that because we love,

death can never harm us. To us who cannot refuse to die, we even have an angel of death to guide us in our passage from here to eternity. We even have the host of angels and saints to welcome us in a grand *bienvenida* in heaven. Oh, what an unimaginable great reunion with our loved ones in paradise! Unbelievable! We do not know what to say in our surprise until the good Lord speaks and explains everything to us:

“Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” (Mt 25:34-36)

In short, we love God. And love of God never dies.

**NOVEMBER 9 – DEDICATION OF LATERAN  
BASILICA**

**Jn 2:13-22**

**A TEMPLE-OFFERING: ANGER  
YOU MUST BE KIDDING!**

We are always afraid of our anger. This fear leads us to deny that we are angry. In today's gospel-Reading, we are terribly surprised that Jesus himself got angry and where? Of all places, in the temple itself! Jesus got angry openly to prove to us that there is nothing wrong with getting angry. In fact, anger can be at times the most appropriate offering to God that beats all sacrifices. For anger is the most passionate expression of ourselves. It showcases how strong we are attached to a value. Look at Jesus. His anger of course was not directed to the people. Nowhere in the Gospel passages was it explained that Jesus' anger was violent. He did not whip the people although the animals, he did. And why that discrimination? Temples are for humans and not for beasts. But the religious authorities had allowed the temple to be desecrated by allowing it to be used for business. Even religious worship was converted into cash. Who will not be angry at that? In the face of this desecration, Jesus' anger became so passionate that it went even beyond feeling. His anger for being a part of himself became his self-offering, a worship in its most dramatic expression. Amazing as it might sound, his anger was liturgical. No wonder it was depicted as the expression of Jesus' zeal for the house of God. (Jn 2:17)

Today there is a need for us to be angry and our anger should indeed be the energy that fuels our zeal for the house of God. The situation today is even worse than the situation of yesterday. In Jesus' time, even the beasts for a fee could enter into the house of God; in our time, even humans can no longer do so. We have created a system where the people find it impossible to enjoy, much less, satisfy the basic longings of religion. The issue is survival and when survival itself is at stake, all other issues take the backseat. How can the word of God make sense to people whose stomachs and heads are empty? Will not the preacher appear to a starving audience as though a leg of a chicken? Will the voice of the preacher resound in the empty heads of illiterate listeners? Jesus in his public display of anger in the temple declared: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (Jn 2:19) Jesus of course was referring to his body. Would that those words refer also to human bodies of today emaciated by unjust and unequal distribution of wealth, ignored by a system of education which patronizes only the elite. The case is urgent and we cry to Jesus that three days will not be quick enough to raise up the needy. But the question is why do we have to depend only on Jesus and not also on ourselves? Are we the bystanders at the temple much like those at the time of Jesus who simply watched the Lord cleanse the temple while they were just looking on? Are we insensitive as the dead? Can we not also get angry like Jesus and cleanse the temple like he did?



**NOVEMBER 16 – THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN  
ORDINARY TIME**

**Mt 25:14-15, 19-21**

**THRIFT THAT LEADS TO GENEROSITY**

Nature is thrifty. It does not waste its resources. The theory on conservation of matter attests to this. Nature spends its energy only at the amount that is necessary. No useless accessories, the moment any part of it becomes useless, such is eliminated in the most efficient way. So, whence all these present aberrations of nature originate? From us humans who refuse to heed the pattern of nature. We think and act only for ourselves as though we are the master of nature instead of just being its steward. Worse, we are contented not only to waste nature's patrimony to us, we apply the same irresponsibility to the supernatural world: the grace of God.

Today's Gospel-Reading reminds us that God is so generous that he gives us everything to make our lives worthy to enter his kingdom. Thus, there is no reason for us to envy anyone. We have everything necessary in order that we may reach the destiny which God assigns to us. We cannot therefore blame anyone when we fail to accomplish God's design for us. We have all the grace to become saints. We may bear different cups but whatever size is given to us, it will be overflowing. God's thrift is his generosity. He gives to us gifts just enough to make our voyage in this world enjoyable by helping us to travel light. Nothing superfluous, what is necessary is only a heart able to empathize with everyone who is in need. That kind of heart is customized

in anyone in any kind of station of life: rich or poor, royalty or commoner, cleric or lay. Grace is like that. It is God's gift that expects no return except that it is likewise be given away without counting the cost, without calculating the risk.

**NOVEMBER 23 – SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING**  
**Mt 25:31-46**

**THE SERVANT-KING**

The king is usually the person whom the citizens love to hate. No wonder kings nowadays seem out of place, out of this world. A few still exist but they are as good as an ancient painting enclosed within a steel frame: a prison cell! They are practically *Very Important Prisoners* more than real *VIP's*. The constitutions of these kingdoms make sure that their citizens will not suffer from any mischief of the royal families. People are learning from past mistakes: kings who wielded absolute power ended up corrupt and the heads which wore the crown, rolling down from the guillotine. To avoid future bloodshed, short of abolishing the monarchy, we mellow down the revolution by instituting a constitutional monarchy, which reduces the king to a symbol – whatever this means. In the midst of these historical changes, we wonder why we still call Jesus “The King”. Simple. Jesus is the only King who is a servant, and for this reason all his “royal decrees” boil down to just one mandate: “Serve!” A servant-king is obviously most welcome. When service rules the kingdom from the crown to the simplest of the commoner, there will be peace and contentment. That kingdom is heaven. Look at why this kingdom of service is heaven in the judgment of Christ the King. Everyone there has a track record of serving the needy: the hungry and the thirsty; the naked and the homeless, the sick and the dying. Everyone there did all these not for selfish interests but because service is his second nature. And service is his second

nature because his person is love. To love is to serve. That is why everyone there has never charged anybody for his service. Love never seeks compensation but takes the joy of serving as its own reward. In the end, he is even surprised at the reason why the Lord is commending him: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Mt 25:46) Now, we realize that loving service will eventually grant us citizenship in the Lord's kingdom. Through service, we become like the King. He serves us all and he serves us all through ourselves in our mutual service. Thus, we make a family – a family of servants, from God the Father to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit who inspires us to serve one another in love.

Aren't we glad that Jesus is our Servant-King and we, the servants of Christ the King?

## **NOVEMBER 30 – FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**Mk 13:33-37**

### **WATCHING ACTIVELY**

To be alert means to watch actively. This is precisely what today's Gospel-Reading enjoins us. We have entered the season of Advent after all. The color of Advent is hope. And hope means never to get tired of waiting because the person whom we are waiting for has arrived even before he arrives. This is not a riddle of course but simply a statement of the truth. If that someone whom we are expecting to arrive is utterly unknown to us, how can we detect his presence the moment he appears? We are able to recognize someone whom we have never met before precisely because such person has already possessed our hearts, indeed, our total consciousness, even before he turns up. This is what we call active waiting, not passive waiting, where the only thing we do is clean our nails to pass the time. Meanwhile everyone passes by without our attention. This does not matter because definitely we do not care. Waiting ceases for us to be a mission and a responsibility but simply an expression of boredom and despair.

Unfortunately despair seems to be the gloom that envelops most of our people today. In the past we announce the coming of Christmas with a smile; now no more, just with a frown. We are as though telling everyone "Christmas? So what?" Prices continue to soar, no food at the table, and no money in the pockets. Christmas simply means nothing to us anymore because there is nothing to expect. But think about this: Does not the original

Christmas mean sharing? It is the day when God sent his Son to be born like anyone of us: poor alright but filled with grace to rise from poverty by sharing with us “grace upon grace” (Jn 1:16). The child born in the crib is the child we are waiting for and he continues to come not only during Christmas but every moment of our lives. We have become blind to his continuing coming because we have stopped professing and practicing the spirit that made once the birthday of Jesus Christmas: sharing.

The crib was cold and dreary until the shepherds walked right into it and with their bodies gave the needed warmth to the child. The Magi came with their gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh – but more than these treasures, they gave to the child the source of all their offerings: generous hearts. If Christmas looks today as an impossible dream, it is because we have become blind to others. We have ignored the presence of God and our fellowmen in our lives. When we imprison ourselves into that narrow overused, misused, abused pronoun “I”, Christmas is definitely beyond our reach. Our arms are poised to embrace only ourselves. In that self-embrace, nobody lives, everyone dies of strangulation.

Come on, let's release ourselves from the bondage of selfishness! Share and reach out for God and our neighbors and enjoy the spirit of the original Christmas!

**DECEMBER 7 – SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**Mk 1:1-8**

**INTRODUCING JESUS**

Jesus had an amazing way of introducing himself. Instead of immediately entering the stage, he let his forerunner take the limelight. John the Baptist, the forerunner, behaved as prophesied. The Gospel-Reading of this Sunday brings us to the prophesy of Isaiah which aptly describes the vocation of John the Baptist as the voice. As the voice, John the Baptist was a success in creating sound. He was indeed an attention-getter. Even his appearance stood out from the fashion trend of the time: camel's hair woven together to provide the cloth and a leather belt to go with it. John the Baptist cut an extraordinary profile so that it would be impossible for anyone to ignore his presence, much less his words. The words of John the Baptist remain meaningless unless they point to Jesus. Jesus is the message of John's voice without whom the preaching of the Baptist explodes into plain noise. John the Baptist was utterly frank about it. For those who were taking him too seriously, John himself warned not to expect much from him, he was not the Messiah. He was simply preparing the center stage for the real one. But alas! The people then as they are today were prone to believe in the magic of the outlandish. They thought that since redemption is of God, it could not be found in their midst. They all went to seek for the Baptist in the desert in the mistaken belief that only there God could be found. Indeed God was there, only because there Jesus did willingly follow John to give guarantee to the veracity of his

preaching. Later, Jesus brought back the pulpit to the villages and towns: the common place. Jesus himself appeared scandalously ordinary that the people missed John. The people loved the voice and forgot altogether to where it was pointing. It was pointing to the "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). But sheep and lambs, for that matter, were a dozen a dime in Israel. This introduction to Jesus did not trigger an avalanche of followers. It would take time before the voice that was John sink deep into the hearts of the people to lead them into the recognition of the real message of the voice in the desert. Without Jesus, the voice of John would be meaningless.

What happened then continues to happen today. Worse, nowadays, we do not even care for John the Baptist anymore. We lost the voice and the Word together. We heed to the noise of Christmas instead: jingle bells, chestnuts cracking on the open fire, fireworks on display. Well, for us this is Christmas: the most festive celebration of the year. Is it because Christ has come into our lives? Not necessarily. Just plain revelry, good for business: This is Christmas today.

Christmas without Jesus? John the Baptist must be turning his back in the grave.



## **DECEMBER 14 – THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**Jn 1:6-8, 19-28**

### **GOOD-BYE SHADOWS; WELCOME THE LIGHT!**

John the Baptist's preaching announces the end. Without doubt John the Baptist is a great prophet, the greatest most probably, for standing at the threshold of grace. But precisely for being at the crossroads, he had seen the past but was unsure of the future. He could not preach the era of grace which certainly only Jesus could preach. After all, Jesus is himself the source of grace. John the Baptist could only preach the end of an epoch, the sunset presaging the dawn. No wonder his preaching style still smacks of a threat which is necessary to warn his folks on the danger of vacillating between fidelity and infidelity to Yahweh. Like Moses of old, he was leading a stiff necked people to the Promised Land without the guarantee that he himself would see the fruits of his labor. When his cousin arrived, he would sink into oblivion. His cousin must increase, he must definitely decrease. After all, he was only the forerunner of his cousin – his Lord and God.

John preached a terrible message. He warned his people that if they would not repent they were surely go where even angels fear to tread: "Bear fruits worthy of repentance!... Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Lk 3: 8-9) With all this preaching, John failed to mention one thing: If we are sure where we will go when we refuse to repent, the big question is where we will go when we do repent. John was silent

about this question. He would not know the answer either. Only Jesus would. For Jesus comes from the Father, that is why he is the only one who knows how to return to him. John knew this as he recognized that his own vocation no matter how lofty did not exclude him from the need of redemption. He too was excited at the coming of the promised redeemer. Not only the coming of the Messiah would prove him right. More than this, it would make the human state of sin a thing of the past. John the Baptist was just too happy to welcome a new era. Good-bye shadows, welcome the light. Redemption is at hand!

**DECEMBER 21 – FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT/  
THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE  
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

**Lk 1:26-38**

**BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART**

It's always Christmas for Mary. She is one person whom the angels alluded to in their song of rejoicing during that first Christmas night: "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Lk 2:14) In what sense is Mary the most favored among God's children. She is exempted from sin right from her conception. And why not? She is destined to be the Mother of God. From her, the Son of God inherits his humanity. If Mary is as sinful as we are, Jesus gets a humanity infected by sin and becomes one among us in everything even in sin. How can Jesus save us from sin if he himself needs to be saved from it? So with divine foresight, God deigned to exempt Mary from sin to keep the Son who would be born from her sinless too. Mary fits in this role perfectly. Her purity of heart has kept her vision clear and far reaching. Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary her destiny to be the Mother of God and right away she accepted it. No affected modesty, no sign of vacillation, no inclination to procrastination, she gave her reply right away: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word." (Lk 1:38)

That we cannot see clearly the will of God is brought about by our sinfulness. Possessed by our sinful desires, we lost that

purity of heart which focused our life's direction on just one: God. Without that purity of heart, how can we expect ourselves to see the kingdom of God? Is not the reward for those with the purity of heart the vision of God? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Mt 5:8) Christmas is one crucial test to find out whether we possess this clarity of vision brought about by purity of heart. A child born in a manger, the King of Kings entering the world he created in utmost poverty, a play of contrast so unbelievable that we would rather reject Christmas than say "Amen"!

Mary's "Amen" is an expression of an everlasting faith. Her "Amen" to the Archangel during his visit was just the beginning. Mary was never scandalized by the poverty of Christmas. Her clear vision brought about by her absolute purity of heart would be tested even more at the foot of the cross. As the redemption story would attest, Mary's faith was unwavering from the beginning to the end. She did not only see God in the child born from her in the manger; she saw God even more in her adult Son dying on the cross. Mary saw God from the womb to the tomb. Thus, she deserves to see God beyond death, in her Son's resurrection. Mary is indeed the best proof that God rewards all those who are pure in heart. They will infallibly see God.

**DECEMBER 25 – SOLEMNITY OF THE BIRTH  
OF CHRIST**

**Lk 2:1-14 / Jn 1:1-18**

**DOES CHRISTMAS CANONIZE POVERTY?**

Both Gospel-Readings of Christmas , one at midnight Mass (Lk 2:1-14), and the other, during the day (Jn 1:1-18) speak of poverty in glowing terms. Luke sounds more historical, painting for us the first Christmas night as colorful as the Nativity Scene we traditionally display in the cribs of our churches. John, on the other hand, projects a more ethereal vision of the Son of God coming from heaven falling to earth like a fiery meteor to end finally as part of this material world. Differing in form and matter, both Gospel-Readings seem to be preaching there is nothing so much blessed than to be poor. After all, the Son of God was born from a poor couple, born in a poor stable, visited first by poor shepherds. In conclusion, is there any expression so effective to proclaim this poverty than John's cryptic but highly theological statement that "the Word became flesh and lived among us."? With all this exaltation of poverty in the Scriptural readings on Christmas, does it really mean that the birth of Jesus has indeed canonized poverty?

Our affirmation of poverty as though an imperative in Christian living opens the gates of criticisms from within and without our ranks that this alleged teaching of Christianity explains the inertia why many Christians do not get involved in working for the material prosperity of this earth. They always hope for things to get better in the afterlife. Meanwhile, they walk with eyes turned upwards just waiting for Jesus to drop

all of a sudden from the sky. This comment is usually done to caricature the real intent of Christian poverty. Those who spread this position allegedly as Christian teaching has definitely no in-depth knowledge of Christian doctrine, much less, of the Gospel-message as taught and practiced by Jesus himself. Christian poverty does not mean to instill idleness by promoting a false hope that God will do everything and that there is nothing left for humans to do except to wait and get served. If this were so, Christianity is indeed blameworthy for all the destitution mankind suffers today. This kind of poverty is no poverty at all. It is plain misery.

Christian poverty as the essential teaching itself of the *Beatitudes* (Lk 6:20/Mt 5:30) speaks of God's justice more than anything else. This justice is not the jaundiced kind which characterizes human justice where the balance of justice is generally one-sided. The justice, which the *Beatitudes*, for being the constitution itself of the Kingdom of God promotes, is *mercy with equity*. Because the citizens of the Kingdom are not greedy, they do not indulge in superfluities of whatever kind. If they have extras which they do not need, they share these with those who do. Thus, the resulting order is one of *communion*: no one is so poor that he has nothing to share and no one is so rich as to exclude reliance on others. Well, this is the poverty we witness in the crib we set up in our homes during Christmas. The rich are there – the Magi with all their choicest treasures – and the poor as well – the shepherds with nothing but their hearts. They all meet in the presence of the Child, the ruler of the Kingdom where the poor and the poor in spirit are happily welcome. On Christmas, Christian poverty has really proven its mettle: It does not impoverish, it enriches.

May the poverty of Christmas be with us all!

## **DECEMBER 28 – FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

**Lk 2:22-40**

### **THE MISSIONARY FAMILY**

This is true love: that those who commune in love do not so much look at each other as much as look at one direction. This love lives in the common mission of the lovers. This is missionary love. This is the kind of love which reigns in the Holy Family.

The physical setting itself of sacramental matrimony attests to the missionary dimension of family building. The bride and the groom stand side by side without facing each other but instead, facing the altar. Would it not be more romantic if the bride and the groom face each other all throughout the ceremony? Maybe. But romance is not the sole purpose of marriage. More than romance, family-building which includes not only the narrow confines of blood relationships but extends to a network of loving relationships in the universal Church gives marriage its missionary dimension. Why do the bride and the groom exchange their vows facing the altar instead of facing each other? Because every altar has a cross, and every cross has Christ. The commitment they enter into at the sacrament of matrimony is not just between themselves but between them as wedded couple, on the one side and Jesus and his Church, on the other. United, they have a mission to fulfill: to promote the Kingdom of God on earth.

The answer of Jesus to Mary's query serves as a reminder not only to his Mother but to us all of this oft-forgotten meaning

of marriage. To the question – “Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” (Lk 2:44) – Jesus made a ground-breaking statement which would re-orient the goal of all families for all times: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:49) Such reply was a moving reminder to Mary, Joseph and all of us what should bind the family together. Not a sentimental bond which could not go beyond blood relationship but a principle thicker than blood itself. With the Holy Family, all families should recognize and embrace this sole principle of unity: The Spirit which binds together the Father and the Son in one loving communion. Only when this same Spirit comes to dwell in our families will all of us experience ourselves as one universal family. So, let the Holy Spirit come to us all and engrave in the hearts of families a missionary character. Only then we shall see the genuine renewal of the world. At last, there will indeed be peace on earth.



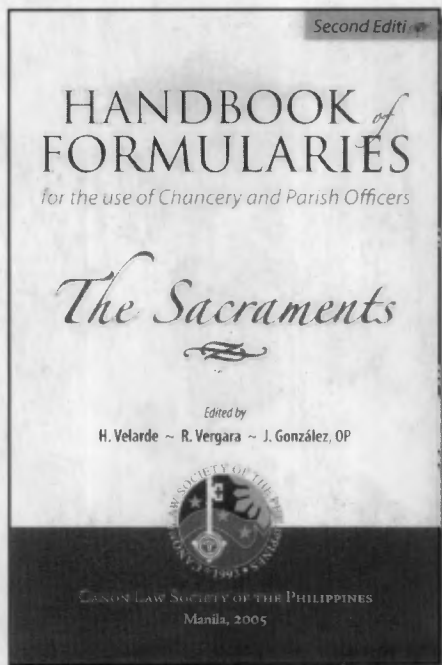
# ATTENTION: Chancellors and Parish Priests

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- ☐ Certificate of Baptism ...
- ☐ Permission to Baptize in a private house ...
- ☐ Authorization to correct or change entry in baptismal registry ...
- ☐ Declaration of parenthood by an unwed mother or father ...
- ☐ Appointments to / Removal from Offices ...
- ☐ Transfer of Parish Priest ...
- ☐ Profession of Faith / Oath Taking ...
- ☐ Penal Procedures ...
- ☐ Other prescribed forms for the different Sacraments ...?

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