

## CATHOLIC HIERARCHY OF THE PHILIPPINES

### PASTORAL LETTER ON THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER "HUMANAE VITAE"

*To the Very Reverend Clergy and the  
Catholic People of the Philippines*

Grace and Peace from our Lord, Jesus Christ.

In Bogota, last August 24th, the Holy Father said to the Latin American Bishops, when he opened their second General Assembly: "Speak, speak, preach, write, take a position, as is said, in harmony of plan and intention, for the defense and elucidation of the truths of the faith, on the actuality of the Gospel, on the questions which interest the life of the faithful and the defense of Christian morality, on the ways which lead to dialogue with the separated brethren, on the drama, now great and beautiful, now sad and dangerous, of contemporary civilization."<sup>1</sup>

By these words, the Holy Father has reaffirmed a pastoral function which the bishops of the whole Catholic world have considered more urgent now than ever before. In the fulfillment of this function, it was our intention to issue this Joint Pastoral Letter on the *Humanae Vitae* during our next plenary meeting to be held in January 1969.

But, while the sentiments of loyalty to the authority of the Holy Father and the sincere acceptance of his teaching on the part of the majority of his flock have scarcely been mentioned in the international press, the adverse comments coming from a relatively small portion of the faithful have been played up. And there is danger that this adverse

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<sup>1</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, Sept. 5, 1968.

publicity might affect the filial attitude of respect and reverence of our people towards the person of the Vicar of Christ on earth.

So without waiting for our plenary meeting in January, We have decided to issue this Pastoral Letter now, on this day of the Feast of the Maternity of Our Blessed Mother.

## I

For the past few years a good portion of the Catholic world had been waiting for the decision of the Holy Father on the question of the regulation of birth. Now that he has given us, his children in Christ, the right moral guidance, "by virtue of the mandate entrusted to Us by Christ," it behooves us all to accept his word with filial love and to follow it faithfully and loyally, since it is the word of the one who now sits on the chair of St. Peter. He and the other Apostles were constituted by Christ "as guardians and authentic interpreters of all the moral law, that is to say, not only of the law of the Gospel, but also of the natural law which is likewise an expression of the will of God, the faithful fulfillment of which is equally necessary for salvation."<sup>2</sup>

The nature and importance of the Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* were described by Pope Paul VI himself in Bogota when he said: "...the law which We have reaffirmed involves a strong moral sense and a courageous spirit of sacrifice. God will bless this worthy Christian attitude. It is not a blind race towards overpopulation; it does not diminish the responsibility or the liberty of husband and wife and does not forbid them a moral and reasonable limitation of birth: it does not hinder any lawful therapy or the progress of scientific research. It is a moral and spiritual education that is coherent and profound; it excludes the use of means which profane marital relations and which aim at resolving the great problems of population with overfacile expedients; it is, ultimately, a defense of life, the gift of God, the glory of the family, the strength of the people."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Humanae Vitae*, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, ib.

In spite of this, there has been opposition to the Encyclical even from among Catholics. This was, however, to be expected. The Holy Father says: "It can be foreseen that this teaching will perhaps not be easily received by all: too numerous are those voices—amplified by the modern means of propaganda -- which are contrary to the voice of the Church. To tell the truth, the Church is not surprised to be made, like her divine Founder, a 'sign of contradiction'; yet she does not because of this cease to proclaim with humble firmness the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical."<sup>4</sup>

But the Encyclical Letter is the best defense of itself. If studied conscientiously by a Catholic, with an open mind, free from the prejudices that propaganda has planted in the minds of many in favor of artificial regulation of birth, it cannot fail to convince the reader of the soundness of the position the Holy Father has taken.

For this reason, We exhort you, faithful children of the Church, to read the Encyclical in its entirety and to ponder upon its teachings in the presence of God. But do not look at the question from the point of view of "an utterly materialistic conception of man himself and of his life," as Pope John XXIII advised when he wrote about recent developments of the social question,<sup>5</sup> for then you will find unacceptable the courage and spirit of sacrifice it calls for. Since this is a question which affects your Christian life, it must be viewed with supernatural faith. Anthrope-centered humanism cannot be the guiding principle of Christian living.

The Encyclical is not concerned merely about the prohibition of acts which are "intrinsically dishonest". Rather, it stresses the beauty and dignity of conjugal love. It states very clearly that it has its origin in God, Who is Love, that it has been elevated to sacramental dignity, that the interpersonal communion of the spouses is a symbol of the union of Christ and the Church. The document brings to light and explains the characteristic marks of conjugal love: that it belongs not only to the physical nature of man but also to his spirit, that is why it is fully

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<sup>4</sup> *Humanæ Vitæ*, No. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Humanæ Vitæ*, No. 23.

human; that it is a special friendship in which the spouses make a total gift of self to each other; that it is faithful and exclusive until death; and that, in its fecundity, it overflows into the raising up of children.

Marriage is a wise institution established by God to realize in and for mankind his design of love. The chaste intimacy of husband and wife is "noble and worthy" and it is ordained toward their mutual perfection and to collaborate with God in the generation and education of new lives.

On the pastoral aspect of the question, the Encyclical teaches three points of doctrine pertaining to the Christian life of Catholic couples, to wit: a) that "It is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life"<sup>6</sup>; b) that Christians should learn to master instinct with the aid of ascetical practices; c) that supported by their Christian faith and hope, by persevering prayer and by the frequent reception of the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance, Catholic couples will be able to surmount the difficulties that this teaching of the Church entails.

That is why the Holy Father exhorts priests, "by vocation the counsellors and spiritual guides of individual persons and of families," "to expound the Church's teaching on marriage without ambiguity"; but this "must ever be accompanied by patience and goodness, such as the Lord Himself gave example of in dealing with men. Having come not to condemn but to save, He was intransigent with evil, but merciful towards individuals."<sup>7</sup>

The Holy Father's hope is that, "In their difficulties, may married couples always find, in the words and in the heart of a priest, the echo of the voice and of the love of the Redeemer."<sup>8</sup>

## II

For this reason We now want to address ourselves more in particular to you, our beloved Clergy. We are confident that you have ac-

<sup>6</sup> *Mt.* 7, 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Humanae Vitae*, Nos. 28 and 29.

<sup>8</sup> *Humanae Vitae*, No. 29.

cepted this Encyclical with loyalty and obedience. At the same time We are aware of a special pastoral problem you may encounter with those who would come to you with difficulties of conscience, especially those who are honestly convinced that the use of artificial contraceptives is not contrary to moral law. Since their conscience must be their guide on matters of morals, you might find it hard to give a satisfactory solution to this pastoral problem. So let us devote a part of this Letter to this aspect of the question.

To begin with, We cannot dismiss the prohibition contained in the Encyclical as a trivial matter. Refusal to accept it is a serious matter of disobedience because by its nature it is an authoritative teaching which commands assent. The Holy Father said in a general audience a few days after he signed the Encyclical: "To you We shall say only a few words, not so much of the document, as on some of the feelings that filled Our mind during the long period of its preparation. The first feeling was that of a very grave responsibility. It led Us into and sustained Us in the very heart of the problem during the four years devoted to the study and preparation of this Encyclical. We confide to you that this feeling caused Us much spiritual suffering. Never before have We felt so heavily, as in this situation, the burden of Our office. We studied, read and discussed as much as We could and We also prayed very much about it... We read the scientific reports about the alarming population problems in the world, often backed up by the studies of experts and by government programmes. Publications reached Us from all parts of the world, some inspired by the examination of particular scientific aspects of the problem, others by a realistic aspects of the problem, others by a realistic reflection on serious sociological conditions, and still others by the pressing considerations of the changes invading every sector of modern life. How often have We felt almost overwhelmed by this mass of documentation! ..."<sup>9</sup> The Holy Father certainly does not consider this a matter of little consequence.

Conscience is the judgement that one makes about the morality of actions. It is the proximate and immediate subjective rule by which man determines the moral category of his action: whether it is right or

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<sup>9</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Aug. 8, 1968.

wrong, good or bad. This subjective rule is, of course, his individual application of the objective standard of morality, the law.

The II Vatican Council says this about conscience: "In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God, for whom he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious."<sup>10</sup> In another document, the Council says: "The gospel has a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice."<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, every one knows that conscience can and does make mistakes. As a non-Catholic author says: "Conscience is not infallible... A too self-confident conscience is a moral peril."<sup>12</sup> And this is because being a judgement, the principles, premises and data that the mind has at its disposal could be wrong, or the process of its actual thinking could be misdirected. That is why, in opposition to correct or right conscience, there is also a false, lax, scrupulous and pharisaic conscience as well as a certain or a doubtful conscience.

The importance of a correct conscience is stated by the Council this way: "Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths... Hence the more that a correct conscience holds sway, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by objective norms of morality."<sup>13</sup>

But how is the function of conscience to be applied to the task of transmitting human life? The Council says: "The parents themselves should ultimately make this judgement, in the sight of God. But in their manner of acting, spouses should be aware that they cannot proceed arbitrarily. They must always be governed according to a conscience dutifully conformed to the divine law itself, and should be sub-

<sup>10</sup> Decl. *On Religious Freedom*, No. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Const. *The Church in the Modern World*, No. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Fern, *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

<sup>13</sup> *The Church in the Modern World*, No. 16.

missive toward the Church's teaching office, which authentically interprets that law in the light of the Gospel."<sup>14</sup> "Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of regulating procreation which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law."<sup>15</sup>

If, according to this teaching, when making a decision about "methods of regulating procreation," conscience must be guided by the law of God as interpreted by the teaching office of the Church, then one of the premises of its judgement has to be the answer to the question: "What is the teaching of the magisterium of the Church on this matter?"

We have the answer in the Encyclical. Once more the teaching office of the Church has spoken. Pope Paul VI repeats what he says is the constant teaching of the Church. So to form a right and certain conscience on this matter, We have the doctrine contained in the Encyclical as a sure guide.

However to many children of the Church what makes the formulation of a right conscience on this matter more difficult are opinions that have been voiced either opposing outright the position taken by the Holy Father or indirectly insinuating that a thinking Catholic has really no obligation to heed his voice.

Let us examine briefly some of these opinions.

A) It has been said that Paul VI did not intend his Encyclical to be the last word on life and love; that he made it clear he did not intend to make an irreformable statement since the question is still in a stage of development.

The Holy Father did say, two days after the Encyclical was introduced to the press: "It (the Encyclical) clarifies a fundamental chapter in the personal, married, family and social life of man, but it is not a complete treatment regarding man in this sphere of marriage, of the family and of moral probity. This is an immense field to which

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* No. 50.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* No. 51.

the Magisterium of the Church could and perhaps should return with a fuller, more organic and more synthetic exposition."<sup>16</sup>

But this does not mean that it is not necessary to obey the Encyclical because it is not yet a "complete treatment" of the matter in question and so it may still be developed and changed. If we adopt the criterion that we may suspend our obedience to authority on the ground that what it prescribes is still under doctrinal development and therefore subject to change, then society itself will collapse. No law or discipline could ever be enforced for everyone would have the right to claim that the doctrinal basis of any given law can still stand further study and so he has no obligation in conscience to obey it until he decides that full growth has been achieved. And what doctrine, of whatever branch of learning could be classified as "fully developed"? Even in the case of defined teachings, without supposing for a moment that their dogmatic contents can change, our understanding of them is subject and will always be subject to growth.

When applied to the Church, this criterion stems from the modern tendency to water down its institutional character. The Holy Father denounced this tendency when he said to the CELAM: "The other doctrinal point concerns the so-called institutional Church, placed in confrontation with another alleged, so-called charismatic, Church, as if the first, communitarian and hierarchical, visible and responsible organized and disciplined, apostolic and sacramental, were an expression of a Christianity now transcended, while the other, spontaneous and spiritual, would be capable of interpreting Christianity for the adult man of contemporary civilization, and of giving an answer to the real and urgent problems of our time."<sup>17</sup>

But the truth that the Church is an institution visible and hierarchical, is a defined doctrine of faith. If by nature it is hierarchical, then its hierarchy is not just an ornamental feature of its life. That hierarchy has to function and its function is to serve the people of God

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<sup>16</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* No. 14.



through the sacramental life and the interpretation of the truth and the will of God. The criterion we have mentioned would render this function useless.

B) The II Vatican Council said: "This religious submission of will and of mind (religious assent of soul) must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. That is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgements made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will."<sup>18</sup>

Despite this doctrine, it has been said that if there is no infallible pronouncement, one has the right to disagree with the Holy Father, respectfully but with finality, because the same Council also gives everyone the duty and right "to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgements of conscience."<sup>19</sup> So it is affirmed that even if the conscience of an individual Catholic must respect and consider the teachings of *Humanae Vitae*, other elements of judgement may also determine equally its decision, such as the need of fostering love between husband and wife, family and social exigencies and the like. No one should abdicate his personal moral responsibility of judging for himself because before the judgement seat of God, no one will be able to justify himself by saying that he just followed what the Pope taught. Let us give some thought to this position.

There is no question at all that man must follow his conscience as his proximate rule of conduct. This has always been the constant teaching of the Church. The question here is: Is the official teaching of the Holy Father, even if not *ex cathedra* but solemn and intended for the whole Church, a decisive factor of conscience? When the Holy Father prohibits something that way, is there a duty on the part of a Catholic to say to himself in conscience: "I will not do this because the Church

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<sup>18</sup> *The Church*, No. 25.

<sup>19</sup> *On Religious Freedom*, No. 3.

prohibits it?" Is the official word of the Holy Father only as good as and no better than any other consideration to sway the conscience of a Catholic? Or to sum up these questions in one, when the Council said that everyone has "the right to form for himself right and true judgements of conscience," did it repudiate its other statement that the judgements of the supreme magisterium, even if not *ex cathedra*, must be "sincerely adhered to"?

We cannot suppose that what the Council says in one place, it discards in another place. Therefore, the only sensible answer is to say that the "right to form judgement of conscience" is delimited by the duty to "adhere sincerely" to the judgements of the supreme magisterium, even when they are not given *ex cathedra*. The right is not absolute; it is conditioned by a duty. We do not have to be told that there is no right enjoyed by man in this world which is not limited by a duty.

To what we have already quoted above to prove this, we may add the following from the declaration itself on Religious Freedom: "In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church. The Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that Truth which is Christ himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself."<sup>20</sup>

In this position, we are examining, We find a danger that the objective moral order may be totally scrapped. If we equate the value of the teachings of an encyclical on matters of faith and morals with that of one's own conclusions, then nothing can stop a person from applying this same procedure not only to the regulation of birth but also to any moral question whatsoever. Abortion, divorce, euthanasia, graft and corruption, drug addiction, drunkenness, racial prejudice, lying, pornography, etc., etc., the whole gamut of the Christian moral order, aside from what is explicitly revealed and declared to be so by an ex

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* No. 14.

cathedra pronouncement will become a matter of one's own personal judgement, since each individual will have the power to pass judgement, for the use of his own conscience, on the acceptability of the moral teachings of the Church. The end of this road is clearly situation ethics, if not the so-called personal ethics.

This would all be very well if moral truth were just a matter of private study or of "private interpretation" of the Word of God. But this is not so in the Catholic context of morality. We in the Church believe that Christ meant what He said when He promised Peter: "I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you shall declare unlawful upon earth shall be held unlawful in heaven; whatever you shall declare lawful upon earth shall be held lawful in heaven."<sup>21</sup> As two Protestant versions render this text: "...what you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and what you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven."<sup>22</sup> "Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven; and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."<sup>23</sup>

So if Christ gave this function of prohibiting and permitting to Peter, there is no loss of dignity, as has been averred, in appearing before Christ and saying that one simply obeyed Peter in the conduct of his life.

Neither would it be an abdication of his personal moral responsibility of judging for himself if one were to permit his conscience to be guided in fact by the teaching office of the Holy Father. We should not forget that, because of the words of Christ we have just quoted, accepting the moral guidance of and obeying that teaching office is a moral responsibility of the Catholic. "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them... and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Mat. 16, 19* — (New Confraternity Translation).

<sup>22</sup> *The New English Bible*, translated by Protestant bodies of England, and printed by Oxford and by Cambridge University Press.

<sup>23</sup> *The Moffatt Translation*.

<sup>24</sup> *Mat. 28, 19-20*.

Any sensible person should have the humility to accept the fact that he can err. If he is a Catholic, mental honesty demands that he stand ready to revise his conclusions in the presence of the extrinsic evidence of the Holy Father's decision. This is not a question of pitting his intelligence against that of the Holy Father. It is only a simple matter of accepting some facts; a) that the Holy Father acted with all prudence in his quest for the right decision<sup>25</sup>; b) that he has the right to prohibit given to him by Christ; c) that he has the assistance of the Holy Spirit on matters of important decisions like this one of *Humanae Vitae*; and d) that the II Vatican Council, also assisted by the Holy Spirit, according to Catholic belief, declared that the judgements of the supreme teaching of the Church "must be adhered to," even when not speaking *ex cathedra*.

Therefore We believe that after this Encyclical, a Catholic can form the judgement of his conscience this way: "The Holy Father has the right given by Christ to forbid or to allow a moral action. He has forbidden artificial regulation of birth. And he has done it in the most solemn way short of an infallible pronouncement. And he has not acted lightly or capriciously. And he says that what he forbids is intrinsically wrong. And he has the charism of the assistance of the Holy Spirit on matters of this kind, which I do not enjoy in my private studies. And the II Vatican Council says that I must follow his teachings. So I accept his pastoral and moral guidance."

Before we finish this section of our Letter we want to remind you, our beloved Clergy, that the great majority of our faithful because of their lack of religious training and higher education, are not in a position to form their conscience with an elaborate judgement and after an exhaustive study on matters of faith and morals. In their unflinching Christian faith, they accept the teachings of the Church because they believe that she is the Church of Christ. On this question, as on other questions pertaining to their Christian life, they will accept the teaching of the Holy Father if it is clearly and logically explained to them. On the strength of that teaching, they will form their conscience.

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<sup>25</sup> *Humanae Vitae*, Nos. 5 and 6.

As Pastors of this flock, We are happy to note that among our Clergy and our leaders of the lay apostolate, not one voice was raised in public against the Encyclical. But in case, after serious study, somebody comes to have opinions which differ from the doctrine of the Encyclical, We most earnestly ask him not to substitute his own personal convictions for the teachings of the Holy Father when he teaches the people of God either from the pulpit, from the platform, in the confessional or in the classroom. After all, they are primarily the flock of Peter, and only secondarily his. It would be a kind of pride and presumption if he practically says to our people: "This is the teaching of the Pope, but do not believe him; you should rather follow me for my doctrine is true and his is false." We say this because when one thinks that he is a better scholar than the Holy Father, there is a great temptation to adopt that stance.

We are not asking you to tell our people that you agree with the Holy Father if in conscience you do not. We are only asking you to teach them what the Holy Father has taught, as his teaching, not necessarily as yours. After all it is not really proper to use the pulpit and the confessional as channels of our own private feelings and personal interests.

### III

We are inclined to believe that the opposition to the Encyclical, even from some Catholics, is not just a strange phenomenon in an otherwise close-knit society, "united in mind and voice,"<sup>26</sup> belonging to "one Body, one Spirit," and possessing "one faith, one baptism,"<sup>27</sup> as St. Paul envisioned the people of God to be.

The thinking of some Catholics in regard to the teachings of the Church, a thinking which will necessarily affect their conscience, has been influenced by what the Holy Father referred to last April when he said in a general audience: "After the Council the Church enjoyed, and is still enjoying, a magnificent re-awakening that We are pleased

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<sup>26</sup> *Rom.* 15, 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Eph.* 4, 4-5.

to recognize and encourage. But the Church has suffered and is still suffering from ideas and facts that are certainly not in accordance with the Holy Spirit, and give no promise of that vital renewal promoted and promised by the Council. An idea with a twofold meaning has made strides even in Catholic circles. This is the idea of change, which for many has taken the place of the idea of "aggiornamento," presaged by Pope John of venerable memory. In the face of the evidence and contrary to all justice they attribute to that most faithful Shepherd of the Church ideas, which are not ideas of reform, but which are even destructive of the teaching and discipline of the Church."<sup>28</sup>

Those "ideas and facts that are not in accordance with the Holy Spirit," that "idea of change" which is falsely presented as "aggiornamento," those "ideas which are destructive of the teaching and discipline of the Church" are constantly given wide publicity by a certain segment of the press and the impression this publicity creates is that whatever is against *any and all* traditional teachings of the Church is to be held as the true "aggiornamento" and whatever is in opposition to this kind of "aggiornamento" is simply "integralism fostered by arch-conservatives." This attitude could be at the root of the opposition to the *Humanae Vitae* even from quarters which were expected to be strong in faith and in reverence to the teaching office of the Vicar of Christ on earth. Knowing the existence of "destructive ideas" in the Church, the Holy Father already predicted this opposition in the Encyclical itself.

In a rather forceful manner, the Holy Father summarized these "destructive ideas" when he said to the Bishops in Bogota: "...we are tempted by historicism, relativism, suggestivism, neo-positivism, which introduce into the field of the faith a spirit of subversive criticism and a false persuasion that, to approach and evangelize the men of our time, we must renounce the doctrinal patrimony, accumulated for centuries by the Magisterium of the Church, and that, not only by a greater clarity of expression, but by altering dogmatic content, we can shape a new Christianity, made to the measure of men, and not to the measure of the authentic word of God. Unfortunately also among us some theo-

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<sup>28</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, May 2, 1968.

logians are not always on the right path. We have a great esteem for, and a great need of the function of good and capable theologians; they can be providential scholars and skilled expounders of the faith if they themselves remain intelligent disciples of the ecclesiastical Magisterium, constituted by Christ the custodian and interpreter, by virtue of the Paraclete Spirit of His message of eternal truth. But today some have recourse to ambiguous doctrinal expressions, and others arrogate to themselves the permission to proclaim their own personal opinions, on which they confer that authority, which they, more or less covertly, question in him who by divine right possesses such a protected and awesome charism; and they even consent that each one in the Church may think and believe what he wants, thus fall back into that liberty of examination which fragmented the unity of the Church itself, and confusing legitimate freedom of moral conscience with a misunderstood 'freedom of thought,' often in error because of insufficient knowledge of genuine religious truths."<sup>29</sup>

Now speaking of theologians, it is not only the Holy Father who has raised his voice against this "restlessness which troubles certain sectors of the Catholic world itself."<sup>30</sup> Famous theologians have spoken about it too.

Fr. Henri de Lubac, S.J., writing a few months ago, says: "The crisis sweeping over us today is a general crisis in which we are all caught up. As Teilhard already foresaw, it has a cosmic amplitude. It is heralded by a deep and universal confusion of minds and causes many disorderly eddies. . .

"Already, in cases that are only too frequent, under the ambiguous names of 'post-conciliar church,' or 'new church' *it is another Church than that of Jesus Christ that risks being set up—if it is possible to speak of setting up to designate a phenomenon which is above all one of abandonment and disintegration.*

"It is not those with a yearning for the past, stubborn traditionalists or opponents on principles who tell us so; it is not 'integrist' or

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* Sept. 5, 1968.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

sad spirits, or apprehensive beings, who dread all innovations. It is many of the best workers of the desired renewal.”

Then he mentions such pioneers of true renewal as Msgr. Christopher Butler, Joseph Ratzinger, Cardinal Doepfner, Yves Congar, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Msgr. Dumont and Father Villain who have given warnings about this crisis in the Church.

And he continues: “But how can we continue to remain silent today, when we are witnessing in so many cases, such a surrender of Christian intelligence, when we see the levity with which ecclesiastics, forgetful of the hearing that their title gives them, launch so many aberrant ideas which have not even the merit of being due to personal reflection? Are we to be always the dumbfounded or absent-minded witnesses of this unmaking of faith and of ‘this amazing flattening of Christianity’ which naively takes itself as being the last word in progress?”

Farther down in these quoted portions of his work, the same author says something which perhaps will explain the “conscience” of some Catholics over this Encyclical: “To those affected by it (a kind of collective giddiness), all the vital points seem threatened at the same time: suddenly discovering all the problems and imagining that no one had seen them hitherto, they let themselves be persuaded that *the most ruinous solutions* are necessary. Consequently, as the result of contempt, which is often based on ignorance and which becomes deliberate ignorance and rejection, *Catholic conscience* is cut off from everything that nourished it, it wilts, and thus finds itself handed over, empty, unprotected, to all outside solicitations. It is no longer able to see itself except *through the eyes of an unbelieving world.*”<sup>21</sup>

We have taken pains to quote Fr. de Lubac at length because we want you to realize, dear children of the Church, that it is not the so-called “integralists” or “arch-conservatives” who are alarmed at the post-conciliar apostasy presented under the guise of “renewal,” a “gospel

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<sup>21</sup> *Christ to the World*, 1968, Vol. XIII, No. 3, pp. 249-252.



which, while claiming to be still 'Christian', aims at replacing the Gospel of Jesus"<sup>32</sup>; it is theologians of the calibre of de Lubac and the names he cites—add the name of Jean Danielou—who call on us to beware of innovators who "are busy, for the moment, sketching, as in a 'freehand drawing,' *all kinds of possible new Christianities*," as von Balthasar says.<sup>33</sup>

This author exclaims: "*The situation of the Church is deadly serious today! . . . How, I ask you, is the Christian to behave when he hears a sermon explaining that the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost are only coverings of mythical images, permitted by God in past times, whereas today they must be replaced by quite different ways of expression? I ask the bishops: is the person listening to such a sermon dispensed from divine service? May he, must he, perhaps, leave this divine service? . . .*"<sup>34</sup>

But it is not enough for us to bewail this crisis of faith in the Church. On the positive side, we should ask ourselves: What true Catholic doctrine should I profess? The answer was given by the Holy Father when, at the closing liturgy of the Year of Faith, he made a profession of Faith which, he said, "repeats in substance the Creed of Nicea, the creed of the immortal Tradition of the Holy Church of God," "with some developments called for by the spiritual condition of our time." In the introduction of the Profession of Faith, he says: "We have wished our profession of faith to be to a high degree complete and explicit, in order that it may respond in a fitting way to the need of light felt by so many faithful souls, and by all those in the world, to whatever spiritual family they belong, who are in search of the Truth."<sup>35</sup>

We exhort you, then, dear children of the Church in the Philippines, to study seriously this Creed, to adhere to it faithfully in spite of the lures of "new christianities and new gospels," and to recite it in the presence of the Lord in the true spirit of faith.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, July 11, 1968.

“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind. . . .”<sup>30</sup>

For the Catholic Bishops’ Conference  
of the Philippines:

✠ LINO R. GONZAGA  
Archbishop of Zamboanga  
President

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<sup>30</sup> *Eph.* 1, 17-18.