

# HOMILETICS

## BIBLICAL NOTES AND OUTLINES FOR HOMILIES FOR JUNE

by

**Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.**

### SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY (June 1st, 1980)

**First Reading: Proverbs 8:22-31:** Divine Wisdom in this passage is the closest approach in the Old Testament pages to a plurality of persons in God. St. Paul would make the final equation: Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:21), the firstborn of all creatures (Col. 1:15). And St. John would state clearly: The Word is God (Jn. 1:1); and God's Word is his Wisdom by which he created all things (v. 3). Here is this passage, which is a poetic strophe, Wisdom is begotten before anything else existed in the entire universe. In v. 22, the verb "qana" means "to acquire by birth" as in Gen. 4:1, and is thus correctly translated "begot" (by NAB) in preference to "created" (JB, RSV). Wisdom's role in creation is to be God's architect, his mighty plan by which and with which he brought into existence the variety of the universe and its beauty (like Jn. 1:3). Wisdom is always pleasing to God (as was Jesus in Jn. 8:29), and is eminently in love with man, God's masterpiece. All creatures reflect God's Wisdom, his blueprint in creating them. In the New Testament, all this is said of the incarnate divine Word.

**Second Reading: Romans 5:1-5.** A Pauline trinitarian passage, expressly mentioning all three Persons (God, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Man has been set right (justified) and has peace with God (the Father) through Jesus Christ the Lord. By accepting Christ (faith), man enjoys God's favor at present, and hope gives him exceedingly great expectations for the future: to possess the very glory of God. Sufferings and trials do not diminish that hope, for it is founded on the immense love of God for him. This love has been poured out into his heart by the Holy Spirit, God's Gift of Love who is the source of all created love. Notice that all three divine Persons are active in bringing about man's well-being and salvation.

**Reading of the Good News: John 16:12-15.** The Holy Spirit of truth will complete the spiritual enlightenment of the believing community, begun by Christ, the Teacher. He will guide them into grasping more fully the Mystery which is Christ, as well as his message. All that the Spirit communicates, he receives from the Son who in turn receives it from the Father. Thus all revelation has its source in the Triune God. Theology will later draw from this passage the truth of one divine nature, possessed by the Father and communicated through the Son to the Spirit.

By giving the believing community an ever deeper understanding of the content of revelation, but especially of Christ and his Paschal Mystery, the Spirit gives great glory to the Son as the Son gave glory to the Father by manifesting him to men as the Father of love and compassion.

#### **OUTLINE FOR HOMILY: Father, Son and Spirit.**

**Introduction:** St. Patrick, it is said, was wont to explain to his Christians the mystery of the Blessed Trinity by a simple comparison. Stooping down he picked up a shamrock, which is a three-leaf clover. All three leaves are of equal size and quality, and they join at the stem to make one clover. This reminds you of the most Blessed Trinity. All three Persons are equal in all things yet they are One God, one divine Being.

1. Yes, the most Blessed Trinity is the great mystery of our holy faith. We hold it firmly in our Catholic belief, because Jesus has revealed it to us in his Gospel-message that "he and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30), and "the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father" (Jn. 14:26). But as a true Israelite, Jesus professed one and only God (Mk. 12:29). All down the centuries, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have fought strenuously to maintain this truth, though it took time to clarify it properly: One God in three divine Persons, equal in all things, equal in power and majesty, in holiness and beauty, in mercy and love: Father, Son and Spirit.

2. But Jesus did not only want us to believe this great mystery and then stow it away in a corner of our minds. He wants us to realize how meaningful it is to live this mystery. Each of the divine persons is very active in our individual lives: the Father loves us so much that he gives us his Son (Jn. 3:16) and gives him up to death for us (Gal. 2:20). The Son becomes our Brother and Savior, undergoing the victim death on the cross for our sakes to free us from the consequences of sin and death. The Spirit is poured out into our hearts and dwells there creating in them an atmosphere

of love and peace, as is mentioned in the second reading. Continually the Spirit is at work transforming the heart of man into active in our spiritual and temporal welfare because they love us. They constantly couple us with blessings so that our lives prove fruitful for time and eternity.

3. What is our response to the infinite love of the most blessed Trinity for us? Every Sunday, and often when reciting the rosary, we make a profession of faith. Aware of God's love, let us recite it joyfully and whole-heartedly, making it truly a profession of our inmost convictions. When we were baptized, we were immersed in the new atmosphere of the New Testament, which is that of the Trinity. Thus our prayers ought to revolve around all three persons of the Godhead. We pray through the Son, for he is our mediator with the Father, but we pray in the Spirit, for in that Spirit alone can we cry out "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). The Father is our ultimate goal as it was that of Jesus while he was on earth. He tended always and most faithfully toward the Father.

What a privilege it is to have entered into this perfect community of love: that of the Blessed Trinity, after which all community life is modeled. Someday in the vision of heaven we shall be given to see the beauty and the greatness of this mystery. Now in humble faith, let us believe and adore.

### SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (June 8th, 1980)

**First Reading: Genesis 14:18-20.** Melchizedek prefigures Christ the Priest. Even Jewish tradition considered the Messiah to be both king and priest (as was Melchizedek: Ps. 110: 1-4), and it also identified Salem with Jerusalem (Ps. 76:3), the local of Christ's priestly sacrifice. His name means "king of justice" or "my king is justice" while Salem has an assonance with shalom (peace), hence, king of peace (Heb. 7:2). He was priest of El-Elyon (the most high God) whom Abraham identifies with the Lord his God (v. 23). As priest Melchizedek offers a sacrificial meal of bread and wine in thanksgiving, the very elements chosen by Jesus for the eucharistic sacrificial meal of thanksgiving. Abraham is blessed by Melchizedek and gives him tithes, thus acknowledging his superiority, a point that is developed in Hb. 7:4-10. The blessing extends to all who are in the loins of Abraham, namely, the entire People of God, whom Christ has blessed with abundance of gifts.

**Second Reading: First Corinthians 11:23-26.** Together with 10:21, this is the earliest witness to the Eucharist (written about 56 A.D.) Paul either had the revelation directly from the Lord or the tradition from the Apostles. It contains clear statements about the nature of the Eucharist: 1) The Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ. The words are crystal clear (vv. 24-25) as is the inference from v. 29. In Greek it is simply stated: "This (is) my Body which (is) for you", body in the Hebrew mind meaning the whole person is so far as visibly perceptible, thus a sacrifice, all for them. Two figures of speech are employed in the second part: The container (cup) stands for what is contained in it (the Blood), and the effect (covenant) is mentioned instead of the cause (Blood, that is, the redemptive death). Christ's sacrifice of himself brought about the permanent covenant between God and man.

2) The Eucharist is a true sacrifice: Body and Blood are mentioned separately as a sign of sacrifice, in which the blood is always poured out. Then there is an inescapable allusion to the sacrifice of Mt. Sinai when the Old Covenant was sealed by the pouring out of the blood of animal sacrifices with the words: This is the blood of the covenant (Ex. 24: 8).

3) The Eucharistic sacrifice is one with that of Golgotha, for as often as it is celebrated, it proclaims the death of the Lord (v. 26), by re-enacting it, making it known and effective for all who participate.

4) The Apostles are empowered to perpetuate the very act which Christ performed: "Do this in remembrance of me" (vv. 24-25). This power passes on to their successors because it must be enacted "until he comes" (v. 26).

**Reading of the Good News: Luke 9:11b-17.** Luke recounts the multiplication of the loaves with details that are meant to symbolize the Eucharistic meal in the community for whom he is writing. Sunset was the time of the first Eucharistic meal. Jesus comes to the aid of a multitude hungry for food, and feeds them by multiplying bread. He will call himself the Bread of Life in a long discourse on the Eucharist (Jn. 6:35). The Early Church made the fish the symbol of Christ, since the Greek word for fish was an acrostic spelling "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" (Ichythys). The meal was to be taken in groupings, in orderly fashion. Jesus first offers a prayer of thanksgiving (the blessing), breaks the bread and gives it to the crowd through his ministers. All the fragments left over are gathered and preserved. Twelve may indicate that all twelve apostles gathered the fragments after distributing them. The action shows that Jesus frowned upon any waste of food, but it also points in Luke's mind to the care which the believing community takes to

preserve the particles of the Eucharist left over. This stupendous miracle manifests above all the limitless power and munificence of Jesus, who is likewise able to give himself to countless throngs in the Eucharist to satiate their hunger.

**OUTLINE FOR HOMILY: Hungry for the Life of Jesus.**

**Introduction:** It was in Africa. The chaplain was being called to the bedside of a 23 year old young man who had been blind since birth. Lying on his back he told his story: "My mother died when I was a baby. My father took me from place to place. When I was all ready for baptism, my father would move to another town. So I never got baptized. I beg you, baptize me now. Otherwise, after leaving the hospital, I will miss being baptized again!" He could read the Bible in Braille and he knew the whole story of Jesus. The sister in attendance gave him necessary instructions, and the chaplain baptized him with the name he wanted to bear: Christian is his name. He followed all the ceremonies of baptism and first communion with tears rolling down his cheeks. His smile was magnificent. He couldn't thank them enough. He got out his mandolin and played and sang songs of thanksgiving. Now he really belonged! Jesus was his Life\*

1. The Lord in his wisdom knew that man is hungry for God. God made him for himself. So he devised this great sacrament of his love, in order that everyone could come, any day, without pay, to receive the Bread of Life to make one strong. The only price to be paid was to be baptized into the believing community, to be in God's friendship (that is, to be in sanctifying grace), and to want this Food from a motive of pleasing God or deriving benefit for the inner man. This is a very easy price to pay, and thousands are receiving this Food of the strong day after day. Many make real sacrifices to rise earlier, or to abstain from food and drink (except water) for an hour previous, and to keep themselves properly prepared in spirit for this sacred banquet. But they realize its strengthening effects. That is why they do not wish to be deprived of it.

2. What a blessing that Pope Pius X extended Communion to the little children, and encouraged its frequent reception! Before that, during the last century, communion was not received until about the 14th or 15th year, and then not at all frequently. But the saintly Pope, who was later canonized by the Church, sensed the longing of the Heart of Jesus to enter into our hearts often, and when we are still very young and unspoiled by sin. Since the first decade of this century, what a change has come to the Body of Christ that is nourished frequently by this heavenly Food! The Eucharistic

sacrifice has again become the central event in the lives of many Catholics, the liturgy has been completely revised and brought close to the people; the thousands that frequent our churches especially on Sundays but also on weekdays, and partake of the Bread of Life, are very edifying. The Eucharist is desired by young and old alike. They are hungry for the Lord.

3. Some caution, however, is to be kept in mind. There ought to be some preparation for the reception of this sacrament. The best preparation is our full participation in the entire Eucharistic sacrifice, being present also at the very beginning. Fasting from eating and drinking (except water) is the prescription of law, and it is meant to make us show respect for the divine Food which we are about to receive. Moreover, acts of faith, hope and love inflame the heart to receive the Lord, not in a routine way, but with fervor of heart. Our hunger for the Bread that gives immortality will dictate what is proper and fitting to welcome the King of kings and Shepherd of our souls. He alone can still the hunger of the human heart.

## ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(June 15th, 1980)

**First Reading:** Second Samuel 12:7-10.13. In spite of all the favors the Lord had shown David, he sinned grievously by adultery, followed up by murder of the woman's husband who was a foreigner. David acknowledged his guilt, and did penance. The all-merciful Lord forgave him, though his sin was manifold. Yet temporal punishment for his family and posterity would remain as a reminder. Dissension would be their lot.

**Second Reading:** Galatians 2:16.19-21. Paul was convinced that the legal observances of the Law could never make a man inwardly holy. All holiness must flow from our acceptance of Christ and his salvific work. The Law was only preparatory and its purpose was to lead men through Christ to God. Paul's mysticism shines forth in his being nailed to the cross with Christ, and living totally in union with him. He lives in the Christ-life in faith and acceptance of love.

**Reading of the Good News:** Luke 7:36 to 3:3 (or 7:36-50). Since, according to the customs of the time, Jesus was reclining at table on a couch with the feet extended outward, it was not difficult for the woman to anoint them. Overcome with loving gratitude, her tears also flowed freely and the simplest way to wipe them was with her long hair.

Jesus proved to Simon that he truly was a prophet by discerning his thoughts. He has only praise for the woman, who was truly repentant of her sinful life and showed every mark of courtesy which Simon had denied him. Like the money lender in the parable, the good God remits every debt, big or small. Gratitude will be respectively greater from the one whose debt was greater.

Translators differ in the sense given for v. 47. For some, the love of the woman brought about the forgiveness of her sins (NAB), while for others she was showing loving gratitude because of her sins already forgiven (JBC).

#### **HOMILY: Mercy Unlimited**

**Introduction:** Alessandro was his name. He was the young man who tried to seduce Maria Goretti to sin with him, and when she strenuously resisted, he stabbed her to death with 14 strokes. She died a martyr of purity and was canonized a saint, and pronounced a model of youth. Maria forgave him before she died, and undoubtedly kept praying for his conversion. Alessandro was sent to prison and gradually his heart began to change. He became truly repentant, and after his release from prison he entered a monastery to work there as a simply, humble laborer. Here was another triumph of divine mercy. Once bent on sinful purposes, a murderer, but changed into a saintly penitent.

1. One of the most appealing characteristics of the good God is His infinite mercy. David sinned deeply, piling offense upon offense: uncontrolled desire, adultery, gross deceit, and then murder. Yet he sincerely repented, did penance, and had the assurance from the Lord his sins were forgiven, ugly and manifold thought they were. The sinful woman in the Gospel had a public reputation of being evil, yet she turned to Christ in sorrow and grief, and the Lord forgave all her sins. This has repeated itself over and over again in the hearts of countless men and women. Indeed, the Lord is all for mercy.

2. All that the Lord asks of the sinner is sincere compunction of heart: the realization and admission that he has done wrong, made a mistake in life, failed in his ideals; but deeply regrets to have offended his Lord and God who has showered such constant blessings on him. Is this difficult? One act of true love of God, and he comes again to take up his abode in our hearts (Jn. 14:23). But there are two enemies of compunction. One is despair. Despair gives up all hope of being forgiven because of the enormity of one's sins or their never-ending frequency. It often gives itself

up to all manner of licentiousness, being unable to unleash itself from the meshes of sin. Judas despaired and ended it all. But what are all the sins of innumerable worlds pitted against the infinite mercy of an infinitely loving God? St. Therese of the Child Jesus stated that if she were guilty of all the sins of the world, she would fling herself into the ocean of God's love and mercy, knowing that He would forgive her. For He is all mercy.

3. The second enemy of compunction is presumption. Such a person rushes head-long into any and every occasion of sin, ruthlessly discarding all precautions, assuring himself that God will always be merciful and not let him sin, or, what is worse, he will always forgive him his sins, so why worry? They blandly enter any movie-house even though they know the showing is foul, or enter massage parlors and similar joints, assuring themselves that they are mature and have plenty of self-control: Such an attitude is so unworthy of the goodness of God who detests evil in every form, and for whom sin is not a playtoy to be tossed around. To act thus is to make a mockery of God's loving-forgiveness and mercy. True compunction, on the contrary, realizes its weakness, its sinfulness, but throws itself on the bosom of the merciful Father, like the prodigal son in the Gospel-parable.

## TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(June 22nd, 1980)

**First Reading:** Zechariah 12:10-11. The inspired author of this prophecy introduces the chapter with an oracle proclaiming the victory of God's people over the heathen, after which the messianic age begins, with its manifold blessings of the Spirit. "Pour out" frequently points to the messianic age (cf. Joel 3:1). The gift of the Spirit results in a changed attitude. There is great mourning over an only son and the firstborn among his brothers. In the New Testament, this prophecy is seen fulfilled in Jesus, pierced with a lance (Jn. 19:37; Rev. 1:7). The mourning over his death is compared to another mourning well known to the readers of his time, perhaps over good King Josiah, who met death prematurely in the plains of Megiddo (2 Chr. 35:24).

**Second Reading:** Galatians 3:26-29. Once a man has accepted Christ fully (faith), no matter what his race or color or standing, he becomes through baptism a child of God. Baptism complements faith, since it publicly manifests the belief of a man. Such a one has put on a new identity, his previous identity having been absorbed



by the new one: that of Christ (cf. Rom. 13:14). All who are incorporated into Christ form one (Greek masculine pronoun) great Body Person of Christ, and as such are Abraham's offspring, for whom the promised blessings were reserved. This is the climax of the first part of the letter, and it loudly proclaims the unity and spiritual equality of all Christians.

**Reading of the Good News: Luke 9:18-24.** Once the chosen band in the representative person of Peter acknowledges Jesus as the long expected Messiah-King, Jesus accepts it, but first cautions them from publicizing the fact, lest the false expectation of the people regarding a sensational, political Messiah stand in the way of his plans for man's salvation. Now he is ready to disclose to the Twelve what kind of a Messiah he is for the present era, and this was a totally unexpected revelation. Yes, he is the Messiah, but a suffering Messiah, like the suffering Servant of Yahweh in Is. 53. He will be rejected by the very leaders of his people, something incredible to the Twelve, so that they hardly hear his last words about being raised from the dead.

Jesus then lays down the conditions for discipleship for all and everyone who wants to join him: 1) he must be willing to give up his own selfish aim and ambitions. 2) daily take up his cross, that is, willingly suffer whatever the Lord places on his shoulders to bear and 3) follow along the same path that Jesus trod and traced for his disciples, the path of love in total service of his fellowmen. To give in to all one's desires and enjoy life to the full here below will only end in frustration, while he who is willing to give up for Jesus' sake all that this life has to offer, will have it forever (he will save it).

#### **HOMILY: The Challenge of the Cross**

**Introduction:** "You're going to be a cripple for the rest of your life. You'll never play football again". This was told "Rocky" Eleier after a bullet struck him in the thigh in Vietnam, and sharpnel shattered several bones in his legs. But fierce determination, sturdy faith in God and many painful operations plus a gruelling schedule at re-habilitation for many months gave him slow recovery and put him back on the football field as a star player. He has discovered the challenge of adversity. His adversity made him a stronger and a more determined person.

1. The cross was a sign of ignominy and disgrace when it was placed on the shoulders of Christ, but then he made it a symbol of victory and glory. He met the challenge and turned it into a triumph. Today the Cross is the symbol of Christ all around the globe. By it, he showed the world how much God loved it. By it he redeemed

us from the slavery of Satan. By means of it he took away all our sins and opened wide the gates of heaven. Through the cross he himself came to glory. Thus he told the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and thus enter into glory?" (Lk. 24:26). This lesson he had to impress on the Apostles and on all his followers. The Cross is a challenge. Meet it. It leads to triumph.

2. When the Roman Emperor Constantine was about to challenge his adversary, it is said he had a vision of the cross with the words: In this sign you shall conquer. So he placed those words on his standard and gained the victory. From that time on the Cross has marched across the world in triumph. Constantine gave full liberty to the Church; it came out of the catacombs and began to plant the cross in every land. The babe at baptism is signed with the cross. The cross is the sign of forgiveness in the sacrament of healing and reconciliation. Every blessing given by the ministers of the Church is accompanied by the sign of the Cross. Even the tombstones of deceased Christians are marked in a military cemetery with the Cross of Christ. And today many young people are beginning to wear a small golden cross around the neck as an emblem of their faith. The Cross is a sign of salvation, of victory.

3. For everyone of us the Cross is a challenge. That is what Jesus tells us in today's gospel-reading. If we wish to follow him, we must take up our cross daily, be it large or small, heavy or light, and follow after Jesus. It is not a wooden cross that we carry but it consists in various disagreeable situations that can meet us at any time. Examine what your cross is. Is it conquering old habits that are incompatible with the Christ-life we live? Is it being patient with those we daily come in contact with? Is it suffering, mental or physical, a lingering ailment, a delicate situation, an annoying "something" in your life? Or is it inner discouragement, darkness of spirit, lack of energy or spirit, that makes God seem so far away? Meet the challenge of the cross. It leads to victory. It has a glorious end: we shall overcome! We shall rise again even though we die, for we share Christ's sufferings, and therefore we shall share his triumph and his glory (Rom. 8:17). In the Cross is peace, in the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is glory!

## SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL APOSTLES

(June 29th, 1980)

**First Reading:** Acts 12:1-11. King Herod Agrippa I, (grandson of Herod the Great who had massacred the Holy Innocents) won the favor of the Jews by scrupulously following the Law while living

in Judaea (though living elsewhere like a pagan), and desiring to please the Jews he began now to persecute the Christians. After beheading James the Greater (son of Zebedee), he put Peter, the acknowledged leader of the Christians, into prison. But heavenly interference foiled the plan of the king, and the Lord restored Peter to the believing community, manifesting his power over king and Jew alike. This divine act gave Peter assurance for all future trials.

**Second Reading: Second Timothy 4:6-8.17-18.** Another prison scene. Paul sees his death as a sacrificial offering, like a libation of oil or wine poured out to the divinity. He is not afraid of death. It is the crowning achievement of his life, which he compares to an athlete's match or a race. The Lord crowns with justice all who have him at heart and strive likewise to lead a life pleasing to him. Paul relies entirely on the Lord to rescue him for all hindrances to his service, and finally from death itself.

**Reading of the Good News: Matthew 16:13-19.** Jesus had asked all, but Peter as chief-representative spoke up in answer. It seems that Matthew in grouping his material here synthesizes two confessions of faith: Peter's confession of the messiahship of Jesus at Caesarea, and the confession of the Early Church (with Peter) after the resurrection. (This is in line with the decree *Dei Verbum*, 19). A confession of the divinity in such clarity before the resurrection is less probable. In the parallels: Mk. 8:29, and Lk. 9:20, there is at Caesarea only a profession of the Messiahship. Even in Mt. 16:20 which is the end of this scene, there is only reference to the messiahship. Matthew places both confessions here, for in this section (ch. 16-17) he is out to prove the divinity of Christ.

Jesus in turn promises Peter the Headship over his community. He names Peter "Rock" (which is Peter's name in Aramaic), for Jesus is building a new edifice of the People of God on him, one of stability, and the foundation of unity. God's People of Old stemmed from Abraham as rock (Is. 51:1). Church in Greek is *ecclesia* (Hebrew *qahal*) meaning assembly, community. Though used only here and in Mt. 18:16 in all four gospels, it is the common designation for the Christian community in the letters of Paul. It matters little if Jesus used the phrase itself, or if it is a clarification by the Early Church of his mind to form his apostles into the new People of God. They understood this well and transmitted the fact to the Early Church. The new People of God is one (my Church), though Jesus never gave it the title which *Iglesia ni Christo* claims.

The gates (or jaws) of the underworld can be considered as a figure of speech for death which had no power over Jesus nor will

it win out over the community of believers. Or it can be taken as the hostile powers of evil. They will neither prevail (putting the Church on the defensive) nor hold out putting her on the offensive). She will win in the battle against evil and death itself. The keys symbolize the authority given to the chief steward in the kingdom. To bind and loose can be taken doctrinally for forbidding and permitting something, or disciplinarily, for excluding or absolving someone. Thus, Peter is given a comprehensive mandate with regard to the means of salvation, a strictly divine charge, by which authority exercised on earth is valid in heaven.

#### **HOMILY: Pillars of the Church**

Today we honor Peter, the fisherman, from the Sea of Galilee, who was made by Christ the Great Fisherman of the sea of the world, with the authority of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to bring all mankind into the fish-net of the Church. Today we honor Paul the one-time Pharisee, who by a single encounter with the Risen Christ, considered all his learning as rubbish, and left it to be filled with the knowledge of Christ and be the Apostle of the nations, teaching them the one law of love. These two are the two pillars of the Church, who uphold her with the authority of the keys and the sword of the word of God.

It was Peter who had the courage to take the lead in professing Christ as the long-awaited Messiah-King in the name of all his fellow-apostles. On the first day of Pentecost he boldly confessed Christ before all the crowds and then again and again before the leaders of the People. Though he had, under great stress, failed his Master on the night of the Passion, yet now, filled with the Spirit of Christ, he openly bore witness to him as his Savior and Lord, despite the threats, the scourging and even imprisonment.

It was Paul who had pursued the Christians to death, dragging them out of their homes and handing them over to the Jewish authorities, but overcome by Christ on the road to Damascus, and filled with heavenly light, he at once began to confess Jesus as Son of God in the synagogues of the Jews, though they contradicted him and endeavored to kill him. What a glorious witness he bore in those decades following his conversion! Often imprisoned, five times scourged by the Jews, three times beaten, three times shipwrecked, once stoned and left for dead. He encountered many and various dangers on his journeys, but neither the perils of land or sea, nor the opposition of man could stop this fire-brand from carrying the message of Christ to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire.

Those are the men we honor today. Both have fought the good fight to the end and are now crowned with glory before all the world. Of Peter it is said that when they came to crucify him, he begged to be crucified upside down, for he said he was not worthy to be crucified like his Master. Paul was beheaded, and legend has it that three springs sprang out of the ground on the spot, so that it is called "Three Springs" to this day. Peter and Paul have strengthened the faith and love of the Infant Church by their giant lives while they lived and by their gallant victory in death.

We turn to them today to strengthen the Church of today spread all over the world. The enemies of Christ are many, and there are even those within the fold of Christ who weaken the witness to Christ by their false or watered-down teachings, by their permissiveness in the field of morals. To Peter we turn that he may continue to manifest his authority through his successor, the Great White Shepherd in Rome, and show the way to salvation with continued courage and straight forwardness. To Paul we turn that by his intercession many will follow in his footsteps to preach the Good News far and wide, upholding the truth in all things and making known to a tired world the loving-kindness of the Blessed Savior and the riches of his knowledge. May they arouse us to genuine deeds of valor for Christ and his Body-Person, the Church, deeds which they themselves never desisted from accomplishing while on earth. From heaven may they intercede for us.

## BIBLICAL NOTES AND OUTLINES FOR HOMILIES FOR JULY

### FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (July 6th, 1980)

**First Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14c.** A burst of ecstatic joy from the last chapter of Third Isaiah, an unknown poet whose writings were added to those of the great prophet. Exultant joy will fill the Jerusalem of the new People of God, for the Lord has filled her with delight (65:18). All nations flow to her with abundant offerings. Now she is universal Mother of all peoples, fonder her children, and giving them plentiful nourishment and delight. This image of a loving mother, vividly drawn and elaborated, finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Church of the New Covenant. Suddenly in v. 14, it is the Lord himself who in the new Jerusalem will act as a mother

comforting her children. (This passage gave the impetus to St. Therese of the Child Jesus to initiate her little way of confidence and love).

**Second Reading: Galatians 6:14-18.** Christ crucified is Paul's sole boast, for that salvific act of Jesus meant new life for men. Crucified with Christ (2:19) Paul is dead to the "world", that is, anything inimical to God's reign in Christ. All the external observances with which his opponents were trying to shackle the Christians were meaningless. Inner transformation into a new creature in Christ by his Spirit alone matters. Those who follow Paul in this, constitute the new Israel of God.

The Latin word "stigmata" in v. 17 has a meaning in present usage which Paul did not have in mind. Rather, he is referring to the scars and marks left by the stoning and scourgings he had endured, branding him as a slave of Christ. As Christ's possession, he is not to be molested. Now he can really glory in the flesh (in contrast to his adversaries glorying in their fleshy circumcision). A final plea for peaceful reconciliation is sounded in a last appeal to them as brothers.

**Reading of the Good News: Luke 10:1-12, 17-20 (or: 10:1-9).** The mission of the seventy-two disciples prefiguring the universal mission of the Church. Its salient points are:

- 1) For mutual encouragement, they are not sent out alone but in pairs.
- 2) Prayer is enjoined that many laborers be found to gather the harvest.
- 3) Their urgent mission must not be held up by trivialities. Much hostile opposition will be incurred.
- 4) Theirs is a mission of peace, which is bestowed as a blessing. It will only benefit those who receive it properly disposed.
- 5) The laborers deserve their wages in the form of board and lodging, but they are not to be choosy with regard to food and dwelling.
- 6) They are to proclaim the presence of God's reign over men through acceptance of the Master. Non-acceptance will be met with a symbolic act, indicating that they have no further responsibility in their conversion.

The real motive for their joy should be the presence of God's reign (11:20), which puts an end to Satan's reign over men, and, secondly, that they have a share in that reign of God (v. 20). Christ's disciples have power overall diabolical influences.

**OUTLINE FOR HOMILY: The Crying Need for Missionaries**

**Introduction:** Father Martin was in the concentration camp at Dachau in Germany in the time of Hitler. Undergoing all that such a situation entailed, he made a vow that if he survived he would go to the missions and would never in his entire life complain about anything. He survived, being released when the Allied troops liberated the prisoners. He volunteered for mission work in difficult sections of India, and all who work with him can attest that he is never heard to complain. His labors and sufferings have so much more meaning for him now.

1. Today more than ever, the Church needs men and women who will bring Christ and the Good News to those millions who do not as yet know him, or know him very imperfectly. While certain countries have closed their doors to Catholic missionaries, other, chiefly the African countries, are begging for priests Brothers, nuns and lay apostles who will volunteer to bring the blessings of Christ and the Good News to thousands who are hungry for God. Conversions in those countries continue by leaps and bounds. It is the youth of today who must respond to the challenge, youth that is willing to forego the comforts of the home-country and meet the challenge that such a calling entails. It will demand sacrifice. Health, talent, and proper motivation will be requisite, but what more glorious calling can there be than to bring the modern world to Christ?

2. That is why the Savior is asking us to pray to the Father in heaven, that he draw many by his magnetic power of the Spirit to the missionary vocation. It is the Spirit of God who implants the seed of a vocation in the heart of the young. Parents and teachers may nourish it, but it is the Spirit who continues to bring it to full flowering under the continued cooperation of the person himself. Now, it is fervent prayer that wins the grace of such a calling. The Lord Himself in the message of today clearly requests such prayers. Will we be deaf to his entreaties? "The harvest is rich but the workers are few: therefore ask the harvest-master to send workers into his harvest". Parents can add a short prayer for missionary vocations in the family evening prayer or after the evening meal. That will go far to inspire those who hear and pray the prayer. Teachers in schools can have such prayers said on given occasions, and the parish priest can have them often added to the general intercessions in the eucharistic sacrifice on Sundays. Did not the Savior say: Ask and you shall receive!

3. In many places the radio is made use of as an excellent means to bring the truths of our holy faith to outlying stations and even

into the individual homes. Others made constant use of the apostolate of the press, and in some cases even of the TV. But we must admit that far more could be done. The entire Church according to Vatican II is a mission-minded People, and everyone must endeavor to bring Christ to his neighbor, each in his own way. Journalists of our daily newspaper can add their contribution, if they have the courage and the zeal. To think that after two thousand years, Christ and his marvellous plan for man's happiness is so little known to the greater number of those on earth is something that ought to set every sincere Catholic thinking. Am I sharing the blessings of the faith with my fellowmen? Am I at least praying often and earnestly as requested by the Lord for missionary vocations?

### **FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME** (July 13th, 1980)

**First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:10-14.** An exhortation to return to God with our whole heart by listening to his voice as it resounds in the word of God proclaimed to us. It is not difficult to lay hold of God's word, as if it were "way up there" or in some remote place hard to reach. On the contrary, God's word is very near: by listening to it attentively, it enters into our very heart. God is present in his word, and it is up to those who receive it to put it into action.

**Second Reading: Colossians: 1:15-20.** A Christological passage of highest import, proclaiming Christ as center of the universe, directing all things to their final end, and head of God's new creation, the Church:

1) As perfect man (adam in Hebrew), Christ is the perfect visible representation of God. 2) Thus he holds supremacy over all (as man was told in Genesis to have dominion over all things: 1:28f). His supreme position is given in the threefold relation of the universe to Christ: a) "in him": he is the center of all, bringing all things together in harmony as in Eph. 1:10); b) "through him" he is actively bringing all things into existence and conserving them in it; c) "for him" he is the final goal and perfection of all creation. 4) The Risen Christ is the Head of his Body-Person, the Church, and the beginning of the new creation. 5) In him resides God's "pleroma", that is, the fullness of God's sanctifying powers concentrated in Christ, who in turn concentrates it as the Church of which he is the Head. (The ancients considered the head as imparting all vital influence to the rest of the body). 6) Christ in his supreme sacrifice on Golgotha is the means of reconciliation with God for all created



beings, and the restoration of peace and harmony for the entire universe. And this is he who was the despised Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified man of sorrows!

**Reading of the Good News:** Luke 10:25-37. Quoting a revealed precept in vv. 25ff, the lawyer was aware that supernatural love of God and neighbor is required to obtain life eternal, but its specific application was not clear to him. Who exactly was his neighbor? Jesus answered by telling this super parable. The picture unfolds in three scenes:

1) **Misfortune:** On the lonely road leading from Jerusalem to Jericho, a man falls among brigands. The distance is some twenty kilometers with a descent of a thousand meters amid rugged cliffs and deep ravines, often infested with just such outlaws. They beat him up badly, strip him and leave him lying there half dead, covered with blood and dirt, a prey to insects and the heat.

2) **Indifference:** Some countrymen come upon him (of the O.T. priestly caste). Unmoved, and uninterested, they steer clear and pass by.

3) **Compassion:** A Samaritan stops at once at the sight of the misery, and, forgetting all else, is only intent on alleviating the man's needs.

**Note:**

- He is a foreigner; on no terms of friendship with the Jew in need.
- He is travelling to Jerusalem, eager to accomplish some business (cf. v. 35).
- Moved to compassion he sacrifices his best articles for the man: wine and oil provide food and condiment, but the wine can act as an astringent, cleansing the wounds, and oil is a soothing, healing salve.
- From his own linens he makes bandages to bind up the wounds.
- He gives him **personal** care, placing him on his own beast of burden (despite the blood and dirt), and carefully steady-ing him while he walks alongside till they reach the inn. There he watches over him personally until the crisis is over. Then he arranges with the innkeeper for continued care, and promises to make up any extra expenses on his return.

In short, this is an exalted picture of love in action. The Samaritan disregarded every consideration of urgent business, surrounding dangers, national pride and sentiment, as well as personal comfort. He offered every service he could think of with promptness, great

personal care, generosity and genuine love. [In the original Greek, the verbs are compounded with prepositions which intensify the verb-action).

Jesus made it clear that my neighbor is not only he who lives near me or is one of the same nationality (as the Jews thought); any needy person of any country must be regarded as my neighbor. Moreover, true love of neighbor is unselfish and self-sacrificing time, goods, one self. It does all in its power to relieve the necessities of one's fellowmen in need. (Neighbor is a correlated term. The Samaritan acted as a true neighbor because of his actions. The Lawyer is admonished to follow suit).

**Homily suggestion:** This graphic picture lends-itself to speak in detail on the Samaritan who in our Lord's mind represents the ideal Christian; but in the mind of St. Luke evidently the Lord himself who came to earth and found man set upon by Satan and robbed of all he had. But the Lord in turn gave him everything that was his, especially the sacraments, but above all his own personal love, and healed him completely. The parable can be illustrated by the following true incident:

A seminarian was walking along a side road, when he noticed somewhat ahead of him an old man hobbling along. Suddenly a car swept past, swerving for no apparent reason, and hitting the man knocking him unconscious, but never stopping. The seminarian ran up, and saw another car coming. He waved him down. The driver was a business man on his way to the city nearby, but he stopped, took the man in and laid him on his shiny-covered seats, drove him in another direction to the hospital, and after seeing that he was cared for, continued his journey. A perfect stranger in need, another good Samaritan.

### SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (July 20th, 1980)

**First Reading:** Genesis 18:1-10a. In a conflation of various traditions, the author presents Abraham entertaining with consummate Oriental hospitality; three strangers, one of whom represents the Lord Himself. The simplicity of the divine visit and the intimate conversation remind us of the intimacy of man with God in Paradise, marking Abraham as truly the special friend of God. No other scene in Genesis represents God in so human a manner (anthropomorphism). Climaxing the visit is the renewed promise of a son to Abraham by his wife Sarah.

**Second Reading: Colossians 1:24-28.** The tremendous mystery of "Christ in us" (v. 27) presupposes such an intimate union of Christ with the Christian, that the sufferings of each member are accounted as sufferings of Christ. Although Christ's salvific work alone was sufficient for man's salvation, yet all Christians till the end of time must share like Paul in Christ's redemptive sufferings, to bring the Body of Christ to full measure. In Paul's case, his sufferings were intimately bound up with his mission of preaching Christ's gospel-message, with its demands of Christian love. This brought him untold sufferings time and again. But he never ceases to preach Christ, for Christ alone is the true glory of mankind.

**Reading of the Good News: Luke 10:38-42.** The Lord is welcomed into the home of Martha and her sister Mary (who is nowhere identified as the Magdalene). Martha is the active and energetic type, while Mary is quiet and retiring (as can also be seen in Jn. 11:20). Jesus is well aware that bodily needs must be cared for, and surely appreciates Martha's hospitality. Yet he gently chides her for over-stressing the material side of things. (That the remonstrance is gentle can be concluded from the double calling of her name which softens the tone). Preference must always be given to the spiritual, for this is the Savior's main aim wherever he goes, and Mary has wisely chosen to be nourished first by Him. Martha's great faith is evident from Jn. 11:24. (Although some manuscripts have "just a few things" referring to a few dishes, instead of "Just one thing" referring to the spiritual, the latter reading is preferable, because Jesus evidently understands it thus at the end of the verse.)

**OUTLINE FOR HOMILY: Suffering with Christ (second reading)**

(Note: For a homily on the message of the Good News, see Bol. Ecl., June-July 1977, 432: "Troubled about Many Things")

**Introduction:** Years ago, Bishop Bernard Shiel, Auxillary of Chicago, did much in the line of social work for youth and the working-man. Once he gave an address in a large auditorium on social justice, simultaneously opposing communistic tendencies which at that time were rapidly increasing in that part of the country. On leaving, he walked down the main aisle. The atmosphere was tense, for many in the audience favored leftist views. Suddenly half way down, an old woman full of resentment at the Bishop's views, coughed up from the depth a mouthful of spittle and spat it directly in his face as he passed. There was a dead silence. The Bishop paused, took out his handkerchief and wiped off the spittle, then without a word, passed on. All who saw it or heard of it were impressed. Like the Master, he was spat upon and did not resist.

1. Suffering comes to everyone in life. Old age suffers bodily ailments, middle age from re-adjustments in life, family troubles, and business worries, as well as deep concern over the new generation. Youth goes through frustrations and disappointments, and seeks a meaning to life which is shared so unevenly by many. The great apostle also suffered much, both physical pain from frequent persecutions, as well as mental anguish from the care of his Christian foundations. But suffering for him had a deep meaning: He was crucified with Christ, and Christ was living in him (Gal. 2:19-20). In Christ he found the necessary strength as well as deep meaning for whatever befall him. It was his share of suffering to be filled up for Christ.

2. According to Paul in today's reading, every Christian is allotted his or her share of suffering as a member of the Crucified. These sufferings are salvific and redemptive, and have a saving value for the whole Body. That is the meaning of "filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ." Christ's sufferings while he was on earth were entirely sufficient for the objective redemption of man, but there remains sufferings for each member of Christ, so that having suffered with him, they may also share his glory (Rom. 8:17). Christ the Lord suffers in each of his members anew and will do so until the end of time. It is a greatly strengthening thought that Christ suffers in us, for his very presence gives courage and motivation to bear whatever our Father in heaven deigns to send us.

3. This is what gives daily stamina to those caring for the sick, the aged, the retarded, the addicts. They see Christ suffering again, and seek to relieve his sufferings. Mother Teresa of India goes out of her way to find the most abandoned and helpless man or woman, for in each and everyone she finds Christ her Lord. For the sick themselves, the conviction that Christ dwells in them and suffers in them is of the greatest help to bear their sufferings bravely and patiently. But every state of life can benefit from this conviction. Husbands and wives, old and young are filled with new motivation and strength when they realize they do not do it alone, but that Christ himself is always with them suffering again in his members so that one day he may be glorified in them.

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 27th, 1980)

**First Reading:** Genesis 18:20-32. When the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah comes to the knowledge of God (described in human fashion according to the Yahwistic tradition), divine chastisement

is in order. But Abraham bargains with the Lord in genuine Oriental manner, a delightful scene, which reveals the intimacy of Abraham with God; yet the main issue is a theological one. Will God's justice allow the just to be chastised along with the wicked after the manner of collective punishment? Or, on the contrary, will God's mercy even spare the wicked in favor of a few just ones, should these be found? Here we see the principle of collective punishment mitigated, and the great value of virtuous persons in the midst of the community.

**Second Reading: Colossians 2:12-14.** In baptism, the Christian, professing his faith in Christ's resurrection, was buried symbolically with Christ and rose in the newness of the Christ-life. (These same thoughts are given in greater detail in Romans 6:3-8). By his victim-death on the cross, Christ relieved man of all his sinfulness, as well as of the Law with all its burdens. He paid the debt.

**Reading of the Good News: Luke 11:1-13.** One of the finest passages in the Gospels on prayer. Words move but example draws. Fascinated by the Master's prayer-life, the disciples beg to be taught. His response is the prayer now offered untold times daily throughout the world. Luke has five petitions which Matthew has enlarged to the covenant number of seven, a favorite with Matthew (see Mt. 6:9-13.).

Jesus teaches us always to approach God as children approach their father. The first two petitions pertain to God's glory and envisage the blessed day when all creatures will recognize the all-holy God, with his reign fully accomplished in them. The next three regard God's children. "Daily bread" includes all the spiritual and material needs for sustaining their life, not excluding a Eucharistic allusion (in the mind of Luke). Forgiveness of sins is closely bound up with our willingness to forgive those who offended us. "Temptation" is better translated trial or test, and refers to persecution which tests one to the utmost.

In the parable of the importunate friend, Jesus describes a man's embarrassment because of an unexpected midnight visitor. In need of something to put before the guest, he goes to his close friend for provisions. The initial refusal is quite understandable for it involves a lot of trouble. To open the door with its large wooden pegs or iron bolts would have caused much disturbance, and would easily have awakened the rest of the family, sleeping on mats on the floor in the same room. Yet, by **persistent pleading**, the friend in need wins out and gets all he needs for his guest. The point of comparison is obviously perseverance in prayer and the determination not to give up despite apparent refusal will assuredly

obtain the desired results. Jesus has evidently the same meaning in mind with the words: Ask and you shall receive etc. Yet to offset the objection that we do not always receive what we ask for, Jesus follows this up with another parable.

The child who asks for wholesome food will not be given harmful objects by a loving father. Man often asks God for what he thinks he needs, but in reality it may be harmful for him. So the prayer is heard by God granting what is useful, wholesome and good for the one asking. God's supreme gift to man is the Holy Spirit and he wants us to ask for this Gift of gifts.

**OUTLINE FOR HOMILY: Heard for the better.**

**Introduction:** A young business man prayed fervently to be able to purchase an office room for his business in a certain building. He was about to take over when the owner demanded full payment first. This he could not do at the time. Disconsolate at first, and wondering why his prayer had not been heard, he kept on praying and trusting anyway, that the Lord would not let him down. Two weeks later, the office-room he had wanted to procure burnt in a fire to the ground. Had he moved in, he would have lost all his belongings and savings. God knew best. He understood why God had delayed hearing his prayers.

1. What father will give his child strong alcoholic drink even if he asks for it? He knows it is harmful for the child's stomach at that age. What mother will give her baby the bottle of bright red medicine intended only for adults, just because the child has spotted the bottle and keeps demanding to have it? Instead, father and mother will give what they know is nutritious and in no way harmful for their child. Will the all-loving Father of us all, whom Jesus taught us to address with that intimate title in the "Our Father", be less anxious to keep his children in good spiritual health? Jesus taught us to ask from him our daily bread, something which is nutritious and makes for good growth. We can be sure that God knows all our needs, for he is all-knowing, all-wise and all-loving. He created each of us for himself and his divine Providence daily leads us to our final and happy goal. In asking for our daily bread, we ask for that which will sustain us sufficiently both physically and spiritually, and Our Father in heaven knows best what to give us.

2. But there is need of persevering in prayer, pleading over and over again. Abraham the friend of God could keep requesting the Lord in the first reading to spare the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, because of the innocent people within their walls. He is depicted as bargaining with the Lord in a truly human fashion, to

show that God listens to the pleas of those who love him. Moses did the same for his people when God wished to reject them. Totally selfless was his prayer. Disregarding any personal advantage, Moses pleaded with the Lord to spare them with one motive after the other, till the Lord granted his request (Ex.32:11-14; Num. 14:13-20). Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed long and fervently for a child, and only when all seemed hopeless because Zechariah was old and Elizabeth sterile (Luke 1:18f), was their prayer heard. But then how wonderful! Not only were they granted a male child as they longed for, but the greatest of all the prophets, John the Baptist! The parents of St. Therese of the Child Jesus had many girl-children but prayed ardently for a boy whom they wanted to see a priest of God. Their sorrows was great when the boys died already in infancy. Yet God heard their prayer in a much more remarkable way: they were given a child who would be the inspiration of all priests, seminarians and religious, and the patroness of all missionaries, St. Therese, the Little Flower of Jesus.

3. We ought not overlook the proper disposition necessary for our prayer to be heard. In the Our Father, Jesus wants us to acquire the virtue of forgiveness for wrongs done to us, if we hope to obtain God's mercy and-favor. Perhaps this is one reason why the prayers of some are not heard. They are harboring resentment and a grudge against others and are unwilling to forgive injuries suffered. Let them beg the Father in heaven to bestow his Spirit of healing, as is mentioned in the last part of today's Good News, and the Holy Spirit knows well how to heal those wounds and bring about reconciliation. Then the heart is ready to receive the other gifts that God has prepared for it, or for which it is pleading. Will not an all-loving Master more readily grant the requests of his servants when he sees them living in peace and harmony with each other?