

# **BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS**

**POPE PAUL VI: 1963-1978**

**Bishop Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., D.D.**

**THE FUTURE OF CATHOLICISM IN ASIA**

**Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, D.D.**

**THE ROLE OF THE RELIGIOUS IN THE  
INDIGENIZATION OF LITURGY AND PRAYER**

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OF THE TRADITIONAL PARISH SYSTEM**

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**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF  
HOLY COMMUNION**

**Archbishop Oscar Cruz, D.D.**

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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## **Pope Paul VI: 1963-1978**

Paul VI was not the Pope this century wanted, but the Pope that this century needed.

His ascension to the Chair of Peter was not an enviable moment. For five years Pope John XXIII had captured the imagination and won the heart of the world. His successor would almost certainly suffer by comparison.

More basically and importantly, Paul inherited the effects of John's throwing open the windows of the Church. Through the open windows came the breadth of the Holy Spirit and movements of human wisdom and noble ideals. There also came gusts of folly and self-centered ambition.

There were threats that solid values and essentials would be swept away with things that had outlived their usefulness. It was a mighty task to direct the fresh air to the work of rejuvenation, not of destruction.

A lesser man could well have opted for safety and slammed the window shut. Not so with Pope Paul. He reassembled the Vatican

Council on time, opened its discussions to the full force of the Holy Spirit and accepted the responsibility of translating into action what the Council could state only in principle.

For some time, Paul VI was labelled a Hamlet, unable to make up his mind. But eventually he proved his critics all wrong, by the vast number of firm decisions he took — and he did so in his own time, the time when the truth was clear and the occasion prudent.

He gave formal authoritative teaching on such subjects as the Eucharist and moral principles in marriage. He made firm disciplinary decisions such as that on the celibacy of priests. He re-organized wide areas of Church life, such as those of worship and of Vatican administration. He pioneered in areas of ecumenism, personal contacts with people of many nations in their homelands and of Church developments in native cultures.

He did not receive particularly good publicity. But it slowly became more and more evident to more and more people that Paul was the leader the Church needed during these years. He was the leader not necessarily because he reflected popular opinion, but because of his vision of the truth and his complete integrity in responding to it.

We have good reason for public pride in the achievements of Pope Paul VI in the past 15 years.

Now that he has left us, may he rest in peace and may the continuing fruits of his pontificate confirm that he did not live and pasture Christ's flock in vain.

**Bishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D.**

## In This Issue

After paying tribute to Pope Paul VI, we invite our readers to consider the **Future of Catholicism in Asia**, which at first may seem scary and foreboding. But if one carefully considers that, though Asia is poor, Asia is young and Asia is moving into action, and one would finally conclude that the future of Catholicism in Asia is bright if we count on God's grace and blessing.

One of God's gifts to Asia is the abundance of religious vocations. Hence the Church must call upon religious if it wants to be effective in the **Indigenization of Liturgy and Prayer** in Asia. Along this line Fr. Leonardo Mercado, SVD, explores some options for the religious and makes some practical suggestions.

Bishop Leonardo Legaspi continues his series on the **Magisterium**. He believes that a better understanding of the Church's magisterium is imperative for many contemporary Catholics, and that until that better understanding is reached, confusion will continue in the Church.

**Will the Parish survive?** asks Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P. He believes that all types of parochial mission are subject to change and revision. For example, large parishes can be split up into personal parishes based on race, language, prevailing religion, kinds of commitment, etc. He also believes that no parish should attempt to answer all the needs of the people living within its territorial boundaries, and instead each parish should be allowed to develop its own life-style as would appeal to a certain segments of the people living in the region.

Two of our writers examine aspects of ministry. Archbishop Oscar Cruz studies the **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** and Fr. Herman Graf takes a look at **Sacramentals and their Ministers**.

As a follow-up of the documents on the **Biblical Apostolate** we published in our previous number, Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P., writes on the **Catholic Biblical Apostolate Today**.

## PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

**AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM.** Cum tempora maturuere, consuevit quidem haec Apostolica Sedes, Omnium Ecclesiarum mater sollicita, quasi stirpe ex arbore detracta, novas circumscriptiones Ecclesiasticas condere. Nam per id non solum nimis latae dioeceses intra aequiores limites continentur, sed multiplicatis praeterea Episcopis etiam consilia et vires longe accrescunt, quibus Dei verbum currat et clarificetur — 2 Thess. 3,1. Quare, cum Venerabilis frater Josephus T. Sanchez, Episcopus Lucenensis, audita Confrontia episcopali, ab hac Apostolica Sede enixe postulaverit ut, divisa sua dioecesi, nova constitueretur, Nos, Venerabilibus fratribus Nostris sententiam rogatis qui Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praesunt, de bono fidelium solliciti, haec statuimus atque iubemus. A dioecesi Lucenensi integrum territorium separamus provinciae civilis, quam populus Marinduque cognominat, eoque novam dioecesim condimus, **BOACENSEM** appellandam; cuius sedes episcopalis in urbe Boac ponetur, cathedra vero in sacra aede B.M.V. omni labe expertis, quae est in eadem urbe, quaeque cathedralis habebitur, cum debitis iuribus. Eam praeterea suffraganeam constitutimus metropolitanae Sedi Lipensi, ad norman iuris. Jubemus etiam ut Canonicorum Collegium condatur, iuxta leges per alias Litteras edendas. Interea vero Consultores dioecesani eligantur, qui Episcopum iuvent consilio et opera. Ad mensam episcopalem quod pertinet coalescet haec Curiae emolumentis, fidelium collationibus sponte factis, parte aequa bonorum si quae sint quae adhuc Sedi Lucenensi propria erant, ad canonem 1500 J.C. De seminario statuimus, ut serventur leges iuris communis, ratione habita tum Decreti Optatum totius — Concilii Vaticani II, tum regularum Sacrae Congregationis pro Institutione Catholica. Cum autem iuvenes eo aetatis pervenerint ut philosophiae ac sacrae theologiae incumbere debeant, qui meliores fuerint Romam mittantur, in Pontificium Collegium Philippinum. Ad cetera quod pertinet: regimen dioecesis, administrationem, electionem Vicarii Capitularis, suo tempore, haec omnia Iure Canonico temperentur. Nimirum simul ac nova Sedes condita fuerit, Sacerdotes atque clerici qui in eius territorio beneficium aut officium habeant, eidem adscribantur tamquam proprius clerus; ceteri vero clerici atque Seminarii

tirones, ei in qua legitime degant. Denique acta atque documenta ad novam Ecclesiam pertinentia, ad eius Curiam episcopalem mittantur, religiose servanda. Ceterum quae mandavimus, Venerabilis frater Bruno Torpigliani ad exitum deducat, vel quem ipse legaverit factis nempe facultatibus necessariis; re vero acta, documenta exaranda curet, quae sinceris exemplis ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis cito mittat. Contrariis nihil obstantibus Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die altero mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatus Nostri quarto decimo.

✠ **JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

✠ **S. CARD. BAGGIO**  
S. C. Pro. Episcopus Praef.

**JOSEPHUS DEL TON**  
Proton. Apost.

**MARCELLUS ROSSETTI**  
Proton. Apost.



## **PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI**

Dilecto filio **JESU DOSADO**, Seminarii Maioris Caebuani Moderatori electo Episcopo titulo Nabalensi atque Auxiliari Archiepiscopi Caebuani, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cum ad efficaciorē reddendam Episcoporum pastoralementem operam Apostolicae sit Sedis consuetudo auxiliares viros iis sacris Praesulibus assignare, qui egeant, visum est Nobis id genus subsidii tribui posse Venerabili fratri Nostro **Julio S.R.E. Cardinali Rosales**, Archiepiscopo Caebuano, qui petiit. Cumque te, dilecte fili, aptum admodum existimaverimus ad dictum munus suscipiendum magnaue cum diligentia explendum, ex sententia Venerabilis fratris Nostri **S.R.E. Cardinalis Praefecti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis**, summa Nostra potestate te nominamus Auxillarem sacri Praesulis, quem diximus. Ne autem iusta dignitate careas, tibi etiam titulum damus episcopalis vacantis Sedis **NABALENSIS**, cum iuribus et obligationibus ad officium dignitatemque tuam pertinentibus, sic ut describuntur in Apostolicis Litteris "Ecclesiae Sanctae", a Nobis datis die VI mensis Augusti anno **MCMLXVI**. Antea autem quam episcopalem ordinationem a quolibet catholico Episcopo iuxta statutas liturgicas leges ubivis locorum accipias, tuum erit fidei catholicae professionem facere atque iusiurandum fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros dare, testequovis rectae fidei Episcopo, formulasque adhibitas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittere, usitato more signatas sigilloque impressas. Dum tibi denique, dilecte fili, sacerdotii summam quam accipies, in animo gratulamur, hortamur etiam ut Archiepiscopo Caebuano tuum subsidium praebeas et ad Christifidelium bonum, pro tua parte procurandum, operam et studium impiger conferas. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die tricesimo primo mensis Octobris, anno Domini millesimo nongentisimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatus Nostri decimo quinto.

✠ **JOANES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Statues

**MARCELLUS ROSSETTI**, Proton. Apost.

# PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilecto filio **PETRO DEAN**, curioni paroeciae Sancti Nicolai in urbe et dioecesi Caebuana, electo Episcopo titulo Thuccaborensl atque Auxiliari sacri Praesulis archidioecesis Davaënsis, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Pro munere Nostro, quod etiam postulat ut quam aptissime auxiliemur sacris Pastoribus particularium Ecclesiarum, haud dubitamus quin exaudiendus sit Venerabilis frater Antonius Mabutas et Lloren, Archiepiscopus Davaënsis, qui petüt ut sibi Auxiliaris daretur Episcopus. Nos igitur, ratum habentes propositum Nobis consilium Venerabilis fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, vi et auctoritate Nostra Apostolica Episcopum titulo **THUCCABORENSEM** te, dilecte fili, eligimus atque Auxiliarem memorato Archiepiscopo assignamus, iuribus tibi factis quae sunt hulus officii propria, ut statutum est per Apostolicas Litteras — Ecclesiae Sainctae — VI mensis Augusti datas anno MCMLXVI. Tibi permittimus ut episcopalem ordinationem, servatis iure servandis, ubivis a catholico Episcopo accipias, post tamen quam, teste eodem aliove sacro Praesule, professionem fidei feceris atque iuslurandum de fidelitate erga ros et Successores Nostros iuraveris. Quibus ita actis, tuum erit curare ut formulae adhibitae usitato more subscriptae sigilloque impressae transmittantur quam primum ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis. Tibi denique, dilecte fili, suademus ut, graviore considerato munere tibi obeundo, magno honori tibi ducas sacro Praesuli esse levamini, cui mitteris auxilio, eiusque curas participare de dilectis filiis Davaënsibus, quos sibi commendatos habet. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die duodecimo mensis Decembris, anno Domini millesimo non gentesimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatus Nostri quinto decimo.

**JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

**EUGENIUS SERVI, Proton. Apost.**

# **PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI**

Venerabili fratri **RAPHAELI MONTIANO LIM**, Episcopo Laoagensi, ad cathedralem Ecclesiam Boacensem translato, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cum in praesenti providendum sit Ecclesiae Boacensi, quippe quae, ante hos menses erecta, adhuc suo careat pastore, idcirco mentem ad te convertimus, quia episcopalis muneris obeundi iam iuculenta dedisti specimina, praesertim in sede Laoagensi. Volentes igitur Nos huic satis facere apostolicae necessitati, harum Litterarum Apostolicarum vi ac Nostrae potestatis plenitudine te vinculo Ecclesiae Laoagensis liberamus atque Ecclesiae **BOACENSI** Episcopum et Pastorem praeficimus, dato regimine omnique administratione, cum iuribus debitis. Te vero lege professionis fidei faciendae et iusiurandi fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros dandi eximimus; mandamus tamen ut hae Litterae Nostrae dero ac populo in cathedrali templo dioecesis tuae legendas cures die festo de praecepto. Quos dilectos filios et filias paterna voce hortamur, ut te humanissime suscipiant Ecclesiae localis praesidem rerumque divinarum magistrum, ac promptissime tuis pareant iussis, quae ad spiritalem eorum commoditatem dederis. Demum divinae gratiae copiam Beataeque Virginis Mariae praesidium tibi, Venerabilis frater, ex animo precamur. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo sexto mensis Januarii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo octavo, Pontificatus Nostri quinto decimo.

**JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

**MARCELLUS ROSSETTI, Proton. Apost.**

# **APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE, MANILA**

## **OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION**

### **ON RE-ADMISSION TO SEMINARY OF STUDENTS ONCE DISMISSED**

25 July 1978

Your Eminence:

This respectfully refers to an inquiry about the Papal Decree on Re-admission to Seminary of Students once dismissed.

In its recent letter, Pro. N. 933/74/21, dated July 8, 1978, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education has instructed this Apostolic Nunciature to inform the Episcopal Conference that said Decree "Solemne habet" of July 12th, 1957 (AAS 49 [1957] 640), is still in force, as well as the joint Decree "Consillis Initis" of July 25th, 1941, on admission of ex-religious to seminary or of ex-seminarian to religion (AAS 33 [1941] 371).

While communicating the above-mentioned for the kind guidance of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, I willingly profit by the circumstance to renew to Your Eminence the assurance of my profound veneration in the Lord.

Devotedly yours,

(Sgd) † **BRUNO TORPIGLIANI**  
Apostolic Nuncio

His Eminence  
**JAIME Cardinal L. SIN**  
Archbishop of Manila  
President, Catholic Bishops  
Conference of the Philippines  
Arzobispo de Manila  
San Miguel, Manila

# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES

## OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION

August 16, 1978

### **Re: OPTIONAL COMMUNION IN THE HAND**

In a secret vote made on the Optional Communion in the hand, the affirmative votes (37) failed to get the needed 2/3 majority votes of the Conference.

### **Re: GRODEN METHOD FOR FAMILY PLANNING<sup>1</sup>**

The CBCP has issued the following statement: STUDIES UP TO NOW HAVE SHOWN THAT THE GRODEN METHOD IS CERTAINLY ARTIFICIALLY CONTRACEPTIVE AND MAY EVEN BE ABORTIFACIENT; THEREFORE, THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES DECLARES ITS USE FORBIDDEN.

✠ CIRILO R. ALMARIO, Jr., D.D.  
Secretary-General

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1. See: Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas, 563, October 1976, pp. 718-727.

# THE FUTURE OF CATHOLICISM IN ASIA

By

**His Eminence Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, D.D.**  
**Archbishop of Manila\***

Let me begin this conference by saying that its very title sounds scary and foreboding. Only a prophet could speak authoritatively on "The Future of Catholicism in Asia". And, as far as I know, neither bishops nor cardinals are necessarily endowed with the charism of prophecy, if by that word we understand "predicting" the future. There are no graduate masters in futurology.

However, once I accepted your invitation to develop this topic, speak I must. I am duty bound to present to you honestly and without any pretension what I think the future of Catholicism in Asia may be.

I am fully aware that when we try scanning the future, we may be liable to confusing reasonable perspectives with emotional hopes. But while I may be unable to totally divest myself of the connatural frame of mind that is a characteristic feature of incorrigible optimists, I will try to keep my feet on the ground. I will start by citing a few basic facts and figures so that we may at least start safely on the road towards formulating a "prophecy" that might claim some reasonable support.

Somebody has remarked wittily that "statistics is the art of lying with numbers". And yet we still need such "lies" to have an approximate quantitative view of the reality. Accordingly, I will try to present briefly some figures which will serve as necessary premises for conclusions we may draw in our topic. In order, however, to prevent an overdose of figures, I will use in most cases the closest round number.<sup>1</sup> I will make abundant, although not exclusive, use of the 1975 *Statistical Yearbook of the Church* published by the Vatican Secretariat of State.<sup>2</sup>

\* Conference given at the Circolo di Roma, 10 March 1978.

<sup>1</sup> Exact figures will be usually enclosed in parenthesis; details will be remanded to the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> Secretaria Status, Rationarium Generale Ecclesiae. *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae. Statistical Yearbook of the Church. Annuaire Statistique de L'Eglise*, 348 pp.

A preliminary remark on the geographical limitation of my reflections may be in place. My conference will consider the countries of South, South East and Far East Asia. The Middle East countries will not be generally included (Afghanistan, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey). For obvious reasons this is an almost natural selection.

It will also help our purpose to present at the very beginning an overview of the religious population of Asia, following the 1975 *Britannica Book of the Year*,<sup>3</sup> but completing it when necessary. This is the general chart of the main religions:

Total World Religions Population	2,249,665,000	Asia	1,571,729,000
Word Christian population	944,065,450	Asia	86,811,000

Of these Asian Christians (almost eighty-seven million) about two-thirds are Catholic; about one-third belong to Protestant or indigenous Christian churches.

<b>Orthodox:</b>	world population 89,301,600;	Asia 1,835,000	(including Middle East)
<b>Jewish:</b>	world population 14,386,540;	Asia 3,026,150	(including Middle East)
<b>Muslim:</b>	world population 529,108,700;	Asia 422,208,000	(including Middle East)
<b>Shinto:</b>	world population 62,149,000;	Asia 62,004,000	
<b>Taoist:</b>	world population 31,388,700;	Asia 31,360,700	
<b>Confucian:</b>	world population 205,976,700;	Asia 205,725,700	
<b>Buddhist:</b>	world population 248,516,800;	Asia 247,951,500	
<b>Hindu:</b>	world population 514,432,400;	Asia 512,418,000	

In the concrete, Asia has a proportion of 2.3% Catholics out of 2,300,000,000 (2,301,291,000) Asians. In other words, around 58,000,000 are Catholic. This makes Asia — the most populated continent with almost two-thirds of the world population — the continent with the lowest proportion of Catholics.<sup>4</sup>

A deep feeling of tragedy invades the soul at the sight of empty slots in the statistical tables after the names of some Asian countries. Whether the items refer to the number of Catholics or of ecclesiastical territories, to the number of apostolic workers, of schools or students or of sacraments administered, the empty spaces are tale-tellers of an immense drama. They speak of silence, the silence of death. The background makes these omissions doubly heart-rending: Only a meager 2.3% Catholic population thinly scattered among a populace of more than two billion, spread over forty million square kilometers, is a frightening picture.

<sup>3</sup> *Britannica Book of the Year*, 1975 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.).

## I

What is then the record in Asia? When anyone compares the record of Christianity throughout Asia and other continents, one fact becomes clear. In all other continents Christianity has taken firm root, and the proportion of Christians to the total population is at least substantial; Christianity is at home in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Australia, Oceania. Only in Asia is Christianity, apart from the Philippines, an infinitesimal fraction and something of "a stranger in the land". Why?

The first reason is that practically only in Asia has the Church encountered established religions. Africa, Latin America and Oceania were largely animistic societies, which present fewer difficulties. Even in Asia itself, most of the little success has usually been among animistic societies. For example, in the Philippines, Antonio Morga, describing in 1609 the religion of the people and its private, uncommunitarian framework, commented: "All this was with so little aid, apparatus or foundation" ... In a word, the Philippines contained no rooted liturgical or doctrinal system.

But authentic Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintolism have always been a different story. They have so literally possessed the souls of men, and have so rooted themselves in their daily culture, that any other religion is foreign and an intruder. And all this is even more true of Islam, a post-Christian religion.

Unfortunately, this inherent difficulty was compounded by the "Chinese Rites" controversy in the 17th and 18th centuries. More and more today it becomes abundantly clear that the Chinese Rites decision had very far-reaching consequences. To quote a non-suspect source, a recent issue of *Fides*, published from Propaganda Fide itself in Rome, speaks as follows: "While the question (of Chinese rites) was admittedly a complicated one and involved doctrine as well as ritual, it is generally considered now that the enforcement of Pope Clement's condemnation did great harm to the development of Christianity in China."<sup>6</sup>

What is the solution to this problem? Surely there is no one complete solution, but at least one fundamental remedy would be this: — encourage inculturation and indigenization in every way possible. Here there is unquestionably a danger of syncretism.

<sup>4</sup> The Americas have the highest proportion with 61.4%, followed by Europe with 39.8%, Oceania with 24.6%, and Africa with 12.1%.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* in vol. 16, p. 32 of E. Blair and James A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1902-1909).

<sup>6</sup> *Fides* (July 11, 1970), p. 307.



But a worse danger is for the Church to continue as it has through the last few centuries. Somehow Asian Christians must convince Asian non-Christians that Christ is not a foreign import, and that to belong to the Christian Faith is not to abandon the deepest and dearest traditions of their culture and history.

The modern magna charta for this incarnational outlook, of course, is Vatican II. All its various paragraphs are too well known to be quoted again here fully, but this one can represent the others:

"In imitation of the plan of the Incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these Churches borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Saviour's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life."<sup>1</sup>

At a deeper level of this inculturation process must be the constant, patient, sympathetic study of Eastern religions and dialog with them. Articles and books are already appearing from time to time on these themes, and future publications must continue the same approaches and advance them.

For example, the author of an arresting article entitled "Fictitious Walls,"<sup>2</sup> asks whether we have invented unnecessary obstacles by insisting that an Indian convert must cease being a Hindu to become a Christian. From his long experience in India he opts for Catholic Hindus, just as those converted from Greek religions became Christian Greeks. Others may dispute this individual theory since it seems to involve a doubtful presupposition or at least an ambiguous use of a term, "Hindu", with its religious connotations. This theory may fade away ultimately; but everyone must consider the possibility of this type of approach until undiscovered worlds open to us.

All must be therefore allowed the freedom and be positively encouraged to explore these Eastern religions, — almost as men are exploring space. In space we do not know what we will find, yet the world will never fully rest until we do know. So with the great world religions; our knowledge of them so far has been superficial and often pre-judged. The Church cannot rest until it has penetrated the heart of them, not only in learned circles but on the daily level of people.

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Gentes*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Staffner, S.J., "Fictitious Walls", *Worldmission* 20 (Summer 1969), pp. 17-22.

All this study and dialog may mean that for some years Christianity will be in a time of sowing, not of reaping. Since this is a Scriptural phenomenon and common to various periods of Christian history, however, Christian patience and hope can, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, rise to the challenge.

What precedes has been said in order to explain a fact, the sad fact of a 'not-yet-Catholic Asia', and a hope, the hope of a "Catholic-Asia" — or at least of an Asia wherein the Catholic faith will feel at home and thrive as its own motherland. This, Church will be truly inculturated in the religious reality of the submit, will come to be, will "be-come" when, and only when the Asian people and thus become an "Asian religion".

Let us now pass on to consider some concrete statistics related to other aspects of the Church in the Asian continent.<sup>9</sup>

The number of priests working in Asia is, in round figures, 22,000,<sup>10</sup> giving Asia the lowest proportion of priests per inhabitant among all the continents, 0.001%. It is 0.4% in the proportion of priests to Catholics — slightly ahead of Africa, 0.33%, and the Americas, 0.34%.

A somewhat consoling fact is that the absolute number of priests in Asia in 1975 did not diminish in comparison with the preceding year, and in fact showed an increase, although only slightly. This was due to the number of ordinations representing an increase of 4%(4.06) over the existing clergy. Besides compensating for the decrease due to death and defections, this represent a total positive increase of 2.5%(2.46). But this increase represents still a very meager prospect, considering the proportionate — or rather disproportionate — increase in population. This tragedy will be felt with acute and ever-increasing anguish in the years to come.<sup>11</sup>

If from the priests we pass to the number of religious men other than priests and of women religious, the number of these apostolic workers is 75,000 (75,237), of whom only about 5,000 (5,236) are men and the rest women (70,001).

<sup>9</sup> From a world total of 2,342 ecclesiastical territories, 270 or 12.24% are in Asia. As for pastoral centers involved in the work of evangelization there are 43,363 such centers, understanding by this term parishes and quasi-parishes (9,278), mission stations (28,444, of which only 1,177 or 4.1% have a resident pastor), and chaplaincies.

<sup>10</sup> The figure is 21,833, of whom 10,883 are diocesan and 10,950 religious priests.

<sup>11</sup> As it is, the proportion is desolate: In Asia three is only 1 priest for every 100.00 people. The increase of priests in 1975 was 0.97% while the population had increased 5%. In other words 106 priests more were added, but during the same time Asia increased by 115,000,000.

The number of candidates for the priesthood constitutes a coordinate that must always be considered for any projection towards the future. In this respect Asia occupies the second place among the continents. A proportion of 10% of the candidates in relation to priests (Africa has a proportion of 178.5%) gives some hope. This represents a total of 23,368 candidates, 13,403 in secondary schools and 9,965 in philosophy or theology.<sup>12</sup>

Another patch of blue are the Catholic schools, although they they are threatened by the sword of communist advances, totalitarian governments, nationalistic sensitivities and the revival of Asian religions.<sup>13</sup>

An interesting, although by no means infallible, index of the Church's evangelizing drive especially amidst a non-Christian population, is the number of adult baptisms administered. Of the 16,543,000 worldwide baptisms reported only 6% are adult baptisms, meaning by "adult" persons over 7 years of age. In 1975 Asia had 10.7% of the total adult baptized numbers.<sup>14</sup>

Two more items help to complete the picture. Regarding the situation in countries that had recently fallen into communist hands, Cambodia has expelled all foreign missionaries. In Laos there has been a progressive elimination of religion from the life of the nation since the Pathet Lao take-over. Foreign missionaries were expelled by August 1975, and religious teaching was suppressed. Catholic Church buildings and Buddhist pagodas were seized by the

<sup>12</sup> The percentage of 107% is more than twice as high as the overall percentage of the world which stands at only 49.8%. Central America has 89.1%, South America 83.5%, North America 28.1% only. Europe has 36.4% and Oceania 26.9%. The proportion of those leaving the seminary is lower in Asia than the total world average, 6.7% as against 9.9%. This is still a far cry from the needs of a fast-growing Asia.

As for centres for the formation of candidates to the priesthood there are 220 seminaries at the high school level, comprising both those of the diocesan and the regular clergy, and 112 centers for philosophical and theological studies, again for both clergies.

<sup>13</sup> The number of Church-run primary or elementary schools in Asia is 10,786, with a student population of over three million (3,000,031). The Church directs 5,516 secondary schools with 2,497,835 students. Over 800,000 students frequent her institutes of higher education, colleges and universities.

<sup>14</sup> Out of 1,797,279 adult baptisms, 192,568 were administered in Asia. This represents a 4.7% higher percentage than the average. Africa had the highest rate of adult baptisms, 33.5%.

Another important aspect, because of its social and religious character, is the number of marriages within a determined period of time, as well as the relation between the number of marriages celebrated and the total figure for the Catholic population. We find that in Asia 90.8% of the marriages (or 283,304) were celebrated between Catholics, with a 9.2% (or 28,818) of marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic.

government; only a few were allowed to remain open for any kind of services. As for Vietnam, assessment of church activity and viability is a matter of guesswork because of the dearth of reliable reports.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) representing 14 episcopal conferences in Asia (excluding the Middle East) was established in 1970, and its statutes approved in 1972. Its headquarters are in Hong Kong. Beyond doubt the FABC may prove in the future the organism (I prefer the word organism to "organization") for vitalizing the common thrust of the Asian Churches and unifying their endeavours for a more integrated and more "Asian" evangelization.<sup>16</sup>

Up to now I have developed at some length an aspect of the Asian situation which, I believe, is basic for the proper projection into the future: the enormous disproportion between a "non-Catholic" Asia and the present means for its evangelization. By this I mean not only personnel and resources as placed in relief by the statistics I have quoted, but above all the problem of inculturation and Asianization, a topic I touched upon during one of my interventions at the last Synod.

## II

Asia's reality is many sided. But today, along with the problem of religious inculturation, most of its characteristics force themselves on our attention. Asia is young, Asia is poor, Asia is moving into action. The Church should be attuned to this triple reality and in full harmony with it.

1. Asia is young. Its people form 56% of the world's population, and 56% of Asia's people were born since the end of World War II. In Thailand this latter proportion is 60, in the Philippines it is 66 per cent. By 1980, 80 per cent of Asia's people will be under 40 years of age.

<sup>16</sup> There are 12 cardinals from Asia, the same number as from Africa, of whom 3 are from India, 2 from the Philippines, and 1 from each of the following countries: China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. — The number of *Episcopal Conferences* is 15: Latin Bishops of the Arab Countries, Bangladesh, Burma, China (Taiwan), India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos & Khmer Republic, Malaysia & Singapore, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam. — As far as the *oriental rites* are concerned there are oriental jurisdictions in India with hierarchy and faithful of the Antiochene rite (Malankarese) and of the Chaldean rite (Syro-Malabarese). There are Chaldean and Armenian rites in Iran, and Antiochene, Byzantine and Chaldean in Iraq, not to speak more directly of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Turkey.

Asia's youth largely shares the outlook, needs, and aspirations of youth everywhere in today's world; they are restless, in ferment, conscious that grave problems confront them. The present-day youth of Asia has outstanding assets, they are imaginative, resourceful, energetic and hard-working. They want employment, but they ask that it be meaningful. They are eager for change in a swiftly-moving intoxicating era of dynamic transformation. They are adaptable and idealistic.

This youthful force for change is massive. The immensity of young Asian manpower need not be a drag on its progress towards development. Christians must see that in human resources great potential lies. God intends them to cultivate and expand the physical resources He has created for us. If the Church can help inculcate in this youthful mass of manpower a will to corporate effort and a spirit of social responsibility, she will offer striking witness and render superb service to the human family of new eras to come.

So this youthfulness of Asia must be welcomed and utilized within the Church's life and work in Asia. Failure to move with the young will cost the Church manpower she badly needs. High pastoral priority ought to be given to communicating with the young through all personal and mass media. Our best efforts should be devoted to solid leadership training of Catholic youth.

2. Asia is poor. In comparison with the nations of Europe and North America, her per capita income and her gross-annual-product growth are lamentably low; the rate was 4.6% throughout the promising "development decade" of the sixties. A few economically bright spots (Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand) relieve the dark picture, but then the low average in spite of those gains is all the more disturbing. The gap between the "have" and "have-not" nations grows wider. Asia is still mainly rural and agrarian, while Western lands have become industrialized and urban.

Likewise, within Asia's several countries, some few individuals and families enjoy huge wealth. In view of that fact, the low per capita income is the more shocking. In the Philippines, 70% of the families must subsist on 33% of the country's total income; ten per cent of the families receive 40% of that revenue. It is said that about half the total income earners bring in less than (U.S.) \$330 a year. Six or seven persons need to be fed, clothed, and housed in an average family. Economic inequalities split Asian societies into social classes fearful and resentful of one another.

Poverty means little food and that of poor quality, inadequate clothing and housing, helplessness against illness or accident, limited

schooling and employment, an anxious, precarious old age. It also breeds crime and subhuman living.

The 'Green Revolution', increasing the supply of food grains raises hope that most countries will be able to put more rice in the pots of their people more bread on their tables. Some arable land can be utilized for the raising of industrial crops which may set economies on an upward course. But socially conscious administrators must try to see that the new windfall is shared widely, especially by the indigent.

The Church knows that Christ came to fill the hungry with good things, to befriend the poor. A man who fails to be moved and shaken by the physical poverty of people in misery is simply no partaker of the mind and heart of Christ! If the Church would communicate, then, with the countless masses of Asia, serve as their spokesman, champion their cause, and help lighten the burden they carry, she must walk in frugality and simplicity among the poor, and not leave them ill at ease at a distance. The Social Teachings of the Church can lend much light to Asia as she tries to stand on her own feet and bring her people a kind of living more fully in keeping with human dignity.

Asia today must live in sober austerity in order to develop her resources more efficiently. Here as elsewhere, then, the Church must avoid any show of wealth and lavish spending.

At this point a twofold problem confronts us: "Asian" "development" not merely "development in Asia".

With the possible exception of Japan, Asia belongs to what is called the Third World, the world of developing nations. Asians see the good things the industrialized nations of the West are able to produce and enjoy, and they want them.

But they don't want to be "westernized". They want to continue being Asians. For some Asians, perhaps for many, this may simply be inertia. They don't want to jettison things that have been with them for so long: traditional values and attitudes. Other Asians, more reflective, feel that they have a distinctive cultural heritage which they must preserve not only because it is of great human value but because it is what gives Asians identity, it is what makes Asians what they are.

To develop as the West has developed — technologically, economically, humanly, yes, but at the same time to remain Asian: is this possible?

It is a problem. But it may have a solution.

The example of Japan, may be cited. There, certainly, the rewards of development are no longer limited to a few. And yet, does not the Japanese success story involve a different kind of alienation, a materialism which other Asians are unwilling to accept? Have the Japanese, the leaders in Asian development, succumb to an outlook on life that is alien to the humane tradition of Asia?

Moreover, certain basic cultural features of Asia differ from those of Europe. The peoples of the West share a universe of discourse based on a common historic experience: the unity of the ancient Mediterranean, the unity of medieval Christendom.

We Asians do not have this shared universe of discourse. And so, when we even as Asians speak of Asia, we do not know whether we are thinking of the same thing. We may have found ourselves as Chinese, as Japanese, or as Indians; but we have not yet found ourselves as Asians. We need to find ourselves as Asians, because we need to form a community of Asian nations and Peoples. This need is becoming more and more apparent every day.

In the first place, with rapidly growing populations everywhere in the region, we need to share the resources of the region, to develop some kind of regional complementarity by which we can fruitfully exchange goods and services with one another.

But, secondly, this complementarity must be achieved by consent, not by force. It must not be imposed by stronger nations simply by moving in on the weaker nations who have the resources the stronger need.

And therefore, thirdly, we need to acquire a basic trust in one another, for without a minimum of mutual trust dialog is impossible.

In short, we must find ourselves as Asians, as Asians together; and, upon this hard anvil of an Asian consensus, hammer out the differences that can and will arise among us.

This is our present, this is our urgent need.

Who, or what, will then help Asians find themselves? Is it Christianity? It is very possible. And yet, after four hundred years of continuous, dedicated, often heroic missionary effort, what is Christianity in Asia? It is a diaspora: small, isolated communities lost among teeming millions.

You may say that numbers are not important. It is quality that is important. Yes; and the quality of being Christian has been rather authoritatively described as being leaven. Is this, then, the case? Has Christianity acted, is it now acting as a leavening force in Asia?

And now my answer in the form of a question: will not Christianity become the great leavening force for total, human "Asian development" precisely when it will become fully inculturated? Will there not be then an Asia where the Christian faith will feel totally at home, as in its own motherland?

3. We listed as a third feature of present-day pastoral importance in Asia the fact that its people are moving to action. Asia, more and more, is where the action will be. The action, hopefully, will be collective, with intelligent initiative and committed participation from the people themselves on a wide scale. Into new policies Asian countries must work their own traditions and spirit. They should therefore refuse foreign aid that is either patronizing or paralyzing.

Professor Anwar Barkat, a Pakistani political scientist, elaborating on this idea in a recently published article, observed that development achieved thus far has usually benefitted the few: wealthy industrialists, landlords, families highly placed in politics. Barkat deplors the fact that governmental authority is often an instrument of control rather than an agent for creative and directed change such as the masses hope for institution and structures. So there is little popular support and understanding of development efforts, little popular motivation and enthusiasm for change. He says that the modern Asian is a new and awakened man... part of the new Asian masses who are ready and willing to seek change and development actively, although this may involve personal and communal hardships. In modern Asia, he says, the masses awakened are asking for the rights and responsibilities of participation. It is not merely bread they seek, but bread as the symbol of their new-self-realization as participants in society.<sup>16</sup>

It seemed to be the clear mind of Vatican Council II that such active and intelligent participation of laity and clergy alike should be exercised in the corporate life of the People of God. It was invited and encouraged in matters liturgical; it was to be fostered in the elaboration of diocesan programs, and in the planning and execution of common apostolic endeavors. For the Church to move with Asia in motion, and for everyone to profit from this change in Asian attitudes, Catholic bishops and other leaders in the Church might take special care to listen receptively to opinions and suggestions from the junior clergy and the laity. Leaders might well find

<sup>16</sup> Anwar N. Barkat, "The Quests of Contemporary Asia", *International Review of Mission* vol. LIX, n. 234 (April 1970), pp. 135-136.



it fruitful to facilitate judicious experimentation more than has been done, and to place greater trust in the loyalty and gifts of mind and heart enjoyed by the "common Christian", by the "Asian Christian".

### III

From the foregoing, are we now in a position to draw any futuristic conclusions? I am tempted to say "yes", but I am just as strongly tempted to say "no". You may call this a typical Asian answer. All in all, however, I am more inclined to say "yes" but with some "ifs".

If Catholicism in the Asian continent enters by the paths of authentic "inculturation", if it follows the clear directives of Vatican II in the Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity and the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, if the Church in Asia generously endeavours to integrate Christianity into the Asian life and the Asian people while preserving its universal character — as the 1974 Synod on Evangelization so forcefully proposed — then "yes". Catholicism will then be a living reality in Asia, it will permeate the lives of many Asians, it will be at home in Asia; it will be — or if you allow me to put it this way — it will be "again" (not simply become) an Asian religion. After all, Christ was an Asian, and Christianity started to thrive precisely in Asia.

For some countries Christianity may look "imported". But Non-Christian religions do not hide the fact that they have been transmitted from abroad. Buddhism came into Vietnam from China and into China from India. Buddhist pagodas in Vietnam are decorated with buddhist aphorisms in Chinese, and Moslem prayer-houses in the Southern Philippines bear inscriptions in Arabic. Even the great "non-religion" which is Marxism has been "imported" but has become "inculturated" at a pace that leaves all religions astronomically behind.

Though necessarily brought by foreign missionaries, Christianity everywhere can and must adopt indigenous elements, persons, culture, — even religious culture — while remaining universal in all essentials.

Briefly then: if the Church is inculturated in the Asian people, in the Asian peoples, in their culture, in their youth, in their poverty, in their action, in their spirituality, I see a bright future for Catholicism in Asia.

What Our Holy Father Pope Paul VI said to the African Bishops in Uganda on July 31, 1969 applies equally to Asia: "We have no other desire than to foster what you already are: Christians and Africans".<sup>17</sup>

Let me end this conference with a quotation from the same address. After having expressed the need for unity in faith, the Pope continued on the topic of inculturation. He addressed Africa, African bishops, African Christians. It seems to me that the principles are so valid and so universal, that where the text reads "Africa", I may be allowed to read "Asia". And thus his message, without any other change, will apply to Asia with the same force and strength with which it was intended for Africa:

"An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favored by the Church. And in this sense you may and you must have an Asian ("African" in the original) Christianity. Indeed you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to perfection, such as to find in Christianity and for Christianity a true superior fullness, thus proving to be capable of a richness of expression all its own and genuinely Asian ("African" in the original). This may take time. It will require that your Asian ("African" in the original) soul become imbued to its depths with the secret charism of Christianity, so that these charisms may then overflow freely in beauty and wisdom in the true Asian ("African" in the original) manner".<sup>18</sup>

My friends, it could not have been said better.

With this I conclude. "The Future of Catholicism in Asia" is bright, but only with God's grace and blessing. "If Yahweh does not build the house, in vain the masons toll".<sup>19</sup> May I ask your prayers for the Church in Asia.

<sup>17</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano* August 2, 1969. English translation from *The Pope Speaks* 14 (1969), 214-220.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> *Ps.* 127:1.

# THE ROLE OF THE RELIGIOUS IN THE INDIGENIZATION OF LITURGY AND PRAYER\*

By

Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD

The Second Vatican Council, which ended last December 8, 1965, passed numerous resolutions on indigenization and the role of the religious. The resolutions are known to you and plenty of brilliant commentaries have been made on them. Hence there will be no need for me to repeat them here. Have we really implemented Vatican II? My impatience here is something like my impatience on some Asian theologians who say: "we must produce Asian theology" but do not do it. I hope that this seminar on indigenization will not end as another revolution of "we must" but really do some concrete action.

According to the Tagalog proverb, knowledge of our origin is the basis of where we should go. Hence the indigenization of liturgy and prayer, (1) we must know what the religious in the Philippines are now. I will then point out (2) some options and (3) some practical suggestions.

## I. WHAT THE RELIGIOUS ARE NOW

### Nature of the Religious

According to *Lumen Gentium* the religious are supposed to give witness to the people of God about the eschatological nature of the Church. The ordinary people expect the religious to embody the anticipated state of the future of God's people. In the words of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (no. 69):

Religious, for their part find in their consecrated life a privileged means of effective evangelization. At the deepest level of their being they are caught up in the dynamism of the Church's life, which is thirsty for the divine absolute and called to holiness. It is to this holiness that they bear witness. They embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes. By their lives they are a sign of total availability to God, the Church and the brethren.

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\* This is an improved version of the paper given at the Fourth Annual Convention-Seminar of Formation Personnel, San Jose Seminary, Loyola Heights, Quezon City on 19-21 December 1977.

As such they have a special importance in the context of the witness which, as we have said, is of prime importance in evangelization. At the time as being a challenge to the world and to the Church herself, this silent witness of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-witness capable of touching also non-Christians who have good will and are sensitive to certain values.

Furthermore, the religious are supposed to indigenize, or, in the Philippine context, are supposed to be Filipinized. "Filipinize" is a loaded word, but let it be understood in the context of inculturation or indigenization. I shall not document this assertion because enough has been said by other authors.

Since Vatican II ended in 1965, what has been accomplished with regards to indigenization? It left the execution to the local churches. Episcopal conferences like that of Africa and of India seem to be more advanced in the indigenization of liturgy and prayer life. I have the impression that the Philippine Church in general, with a few exceptions, is the traditional side.

Let us view the positive and negative aspect of the religious.

#### Positive

1. The diocesan clergy have been tied up with the traditional pastoral structures and therefore could not change readily. On the other hand, the religious have been more free to adapt themselves to the changes of time. The major problems of every age witnessed the creation of new religious orders founded to solve problems. We can therefore say that the religious have done many of the innovations which later were canonized and became a part of ordinary Christian life.

2. Church history has shown that the religious have usually been the leaders. I do not mean that the diocesan clergy are not leaders; in fact the bishop (who is usually of the diocesan clergy) is considered the leader of the diocese. But since the diocesan clergy has always been tied up with the traditional structures, they usually are not free to specialize and to innovate.

Philippine leaders working for indigenization have to cope up with their hindrance of being westernized. If plenty of our present leaders are Americanized, the same can be said of the leaders at the turn of the century. They were Hispanized Filipinos like Rizal, Mabini, and others. Although many of our present leaders who have had a Western background and formation, not a few had also an intellectual conversion. For example, Romulo used to praise

Mother America. Now he has changed his colors. Behn Cervantes is another and many others. In short, the religious and the other intellectuals can be the leaven of fostering indigenization.

The non-Filipino religious can also foster indigenization by assisting the role of specialists, similar to that of the Peace Corp Volunteers.

### Negative

1. Because of our Western education, we have been brain-washed and thereby alienated from the common tao. Our values have become middle class. Our Western education imprisoned our thinking in the jail of western categories. We want to be one with them, but our aspiration and models are Western. We suffer from what is called the "paralysis of analysis" — we know so much, we analyze so much, but can do little. Our westernization blocks our full integration with the people. Hence we have double standards: what we wish to be in indigenization (elitist) is different from that of the masses (popular). This point clearly arose in the recent seminar-workshop on spirituality which was held in Tagaytay City. In other words, many of our intellectuals have not been really converted intellectually and weaned away from the Western frame of mind.

The problem on westernization is more accentuated in international congregations, be it of American, Belgian, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish origin. The place of origin of a particular congregation is often reflected in the Philippines. For example, language is one case. We speak English instead of Filipino or any of the local languages.

However, we must note that some Westerners are more Filipinos than many of us. On the other hand, some European or American-trained Filipinos are really foreigners in their homeland.

Likewise, we cannot just accuse our non-Filipino confreres of being colonial. The same thing can be thrown into Filipinos. For example, I am told that Filipino missionaries in Ghana, Northern Africa, have introduced the Misa de Gallo to the Ghanas. Likewise, the Cursillo has been Filipinized. In the wake of its popularity, Filipino cursillo teams have preached the Filipinized Cursillo to many East Asian countries.

2. A second negative point is that we are not united. Not even the bishops of the Philippines are united. This factionalism is a form of weakness which will hamper our state of being comandos.

So far I was speaking about the state of the religious in the Philippines. A parallel thing can be said of prayer and liturgy. Although there have been attempts to incorporate oriental forms of piety such as techniques from Yoga and Zen as well as some experimental Oriental forms of liturgy, the spiritual formation given to seminarians and other religious candidates is still Western. Although much of the masses celebrated in the barrios as well as some sacraments are in the local languages, the spirit of the Philippine liturgy has been mostly a translation of Roman models. Liturgical texts from America and England usually find their use also in the Philippines.

In short, the religious state and that of liturgy and prayer in Western.

## II. SOME OPTIONS FOR THE RELIGIOUS

We know that liturgy and prayer are so closely related that both can be considered almost as one. Likewise, liturgy is nothing else but applied theology and prayer is also the application of the faith. For example, we pray for the faithful departed because we believe in the Communion of Saints and in the existence of Purgatory. In other words, "lex orandi, lex credendi."

But the problem arises when we consider that there are many models of theology. Consequently, there will be many models of liturgy and of spirituality and prayer. In prayer and liturgy, one can have the charismatic model, the model of popular piety, the model of liberation theology, the Oriental model, and perhaps more. These models can be subsumed in two higher forms of models or approaches: (1) the adaptation approach and the (2) incarnational approach. The previous one presupposes only one model, which is the Western one which can be adapted in many cultures. But this model has been attacked by the various episcopal conferences and in the 1974 Synod in Rome. I am for the incarnational approach which means a plurality of models. In the Philippines, we must obviously approach indigenization in the light of Philippine culture. *Evangelij Nuntiandi* has something on this point (no. 20):

...What matters is to evangelize man's culture (not in a purely decorative way as it were applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), .. always taking the person as one's starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with cultures, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the Kingdom which

the Gospel proclaimed is lived by man who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.

According to the 1977 Synod of Bishop (no. 5), "a true 'incarnation' of faith... supposes not only a process of 'giving' but also of 'receiving.'" Whereas the adoption approach only "gave," the incarnational approach also "receives" from the contribution of any give culture where the Christian faith is at work. In the words of the third preface of Christmas, God's eternal Word has taken upon himself our human weakness, giving our mortal nature immortal value. So marvelous is this oneness between God and man that in Christ man restores to man the gift of everlasting life." Without the mutual give and take Christ does not become one of us, just as he does not become present in the eucharistic species unless we offer bread and wine in the Mass.

The word "contextualization" can also be subject to many interpretations. It can be understood in the adaptation approach and the incarnational approach. I would rather avoid the word here in order not to be misunderstood.

The incarnational approach can have two sub-approaches: the elitist approach and the popular-based approach of indigenization. The elitist approach has been tried for centuries. But I believe that the Communist experience has weakened the elitist approach. The elitist approach tends to be colonial. I do not wish to say it has no merit. Perhaps it can be combined with the popular-base approach.

The popular-base approach means that we really begin not in the city but in the country. This also applies in traditional parishes. For example, one parish priest said that he could not introduce the concept of adult education and basic communities in his conservative parish. He had to start from the surrounding barrios and let the town-people see the effect of the new pastoral approach. The last and final target then was the town proper.

But does reform not begin from the top in the hierarchy? It is true that an enlightened bishop can do much to change the diocese. But any change — as in the case of indigenization — needs a mass base to carry it out. Plenty of highly thought out innovations in the past have failed precisely because they could not be fully implemented in the barrios. Furthermore, not a few superiors are *seguristas*; they do not want to take the risks of

making mistakes. The approach to the grassroots will purify the approach. Church history has shown that the superiors are among the last to give the imprimatur of programs which had passed the test of experience.

In the past, we always had the elitist approach. Everything had to start with the capital city, Manila and branch out to its satellites. We can say that the other cities in the country have also been elitist: they followed the role of Manila centralism to a lesser degree.

We religious can also examine our approach in the light of these models.

The problem of indigenization is this: We as religious want to be living witnesses of Christ. We want the common tao to see us concretely embody what they wish to be, just as people who see Mother Teresa work among the dying beggars of Calcutta want to be like her. But we are not models because we tend to be Westernized and rather give the wrong example. So we tend to have two or double standards: one for the elite and another for the masses.

I believe, we are tired of saying "We must indigenize" but do little or nothing at all. Our Lord's comparison is that of the man who builds his house on sand, or of the man who only says yes-yes. We have not fully applied Vatican II with regards to indigenization. It is time that we really start doing it no matter how imperfect it may be. Let the systemization take place later on. We must have something to start with.

If we want to be mass-based and to be one with the common tao, then we must try to embody and embellish what the common tao has with regards liturgy and prayer, namely, popular piety. According again to *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (no. 48):

These expressions were for a long time regard as less pure and were sometimes despised, but today they are almost everywhere being rediscovered. During the last Synod the Bishops studies their significance with remarkable pastoral realism and zeal.

Popular religiosity of course certain has its limits. . . . But if it is will oriented . . . it is rich in values. It manifests a thirst for God which only the simple and the poor can know. It makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism, when it is a question of manifesting belief. It involves an acute awareness of profound attributes of God: fatherhood, providence, loving and constant presence. It engenders interior attitudes rarely observed to the same degree elsewhere: patience, the



sense of Cross in daily life detachment, openness to others, devotion. By reason of these aspects, we readily call it "popular piety", that is, religion of the people, rather than religiosity.

If the voice of the people through popular piety can be the voice of God, one possible area to look into is the liturgy of Advent. We know that the Paschal Mystery is the center of our faith. By Christ's resurrection, every day can simultaneously be Christmas, Lent and Easter. Although we insist on the spirit of Advent and do not dare to sing Christmas songs until the eve of Christmas, the common tao does not understand the meaning of Advent. For him Christmas begins as early as November and goes as far as February 2 in the older tradition. It is said that the Philippines has the longest tradition of Christmas.

### III. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

In Tacloban City, we once had a seminar for college theology teachers. We planned to have a Filipino experimental mass as a culminating activity. But since the bishop forbade the proposed liturgy, so we resorted to a simple bible service on indigenization. The group was composed of two American priests, one Filipino priest, several Filipina sisters, seminarians, and theology teachers of a university. In spite of the simple liturgy, we felt the Holy Spirit there. Some were moved to tears in the prayer. The lesson is that rite or externals are not enough. True, they can help in producing the desired effect, but what is more important is the disposition. And indigenized rite without disposition can become like a carnival or a folkloristic show.

#### Basic Attitudes which Religious should have:

- 1) We must have the courage to be different and to achieve something. This includes the daring spirit which entails calculated risks of making educational guesses and mistakes.
- 2) Non-Filipino religious to have the attitude of service, not to be served. This is most evident in non-Filipino parish priest who no longer have, by law (Presidential Decree No. 176), the privilege of becoming administrators in Catholic institutions such as schools.
- 3) A re-education of our sense of values. For example, we have been used to the Western individualism and existentialism of self-perfection. This is very much against the *sakop* spirit and *sakop* fulfillment. I have explained this point in my books.

What can we really do? With our Westernized training and all our setbacks, what can we accomplish? Let us be realistic: we can only do what is possible for us.

I would propose the following:

- 1) Let us start with the language of liturgy and prayer. Take the example of 'sangre', 'blood', and 'dugo'. 'Dugo' has more impact in us. Let our liturgies be in the local language. Again there is the practical difficulty of implementing it.
- 2) Let us create the climate wherein our successors will be more capable of doing the job indigenization. In doing so we lay the foundations for better people to carry out the task of indigenization. This job is common to us westernized Filipinos and our non-Filipino confreres.

### **The Problem of Change**

The problem of change is among the hardest for administrators and for social workers. One top administrator once remarked: "You have to wait for a few more funerals before you can carry out your plans". In the Philippine church, we cannot carry things overnight. The hierarchy and the Roman Catholic Church has been known to be patient — the Italian style.

Let us ask the practical question: How can we religious bring about the indigenization of liturgy and prayer with our given limitations? Allow me to borrow a few thoughts from the social scientist. Let us illustrate it with one example, the use of the vernacular in liturgy and community prayer.

The human body is a perfect example of change and permanence. We are the same persons we were ten years ago. At the same time we are different because we grow and cope with new situation ideas. The body changes because it accepts what is conducive to its own good. Change, furthermore, must be according to the nature of the body. E.g., from ordinary rice you produce strains for miracle rice.

Habits are hard to change. There is the law of inertia and man is proverbially lazy. In the case of liturgy, the popular backing which Cardinal Lefebvre has for the Tridentine Latin Mass shows that Vatican II was not fully understood by all people.

The following are some principles used for change (in our case, indigenization):

1. **Conscienticize and motivate:** We cannot just legislate that from now on, we only will pray in Pilipino. To use force will only create counter-results. Here, I leave the door open to other details.
2. **Involve all the people concerned:** "What is shared is cared." Psychologists say that people tend to cooperate more if they are involved in the planning stage. Here, for example, learning the language is both for non-Filipinos and Filipinos as well. There are Filipinos assigned in other parts of the country (e.g., Visayan in an Ilocano province or vice versa) who do not pick up the language of the province. There are also non-Filipinos who are much better than Filipinos in speaking the local language.
3. **Use the present system.** Iconoclasts must beware that they cannot just throw overboard our liturgy as colonial or foreign. We must take what we have and begin from there. We can learn from the experience of the Population Commission people: they tried to enforce change agents who were foreign to the barrio (hired social workers). Now they have learned to use the *hilots* and *parteras* to be agents to change. We also cannot junk our traditional piety. Let us start from here.
4. **Use the new system together with the old system.** One example can be that of the implementation of modern math. Math teachers found out that the old system of mathematics was obsolete. The Americans revamped everything in the implementation of modern math: they revamped the school system, the method of teaching, the textbooks. This experiment amounted to millions of dollars plus the broken hearts of many people. The British, on the other hand, did not follow the American Model. They let modern math be one of the minor branches. The branch eventually grew and changed the whole math system. The British model was more economical and dislocated less teachers, and students.

We repeat: one cannot change people overnight. This is also true of Vatican II which allowed the old and the new undergo a transition period.

5. **Demonstrate.** Let us now just show abstract theories. Let us demonstrate our liturgy and prayer life in action. In doing so, people can imitate us better.

6. **Work with the young.** We are aware of the saying that "you cannot teach an old dog new tricks." It is hard to change fixed habits and the old anyway will die some day. So to work on the young and our successors will pay off better results. This is to the scope of formation people. Let us try to work with the new generation.

In this connection, let us look at the example of Christ, the foremost social changer. Christ did not aforementioned principles of change. In fact he was so successful that he changed the world. For example, he faced the problem of institutional slavery which we consider today as inhuman and unlawful. But his contemporaries thought, slavery was correct and just. He did not rally against the Emperor of Rome or make a protest that slavery is unlawful. To do so would be useless. Christ began his reform with the training of a few "seminarians" in a remote barrio of the Roman Empire. We all know the rest of the story.

I feel that the religious have the most important role in the indigenization of prayer and liturgy as well as the other aspects of enculturation. The religious have always been the primary change agents in the history of the Church. Vatican II has provided all the guidelines, majority of which remain to be accomplished. The formation personnel have this task and challenge to face. I hope this convention-seminar will accomplish some real action.

**THEOLOGY: MAGISTERIUM**  
**Second of a series**

## **WHAT IS THE MAGISTERIUM?**

**By**

**Bishop Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., D.D.**

### **Introduction**

During the previous lecture we described the various signs and causes of the existing crisis of faith in the Magisterium. The scenario we painted was rather grim.

But at the same time, we stated that the Church has never been in its history problem-free. From its very beginnings, the Church through a succession of ages has undergone a severity of trials, endured a fury of internal discorders and survived violent oppression and persecution. The Church, ever beset, ever ailing, ever exhausted and expiring, continues to survive and increase in vigour and in numbers. History bears eloquent witness to this irrefutable reality and provides evidence that the life and power of the Church come not from men to whom it was entrusted, but from God who founded the Church twenty centuries ago, and remains its guiding force through all the trials.

The proper way of viewing the problems which beset the Magisterium today therefore is to view it within the context of the history of the Church on earth.

From its very beginnings, the Church has been troubled by tensions between faith and theology, and between obedience and authority.

1) St. Paul cautioned Timothy to stay clear of men who make a pretense of religion but mitigate its power, and who are "always learning but never able to reach a knowledge of truth" (II Tim. 3:5-7).

He also predicted that the "time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but following their own desires, will surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears. They will stop listening to the truth and will wander off to fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

- 2) God has not failed in his promise to be with his Church:
- a) In the 4th century, he raised Athanasius and Hilary to defend the authentic faith against the bishops dominated by Arian emperors.
  - b) When a secularized clergy was betraying its mission in the 13th century, Gregory the Great and Peter Damian restored discipline within the Church.
  - c) In the 16th century, when the clergy was helpless in the face of a crisis in medieval society, Charles Borromeo and Francis de Sales reformed the clergy and restored the Church to missionary vitality.

All throughout her life, the consistent picture of the Church has been a divinely founded and divinely guided community of human beings — of sinners, and heir to the frailties of such nature. Through her imperfections, we are permitted to catch a glimpse of her divine beauty and the unfailing guidance and providence of her founder and Spirit.

### **What is the Magisterium?**

What is this magisterium? Today's lecture focusses on the answer to this question. Is there in the Catholic Church an authority which ultimately by its authority alone obliges a Catholic to accept a teaching which, logically or psychologically, he doesn't want to accept?

In thus formulating the question, we limit its scope to the nature and properties of the Magisterium. We are also excluding, for the moment, any discussion on the functions, manner of exercising, objects, subjects and expected assents to the magisterial acts. We hope, God willing, to talk about them more extensively in the succeeding lectures.

### **Threefold Powers of the Hierarchy**

Christ's mission is unique, but on analysis we can easily distinguish three aspects in it: prophetic, kingly and priestly aspects. The same aspects appear in the NT as the apostles preach the gospel, consecrate the Eucharist, perform the sanctifying gestures instituted by Christ, form communities and administer them. It is to these three aspects of the one mission of Christ that theologians attach the three powers of the hierarchy: **Magisterium, Order, Governance.**

COMPARATIVE TABLE BETWEEN THE THREE POWERS OF THE HIERARCHY

Powers	In relation to the Messianic functions of Christ	Basic Nature	Immediate Objects	Manner of Conferment	Permanence	Subjects
Orders	Instrument of Christ the: Priest	Instrumental or ministerial	Worship in the strict sense	consecration	indelible	Practical Intellect
Magisterium	Prophet	Principal Agent Addressed to the Intellect Motivation: certain that the Church teaches the Divine truth — Christ the Truth	Adherence to truth (revealed)	Canonical mission, designation, mandate	temporary i.e. can be revoked	Practical Intellect
Jurisdiction	King	Principal Agent Addressed to the Will Motivation: because the Church is divinely responsible for leading me to the common good — precept of the Superior	Adherence to the good	Canonical mission	temporary i.e. can be revoked	Will

The power of serving as instrument of Christ the Priest to perpetuate the redemptive sacrifice in the Mass and to communicate the fullness of Christian grace through the sacraments, is the power of order.

While the power of serving as instrument of Christ the King, so as to continue under His action to rule His mystical Body, is the power of jurisdiction.

And finally, the power of serving as instrument of Christ the Teacher or Prophet, to preach the fullness of Christian truth to the world, is the power of magisterium.

#### **Their respective characteristics**

The power of order is merely instrumental or ministerial. The reason is because God alone can produce grace as its principal, efficient cause. In this case, the official personnel of the Church have no proper or native power. They act merely as God's instruments, or, since they are rational beings, as His ministers. Consequently, they impart grace only by performing the rites instituted by Christ. There is after all a distinction between minister and sacraments. The former (minister) is a living person taking the place of the living God, precisely applying his knowledge of the will of God, directing those who should follow it by means of formulas and actions. While the latter (sacraments), are actions and gestures which are applied or acted upon, as conveyors in meaning; and efficacy of a divine power institutionally attached to it by God and applied to the subject by the power of God.

The powers of jurisdiction and magisterium however are secondary principal causes. For although the rulers of the Church may have set forth the teaching and the precepts of Christ, they enjoy also their own personal power of teaching and ruling. In teaching, for example, they do not merely declare what has been revealed but make use of their own prudence in deciding the proper time and the precise manner in which they should make any declaration. They decide on their own what is in harmony with revealed truths, and what is directly or indirectly opposed to them, and on their own authority they prescribe that revealed truths be accepted as certainly true. So with ruling, they do not only declare what divine law enjoins, but on their own authority they enforce these precepts and decide when and how they are to be observed.

The power of Order being a sacramental power, it is normally conferred by way of consecration received through baptism, confirmation and orders. Being a moral power, jurisdiction and



magisterium are normally conferred by way of designation, of commission or mandate (ST, II II, a.39, a.3).

The power of order being a physico-spiritual power, is **indelible**, while jurisdiction and magisterium are lost by a simple act of **revocation**.

The act of teaching, in the sense of either revealing or transmitting revelation, is fundamentally different from ruling or ordering. In the first place, the object of teaching is adherence to **truth**, while ruling is concerned with adherence to the **good**. When I teach I appeal to an act of the intelligence, but when I order, it is to an act of the will. The motivation is distinct in both also. I bow before the magisterium because I am certain that the Church teaches the revealed truth, and that it is sure of what it teaches. I bow before its pastoral power because the Church is divinely responsible for leading me to the common good.

Even from the point of view of the **subject**, the power of jurisdiction is distinct from magisterium. St. Thomas says that in the act of faith the intelligence is not sufficiently actuated by its proper object. The assent must come to it from elsewhere, that is to say from the will which actuates all the faculties. From this aspect, faith is a kind of obedience. But the act performed under the movement of the will remains essentially an act of the intelligence. The necessary intervention of the will does not go so far as changing the object. (Chenu, *L'amour dans la foi*, BT, 1931-1933). While the act of faith which corresponds to the pastoral power is quite different. Adhesion to the directives and orders of the pastoral power is formally an act of the will, an act of obedience in the formal sense of the word. (ST, II-II a.4. a.7, ad 3 um). In other words, while the proper motive of obedience is the precept of the superior, the proper motive of the act of faith is the First Truth which is the attribute of God.

That is why, when I adhere to a revealed truth through the pronouncement of the Church, the real master of my act of faith is Christ. But when I obey the power of jurisdiction, there is nothing similar to this immediate action of Christ on my soul. I pursue a good cause because the Church tells me so. That is no small thing; the Church is after all entrusted with leading me to salvation and it is assured of the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the very special form of the charism of infallibility. But it is, nevertheless, an inferior motive which reveals by contrast the greatness that belongs to the teaching mission of the Church putting forward the articles of faith.

While there are three distinct powers, there is only one hierarchy. This is because the sovereign priesthood, the supreme kingship and prophetic office are inseparable in Christ who is the Head and in whom there is unity of love, action and knowledge. In the same manner the threefold derivatives — jurisdiction, order and magisterium, should be strictly united in order to act on the Church which is His body. They constitute, according to St. Paul's image, the system of joints and ligaments by which the increase of charity and truth and, in a word, the unity of one life, descends from the head to the body. It would therefore be an error to think of three hierarchies, one each of order and magisterium and jurisdiction. There is one hierarchy with three distinct but interdependent powers.

### Magisterium — Master

It has been said quite often that the first problem of the magisterium is not doctrinal, but psychological; that the principal difficulty regarding magisterium is not the difficulty of understanding it, but the difficulty of psychologically accepting it.

And one root of this psychological difficulty, it seems, is the word "magisterium".

"Magisterium" is a latin word, which come from **magister**. But in our American English, **magister** means **Master**. But a **Master**, is one who dominates. In an age when all authority is challenged, the idea of **master** — connotating dominance understandably repels.

But there is a prior meaning in the word **Master**, lost perhaps in the American English, but still retained in the British English — and that is, **teacher**. **Magisterium** therefore is a teaching given by the authority of a **Teacher**. It is not just an ordinary teaching. In the case **Ecclesiastical Magisterium**, the authority does not come from the **person** but from the **office** and the **doctrine**. It must be a teaching in the name of **Christ**.

In this modern age, there are too few willing to learn. But a **Teacher** makes no sense, functionally and Philosophically, if there are no learners, there can be no **docentes** without **discentes**, no **teacher**, without learners.

If there are attitudes which create special problems to the **Magister**, they are conceit and presumption. We do not like to be sheep of **Christ's** and **Peter's** flock.

Viewed in the light of a **teacher** with authority, the classical definition of the **Magisterium** is: **the right and duty of teaching**

revealed truth authentically, and the obligation of the faithful to accept with submission of heart and mind the doctrine proposed.

For a proper theological understanding of this definition, it is important to look at the magisterium in its proper ecclesiological context. This ecclesiological context is nothing else but the eschatological nature of the Church. What does this mean? It means that the Church proclaims that the grace of God, hence also the grace of truth and faith, is not merely constantly offered anew, but that this grace of truth is always in the Church, in fact triumphant there, and that this triumph remains tangible and manifest in the historically concrete Church, and hence also in its confession of faith. But the Church would not be the eschatological community of salvation if it were not in "infallible" possession of the truth of Christ. It can only remain eschatologically triumphant and present in the world if it does not falter and fail in the confession of faith; for in faltering and failing in the confession of faith it would not be any more the Church of Christ; it would be quite another community.

This leads us to the consideration of a very important aspect of the magisterium. The magisterium is not strictly speaking the authority to teach abstract doctrines for their own sake. It is the guarantee that the salvific word of Christ will be really addressed to the concrete situation of a given age, in view of Christian life. It is the concrete form in which the guidance of the Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, gives the Church the assurance of maintaining, at any historical period, historical continuity with Jesus Christ.

### **Divine Institution**

Essential to the Magisterium is, therefore, the **divine institution**. Holy Scripture shows Christ giving the Apostles a power of teaching which is to last forever in His Church. In a generic way, He entrusts to them His own mission: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (Jn. 20:21; 17:18). He explicitly gives them the command "to teach all nations" (Mt. 28:18) and to "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:16). He prays to the Father for the Apostles and "for those also who through their word are to believe in me" (Jn. 17:20). He considers contempt for their teaching as contempt for himself: "He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me" (Lk. 10:16).

One cannot help but be astounded by this manifestation of divine generosity in giving men this awesome power over the minds of men. But divine logic is inescapable. "All power is given to

Me in heaven and on earth", and because God is the absolute Lord of all men, our destiny, as revealed to us, is to know Him and to love Him supernaturally. It becomes then our inescapable duty to completely surrender our mind and heart to him through the free acts of faith and love (D. 1793). The Church is ordained to effectively carry out the union of the complete man to God by elevating the complete man to divine sonship (Vat. I, session 3, c.3; D. 1797). But in order to carry out this mission, the Church, assisted by the Holy Spirit, must have the power over the minds of men, i.e. she must have a doctrinal authority, she must have the authority to oblige the intellect.

Herein lies the great division between the Catholic position and that of the Protestants, led especially by Barth and Cullman following the early Reformers on this particular matter. The basic foundation of Protestant difficulties vis-a-vis the Catholic position regarding the Magisterium is the fact that they assert the total sufficiency of Scripture both for the constitution and interpretation of Revelation. They hold that, at first Christ instituted a living Magisterium, which was oral. When the New Testament was composed, that Magisterium was only written. Individual Christians are illuminated by the Holy Spirit when reading it. The Bible, in this case, becomes sufficiently normative.

When Catholics then insist on the living Magisterium in the persons of human beings, they fault us with substituting the human word of interpretation in place of the divine word.

It is not easy to understand this position, because, even assuming that the Scripture is sufficient as an infallible norm of belief, the recognition of the New Testament has still to be resolved. Our contention is that this norm — Scripture — still requires previous recognition by the Magisterium of the second century as to which existing writings could be included in the Scripture as authentic and hence infallible doctrine of Christ.

A more positive answer is to note the fact that in the NT the act of faith is seen as something which is not merely human but is placed under the influence of grace. The horizontal dimension, and the Church, is joined with the vertical dimension, i.e., God's intervention through grace, in the act of faith. When man hears the word of God through the preaching of the Church, there God meets man and man responds to God. The historical transmission of revelation takes place through the Church and the Church has the obligation of making revelation present. Revelation is mediated only because of distance and time, but it is mediated in the Church through Christ. Christ puts revelation into human words.

That is why we say that God certainly speaks to all the baptized, from bishops to the lowest lay faithful. After all, the Holy Spirit, who has taken abode in the revealed Word, is the interior principle of all relations of men with the heavenly Father who, through him, gives back to them life in Christ and continually renews the Church by the power of the Gospel. Nevertheless, this action of the Holy Spirit takes place within the framework of the divine constitution of the Church, which means that the Holy People must be guided by the Sacred Magisterium. For only in obedience to the latter can it remain faithful to the transmitted Revelation, penetrate it more deeply by accurate insights and apply it more thoroughly to Life (LG, arts, 4, 12).

The Magisterium separates the Church from other natural societies. Other natural societies can claim solely, the power of government with its triple function of legislation, judging and execution. And this is because society receives its members already basically complete with their innate aspiration to an ulterior social good and the capacity to obtain such good. What is needed is merely the coordination of their activities through the so-called social powers or authority. The power of government is merely to order and administer.

The ecclesiastical society is totally different. Before it can exercise the power of government, it should first constitute her members into a new being and should first dispose them proportionately to a supernatural dimension. Hence the members should first be regenerated into a new being through incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ through the sacrament of faith and grace, which is baptism. In order to effect this, the doctrinal power is necessary.

The Magisterium is not only unique, it is also supernatural. It is freely willed by Christ who gave Peter as head of the Apostolic College, the command to confirm his "brethren" in faith, and invited the other Apostles to preach the Gospel to all the people. That is why we believe that the hierarchical magisterium is a dogma of faith, which in essence means that Christ constituted the Pope and the Bishops united with the Pope as teachers of its faith, its guardians, its interpreters. And He promised them the special assistance of the Holy Spirit so that they do not fall into error when they propose for belief the truths contained in Revelation. This last remark underlines another interesting aspect of the magisterium: It is not above the Word of God, but is at the service of that Word. The Word of God is the origin and the foundation of the Church. In fact, it must be acknowledged to have "a force and power so great that it stands as the support and energy of

the Church, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life" (Del Verbum, n. 12). Nothing and no one can take its place. The hierarchical magisterium "is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit; it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed" (Ibidem, n. 10).

Precisely because it comes from God, because it is a divine charism, the Magisterium is not a scientific Magisterium, but a Magisterium of authority. Most of the criticism against "Humanae Vitae" seems to have lost sight of this property of the teaching authority of the Church. The critics expended too much effort analyzing the scientific justifying reasons for the decision taken by the Pope. Feeling dissatisfied with them, they concluded that therefore the decision is not binding at all.

But they do not constitute the essential consideration of the Encyclical, or of the teaching authority of the Pope for that matter. The essential thing is that the Pope in this particular encyclical is laying down a moral rule. The Pope, as the supreme doctor of faith, is authentically interpreting the divine law and teaching that its observance is binding "on all the faithful". In the light of the divine assistance which he possesses and which we believe in by faith, the Pope is declaring and teaching that this moral rule is true and good. It is binding, not by reason of the justifications that might be given to support it, but primarily by reason of the divine authority of the Vicar of Christ, who commands through him. "He who hears you, hears me." The justifying arguments certainly have their own meaning and role in the magisterium of authority; their value is to help shape the papal decisions and interventions. But, the real foundation and motive of our obedience will not be because we see and we are convinced of these reasons or arguments, but because it is an act of the Pope's supreme teaching authority backed up by the divine assistance of the Person whom he represents, Jesus Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, the Church.

### Conclusion

May I just conclude with the observation of Karl Rahner on the need by our contemporary period for the magisterium.

"In spite of the individualism of later days, which is still very much the prevailing temper of the West, a new understanding for the magisterium of the Church must surely

now be possible, in view of our knowledge of the man of today and tomorrow. Man cannot possess his truth as an isolated individual, since he is no such thing. The truth of man would be dissipated into the hazard of private opinions which the self-doubting man of today would not take particularly if in free and inevitable resolve he did not allow himself to be corrected by the truth which is not a priori his own but which comes to him as that of a socially instituted fellowship. Truth of its very nature has to do with fellowship, society and institution, even though the precise relationship of an individual and his truth to the truth of fellowship and society, differ essentially according to the nature of the society in question. But in a post-individualistic epoch new possibilities of understanding may be opened up, even for the understanding of the magisterium of the Church." (article "Magisterium" in *Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. by Karl Rahner. The Seabury Press, N.Y. 1975.

A better understanding of the Church's magisterium is indeed imperative for many contemporary Catholics. Until that better understanding is reached, confusion will continue.

# **WILL THE PARISH SURVIVE? AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL PARISH SYSTEM**

**By**

**Florencio Testera, O.P.**

Whenever people group together for a common purpose some type of organized interaction or structure develops. The emerging structure determines in a more or less formal way the role and responsibility of every member within the community, it delineates the authority of its leaders, and, above all, it serves to protect the interests and freedom of the individual members.

The people of God is no exception to this sociological rule. Structures of worship, administration and mission are essential elements in the life of any christian community. The believers, too, must group into a unit — a parish, local church — to share the same religious values and live them out individually and in their respective local church or community.

It is precisely this structural nature of the parish — an institution subject to change and revision like any other type of structure — what has lately given origin to some basic questions related to the viability and relevance of the existing parish system. Should the traditional-territorial parish system be viewed as a totally irrelevant and obsolete institution and as such be abolished, or can it still be salvaged and somehow revitalized to continue serving the spiritual needs of the faithful in the christian community? Are there any valid alternatives to the centuries-old parochial system? What is the future of the territorial-residential parish?

These and other questions of a similar nature are being frequently raised in modern christian communities and local churches and surely all are worthy of an adequate answer. This is what this brief study shall endeavor to do.

## *1. The Traditional Parish System*

Traditionally, the make up of a parish has been determined by the territory within which it was established and by the amount of income sufficient in itself to cater to the material needs of the clergy, the up-keep of church buildings and the funding of its religious activities and projects.



This type of territorial parish is not an institution of recent origin having emerged in the early centuries of christianity as an answer to the urgent need of providing spiritual care to christians living in the rural communities. Truly, at this early date the christian message had not yet reached the far-flung villages or pag in the countryside and thus christian life flourished mainly in big urban centers. The spiritual needs of the community were attended to from the *presbyterium* or house of priests where the bishop and his clergy — priests and deacons — led some sort of communal life and shared the responsibility of the pastoral care of the community of the faithful.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately this pattern of shared-pastoral-ministry did not last for long. When christianity reached the age of emancipation under Constantine, numerous christians had already moved out into the country-side and were settling in model communities making it necessary for a clergyman to follow them to tend personally and directly to their personal needs. This new type of rural ministry was entrusted to a priest-member of the city *presbyterium*, a fact that accounts both for the gradual desintegration of the *presbyterium* itself and for the emergence of territorial parishes where the clergy were forced to live in isolation deprived of the benefits formerly enjoyed in the city communal life.<sup>2</sup>

The secularization of church property in the eighth and ninth centuries — under the pressure of gallic and germanic regimes — shaped up the final structure of the territorial parish and gave a fatal blow to the common life practice of the clergy. Under those regimes all church buildings and land-holdings became the property of the secular power, the king and the nobles being the big landlords. The bishop's authority over his priests and their parishes dwindled notably as the care-taker priest of the local church was chosen, hired and paid for by the landlord whose tenants composed the parish.<sup>3</sup> Under this system the pastor of a particular territory had exclusive rights over his flock. The faithful were enjoined to worship in the parish church, to confess to the parish priest, to receive easter communion from his hands, and to be married and buried by him.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D'Ercole, G., *The Presbyterial Colleges in the Early Church*. Concilium, VII (Sept., 1966), pp. 13-15;

Rahner, K., *Bishops: Their Status and Functions*, London 1964, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Barberena, Tomás G., *Collegiality at Diocesan Level: The Western Presbyterate*. Concilium, VIII (Oct., 1965), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> La Due, W. J., *Structural Arrangements of the Parish*. The Jurist, XXX (1970), pp. 315-318.

<sup>4</sup> Neill, Th.; Schmandt, R., *History of the Catholic Church*, Milwaukee, 1957, pp. 163-165.

These exclusive parochial prerogatives — linked to the land or territory — prevailed to the late part of the seventeenth century when Clement X (1670-1676) acknowledged the right of the faithful to receive the sacraments, in some cases, from many other parish priest.<sup>5</sup> Earlier the Council of Trent had introduced some pertinent legislation setting new controls and establishing a more effective rapport between the bishop and his priests. Many of the abuses of the middle ages were thus corrected and the reform of the parish became a most welcome reality. The residential or territorial principle — every parish with its pastor — continued to gather momentum as the decrees of Trent still favored territorial parishes over other kinds of parochial units envisioned by the Council itself.

Neither did the social and cultural upheavals of the nineteenth century bring about any substantial change in the structural formation of the parish. As a result the urban parish did not fare quite well during the industrial revolution of those times as it failed to cope with the pastoral needs of people who ceaselessly poured into the large cities in search of better job opportunities.

Notwithstanding the languid state and performance of some of the large urban parishes operating under the territorial system, the legislation of the 1918 Code of Canon Law still adhered to the old territorial principle when it decreed that the place of residence should be the norm of parish affiliation or membership, (c. 94.1-3). Under the new law, however, the parishioner enjoyed greater freedom of action since he was allowed to worship in churches other than his own parish, (c. 467).

The contribution of Vatican II towards a meaningful restructuring of the parish system was rather limited. The Council simply adopted the existing criteria of territory, nationality, language, rite, etc., in the formation of new parishes.<sup>6</sup> This oversight of Vatican II, however, is compensated fully with the implementing rules of the Council's decrees regarding parishes, by which the bishop is endowed with power to ... "change parishes in any way whatever after he has heard the views of the council of priests."<sup>7</sup>

## 2. *Alternatives to the Territorial Parish.*

An increasing number of catholics no longer find a meaning in the traditional parish system. Territorial groupings, it is averred, are frequently artificial and warping pastoral units and as such can

<sup>5</sup> Blochlinger, A. *The Modern Parish Community*. N.Y., 1965, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> Vatican Council II. *Christus Dominus*, n. 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*, n. 21.

not offer the christian an opportunity to express forcefully and live fully the communal dimension of their faith. This apparent dismal performance of the territorial parish is in part due to a contemporary phenomenon which is graphically summed up in the modern paradoxical adage: "people no longer live where they live" which C. Williams elaborates thus:

"By an accelerating centrifugal motion, more and more aspects of life have been separated from the community of residence... To a great extent our decisions are made, our energies expended and our anxieties are formed away from home. The Church, however, is still centered as residence, and has this time apparently failed to change its shape to meet the changing patterns of secular life".<sup>8</sup>

This growing dissatisfaction with the residential parish of good by-gone days accounts for the rise and proliferation of independent 'new communities' and 'local churches' within the parish territory itself. These new developments are viewed by the local parish as a constant, positive threat to its own existence, as more and more of its dynamic members join such 'floating' and 'underground' communities weakening, as a result, the parish program of activities. A question in point, therefore, could be the following: is the traditional parish still a functional, pastoral unit or should it be rather discarded now as an obsolete institution no longer viable in the present sociological milieu? Or put in another way, can the territorial structure of the parish still offer an answer to the varied needs of modern urban communities, or rather it has become imperative to search for new pastoral alternatives more suited to the demands of our times?

Indeed many of our parishes today both in the cities and in the countryside are too large to be able to provide its faithful with truly personalized services. It is in this context that the existing parish system is actually criticized for its **supermarket** approach to the sacraments and for a similarly **depersonalized** approach to the pastoral ministry.<sup>9</sup>

Despite such shortcomings and criticisms, however, the centuries old principle, "one pastor to each parish", is the prevalent system sanctioned by canon law, (c. 460,2). But the fact remains that it can hardly be considered adequate for most present-day conditions and problems. The "all-knowing" and "all-doing" pastor of olden times is now becoming a relic of history. Contemporary parish

<sup>8</sup> Williams, C., *Where in the World?*, N.Y., 1963, pp. 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> Provost, H. J., *Structuring the Community*, Chicago Studies, XV (1976) p. 272.

administration and ministry has branched out into specialized fields such as post-Vatican II liturgy, catechesis, marriage, and vocational counselling, social works and public relations, even financial and labor management and administration of other temporal goods and interests, that the running of a big parish has become a herculean task. And the branches of such parish activities are indispensable pastoral functions brought about by contemporary sociology, theology, liturgy, economics and even cybernetics.<sup>10</sup>

Due to such shortcomings and limitations in the present parochial set-up many concerned catholics believe that the time is up to introduce certain modifications, even drastic reforms, into the centuries old parish tradition. Some quarters, in fact, advocate that the big parishes should be split into smaller units, and that new parish ministries be introduced such as the permanent deaconate, the team-ministry, and other similar one to minister to such handier units.<sup>11</sup>

Still others would preferred the christian community to move away from being parish-centered. As Wessels says: "There will still be parishes organized along traditional lines which will focus on the needs of the family group, but there will also be other pastoral units—ministries through institutions such as hospitals, schools and prisons; ministries in bussiness and industry; ministries through political processes; ministries in crisis situations such as civil rights, poverty and war; ministries to literary and artistic communities. The basic faith-community of some people may not be the geographical parish but the busness, artistic or political community of which they are members. Others may belong to several different communities and share in the ministry and worship of each of these groups. The christian mission is to transform the world, and the Church's ministry must be present in every aspect to the world that must be transformed"<sup>12</sup>

A third and indeed a more radical group advocate a totally new brand of pastoral ministry and practice which will be based on commitment rather than along geographical lines, as — they allege — the needs of contemporary life seem to demand.

The alternatives to the old parochial system can be as many as the major concerns and pastoral objectives for which the new local communities are being organized. In some countries, for

<sup>10</sup> Suenens, L. J., Cardinal, *Corresponsibility in the Church*. N.Y., 1968, pp. 99-100; La Due, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>11</sup> Coriden, J. A., *Ministry*. Chicago Studies, XV (1976), p. 306.

<sup>12</sup> Wessells, C., *Ministry: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, The American Ecclesiastical Review, 1973, p. 273.

instance, the mission thrust has become the main consideration in establishing pastoral units. In other places it may be an ecumenical commitment. Still in others the development of a community-experience for people alienated in a fragmented society may be the basis for restructuring the traditional parish.<sup>13</sup>

Any of those alternatives could suit one or other part of the catholic world. However, the development or elaboration of these methods or systems of pastoral ministry should be meticulously planned at the diocesan and higher — metropolitan or regional — levels.

### 3. *The Parish — a Community of Believers.*

The Church has often been seen in an institutional setting much like a political entity drawn from civil experience. Today, scholars are shifting from the institution-concept of the Church to a community-centered-perspective.

From this new perspective the people of God is actually viewed as a community of believers hierarchically structured but equal "in one Lord, one faith and one baptism" and sharing responsibility for the life and mission of the Church itself.

In a like fashion and at a local, diocesan level, the parish can be viewed as a community of believers who are gathered together by the preaching of the gospel and for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.<sup>14</sup> It is here at the level of the local assembly where the Church as a community comes into being in its most visible form, as the faithful unite to partake in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The concept of the Church as a communion is deeply rooted in tradition and stems from a sacramentarian source — baptism.<sup>15</sup> Local and particular communities, dioceses, parishes, assemblies of priests, bishops' conferences, synods and the like rise within the framework of the universal Church and mould themselves — through a canonical structure — to the nature of the great ecclesial, hierarchical community and to their own pastoral needs.

These local communities organically united among themselves and with the universal Church are not merely administrative units

<sup>13</sup> Provost, H. J., *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>14</sup> Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 4; *Conclusions of the Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church*, Boletín Eclesiástico, LII, (1978), p. 18; Coriden, J., *The Once and Future Church*, N.Y., 1975, p. 268 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11; Barberena, T. G., *op. cit.*, pp. 11-18.

but permanent structural realities, different colleges, each with its own collegial actions and liturgical functions.<sup>16</sup> Thus the theological term communion leads to the canonical term college. The communion with its theological implications and corollaries — solicitude, solidarity and fraternity — will adopt canonically the term collegiality, collegial character and nature, collegial union. The liturgical actions of the communion will become collegiate acts, and the relationship between communities will be the fruit of collegiate ties of love.<sup>17</sup> In short, collegiality is, in its first and deepest meaning, a matter of community.

The collegiality principle so profusely permeates the conciliar decree *Lumen Gentium* that one can safely consider it the most influential way of thinking about the Church at the Council. On a pastoral level too, perhaps the greatest impact of Vatican II was "the rediscovery of the people of God as a whole, as a single reality, as a community, and then, by way of consequence, the corresponsibility thus implied for every member of the Church".<sup>18</sup>

It is a well-known fact that the Council's teachings on collegiality refer mostly to the bishops who together with the Roman Pontiff form the episcopal college and share the responsibility of the Church's government all throughout the world. But this principle of shared responsibility — corresponsibility — applies equally though in a different sense, to all institutions and individuals in the Church. Together they are the Church, the people of God, so they must share in this genuine responsibility both in the local community and in the universal Church. This same line of thought leads us logically to conclude that the Church which is collegial in its nature and origins, must be collegial too in its structure and government even at the grass-root levels.

Perhaps, no one will dare openly to question the validity of his doctrine and its corollaries. In fact the return of the Church to collegiate ideas and systems is at present regarded as a matter of necessity and urgency. As a case in point one could mention the great achievements of modern technology. These amazing accomplishments are not the result of an individualism that shuns or rejects cooperation, but are rather the product of a common and united effort of peoples and nations. The Church must work and

<sup>16</sup> Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8, 9, 10, 11, 23; *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, n. 22, 23; Urresti, T. J., *The Ontology of Communion and Collegial Structures in the Church*, Concilium, VIII (1965), pp. 5-10.

<sup>18</sup> Suenens, L. J. Cardinal, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

labor within the new sociological concept. Today's pastoral effort must be a collegial, corporate effort or it will be neither pastoral nor successful.

In step with these developments of our times, there has been in the Church an evident trend towards experimentation on institutions and activities of a collegial nature such as episcopal conferences, priests' assemblies, pastoral councils, the CELAM of Latin America, the MISEREOR movement of the German hierarchy and many others. With what results? Available though limited statistics seem to show that while corporate or collegial bodies functioning under the direction of bishops' colleges or conferences have been usually successful in their undertakings, the collegial experiments carried on a local, diocesan level have fared rather poorly. Reports emanating from different parts of the world witness to the meager results so far attained by such institutions as senates' of priests, pastoral councils, parish and particular communities, team ministries and the like. And why?

Perhaps the main reason for this lack-luster showing of such diocesan bodies can be traced to a doctrinal and even technical vacuum along this new post-Vatican II development. For a while Vatican II formulated a set of clear and definite theological principles regarding the bishops' collegiality, on the other hand little has been said, and that in a rather ambiguous manner, of the presbyterial college. Such lack of doctrinal basis makes it difficult for the lawmaker to frame the juridical structure and find the technical formulae best suited to bring to life diocesan and parochial institutions and communities. And yet, a legal formulation of collegiality at this lower level is a "must". Unless and until this confusion and ambiguity were cleared up and remedied, all ongoing experiments on local communities and churches are bound to fail.

Moreover, a radical change in attitudes of both clergy and laity is needed if any sort of collegiate activity is to become an essential part of the Church's life in this modern world. The dream-parish where all believers — clergy and laity alike — will feel responsible for, and become a part of the decision-making process in matters that affect the whole community, cannot materialize unless a new spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility should imbue and permeate the ecclesial community. As it is, however, collegiality at the parish level is still struggling in its infancy. For it to mature more time is needed, suitable forms and structures are to

be discovered and, above all, new attitudes must grow and develop in the community. We can but hope for that day to dawn when the future generations of christians will see and enjoy the fruits of such collective efforts.

#### 4. *The Future of the Traditional Parish.*

The territorial or local parish is indeed the normal and the most frequent type of mission in the christian community. This fact, moreover, does not rule out the possibility of other forms of pastoral ministry structured along lines of nationality, language, rite, etc., of the individuals.

Whatever the structural principle of a parish or pastoral unit might be, it still remains a fact that all types of parochial mission are subject to change and revision. For the parish, like any other form of structure, necessarily relates to people, time and place and as such its institutional framework may be changed for, or substituted by any other form of ministry if and whenever the signs of the times and the needs of the people so demand.

Based on the foregoing argumentation some quarters have started raising this sort of question: can the traditional parish still survive or should it give way to new structures and contemporary types of mission as those sprouting or existing in not a few ecclesial communities?

Seemingly the traditional parish system can and will survive. At least that is the line of thought that runs all through the ongoing revision of church law. Truly, the centuries-old pattern of the residential parish is still retained in the proposed new law. The parish, it is decreed, should still be territorial, though the bishop may, after consulting with his council of priests, establish personal parishes based on nationality, rite or any other determining factors. Likewise, the old rule "one pastor to every parish", shall still be enforced, but a new notion of team-ministry is introduced to cater to special pastoral needs of a particular parish or of a group of parishes.<sup>19</sup>

Obviously, the thrust in the proposed new legislation is still geared to the territorial type of parish. Indeed, the residential arrangement makes for good order which is, as in anything else, the underlying principle in all coordinated action and progress. Admittedly, the old structure has its own share of flaws and pitfalls, though not all shortcomings are a part of the system itself.

<sup>19</sup> *Communications*, I/1976, pp. 23-24.



some having to do with the scarcity and skills of personnel, lack of financial resources, etc. Nevertheless there is an urgent need to institute certain organizational changes and to introduce contemporary administrative skills in order to update and, to some extent, to revitalize the life of the parish itself.

Once and again it has been averred that the parish as a pastoral unit is too large, spread — out, and besides it frequently becomes inadequate administer to the growing needs of the people. Doubtless a parish large in land area or membership, or in both, is not conducive to an intensive christian life for it cannot provide its flock with a sense of belonging and with satisfactory, sustained service. Thus the existing giant parishes perforce must be subdivided into smaller pastoral units. This in itself is not a threat to the very existence of the parish which, after all, is made up of small communities politically and socially grouped in a baryo, sitio, barangay, etc.<sup>20</sup>

The "split-up" of large parishes into smaller units can be carried out in various forms and fashions. One of such forms could be the erection of personal parishes based on race, language, religion or even commitment. This implies the establishment of local churches within the parish territory which will minister to particular groups of people such as university communities, hospitals and prisons, religious movements and so on and so forth. The same or similar salutary results can be attained through an effective assimilation and or incorporation into the parish blood-stream of communities, associations, groups and religious movements already existing within the parish. This way dormant parish associations could be revitalized, and new religious movements — christian basic communities, charismatic groups, ecumenical and catechetical clusters, etc., — could serve the parish ministerial interests while achieving in the process their peculiar objectives.

The inadequacy of large, urban parishes to serve the needs of their flock is so obvious that one needs not harp on it. Several proposals have been advanced to remedy and counteract such anomalous situation. But most of such proposals boil down to the reapportionment of parochial services and the establishment of specialized parishes.

The reapportionment pattern in the parochial functions would imply an expansion of diocesan services and a reduction of those entrusted to the parish. In short, the ministerial responsibilities

<sup>20</sup> Purcell, J., *Small Christian Communities*, Boletín Eclesiástico, LII (1978), pp. 68-72.

of the parish would be limited to ordinary or routine preaching, elementary catechesis, varied and meaningful liturgical celebrations, the administration of the sacraments, the organization of unsophisticated associations, and the management of local works of charity. Other types of ministerial services requiring special training and uncommon talents such as adult education, therapeutic and marriage counselling, the establishment and operation of rather sophisticated social undertakings and the like, should be the exclusive concern and responsibility of diocesan or regional groups or organizations. Religious communities and lay associations should be called upon and commit themselves to this sort of specialized mission.

Within this master plan, no parish should attempt to answer all the needs of the people living within its territorial boundaries. Instead each parish should be allowed to develop its own life-style as would appeal to a certain segment of the people living in the region. One parish, for instance, may specialize itself in liturgy and catechetics and so give fulfillment to those in search of new dimensions in these fields. Another parish could direct its thrust to traditional patterns of worship and so appeal to persons inclined to this kind of ministry. A third one could emphasize its social action programs and so on and so forth.

In fine, the possibilities for the reorganization and improvement of the existing parochial system are rather limitless. The main consideration or criterion therefore is that, whatever new structure might emerge herefrom, the end-results should prove strong and stable enough to provide protection for the religious life and freedom of the faithful and to respond abundantly to their pastoral and spiritual needs.

# **THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE TODAY**

**By**

**Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P.**

*Philippine Delegate to the Malta Biblical Assembly*

## **(1) World Assembly of Catholic Biblicists.**

During eight days of intensive work, 76 delegates from 44 countries shared with one another their personal and varied cultural experiences of communicating the revealed message of the Good News to man's troubled and suffering society.

On April 11, 1978 these communicators of God's Word began pouring into Malta to participate in the second plenary assembly of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA).

Their task was to re-awaken the biblical consciousness of the People of God through ways appropriate to the reality (1) of a world becoming aware of its inner unity and interdependence, (2) of a Church called to be the light, leaven and salt of that world.

## **(2) In the Crossroad of Varied Cultures.**

Malta could not have been a more fitting venue for the second world assembly of the Federation's members. Situated almost at the center of the Mediterranean, it possesses a wealth of historical traditions, culture, art, and science out of all proportion to its diminutive size.

From as early as the fourth millenium B.C. to as late as 1964, Malta's cultural heritage grew steadily as a result of successive waves of civilizations and the cross-fertilization of different cultures.

Neolithic inhabitants, megalithic peoples, the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Christian Europe like Spain, France, Great Britain all but have left their deep imprint on this fortunate island.

Malta boasts yet of another glory that has a more direct bearing to the Bible. Saint Paul was shipwrecked there, but he survived, converted the people and proceeded thence to Rome to give, by his martyrdom, the supreme witness to the Word of God.

**(3) Time for Assessment and Setting of Priorities.**

To Malta the 76 delegates representing 40 Episcopal Conferences and 125 Catholic Bible Societies and Associations brought with them their varied rich cultural backgrounds. They studied together and more importantly, lived and experienced together the implications of their membership to the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate.

All five continents were represented. Asia contributed to this meeting of self-study and future-planning in the persons of 14 delegates from Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand.

For eight intensive and insightful days, the 76 delegates worked, studied, prayed, ate, and laughed together. There were also moments of anxious confrontation and debate, which is inevitable in a gathering of this nature. But the Bible was a catalyzer. There was no single moment when the delegates did not feel they were one community, despite racial and cultural differences, candidly evaluating together the successes and failures of their efforts in their respective countries, and trustingly planning together the direction and priorities that their-work must take in the future.

**(4) An Important Development in the History of Evangelization.**

Just what exactly is the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate? What is the purpose and the instrumentalities of the WCFBA that held its second plenary assembly in Malta on April 12-19, 1978?

It is a Catholic world fellowship of administratively distinct multi-national, national and local biblical organizations having episcopal recognition, in particular the offices for the biblical apostolate of the episcopal conferences. As stated above, some 40 episcopal conferences and 125 Catholic bible societies and associations are present members of the Federation.

The WCFBA is a service organization existing to help bishops and pastoral-biblical organizations discharge their responsibility to make the Bible available and intelligible to all, taking the Word of God as an invitation to faith (kerygma) and as a source of enlightenment, strength and fraternal charity (catechesis).

It is the primary concern of local Churches to promote the scriptural message within the process of evangelization and the full integration of the Word of God within every aspect of the Christian community. Hence it is obvious that the development of a service

organization like that of the WCFBA constituted a new and important step in the history of evangelization and in the witness of unity given by the Church.

The biblical apostolate is not only a means for evangelization; it is also evangelization in so far as the "Good News" is at the heart of all evangelization efforts. It is not simply the apostolate of the Bible; it is also the apostolate with the Bible because it applies Scripture to life.

Although the term "biblical apostolate" cannot be found in any authoritative works on the Church's pastoral outreach that are ten years old or more, yet it is not a new thing. The biblical apostolate began on the Road to Emmaus, and its activities started with the Sermon on the Mount. What is new is its identity as a rallying point for insisting that all our evangelization be based biblically. As Vatican II would put it: "...all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by the Sacred Scripture." (*Dei Verbum*)

#### **(6) The Bible Regains its Place in the Life of the Church.**

A 19th century catechism, carrying the approval of Cardinal Manning for its English translation, contained a question-and-answer item that sounds strange to modern ears. The question was whether it was advisable to make vernacular translations of the Bible so that all, including the laity (!), could use it. The amazing reply was that the Church forbade the Bible to be read in the vernacular by all persons indiscriminately, and that absolution would be refused to those who chose to read it, or retain possession of it without permission.

There could have been abuses for prompting the Church to act the way she did regarding the reading and possession of a bible. But the catechism in question fairly reflected the attitude among Catholics in the post-Tridentine period. We have come a long way since then.

Pius XII began what has been called the biblical movement. However, already pioneering works were done by such biblical luminaries as Lagrange, a Lapidé, Pere Vincent, Bea and others. The swell grew and reached the shores of the five continents. The Catholic laity took greater and greater interest in Scripture. In Africa, for example, the lay people turn spontaneously to Scripture with the desire to find therein the answers to their most fundamental questions about life.

Vatican II stamped its approval on the biblical movement. It stated that "...easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" and "...all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture." (*Dei Verbum*). The biblical movement became the biblical apostolate, binding bishops, priests, religious and the laity as well. The Bible has regained its pride of place in the Church.

#### **(6) The Birth of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate.**

Vatican II designated as a primary objective of the pastoral work of the Church the integration of Scripture into the daily life of the faithful. It also urged cooperation with Christians of other traditions in making the Scriptures available to all.

Pope Paul VI commissioned Cardinal Bea, then President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, to make that mandate a reality, so that the Word of God would be the principal instrument for creating and nourishing Christian communities in all aspects of their pastoral life.

In April, 1968 Cardinal Bea received leaders of Catholic biblical associations from the European countries, plus India and the Americas, together with three members of the United Bible Societies (UBS) to survey the international needs of the Church having to do with access to and use of the Bible.

This consultation resulted in the formal establishment of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate at a meeting in Rome of delegates from 24 countries,\* presided over by Cardinal Willebrands, Bea's successor. The declared purpose of this international body was to promote the biblical apostolate by aiding its development in local churches, and to further cooperation in this regard with the United Bible Societies.

On the occasion of the establishment of the WCFBA, Pope Paul VI in a special audience told the delegates: " 'The Word of God should be available at all times', declared Vatican Council II. Yes, always and easily, and ever more widely. It is not only priests and religious brothers and sisters who should have the Scriptures, read them, meditate on them, and meet Christ Our Lord daily in this way. All are called to this meeting with Christ our Lord.

\* The Philippine delegate appointed by the CBCP was Fr. Efren Rivera, O.P. He was elected to the WCFBA Executive Committee.

"Vatican Council II has made it clearer than ever before that we and our brother bishops throughout the world have a serious responsibility to do all we can to help provide people with easy access to the Scriptures. When dedicated people like yourselves come forward to help us in this great task, we rejoice and give heartfelt thanks."

#### **(6) Between Vienna and Malta.**

The constitution of the WCFBA provides for holding plenary assemblies of Federation members every six years. Its first was held in Vienna (1972) and its second now in Malta (1978). The Malta assembly proposed for itself two objectives: a six-year assessment of the biblical apostolate of the Federation, and setting of priorities of the next six years.

The delegates to the Malta assembly were encouraged as they assessed the development of the biblical apostolate during the past six years. But it also became clear to them that Christians (including themselves for more reason) can play their specific role in helping both the Church to fulfill her mission, and the world to find the answer to its deepest fundamental questions, only through a deeply rooted biblical spirituality.

Accordingly, the delegates brainstormed on the theme of biblical spirituality. Father J.N.M. Wijngaards, a Mill Hill missionary, brilliantly presented a position paper on the theme. The delegates then broke into six workshops to tackle the following topics they had chosen: (1) training of all, (2) experience of God, (3) searching the Scriptures, (4) testimony of the Spirit, (5) transformation of life, (6) biblical spirituality and ecumenism.

#### **(7) Assessing the past six years.**

From reports of the delegates, the emerging keynote was the newness of the biblical apostolate as this took on novel forms in spreading to several countries. The hunger for Scripture on the part of the laity was noted as a new phenomenon in the Church, one of the "signs of the times."

Emerging countries (like those of Africa) felt a certain newness of Scripture in their lives. Fired by a strong desire for community-building and nation-building, their hunger for Scripture which possesses a built-in power for creating communities is simply remarkable.

Many delegates reported the phenomenon of spontaneous Christian groups spring up, chiefly among the laity, interested in reading and discussing the Bible together. Some (delegate from Japan) said many non-Christians showed great interest in reading the Scriptures. Aside from the traditional method of privately reading the Bible, a great interest in group reading and discussion of it was noted by the delegates.

The need of forming animators of the biblical apostolate from among the ranks of the clergy and the laity was stressed. A greater involvement of bishops and priests in the movement was discreetly recommended. The latter is all the more urgent if the emerging keen desire of the laity for Scripture needs to be channeled along the right way.

From reports of the delegates, the Federation members are engaged intensively and extensively in the work of translation, publication, distribution of Scripture; in producing biblical commentaries, aids, radio programs; in organizing bible-study-groups and bible-sharing-groups; in setting up structures for the biblical apostolate on multi-national, national, diocesan and local levels. These activities are being done by Catholics only, or in cooperation with Christians of other traditions where this is possible.

#### **(8) Biblical Spirituality.**

In the euphoria of their achievements, the delegates have not forgotten that the important thing is not the fact that they have been able to get more and more copies of the Bible into the hands of the faithful. (People in our country just as well, more eagerly even, take hold of copies of Liwayway or Women's or Today's Bulletin.)

Having received or bought their copies of the Bible, the faithful must know how to use it properly. This is of paramount importance if the faithful are to fulfill truly their mission in the Church and in the world. A deeply rooted biblical spirituality assures the correct use of the Bible.

What is biblical spirituality? This is not a novelty that is being proposed to the faithful. The first Christians and those of the succeeding centuries had it. Biblical spirituality is no different from Christian spirituality. It is essentially the application of the Gospel to one's life, one's thoughts, actions and prayer.

In the lives of many Christians today the biblical aspect of Christian spirituality needs to be stressed, often almost introduced



for the first time. For some historical reason, many Catholics have lost or did not have the habit of reading the Bible and nourishing their spiritual life with its words.

There is a need to restore Christian spirituality to its true dignity by stressing its source which is the Bible. There is an urgency to propagate a biblical spirituality because there are Christians who don't take the Bible seriously enough. If Christians disregard the importance of the Bible for their lives, whatever they will do will be standing on sand alone.

That this is the task of the moment can be clearly deduced from the words, actually a command, of the Vatican II: "It devolves on sacred bishops 'who have the apostolic teaching' to give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels... so that the sons of the Church may safely and profitably become conversant with the Sacred Scriptures and be penetrated with their spirit." (Dei Verbum)

Every Christian must therefore be reminded of the fact that the Gospel is his principal rule of life. Promoting biblical spirituality means making people realize this fact, trying to ensure that every Christian turns again to Sacred Scripture and seeks inspiration from the day-to-day contact with the Word of God itself.

#### **(9) Brainstorming on Biblical Spirituality.**

The theme needed to be broken down into topics and so studied if the delegates had no wishes to misunderstand and mis-represent so important a subject. The workshops reports are illuminating and its recommendations highly practical on the matter of biblical spirituality.

One workshop felt the experience of God and of Christ in the Bible is very important. Formerly, in catholic teaching this experience was neglected. The revelation of God was talked about in a scientific, 'objective', detached manner. As a result, a two-fold dichotomy in academic and spiritual, academic and pastoral life showed in pastors, teachers and seminarians who went about their duties in an ineffectual, anaemic manner.

Reading or teaching or proclaiming Sacred Scripture should lead not so much to an increase in knowledge as to an experience of God's presence. It is not enough to stress orthodoxy in faith and perfection in religious practice: all Christians must be shown how to be sensitive to the living presence of God in our lives through the inspired words of the Bible.

God who talked to and was experienced as having really talked by biblical Israel (Old Testament) and by the early Apostolic Church (New Testament), is also personally talking to and should be experienced as so talking by us today whenever we take hold of the Bible.

The experience of hearing God speak is not a face-to-face encounter with Him, yet it is valid and direct experience of God. (Examples of Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Therese of Lisieux, Charles de Foucauld). The experience, again, may not be as clear and outspoken at every Bible reading, at every contact with the sacred text. But every Christian who listens with devotion and desire will at least on some important occasions in his life have experience of God addressing him in the sacred text, conveying to him a personal message.

This is a persuasive way to show to the faithful that the Bible, despite its age, is still the book for us today, relevant for our times, a living companion, a sure guide, an actual friend. Otherwise, it will remain for many, as in fact it does, just another of so many ancient books, perhaps possessing a greater historical and cultural value than the others.

#### (10) Searching the Scriptures.

This was recognized by another workshop as the second constitutive element of biblical spirituality. The desire to experience God when reading the Bible, which is legitimate and recommended, should not lead to arbitrariness, magic, and fundamentalism. These are avoided by adopting the method of "searching the Scriptures". Jesus Christ, model of teachers and evangelizers, also "searched the Scriptures" (cfr. Luke 4:17-22). It is an approach to Scripture taken not for the sake of mere study, nor of finding arguments to refute opponents, nor of casual reading. It is an approach that sees in Scripture the answers to our existential needs.

When Jesus was handed the book of Isaias (actually a scroll) He deliberately sought the passage He wanted. He didn't come across the quotation by just opening the book at random. From this we can see that Jesus searched the Old Testament, that He was struck by some passages more than by others, that He reflected on them and integrated them into His own teaching. He felt and realized (a deeply religious experience) that words such as the ones found in the Isaian scroll were spoken to Him in a special manner. (Luke 4:16-21)

This is the meaning of "searching the Scriptures". It is an approach to Scripture that springs from a deeply felt personal need.

It implies an anxious longing, a personal search, an awareness that God can satisfy our personal needs. But to hear God speak and address us a personal message we must read the Scripture on our knees, so to say, listen to the sacred words as a child listens to the words of his father. This was how Saint Therese of Lisieux read the Bible. She also "searched the Scriptures".

However, the workshop on the above topic was careful to point out that there is no real contradiction between this spiritual-pastoral ("searching the Scripture") and the historical-critical approach. The latter is required to assure the "objectivity" of the biblical text. A proper balance between the two approaches is essential in order to avoid both the arbitrariness of fundamentalism and the pretensions of pseudo-biblicism. The great need of today is to integrate the spiritual approach of the Patristic age with the best results of historical-critical techniques.

#### (11) *Witness of the Spirit.*

One workshop discussed extensively the topic on Bible-sharing-groups. The participants felt that this phenomenon was rather universal (from England to South Africa, from Lesotho to Korea from North America to Oceania, from Guatemala to Manila) and quite effective besides. Bible-sharing-groups, according to the participants, are a simple way of helping people encounter God in a direct manner. Through them, a community helps the individual live out his faith. They foster the bond of unity in a village, enabling it to experience itself as a Christian community. They are a continuation of daily life where a family can meet and discuss life-issues. Finally, the delegate from Korea said these groups (over 300 in that country) strengthened Catholic students in their faith.

Actually, the Bible comes to us through the Church, through the witness of other persons who share their faith with us, through our communion with the other disciples who believe in Christ. Scripture is proclaimed to us in liturgy, taught to us in preaching and instruction, illustrated for us by the examples of saints and the traditions handed down through the interpretation given by our brothers and sisters who, like ourselves, are searching for its meaning.

Today's Bible-study-groups and Bible-sharing-groups, so popular and spreading like contagion, give modern expression and apparel to an ancient advice of Saint Paul for his converts at Colossae: "Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God".

The Bible is a book of the people, the People of God. It is read in community, explained by the community. Its hearers share their reflections because they believe they can receive the fulness of its message when they are willing to listen to the Spirit who teaches through others. The witness of the Spirit is the third constitutive element of biblical spirituality.

#### (12) Transformation of Life.

The ultimate test of biblical spirituality does not lie in a subjective conviction, in the knowledge that God speaks to us, but in the fruits it produces in our attitudes and conduct. The prolonged searching in the sacred texts, the endless meditation and prayers about Scripture can even be used as an escape from putting God's Word into effect. The Word of God, experienced, sought for, and shared with, should end up by transforming one's life, or else everything about it would just happen in vain. Transformation of life is the fourth and last constitutive element of biblical spirituality.

The participants of the workshop on this topic decided on a practical approach: they identified the "signs of the times" in their local situations and from there proceeded to the discussion of politics, social commitment, interpretation of life and Scripture, areas all of which needed to undergo the transforming and liberating influence of the Bible.

The transformation of life concerns as much the Christian community as the individual believer, as one workshop judiciously noted. The Scripture calls for a total conversion of individuals and of communities so that they become communities of faith, witnessing to the fact of God active in their lives carrying out the establishment of His Kingdom.

All listeners of God's Word must be involved in the conversion and witness process which the present community of faith, the People of God now, Christ's Church (not unlike the ancient Israel and the early Apostolic Church) is itself undergoing in terms of making the qualities of God's Kingdom a reality in their society.

The participants stated that the dichotomy, in many Christians, between spiritual life and political life was the result of their having followed spiritualities which lacked in historical and incarnational dimensions and are not at all influenced by a Biblical spirituality. People must be helped to examine their lives in the light of the Scriptures and re-interpret the Scriptures also in the light of their life experiences if ever they can hope for a transformation of their lives.

It was suggested that this is best done in groups (Basic Christian Communities, Charismatic Groups, Bible-Study-Sharing-Groups, Prayer-Groups), in all of which positive values undeniably exist. Dangers of group-processes were also pointed out: groups without priests, emotionalism, superficiality, fundamentalism.

The workshop also suggested that emphasis on the Mystery of the Cross might help people today to avoid a lopsided, triumphalistic interpretation of Scripture, pointed out the need to "deprivitize" Scripture by adopting the Liturgy and the Lectionary to foster communal celebration as a healthy reaction to private, individualistic, "ghettoish" worship.

### (12) Biblical Catechesis.

The biblical apostolate includes within the gamut of its concerns catechesis and homily. Elsewhere in this report/position paper, it was pointed out how the WCFBA as a service organization helps bishops and pastoral-biblical organizations in the two-fold use of Scripture as proclamation and catechesis.

This was why, aside from the indispensable theme of biblical spirituality, the 76 delegates to the Malta assembly studied also that of biblical catechesis. The recently concluded Synod of Bishops on Catechetics for Our Times (October 1977) added a compelling reason for them to brainstorm on the role of the Bible in catechesis and pastoral preaching.

An Indian bible scholar and priest, D.S. Amalorpavadass, gave a brilliant lecture to start the brainstorming sessions on biblical catechesis. The lecturer is director for many years back of the famed Bangalore National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Center. Incidentally, the Indian priest chaired the assembly sessions, from start to end, with amazing mastery and precision.

Catechesis, according to the lecturer, has evolved into a direction and a dimension different from those of 25, 50 years ago. Three stages can be identified in its evolution: the first period emphasized the method of catechizing (Psychological approach), the second stressed the content of Catechesis (Kerygmatic approach), and the third, the present one, is concerned mainly about the relevance of the Gospel, Church, Catechesis to man and his life (Experiential/existential/human approach).

The various new trends in the world today and the concrete pastoral situations obtaining in the Church at large and in a particular country have more or less determined the route that the catechetical movement has presently taken. On the one hand (to

mention but a few), desacralization, secularization, de-christianization, crises of youth, this age of change, challenge and confrontation, and on the other hand, progress in human sciences, the rise of democracy, technology and technopolis, a renewed understanding of apologetics, fundamental theology and hermeneutics, the renewal of adult catechumenate, the pastoral need to dialogue with non-Christians and unbelievers or men of good will.

#### **(14) New Understanding of the Aim and Task of Catechesis.**

The aim of catechesis, as it is understood today, is the education of the faith of the converts or the baptized. Its task is to foster this growth of faith and to develop the life of God's children. It does not content itself with merely imparting a religious knowledge or giving religious instruction, but it aims at initiating and educating one to a life of personal and community relationship with God, and with one another in the world of today. It therefore should take into account the whole of man's life, secular and religious, his actual living conditions, social, economic, political, cultural and religious. This education in faith implies a gradual but total transformation of man into Christ, achieved through sacramental life and day-to-day, round-the-clock life of faith.

This education in faith and transformation of life that catechesis promotes, should give the Christian a new world vision, a different hierarchy of values, cause in him a change of attitudes, guide him towards maturity, commit him to the task of the Church and of society, urge him to remain in living contact with God and to bear witness to Christ.

The new catechetical approach understands revelation in terms personalist, communitarian and social, concrete, existential and historical, actual and on-going, dynamic and relevant. God continues to reveal Himself to us here and now, in our world, in the events of our history and in the midst of our life. He has a message for us, designs for our times and for our life. How can we recognize His presence and interpret His designs? In the Old Testament the prophets interpreted the events of history and life-experience of the people (Israel) as signs of God's revelation or interpersonal relationship and enabled the people to discover their meaning and orientation for the future. The Church today must fulfill a similar prophetic mission.

The new catechesis interprets the signs of revelation, namely the signs of God's self-gift in our life and world. It enables a group of faithful to meet and discover God in the midst of their

life-situations and to understand His designs through the Word proclaimed and interpreted. Its pedagogical movements and stages are as follows: (1) evocation of a human experience, reflection on it, and interpretation of its significance at the human level; (2) interpretation and discovery of its fuller meaning and ultimate fulfillment in the light of God's Word proclaimed; (3) with the discovery of the relevance of the Word to life, to review and re-live the same human experience in full consonance with faith.

#### (15) **The Two World-Visions.**

Not unlike catechesis, which, within the span of three quarters of a century, evolved from a psychological method to kerygmatic to experiential, the delegates also graduated from holding an old world-vision to a new world-vision within the duration of the lecture given by Father Amalorpavadass.

The former world-vision had us seeing ourselves living and moving among four realities (God, man, world, Church) more or less separate, mutually exclusive and distant from one another. God created the world, which once created goes on by itself like a machine. It has become bad due to sin. It is a God-forsaken place and is in need of salvation. God reveal Himself to the Church (from then on "official" revelation is closed) and entrusted to her what is necessary for the salvation of sinful mankind in this godless world. The children of the Church are supposed to go forth from "their" world to the pagans in the "other" world and to persuade them to abandon this wicked world and "enter" the Church. The least that can be said about this world-vision is that it's unsatisfactory and leads to feelings of complacency, superiority complex, domination and triumphalism.

The new world-vision (that easily comes to one who has a new appreciation of present world trends, new approach to the theology of revelation and faith, new life-situations in the Church) sees the four realities of God, man, world and Church not as separate and opposed but related, forming a single whole, a single context or framework, yet distinct. God, who created the world and transcends it, is present in the heart of the world, in the course of history and in the dense realities of human existence. He guides all peoples everywhere and at all times, and continues to reveal Himself to his children through events and men. There is but one world which God loves and one current of history and life, one human family which all men (including Christians) belong.

Christians, after having experienced the joy of fellowship and reconciliation with God through the Word, sacraments and service

of love, yearn to share this Christian experience with their fellowmen, and thus hasten the total fulfillment of God's plan, the coming of His Kingdom, the new Heaven and the new Earth. This new world-vision is a vision of God's dynamic presence in the heart of the world, God-directed history, God-permeated life.

After this substantive lecture, the delegates broke into continental workshops for further study and discussion. They were excused from reporting the results of their workshops, perhaps as an indulgence to their spent humanity, especially after such a lecture. Here it can be repeated: "...the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." But the workshop, participated by this writer, showed unweariness in its discussion. It pointed out how really the Word of God continues to reveal itself in creation, in world history, in the Scriptures, in the Church's magisterium, in her Liturgy, in one's present life-situations, in the "signs of the times", in the contemporary faith-community's prophetic function, and is still awaiting new expressions of revealing itself in the future. The Word of God is a living Word, always actual and present, in all our human categories of time, past, present and future.

Our workshop also agreed on the legitimacy of the contemporary faith-community's prophetic function of interpreting present life-situations in the light of Scriptures, and discovering the fuller meaning of Scriptures in the light of life-situations which are then reviewed and re-lived in full accordance with that new understanding of the Word of God. The prophets of the Old Testament fulfilled this heuristic function; the early Church of the Apostolic age also performed such mission; the Church of today must continue to give this kind of service.

#### (15) Description of a good Catechist.

One is now in a position to give a dynamic description of what is catechesis and who is the good catechist. Catechesis is a prophetic ministry of the Christian community by which a group of Christians are enabled to discern God's revealing and saving presence and to interpret the meaning of their lives and their orientation for the future, and thus to discover God's plan for themselves and the world in the light of His Word, in acknowledging which the community surrenders itself to God, feels saved and reconciled, and realizes communion with Him and its fellowmen.

The catechist/ evangelist/ preacher no longer lectures to his audience from outside in an uncommitted way. He is within, and belong to a human group, in solidarity with which he experiences



all events and aspects of human life including tensions and conflicts. He first has to discover God and His designs in his own life-situations, environment and community; then he shares with others his discovery as the fruit of his self-evangelization, personal meditation, assimilation and interiorization, relationship with God and consequent personal conversion and transformation.

The catechist/ evangelist/ preacher is a pedagogue who has experienced God by means of a genuine interpersonal relationship and fellowship, and can guide others to the same experience by a testimony of word and deed in concrete life-situations. In this he becomes a sign of actual revelation taking place, and he plays the role of a prophet by interpreting its significance and guiding his group to respond to it in faith within the community of the Church.

#### **(16) Relations between WCFBA and Other Bodies.**

One session was spent to tackle more earthy matters. Since 1971 the WCFBA has been doing evaluation work of bible projects for a number of European funding agencies. It appears that these agencies and the constituents they represent, have realized "that man doesn't live on bread alone" (in this they have earned the gratitude of many needy Churches in the third world) "but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." They want to do something about this now.

The organizations for which the office of the Federation, based in Stuttgart, W. Germany, fulfills this function are as follows: Adveniat, W. Germany, Centraal Missie Commissariaat, Netherlands, Church in need, W. Germany, Katholische Jungschar, Austria, Lentenfund of the Swiss Catholics, Switzerland, Missio, Aachen, W. Germany, Missio, Munich, W. Germany.

The above funding agencies support bible projects that meet their criteria and set of priorities. Examples of projects that may be submitted for financing by these agencies are biblical pastoral and educational projects, translation and production projects, commentaries and other pastoral aids. It is further supposed that the local hierarchies, through their own biblical commissions, should recommend the projects and commit themselves financially to some degree.

There is another body with which the WCFBA maintains a most cordial relationship in view of common concerns regarding the Bible. This is the United Bible Societies (UBS), which was represented in

the Malta assembly by an Italian, Dr. Renzo Bertalot. The UBS is a non-denominational organization which exists to serve all Churches and has no direct or predominant relationship with any single Church. Its service consists in making Scriptures available to Christians and non-Christians alike, thus providing one of the essential tools of mission and evangelization.

A world fellowship of Bible Societies, the UBS is at work in over 150 countries, and has completed translation projects of the Bible or portions thereof in more than 1526 languages, with other 617 projects still in progress (1973 statistics). There are four regional centers that coordinate the work of over 56 member Bible Societies: in Nairobi for Africa, in Mexico City for the Americas, in Manila for Asia and the Pacific, in Zurich for Europe. The office of the UBS General Secretary (like that of the WCFBA) is in Stuttgart.

While the UBS work is defined in terms of translation, production and distribution, that of the WCFBA is more concerned with the biblical pastoral field. However, both the UBS and the WCFBA have overlapping interests; they serve the common purpose of making the Bible available in all parts of the world; they have a wide range of contact, common concerns and field of cooperation.

It was the Vatican Council II that opened a new era of cooperation between Roman Catholics and other Christian Churches. So that the Bible can become integrated in the daily life of the faithful, Vatican II mandated making Scriptures available to all, in cooperation with Christians of other traditions.

Cardinal Bea, by expressed wish of Paul VI, made this mandate a reality by paving the way for the establishment of the WCFBA which would work in close cooperation with the UBS. Dr. Renzo Bertalot spoke appreciatively of the existing cordial relationship between the two bodies. He expressed a wish (a prayer in fact) for a wider development of the common task by the two bodies, a stepping-up of efforts so that the reading of the Bible, ever growing in popularity, may result in the true conversion of individuals and of Churches, hastening the day for the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer and the longing desire of so many Christians: "ut unum sint".

#### (17) Winding up the Assembly Work.

The Malta assembly was coming to a close. May the delegates start now breathing more easily, or should they realize that the real work was just about to begin? The latter seemed to be the general sentiment, although all also felt relieved on the last day

of the assembly. The delegates had covered the following agenda: (1) a six-year assessment of biblical apostolate by the Federation (5 sessions); (2) biblical spirituality (7 sessions); (3) Bible and catechetics (2 sessions); (4) relations between WCFBA and other bodies (2 sessions), (5) follow-up and prospective (7 sessions).

One evening was spent to join in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Catholic Bible Society of Malta, which played host to the 8-day assembly. The affair featured a solemn concelebration in St. Publius' Church (Publius was Saint Paul's first convert in Malta) and a soiree at the adjoining Catholic Institute. The President of the Republic of Malta, the Metropolitan Archbishop, many distinguished members of the Maltese society, the 76 delegates of the WCFBA all joined in thanking the Lord for keeping the Malta Bible Society this long (20 years) which, in the words of its amiable director Msgr. Carmel Sant, has been putting across to the people of Malta the biblical message and spiritual values of conversion, justice and love.

Sunday (April 16) the delegates allowed themselves the luxury of a respite and the pleasures of sightseeing. They visited the important churches in the island-republic, strolled inside venerable museums, admired the remaining traces of a megalithic civilization, saw the bay where Saint Paul was believed to have been shipwrecked along with 276 persons, and actually experienced the menacing waters of Malta in an hour-long cruise along the Valletta harbor. In the evening they were guests at the St. Edward School for Boys where a reception was held to honor the new president of the WCFBA, Cardinal Paul Zoungrana of the Upper Volta in Africa.

The African prelate is a bible scholar in his own right, chairman of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) an ardent promoter of the Word of God in his archdiocese. He succeeds Cardinal Franz Koenig of Vienna who guided wisely the Federation for six years, especially in its initial struggle for existence. There has also been a change of hands in the general secretariatship of the WCFBA. Father N. Jurgens, MHM, succeeds Fr. J. van der Valk, SDB. The spectacular growth of the Federation was due greatly to the efforts of the latter.

I was the outgoing president who urged the delegates: "... to clarify our evangelizing priorities, since these will determine in practice how our faithfulness to the Gospel and our faithfulness to the people (to whom the Gospel message is addressed) will

express itself." The Federation will function according to the policies, decisions and initiatives that the delegates would take. Its orientation and development for the next six years will be determined by the priorities the delegates will have chosen.

#### (18) The Final Statement.\*

That and many other things besides are contained in the final statement of the assembly. The document includes the insights of the assembly (which it wants to share with Bible enthusiasts everywhere), some recommendations discreetly given to concerned parties, and the priorities it is determined to undertake for the next six years. Briefly, the final statement attempts to describe in as few words as possible all that happened in Malta.

The Apostles were not bothered by the fact that comparatively only a handful of people knew of the drama that happened in Jerusalem around the obscure person of a Nazarene. After having received the power of the Spirit promised to them, they went forth and preached the Good News everywhere, with the Lord Jesus working with them and confirming their message.

Not much unlike the above, the work of the 76 delegates may have escaped the notice of the greater portion of humanity. Cardinal Koenig had already warned them of the dismal alienation of most peoples of the globe and the present terrible drama of the split between Gospel and culture. But that didn't worry the delegates. In the farewell ceremonies, social and liturgical, they exchanged assurances of mutual support, firm determination and selfless dedication in promoting everywhere the Word of God. As they left the beautiful island of Malta, there kept ringing in the ears of their heart, the words of the parting song they had sung, with vigor and in cascading tempo, during the farewell concelebration: "Go out into the whole world, and preach with joy the Good News!"

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\* See *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinas*, no. 585-586, August-September 1978, pp. 500-505.

**EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS  
OF  
HOLY COMMUNION**

**By**

**Archbishop Oscar V. Cruz, D.D.**

**P R E A M B L E :**

The right understanding and correct appreciation of the nature, role and finality of the Institution of Extraordinary Lay Ministers of Holy Communion, can be readily deduced from the following more basic and pertinent texts: (underscoring supplied)

- A. "In liturgical celebrations, each person, be he a minister or a layman, should perform his role by doing solely and and totally what the nature of things and the liturgical norms require of him." (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 28)
- B. "Although they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them, in its own special way, is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ." (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 10)
- C. "The person designated to be an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is necessarily to be instructed, and should distinguish himself by his Christian life, faith and morals. Let him strive to be worthy of this great function; let him cultivate devotion to the Holy Eucharist and show himself as an example to the other faithful by his piety and reverence for this most holy Sacrament of the altar. Let no one be chosen, whose selection may cause scandal among the faithful." (*Immensae Caritatis*, no. I,VI)

Based on the text and context of the above citations, the following observations by way of guidelines and procedural measures are in order, in conjunction with other documents relative to Liturgy, the Apostolate of the Laity and Lay Ministries:

1. **THAT** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion have the following definite and defined eucharistic **ROLE** that should be exercised according to established Liturgical

Norms: To assist the priest in distributing Holy Communion during the Holy Mass. To substitute the priest in giving Holy Communion during a "priestless" full Service of the Word. To bring Holy Communion to the sick confined at home, in Hospitals and similar Institutions.

2. **THAT** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are and should remain **EXTRAORDINARY** collaborators of priests who are the Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and conserve their **LAY STATE** so that while they should have the proper and convenient Insignia during the Services to distinguish them from other Laymen, care however should be made less they be "clericalized" through ambivalent or formally clerical insignia.
3. **THAT** Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should already have the following much opted **QUALIFICATIONS** even prior to their designation or installation as such: Pre-established moral integrity and good standing in the community, Pre-demonstrated interest and regular presence in the Eucharistic Celebration. And pre-witnessed frequency in the reception of Holy Communion. These qualified conatural dispositions are the best premises of the effectivity and constancy of Extraordinary Lay Minister of **HOLY COMMUNION**.

#### I. PRE-INSTALLATION PROGRAM:

On the Principle that the duly presented and admitted Candidates for installation as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be nurtured both by prayer and study, the following Syllabi appears in order by way of a Pre-Installation Formation Program:

- A. **SALVATION HISTORY:** The historical dealing of God with man as testified to specially by the Old Testament. Creation. Fall. Promise, Election. Covenant. Expectation. (Two sessions at least, plus open forum).
- B. **CHRISTOLOGY:** Christ as the Fulfilment of God's Salvific Plan. The Savior, the Son of God, the Suffering Servant. His Death. His Resurrection. His Ascension. The Holy Spirit. (Two sessions at least, plus open forum).
- C. **ECCLESIOLOGY:** The Church as the New People of God of the New Covenant through Christ. The Mystical Body of Christ extending His Salvific Mission in history, till the consummation of time. The Local Community of Believers living in and according to the grace of Christ is the Church

in the concrete. The Christian Domestic Community is a Basic Unit in the Church. (Three sessions at least, plus open forum.)

- D. **LITURGY:** Worship, with the Eucharistic Celebration as its apex, is a privileged moment of the saving encounter between God and man. Through Christ and in imitation of Christ, Christians participate in the fulfillment of Salvation History. The structure of the Eucharistic Celebration, The Theology of the Extraordinary Lay Minister of Holy Communion as a given mode and particular role of participation in the Eucharistic Celebration. (Three sessions at least plus open forum.)

#### **Observations:**

For greater pedagogical benefits, it is highly advisable that the order of the courses as above indicated be observed by the Lecturate, and that the treatment of the course contents be accommodated to the level of the Candidates, who could be divided into sections or groups according to their educational attainment in the event that the need really arises.

Whereas the envisioned Pre-Installation Formation Program is rather basic and fundamental, the more profound and extensive treatment of which could readily be done during the Post-Installation Program, it is markedly desirable that the Lecturate confine the teachings to the truly official and solidly orthodox Church doctrine and practices.

While it is not really necessary to deny Installation to those Candidates who either missed some sessions or failed to attend most of them for one reason or another, consistent and regular presence therein is well indicative of a genuine interest, good disposition and stable desire of being Extraordinary Ministers.

#### **II. INSTALLATION RITES:**

There are two ways of installing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: first, for all given occasions (ad modum habitus); second, for every single occasion whenever a layman is expressly asked and accordingly deputized to give Holy Communion (ad modum actus). The present Liturgical Installation Rites refer to the formal ceremonies to be observed in installing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for all given occasions or on a more permanent basis.

There are also two ways of installing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, irrespective of whether they are deputized for all given occasions or for every single occasion: **first**, within the Eucharistic Celebration (intra Missam); **second**, outside the Eucharistic Celebration (extra Missam). The present Liturgical Installation Rites refer to the formal ceremonies to be observed in installing Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion within the Eucharistic Celebration or during the Holy Mass.

There are finally two ways adapting the Rites of Installation of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, depending on whether the Rites aim at installing one or more Candidates, and depending as well on whether the Candidates are all men, all women, or mixed. The present Liturgical Installation Rites refer to the formal ceremonies to be observed in installing several Candidates, all men.

#### Rites:

The formal Installation Ceremonies begin right after the Gospel reading. The Candidates for installation may be conveniently arranged and seated outside the Sanctuary, facing the altar.

1. The Célébrant, seated in front of the altar, addresses the People to acquaint them with the nature and finality of the Installation of Extraordinary Lay Ministers of Holy Communion.
2. The Celebrant thereafter addresses the Candidates for Installation to remind them of the sanctity of their forthcoming commitment and its consequent demands on their Christian lives.
3. The Pastor then addresses the Celebrant, presenting to him in general the Candidates for Installation who qualify, and subsequently calls them one after another by name.
4. The Candidates individually stand up when their respective names are called by the Pastor, to signify their option to be installed, saying: "I am present in the name of the Lord."
5. The Celebrant stands after all the Candidates have been individually called, and addresses the People, asking these explicitly to applaud if they approve of the Candidates presented for Installation.
6. The Celebrant then addresses the Candidates with the following questions, after each of which they all answer clearly, "I am resolved with the help of the Lord.":
  - a. "Are you resolved to profess and live the Faith with the grace of God, in your private and public life?"



- b. "Are you resolved to assume the function of Extraordinary Lay Ministers of Holy Communion in loving service to God and His People?"
- c. "Are you resolved to give due respect and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament as the ultimate reason of your being as Extraordinary Ministers of the Bread of Life?"

7. The Celebrant, after all the above questions have been made and duly answered, says: "May the Good Lord, who has begun the Good Work in you, bring it to fulfillment."
8. The Pastor brings forth the Insignia and Certificates of Installation, and presents them to the Celebrant who blesses the Insignia thus:

"Almighty and everliving God: You will that Your People serve You in truth and in love. Do bless these Insignia designed to symbolize the truthful and loving service of Your chosen Extraordinary Lay Ministers of Holy Communion. Help them to wear these symbolic representation with distinction and humility. Give them the grace to live their lives in accord with their Eucharistic Apostolate. This we ask through Christ Our Lord. Amen." (Holy Water used.)

9. The Celebrant and the Candidates sit down. The Pastor calls the Candidates one by one. A Candidate, once called, stands, and accompanied by his wife (a bachelor may be accompanied by his parents or their representative) approaches the Celebrant and kneels before him.
10. The Celebrant makes the Candidate kiss the Insignia, after which the Celebrant hands it to his wife/parents/representative. The Candidate stands, faces his wife/parents/representative who then places the insignia on him.
11. The Candidate faces the Celebrant who then hands him his Certificate of Installation. The thus newly installed Extraordinary Minister takes his place in the Sanctuary, and thereat remains till all the Candidates have been also installed. His wife/parents/representative goes back to the pew with the People.
12. The Celebrant stands up and proceeds with the Eucharistic Celebrations. The Extraordinary Ministers follow the Holy Mass facing the People. They may receive Holy Communion under both Species. Subsequently, they themselves formally begin exercising their function by distributing Holy Communion.

**Observations:**

It is advisable that the Installation Rites be held within a Holy Mass presenced by a sizeable number of the People, be this an ordinary day or a day of obligation. This way, the People, whom the Extraordinary Ministers will serve, could witness and know who in effect have been officially installed as such.

It is opted that after the Installation Rites proper, the thus newly commissioned Extraordinary Ministers — two at least if not all of them — bring to the altar the bread and wine for consecration, in an Offertory Procession.

It is proper that in the Prayer of the Faithful, one concrete prayer at least be included in favor of the duly installed Extraordinary Ministers, viz., "That our Brothers just installed as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion be blessed abundantly in the performance of their function, and receive their ultimate reward in the everlasting Kingdom. Let us pray to the Lord." Answer: "Lord, hear our prayer" (or the like).

**III. POST-INSTALLATION PROGRAM:**

The over-all finality of the POST-INSTALLATION FORMATION PROGRAM in favor of duly installed Extraordinary Lay Ministers of Holy Communion is the deepening of their Christian Faith principally through on-going intellectual and practical exercises that would in turn enhance their effectivity and constancy in their Eucharistic Apostolate.

While the POST-INSTALLATION FORMATION PROGRAM is admittedly open to various alternatives and approaches on proviso that its over-all finality is achieved, the following could be adopted by way of a continuation of the PRE-INSTALLATION FORMATION PROGRAM:

- A. **SCRIPTURES:** Books, Inspiration, Interpretation, The New Testament as the Fulfillment of the Old Testament and as a point of encounter with the saying Christ. The call of Christ for our response in Faith. The ethical imperatives of being a Christian. Guidelines on how to draw life from the Sacred Book. (And so on.)
- B. **SACRAMENTS:** In general, effective signs used by Christ in and through the Church to continue carrying out His Work of saving man. In particular, the theology and liturgy of Baptism and Confirmation and their implications to all the members of the Church, of Holy Communion and Recon-

cillation and their significance in relation to Christ and the Ecclesial Community, of Christian Marriage and the Priesthood as vocations, and of the Anointing of the sick. (And so on.)

- C. **MORAL THEOLOGY:** Living according to our commitment to Christ, intrapersonally and interpersonally. The Supreme Law of Charity. Justice. Sexual Ethics. Virtues. Sin. Freedom and Authority. The Rule of Conscience. Basic Christian Moral Principles. Dated and Contemporary Moral Problems. (And so on.)

The **EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS** may also be accordingly motivated to undergo the following exercises as part of their Post-Installation Formation Program: **RECOLLECTIONS** and/or **ANNUAL RETREATS** in the formal connotation of these practices, **MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT** and/or **CANA CONFERENCES**. And without losing sight of their specific Eucharistic Apostolate, they may engage themselves in serious campaign for priestly and religious vocations, in the formal recruitment and training of Altar Services, in the preparation and direction of Liturgical Eucharistic Feasts, and the like.

The **EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS** may then form themselves into some kind of a Parish Group, formulate their policies and guidelines of action, rules of conduct, schedule of meets, parochial involvement consonant with their particular function, select their officers, and the like — all under the moderating guidance of the Pastor.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

By way of guidelines and information, it appears useful to herein expressly mention the following items pertinent to how an **APPLICATION** could be done, who may make the **INSTALLATION**, and what is the **COMPETENCE** of Acolytes who are well distinct from Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion:

- A. **APPLICATION:** On account of the opted qualifications on the par of the Extraordinary Minister that should already be somehow proven existent in him even prior to his Installation proper, it is advisable that instead of issuing the invitation indiscriminately to all, the Pastor would do better if he personally and individually invite only those who, in his prudential judgement, would make good Extraordinary Ministers.

For Parochial Record purposes, it could prove useful if the Application for Installation would be done in writing by the interested, possibly with the subscribed to "Conforme" of his

wife in the event that he is married, in order to give the matter its due significance. And attached to the written Application Letter, it would be convenient if the Applicant would submit some kind of a General Information Sheet, bearing his personal data such as full name, address and telephone number if any place at least of baptism and confirmation, name of spouse and place at least of Canonical Marriage, children, and his educational attainment and employ.

It is not altogether incongruous if the names of the Candidates for Installation as Extraordinary Ministers would be conveniently made known to the Parochial Community during the Pre-Installation Formation Program, through means at the discretion of the Pastor, in view of not only making the people aware of those who would subsequently serve them in the Table of Life, but also in order to somehow prevent the Installation of questionable Applicants and thus avoid, as far as humanly possible, disturbing or painful consequences that could arise from an unwarranted Installation.

For the acceptable human satisfaction of Extraordinary Ministers, and by way of due credentials, the Parish could hand them some kind of a simple printed CERTIFICATE that could carry the following entries: Parish Church. Certification that the named has been duly installed as an Extraordinary Lay Minister of Holy Communion after having successfully complied with the required basic courses in the Catholic Faith. Date given. Installing Authority. Pastor.

**B. INSTALLATION:** It could be proper and sufficient to herein simply cite the Instruction "IMMENSÆ CARITATIS", issued by the S. Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, on 29 January 1973, I:

"I. Local Ordinaries have the faculty to permit a suitable person individually chosen as an Extraordinary Minister for a specific occasion or for a time or, in case of necessity, in some permanent way, either to receive the Eucharist by himself or give it to other faithful and to take it to the sick who are confined in their homes. This faculty may be used whenever a) there is no priest, deacon or acolyte; b) these are prevented from giving Holy Communion on account of another pastoral ministry, ill health or advanced age; c) the number of the faithful asking for Holy Communion is such that the celebration of the Mass or the distribution of the Eucharist outside the Mass would be unduly prolonged.

"II. Local Ordinaries have also the faculty to allow individual priests exercising their sacred office, to appoint a suitable person who would distribute Holy Communion in a specific occasion, in cases of genuine necessity.

"III. The above-mentioned Local Ordinaries can delegate these faculties to Auxiliary Bishops, Episcopal Vicars and Episcopal Delegates.

"IV. The suitable person referred to in Nos. I and II, shall be designated according to the following order of preference: Lector, Major Seminary Student, male Religious, woman Religious Catechist, Catholic man or woman. This order however, can be changed according to the prudent judgement of the Local Ordinary.

"V. In oratories of Religious Communities of men or women, the function of distributing Holy Communion in the circumstances described in No. I, can be fittingly given to a male Superior not having Major Orders, or to a woman Superior, or to their respective Vicars.

"VI. If time allows, it is fitting that the suitable person individually chosen by the Local Ordinary to give Holy Communion, as well as the person appointed by a Priest in possession of the faculty spoken of in No. II, should receive the mandate according to the Rite annexed to this Instruction. Said persons are to distribute Holy Communion according to the Liturgical Norms."

- C. **COMPETENCE:** To avoid possible confusion and resolve some doubts relative to the function or role truly proper of EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS as expressly mentioned in the PREAMBLE and cited above from the Instruction "IMMENSÆ CARITATIS", it could be helpful to cite herein the text pertinent to ACOLYTES, contained in the Motu Proprio of PAUL VI, titled "MINISTERIA QUÆDAM", 15 August 1972, No. IV:

"The Acolyte is instituted to help the Deacon and minister to the Priest. His function is therefore to take care of the Altar Service, to assist the Deacon and the Priest particularly in the celebration of the Mass, to distribute Holy Communion as Extraordinary Minister whenever there is lack of the Ministers mentioned in Canon 845 CIC, or when said Ministers are prevented from giving Holy Communion because of illness, advanced age or due to another pastoral ministry, or when the num-

ber of the faithful approaching the Holy Table is such that the celebration of the Mass would be unduly prolonged. In similar extraordinary circumstances, the Acolyte may be commissioned to expose publicly the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist for the adoration of the faithful, and thereafter reserve it; he may not however impart the blessing to the people. . . ."

The ACOLYTHATE — and the Lectorate — were formerly MINOR ORDERS and formally reserved to those aspiring for the Priesthood. Presently, they are simply called "MINISTRIES" and may be given to plain Laymen, not however to Laywomen. Those aspiring for the Priesthood should nevertheless be first installed as Lectors then as Acolytes prior to their Diaconal Ordination.

The installation into the Ministry of the Lectorate and the Acolythate is done by the Ordinary, i.e., the BISHOP for the Diocese, and the Major Superior for Clerical Institutes. The conferment of these Ministries generates no right no claim to Church financial support or remuneration whereas the Clerical State proper begins with the Diaconate.

The ACOLYTE has manifestly a more extensive function than an EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER of Holy Communion since the former includes the total ministry of the latter, whose ministry is but a part of the competence of the former. Wherefore, while the EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER is expressly and simply commissioned to receive Holy Communion by himself and to give Holy Communion to others under given circumstances, the ACOLYTE may also act as Extraordinary Minister under the same circumstances, in explicit addition to his other auxiliary functions in formal Liturgical Acts in general, in the celebration of the Holy Mass and in relation to the Most Blessed Sacrament in particular.

# SACRAMENTALS AND THEIR MINISTERS

By

Herman J. Graf, S.V.D.

The Constitution on the Liturgy gave us a new definition of what a sacramental is. In doing so it modified somewhat the definition found in the Code of Canon Law (can. 1144). Sacramentals are "sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments: they signify effects, particularly of a spiritual kind, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy" (art. 60). Where Vatican II used here the word "signs", thus bringing the sacramentals closer to the sacraments, the Code of Canon Law had said "things and actions." Also in the sacramental we are given "access to the stream of divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, the fountain from which all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power" (art. 61).

These sacramentals are to be revised. The primary principle of this revision is that of intelligent, active and easy participation of the people. In the course of time some sacramentals may have become obsolete, while new ones have to be created. This was meant when the Constitution on the Liturgy stated that "the requirements of our own times should also be weighed. When rituals are revised ... new sacramentals may also be added as the need for these becomes apparent" (art. 79).

Almost half of the blessings found in the Roman Ritual of 1952 (the date of its last pre-conciliar revision) had been reserved: eighty-seven in all. Fifty-three of them could be given only by members of certain religious orders and congregations, and eight by priests of certain dioceses, the rest by bishops and priests having a special indult. This reservation had been resented by many pastors so that Vatican II decreed that "reserved blessings shall be very few and only in favor of bishops and ordinaries" (Ibid.).

During the discussion on the Liturgy of Vatican II two bishops came up with the proposal that also lay people should be given the faculty to bless certain things and persons. Against a strong opposition in the Council Hall the final section of article 79 of the Constitution on the Liturgy was approved: "Let provision be made that some sacramentals, at least in special circumstances

and at the discretion of the ordinary, may be administered by qualified lay persons." In a last attempt 150 bishops opposed this section of article 79, and the spokesman of the conciliar commission on the liturgy had to reassure them by stressing the fact, that the terms *some, special circumstances, at the discretion of the ordinary and qualified* had to be understood in a restrictive sense.

According to the same conciliar document sacramentals have two aims: they are to dispose people to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and they are to render holy the various occasions of human life.

If we take the first aim ("to dispose men to receive the chief effect of the sacraments") we refer to those ceremonies which precede and follow the essential rite of the sacraments. In the celebration of infant baptism such sacramentals are the signing of the infant's forehead with the sign of the cross, the blessing of baptismal water, the pre- and post-baptismal anointings, the giving of the white-cloth and of the lighted candle. These sacramentals have been reformed together with the sacraments to which they belong.

Most of the sacramentals, however, are celebrations which bear a resemblance to the sacraments, but are independent rites. Here theologians distinguish between consecrations and constitutive blessings on the one hand, and invocative blessings on the other. A consecration and a constitutive blessing assign a person or a thing permanently to the realm of the sacred. Unfortunately, there exists no agreement, how to distinguish clearly between a consecration and a constitutive blessing. The term consecration was used in various senses. Until Vatican II a priest was "consecrated" a bishop. According to the post-conciliar liturgy he is "ordained" a bishop. This new terminology wants to stress two things: first, that episcopal ordination confers the fullness of the sacrament of orders.<sup>1</sup> The episcopate is not a "consecration" that grants a priest merely greater powers of jurisdiction, as many theologians had thought during the Middle Ages. Secondly, there is only one sacrament of Holy Orders; therefore, not only deacons and priests, but also bishops are "ordained."

#### BISHOPS AS MINISTERS OF SACRAMENTALS

According to Canon Law "consecration" is a sacramental performed by a bishop or someone who has a special indult to celebrate the same rite (C.I.C., can. 1147, # 1). Sometimes it was added that

<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, Const. on the Church, art. 21.



a consecration required also an anointing with sacred oil. But the anointing cannot be the distinctive mark between "consecrations" and "constitutive blessings." Both in the former and the new rite of the "Consecration of Virgins" there is no anointing. But this solemn ceremony is exclusively reserved to the bishop of the place.

According to the pre-conciliar Roman Pontifical the dedication of a church was consecration, since its official title was "De Ecclesiae Dedicacione seu Consecratione." The recently published fascicle of the Pontifical, containing the revised rites for the dedication of churches<sup>3</sup> meticulously avoids the term "consecration". But this ceremony is obviously a "consecration" because it is distinguished in the same fascicle from the "blessing" of a church. According to the revised Pontifical the dedication of a church or an altar is reserved to the bishop, but the bishop may delegate this solemn ceremony in urgent cases also to a priest.

The rite for the blessing of holy oils, as reformed after Vatican II makes a clear distinction between the blessing of the oil of catechumens and the oil of the sick, and the consecration of the chrism. "The consecration of the chrism belongs to the bishop alone."<sup>4</sup> In the case of the baptism of adults, simple priests may bless the oil of catechumens, while the oil used for the Anointing of the Sick may also be blessed by a simple priest in the case of need.

A number of constitutive blessings are still reserved to bishops and will remain so also in the future. To them belong the blessing of a bell for the use of a new church or public oratory, the blessing of a new cemetery, the so-called papal blessings and the blessing and erection of the Stations of the Cross.<sup>5</sup>

## PRIESTS AS MINISTER OF SACRAMENTALS

The blessings of the Roman Ritual, Title IX, Chapters 9, 10 and 11, hitherto reserved, can now be given by simple priests with the exception of the few constitutive blessings mentioned in the last paragraph. A few months after the publication of the first post-conciliar Instruction on the Liturgy, the Sacred Penitentiary declared

<sup>2</sup> The Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, Introduction, n. 6

<sup>3</sup> *Ordo Dedicacionis Ecclesiae et Altaris*, Vatican City 1977, 162 pp.

<sup>4</sup> Rites for the Blessing of Oils and Consecrating the Chrism, Introduction, n. 6.

<sup>5</sup> First Instruction for the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, of September 26, 1964, art. 77.

that a simple priest could also grant, together with the former reserved blessings, all the indulgences and privileges.<sup>6</sup> From then on any priest can validly and licitly bless and impose the different scapulars, girdles, cords and medals, like the St. Benedict Medal and the Miraculous Medal. The same is also true of the different blessings of the Rosary (Dominican, Holy Cross, etc.). The only condition necessary is that the priest uses the official formula of the Roman Ritual.

Also a number of former consecrations, now considered to be constitutive blessings, can be performed by any priest in good standing: a priest can bless the oil of catechumens, the oil of the sick, as mentioned earlier, and a chalice for the celebration of holy Mass. A bishop may delegate priest to bless a church or an altar.

### DEACONS AS MINISTERS OF SACRAMENTALS

Vatican II prepared the way for the re-introduction of the permanent diaconate in the Latin Church. Among the tasks entrusted to the deacon is now the solemn celebration of the sacrament of Baptism. The deacon is, together with the priest, the ordinary minister of this sacrament. He is also allowed to perform the rites, when a child or adult had received baptism in an emergency situation and is, after his recovery, subsequently brought to church for the first time.<sup>7</sup> Together with the priest the deacon is now the ordinary minister of the distribution of holy communion, having the custody of the eucharist. After exposition of the Blessed Sacrament he may also give the blessing with the monstrance in the same way as the priest does.<sup>8</sup> Also the Viaticum may be brought by a deacon to the dying. He may assist at wedding celebrations, and bless in this rite the rings, the arrhae and give the solemn nuptial blessing as the priest does. Obviously, he has to use the rite outside Mass. He may conduct funerals, and is allowed, as mentioned twice in recent documents concerning the diaconate, "to administer sacramentals."

May he administer all sacramentals? Certainly not those reserved to a bishop. May he then administer all those sacramentals which are granted to a priest? Some had answered this question in the affirmative, arguing "a maiore ad minorem." The deacon can celebrate solemnly some sacraments. Consequently, so

<sup>6</sup> R. Kaczynski (ed.), *Enchiridion Documentorum Instaurationis Liturgicae*. Vol. I (1976) p. 71, n. 275.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Infant Baptismal Rite*, Ch. VI.

<sup>8</sup> *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, June 21, 1973, nn. 97 and 99.

it was asserted, he can also do what is less, namely administer sacramentals, by performing constitutive and invocative blessings. According to this theory he could bless, in general, persons (e.g., the blessing of throats on the memory of St. Blase on February 3) and religious objects, like crosses, statues, medals and rosaries.

This question has been referred to the Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of the Second Vatican Council. Its answer was negative.<sup>9</sup> A deacon can bless only those persons and objects which the law of the Church explicitly grants him. This "law of the Church" is laid down in liturgical books as they exist now or as they will be published in the future. The main reason for this negative decision was article 29 of the Constitution on the Church which states that "It is the duty of the deacon, to the extent that he has been authorized by competent authority . . . to administer sacramentals." The deacon can only impart those blessings which are part of the sacraments which are officially entrusted to him. In the course of the solemn rite of infant baptism he can bless baptismal water. In the celebration of marriage outside Mass he can bless the rings, the arrhae and give the solemn nuptial blessing. From the other sacramentals he can administer only those which are explicitly assigned to him in the liturgical books, be they already published or still to be published or revised. We must not forget that the *Benedictional* of the Roman Ritual has not yet been revised after Vatican II. Consequently, the deacon cannot bless — at least not at the present time — rosaries, medals, cars or houses.

There are several reasons which seem to justify the restrictive attitude of the Church. The first reason is ecumenical. The orthodox churches are opposed to the concessions in liturgical matters granted to deacons in the Latin rite. For them blessings are exclusively reserved to bishops and priests. In the oriental churches the deacon is, liturgically, what his name indicates: a minister of the bishop and the priest. Thus he assists the priest and the bishop in the celebration of baptism and the eucharist. Only in extreme need is the deacon allowed to baptize, because in the Eastern rites the solemn celebration of baptism includes always the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation by the priest. But a deacon cannot celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation. In case the deacon baptizes, the parents have to bring the infant again later on to church to be confirmed by a priest.

<sup>9</sup> De diaconi facultatibus quoad sacramentalia et benedictiones, *Notitiae* 11 (1975) 36-39.

A second reason for this restrictive attitude of the Church concerning sacramentals administered by deacons is dogmatical in nature. As its name indicates, the diaconate is ministerial in character, even more so than the episcopate and the presbyterate. As early as the beginning of the third century the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, the first post-New Testament liturgical book of which we have knowledge, stated that the deacon "is not ordained for the priesthood, but for the service of the bishop that he may do (only) the things commanded by (the bishop)."<sup>10</sup> In the twentieth century Vatican II repeated and thus re-affirmed the same text, taking it from another ancient Christian liturgical source.<sup>11</sup>

### LAY MINISTERS OF SACRAMENTALS

"Provision should be made for the administration of some sacramentals at least in special circumstances and at the discretion of the ordinary, by qualified lay persons." As is well known, the post-conciliar development went far beyond this article 79 of the Constitution on the Liturgy. The ritual for the Baptism of Infants contains a chapter with the full rite of "baptism in the absence of priests and deacons."<sup>12</sup> This rite may also be used in the Philippines.<sup>13</sup> The pertinent Roman instruction concerning this chapter of the infant baptismal ritual specifies who are the "qualified lay persons" who may celebrate in this way the sacrament of baptism. In the order of preference seminarians of at least 18 years who are taking at least the course preceding theology are mentioned first.<sup>14</sup> Second in line of preference are religious men and women who are in vows or have made an equivalent commitment and have been catechetically prepared. Finally, the document mentions lay persons, men or women, at least 21 years old, with due catechetical and liturgical preparation.

From 1972 on we have also extraordinary ministers of holy communion who distribute holy communion when the ordinary ministers are either not available or prevented by ill health, age

<sup>10</sup> G. Dix (ed.), *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition* (London 1968) p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Const. on the Church, art. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Rite of Baptism for Infants, Ch. IV.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Liturgical Information Bulletin* 8 (1973) 47-50.

<sup>14</sup> Philosophers or seminarians in the College seminary.

or pastoral activities. The same extraordinary ministers may also be entrusted with publicly exposing the Blessed Sacrament for adoration. After the adoration and the connected devotion (e.g., Holy Hour, Adoracion Nocturnal) they may repose the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. But they are not allowed to give the sacramental blessing. Also in the form of Viaticum may extraordinary ministers bring holy communion to those who are terminally ill. More than thirty dioceses in the Philippines have extraordinary ministers for holy communion who preside in barrio chapels over Sunday services without a priest.

When Rome published the new Burial Rite (1969) it gave the permission that "if pastoral necessity demands, the conference of bishops may, with the permission of the Apostolic See, permit a lay person to celebrate the service."<sup>15</sup> Lay people should preferably intervene at the station at the home of the deceased and at the cemetery. The bishops' conference of the United States permits a lay person to lead the station in the church, i.e., liturgy of the word and the rite of final commendation and farewell. Twenty-two Philippine dioceses permit — as of 1976 — lay people to conduct the service in the church or in the barrio chapel.<sup>16</sup>

In at least two dioceses of this country lay people were for some time allowed to officiate at wedding celebrations. Obviously, they were not allowed to give the solemn nuptial blessing. Upon the request of the priests of these dioceses this experiment was discontinued in the meantime.

A letter which recently reached the editor of the *Boletín Eclesiástico* complained: "It is becoming more and more common to see major seminarists and lay brothers (who have received none of the sacred orders and ministries) to go around blessing houses, cars and even the dead. I would like to know what is the present discipline regarding blessings. What are the different kinds of blessings and who can impart what blessings? I suppose this whole matter has also undergone revision in the post-conciliar and canonical renewal."

The previous pages tried to give an answer to this letter, by placing it in the wider context of the sacramentals in general. Also

<sup>15</sup> Rite of Funerals, Introduction, n. 19.

<sup>16</sup> On the data mentioned see C. J. Marivoet, Lay Ministries in the Philippines, *The Liturgical Information Bulletin* 11 (1976) 55-85.

here it has to be stated: lay people may administer only those sacramentals which are granted to them by the law of the Church, because "holy Mother Church has instituted" them.<sup>17</sup> It is obvious, that lay people (major seminarians, lay brothers) are not allowed to bless houses and cars. Under certain conditions, laid down in the new "Rite of Funerals", they may bless the dead. In future certain ("some") other sacramentals will also be entrusted, in "special circumstances" to "qualified" lay people, but "at the discretion of the ordinary" or of the respective bishops' conference, as article 79 of the Constitution on the Liturgy had decreed. To a certain extent this article has been implemented. As far as the blessings are concerned we have still to wait for the Benedictional of the Roman Ritual. But there seems hardly to be any possibility that sacramentals will at any time in the future be administered indiscriminately by lay people.

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<sup>17</sup> Const. on the Lit., art. 60.

# HOMILETICS

By

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

## I. HOMILIES FOR OCTOBER

### A LOVING RESPONSE

**October 1, 1978: Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.**

**The Human Situation:** Juan was born of a Catholic father who had deserted the faith. Yet as a child he was deeply impressed by a teacher's quoting the First Letter of St. John: "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God" (1 Jn. 4:16). But he later abandoned his Christian upbringing and tried pantheism, occultism, and various religions of the Orient. He found no permanent peace in them, for they left him empty. He finally bought a Bible and imbibed the word of God. This soon led him into contacts with Catholic books and persons, who in turn led him into the one fold of Christ, the Ideal for which he had spent so many years in search. To give a total and loving response to God, he offered himself as a lay-missionary without pay in a difficult mission field, and has found fulfillment at last in doing the will of the Father.

**The Good News:** Which of the two sons in today's gospel acted properly toward their father, who rightly could expect help from his sons in the work of the vineyard? To tell the truth, neither of them. The first flatly refused at the outset, involving a great lack of respect and obedience. The second gave his father the polite impression that was going to obey him, but in fact flatly refused to do so. Only the first came to his senses and acquiesced to his father's wishes. Neither of them gave a prompt, loving response to the one to whom they owed everything.

Let us consider the second son at first. He symbolizes many a Christian in our own days. When God grants favors and joys, they are all in praise of his goodness. But when he asks something difficult in their lives, such as the keeping of a difficult

commandment, or heeding the voice of the Vicar of Christ who beckons them to follow the straight and narrow path, or again, when God asks humble submission when in his wisdom he sends trials and sorrow as a cross to be shouldered, there are those who externally say nothing, and seem to acquiesce to the will of God by going along with what is demanded or required by law, yet inwardly they are resentful, morose and even bitter against God for making such demands on them. Their response to God's love, far from being loving and willing, is warped, insincere, unsubmitive.

There are others, and these are symbolized by the first son, who at the outset rebel at anything which seems to restrict their so-called freedom, and they are impulsively reluctant to accept any authority over them when it goes against their grain, even though that authority represents God's own. They chafe at any demands made on their exaggerated opinion of personal dignity. Yet, in moments of sensible reflection, they come to realize the folly of it all, and moved by the divine Spirit, allow the grace of God to touch them to sincere repentance. Responding lovingly to the Savior's call to repentance, they turn to the Father as the prodigal son with whole-hearted contrition and sorrow. This is what the Lord commends in today's first reading, for he says that as a loving Father he will wipe away all the sins of the past and his child shall live anew in love and grace. Many of the saints on our altars today were once rebellious to God's will, yet in the course of their lives, they came to their senses and learned to lovingly respond to the Father who is all-loving and all-wise.

What is desired by the Spirit, urging all God's children to live the Christ-life, is this loving response to the Father, be it in innocence or in repentance. Today's second reading gives us the superb example of Jesus who became obedient unto death, even to death on the cross. This entailed a constant living of that response all through life, so that when in the garden of Gethsemani, the awful spectre of the imminent crucifixion stood before his mind's eye. Jesus begs the Father to let the chalice pass, but at once submits to the Father's will. By that loving obedience, it was granted to him to become the source of eternal salvation for all who accept him (Hb. 5:9). The Blessed Mother manifested that same loving response, not only in that crucial moment when the greatness of God's demands were revealed to her at the annunciation, but all through life culminating at the foot of the cross, when it was most crucifying to carry out that "fiat": your will be done. But that loving response won for her the privilege of becoming the Mother of all God's children and the Queen of the universe.



**Our Response:** Who has not experienced the inner peace and strength of soul when submitting to a difficult carrying-out of God's demands in life? God never asks something more than we can bear up with, though it is by the help of the Spirit that we do so. The Father asks his children to work in his vineyard, some in this way and some in that. Nature will often rebel and assert its egoism, but following our better judgment, we know that true peace and fulfillment consist in doing at all times the will of the Father as Jesus has done for our example.

## RESPONSIBLE ACTION

**October 8, 1978: Twenty-Seventh Sunday**

**The Human Situation:** Who is not horrified on seeing a driver of a car who, under the influence of drink or drugs, smashes at top speed into the car of a law-abiding citizen and thus deprives a wife and family of its only means of livelihood? Who is not angry at the irresponsible husband who gambles away his weekly salary, leaving the family in dire need, or at the irresponsible wife who lets the small children run wherever they want to, regardless of speeding cars or other dangerous situations? And who can condone the reckless youth, who courts danger to himself and to others by his careless habits? It is only responsible action that will build a better world and serve mankind properly.

**The Good News:** Today's gospel-message demands such responsible action in the use of God's talents and gifts which he has given to each one, to share the responsibility of the world in which he has put us. The leaders of Israel of old showed a great lack of responsibility in the charge entrusted to them, though the Lord sent them reminder after reminder, as we heard in the reading of the gospel. God is all-kind and generous but he will not be mocked. He does demand a proper use of his gifts and a proper return of his talents. He does except the fruit of our labors. Today too, God sends us many reminders of our duties and obligations to serve him with a deep sense of responsibility, by serving well our fellowmen. Again and again we hear his message from the lips of his representatives, both religious and civil. Then too his voice can be perceived in the signs of the times: the agony of nations troubled for years by wars and blood; the spectre of high inflation and lack of employment; the threat of a global nuclear war.

The Christian calling is a great gift of God. He expects all to be the salt of the earth in order to give it a Christian savor. Responsible Christian living demands that each one work in the

Lord's vineyard according to the role and the capacity he has been given from on high, be it a professional one such as doctor, nurse, lawyer, architect, teacher, security-guard or public official; or be it the humble role of housewife, day laborer in office or farm bus or jeepney driver. All make up God's kingdom on earth, and are working in his vineyard to bring him the desired results of their labors, the fruit that he expects of them. We do not want him to reproach us as he did Israel in the reading when he said: "What have I done for my vineyard that I have not done? I expected it to yield grapes. Why did it yield sour grapes instead?" We do not want the punishment meted out of Israel's leaders for their lack of cooperation with the Lord's gifts, for their refusal to carry out their responsible role.

Many Christians feel the need of cooperating better with the Lord by more responsible action in their line of work, and by reaching out more generously to their fellowmen in a service of understanding love. But they lack the courage and strength to do so. Then St. Paul's words in the second reading comes to the rescue: "If there is anything you need, pray for it, and peace will guard your hearts and thoughts". Prayer! The infallible means to obtain a renewed sense of responsibility in all our dealings with God, and in all our dealings with our fellowmen. God will be understanding and overlook our shortcomings, if we really endeavor to carry out his will. When we realize what a privilege it is to work for the Lord, to share his responsibility for building our world, will we put forth all our efforts with responsible action. Then the Lord will receive the proper return of the fruits of our labors.

In a lighthouse, the reflectors behind the light must reflect in the proper direction if those at sea are to see the safe way that leads to port. So it is with the life of Christians. They are the reflectors which reflect or ought to reflect Christ the Light to those journeying on the sea of life. If they reflect that Light properly, those with whom they come in contact will not lose the way but continue on the correct path that leads to the eternal port. If we do not reflect that Light but let a sinful life darken the reflector, many perhaps will never reach the eternal port, and we will be made responsible by them before God's judgment seat.

**Our Response:** Taking up St. Paul's exhortation, let us lift up our hearts to the all-powerful God, and to the all-loving Savior. Let us get down on our knees and beg him for the gifts of his Spirit, for a renewal of awareness of our responsibilities in the role given us on this earth. There is no prayer that goes unheeded by the

Father in heaven. He will impart the Spirit of counsel and fortitude to ourselves and to our youth, to husbands and wives, to young and old. And we will return to the Lord the fruit of our labors in his vineyard.

## CHRIST'S WEDDING FEAST

October 15, 1978: Twenty-eighth Sunday.

**The Human Situation:** In many a country the wedding feast is celebrated amid great rejoicing. Much preparation has gone ahead, and when the happy day arrives, there is a special banquet with exquisite foods and drink, the presence of many invited guests, and everyone is in festive spirit. Yet it would be an insult to appear at the banquet improperly dressed. In fact everyone turns out in his or her best. All this is only to be expected. A wedding is the celebration of an event that is the beginning of a new community of love, the promise of new life in a new family, the mutual agreement to leave mother and father and launch out together on a new path. The banquet is the festive symbol of this happy event.

**The Good News:** Again and again in the Scriptures, God's relation to man has been depicted as a marriage. Hosea the Prophet (ch. 2) describes in a striking manner the God of love who seeks after Israel his unfaithful spouse. His love is more enduring than her unfaithfulness; with great patience he endeavors to win her back to himself. The same image is taken up by the Prophet Isaiah who has the Lord himself declare: "He who has become your husband is your Maker, his name is the Lord of hosts... For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great tenderness I will take you back" (Is. 54:5,7). Again, the same Prophet declares: "As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you" (62:4). That the sacred writers were inspired by the Spirit of God to adopt the image of marriage to show forth the covenant-union and love of God for his People proves how highly they esteemed marriage, and how great is the love of God for little man.

In the New Testament writings the theme heightens. Christ is the Bridegroom already in the Gospel of Matthew (7:15 but especially 25:1 ff). St. John explicitly refers to Jesus as the Bridegroom whom John the Baptist who is the Friend of the Bridegroom introduces (Jn. 3:29), and St. Paul could hardly have expressed it more forcefully than when he wrote to his Corinthian converts: "I have given you in marriage to one husband, presenting you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Finally in the book of Revelation, the wed-

ding of the Lamb with his Bride, the Church, is announced (19:7-9), and the New Jerusalem is "beautiful as a Bride prepared to meet her husband" (21:2). Marriage, as the sacred and permanent union of two in one, graphically depicts the unbounded love of God who desires to unite in closest union with himself all those who accept his call, in order to make them completely and permanently happy, fruitful in every grace and virtue.

Today's gospel celebrates this wedding of God's Son with those who are called to be one with him in that closest of unions. It is a parable with allegorical overtones, for it is evident that Jesus refers to himself as the King's Son, who welcomes all who are invited by his Father to union with himself. But many are indifferent to the great plan of God for them. There are so many other attractive amusements and pleasures today, that the spiritual side of life is often aside, neglected, rejected. Others are all taken up with business affairs and worldly pursuits, so as to have no time for God's call, no understanding of the mighty plan which would involve them in an eternal love affair with no one less than the good God himself, and his Beloved Son, Christ the Lord. They find it impossible to leave their selfish interests in order to come to Christ who alone can give them fulfillment that is all-satisfying and everlasting. Yet, the wedding of God's Son will be well attended after all. The simple of heart, the childlike in faith, the little man of the street and of field, whom no one regarded as worthy of notice, they, the humble and the lowly, will respond with alacrity to God's call of love, having understood that there is something more important in life than all that this world can offer, and having perceived that the spiritual call of faith far surpasses the offers of the present time. They respond to God's call, and come with gladness to share in the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Even then, one must come to Christ's wedding-feast properly prepared. To neglect proper preparation and deportment in the inner sentiments of one's heart would betray great lack of respect for the Bridegroom who, although he is the meek and humble Savior of man, yet is also the Son of the Eternal Father and Lord of the universe. It is not at all difficult to obtain the proper "wedding garment" to enter into his presence, for it consists of inner dispositions of humble compunction for sins committed, and grateful love for the call that is holds out to them. Like Israel of old, the contrite soul returns to the Savior with chastened heart, and partakes of the bounty of the Lord in his Table of goodness here below, but above all in the eternal banquet of God's love in the mansion of the Father. There all will drink of the new wine which is the Spirit of festive joy and grateful love.

**Our Response:** The practical application of the parable would direct us to appreciate greatly the call of faith to the knowledge and love of God in his kingdom on earth, and an ever-growing deepening of our faith and love. Should the sacrament of reconciliation be the necessary means to regain the proper wedding garment, it is very easy to obtain. At any rate, all should attend the wedding feast with deep sentiments of grateful love for God's merciful kindness and infinite goodness.

## GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S

**October 22, 1978: Twenty-Ninth Sunday**

**The Human Situation:** Sir Thomas More, a very successful lawyer in the days of King Henry the Eighth of England, was raised by him to be High Chancellor of all England. He endeavored most earnestly to be a loyal servant of the King, giving him his proper due in all things, until the King demanded something that Thomas in all good conscience could not give, namely, the oath of allegiance to his King as Supreme Head of the English Church. Here is where he owed higher allegiance to God in his conscience. So Thomas gave up his high office, was forced to leave his family for the dungeon, and finally gave his life for his convictions. Today he is a canonized saint on our altars.

**The Good News:** It is wrong to think that in today's gospel, Jesus is referring to a twofold diverse allegiance, one to the civil authorities and one to God. All authority comes from God, also that wielded by the State, for God has full claim on all men. If the government, that has been properly set up, wields authority over its citizens, it does so in God's name. If the citizens obey the just laws of the State, they are giving homage to God and offering him a true sign of worship. If they duly pay just taxes they are likewise giving honor and glory to God. But if they evade just and reasonable taxes imposed by the government, they are offending against God. Jesus clearly states that what belongs to the one in power ought to be given him.

But in the Gospel for today, Jesus also tells us to give to God what belongs to him. Are not God's claims on us universal? Yes, they are. We belong entirely to God, for he is our Creator, and Savior and Redeemer. Do we realize how much we are indebted to him as our Lord and Master? Who has given us being and existence, health and ability, sight and hearing, a mind to think and a heart to love? Who nurtured us from earliest years through

loving parents and dedicated instructors? Who fitted us out with various talents and capacities so that we can be of use in this world to our family and surroundings? Who, if not the good God, Creator of all, to whom we belong with our entire being.

Yet, the good Lord expects a voluntary response and willing service in return. If the image on the Roman coin in today's gospel was that of the Roman Caesar, then let the coin be returned in tribute to whom it belonged. But the image of god himself, holy and triune, is imprinted on each one of his children, for man "was made to the image and likeness of God". Then one ought to be intent with one's whole being to belong to God, giving him praise, thanksgiving and worship as he deserves. This we do by the sincere disposition of endeavoring to do his will and please him in all things, despite human weaknesses and shortcomings.

In a special manner we render adequate worship to God when we come to the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Beloved Son, and offer ourselves with him. This is the supreme and unique sacrifice of the New Covenant. We can give God no greater honor and pleasure than by uniting with the Lamb of God in this sacrificial act of offering. Our sincerity will also prove itself by our endeavor to live as God's children ought to, so that God's image becomes more and more resplendent in us, reflecting the goodness and justice of the all-holy God: Then we are bent on dealing honestly with our fellowmen in all private as well as business contacts, bent on letting God shine through us in works of charity toward the homeless and the helpless, bent on letting God's justice shown in our dealings with servants and employees, with loving-kindness toward all. Even necessary corrections toward children and household servants can manifest the holiness and justice of God. In all these acts of Christian perfection, we are giving glory and honor to God Most High by the bodily and spiritual faculties with which he has endowed us.

**Our Response:** A good reminder to give God all honor and glory is the little prayer said so often at the end of each decade of the Rosary: Glory be to the Father etc. A more solemn act is that which the celebrant utters in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, when at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer he says: "Through him (Jesus) and with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, forever and ever." United with Christ we can, as baptized members of Christ, give the Father adequate honor and glory. What dignity, O Christian, do you possess!

## LOVING GOD IN OUR NEIGHBOR

October 29, 1978; Thirtieth Sunday

**The Human Situation:** Tom Dooley the well-known doctor who spent his life aiding thousands of refugees in Vietnam and surrounding countries, till he himself succumbed to cancer, was brought once to a little child whimpering with pain in a dark and dank corner of a hut. Only after they had removed the cowdung that had been smeared all over the lad's back did they see the vermin all over his flesh. After cleansing him thoroughly, applying proper medication, giving him several blood transfusions and bundling him up with innumerable bandages, Doctor Dooley cried out: I do not know what this little wisp of a lad will grow up to be if he lives, but this I know: crying loudly from that little bundle of flesh was Christ in agony, and I know that what is done for the least of his brothers is done to him.

**The Good News:** Jesus places side by side the commandment of love of God and that of neighbor. And for him, neighbor is anyone in need. The two commandments are not to be separated. They form but two aspects of the one commandment of love, and have but one sole motivation: the love of God manifested in love for man. For man is the image of God, and God lives in man, and Christ died for him. One cannot love God whom he has not seen, if he does not love his brother whom he has seen (1 Jn. 4:20). At the last judgment the Lord himself will pronounce sentence: "Away from me . . . away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels . . . I tell you indeed: whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me" (Mt. 25:41,45)

Do we really love God with all our heart as the commandment directs? That can only be proved by our love towards our fellow-men. This is the reason why men and women of all ages devote themselves to the sick and the aged, to the retarded and the insane. What other reason could they have in caring for drug addicts, alcoholics, and others who suffer from similar irregularities? If God himself has so loved man as to become his Brother, his Sacrifice and his very Food in the Eucharist, will little man not respond to love God with the whole heart by manifesting love to God's image on earth? Many professional persons also activated by the same

selfless love in their dealings with their fellowmen, such as doctors, lawyers, nurses, educators public officials. How well St. James shows us the necessity of action when it comes to living the Christian faith: "What good is it for someone to say: 'I have faith', if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them: 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well', if you don't give them the necessities of life? So it is with faith: if it alone and has no actions, it is dead," (Jam. 3:14-17). Rightly St. Paul declares: "What matters is faith that work through love". (Gal. 5:6)

Wealth is a passing thing; possessions cannot be taken beyond the grave. But love shown in good works towards one's fellowman will blossom for all eternity. Material possessions when used in this way can make one rich in God. Even those who do not abound in this world's goods can manifest love to others by seeing Christ on every street-corner, in every jeepney and bus, in the office and in the field, in the hospitals and in the apartment stores, at work and at recreation. Even a smile helps one's neighbors to bear one's daily burdens. On a hospital wall, a notice said: "If you are not smiling now, practice up for tomorrow"! Well said! We do need to practice smiling, so that it becomes second nature. And it is not difficult, if we are always smiling at Christ, living in his brothers and sisters.

Trouble-makers who deliberately start riots and unjust strikes are by no means loving God with all their heart. Employers who oppress their workers with poor conditions, low wages and meager benefits, by no means love God with all their heart. Land owners who squeeze every last bit out of their tenants without regard for their families and poor living conditions, are by no means loving God with all their heart. Yet, this is the first and greatest of all commandments, and God will not be mocked. Man must face his Maker one day and hear the sentence passed on him, accordingly as he endeavored to love, while on earth. Otherwise, all his success, all his fame, all his possessions will go up in flame.

**Our Response:** Man's fallen nature makes him downright selfish. The whole world has to revolve around his little ego and all its desires. Only when man begins to share the love of the Spirit of God, does he gradually throw off the narrowness of self-love and done the richness of God's universal love for all others. Then he is truly becoming a human person. Then he truly is becoming divine. Our resolve is self-evident.



## II. HOMILIES FOR NOVEMBER

### PIETY WITHOUT A SOUL

November 5, 1978: Thirty-First Sunday

**The Human Situation:** In the movie "The Godfather", there was an appalling scene at the end. The young "goodfather" was posing as a Catholic godfather to a child, who was being baptized at the baptismal font, and simultaneously the same man was engineering the ruthless murder of his opponents. Here was a real travesty of religion: posing as godfather in the sacred ceremony of baptism and in truth being a murderous villain.

**The Good News:** If anything is offensive to the Lord it is sham religion: an external show of piety with a complete lack of true religious sentiments in the heart. That is what the prophet decries in the first reading today: the people claim to be God's chosen ones, and come to his holy Temple, but make a mockery of the Lord by offering things totally unacceptable. The priests too are blameworthy for their lack of sincerity in carrying out their holy office.

This is what Christ holds against the Pharisees in today's gospel. They do not practice what they preach. Their piety is only external, and their motive for performing acts of piety is sheer vanity, to be seen by their fellowmen, to "show off" their piety on their sleeve. Such conduct is not done to please the Lord but to ingratiate themselves with men. They constantly need attention, marks of respect, flattery. They abuse the title of Rabbi and Teacher by their unworthy motives, and they do not deserve to be called father of the people, for they are far from representing God's fatherhood to his People. Such is the bane of hypocrisy, externalized piety without a soul. It is a shell without a body, a falseface hiding empty reality.

Is piety today sometimes used also as a false mask for the lack of true interior sentiments of religion? Do not people at times "salve" their consciences by some show of external piety such as donations to the Church or some good cause, yet with their name in large letters written all over the gift? "When you give alms" Jesus told his disciples, "do not sound the trumpet before you". In fact, he told them that their right hand should not know what their left hand is giving away, which is an emphatic way of saying that when they give alms they ought not make much over it; it ought to be so unnoticed that if possible one hand wouldn't know what the other was doing!

The Lord does not forbid external manifestation of piety with the proper intention, for he says in the Sermon on the Mount: "Your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). Note well the motive which the Lord demands of us: our light is to shine in order to please God so that others are drawn to him. The pharisaic spirit on the contrary is centered on self. Actions of piety are done to win respect and praise for oneself. This is piety without a soul. It is not practiced to please God but to win the approval of men.

To be noted is also that the Lord does not forbid the use of the titles "father" and "teacher" in an absolute sense, as if they never were to be used, else even children could not address their parent as father, nor their educators as teachers. But this is absurd. St. Paul surely knew well the mind of Christ and still he could state: "Granted you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you have only one father: It was I who begot you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 4:15). What Christ reproves is the abuse of these titles as the Pharisees were doing, the craving for honor and adulation in the use of them without any respect to the Father in heaven from whom all fatherhood comes, or to Christ the one Teacher of mankind from whom all knowledge proceeds. The Christian priesthood uses these titles in complete dependence on Christ whom it represents.

Our blessed Savior concludes his exhortation today with his commendation of humble living: Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. The humble spirit is in direct contrast to the vain "show-off" which Jesus so sharply condemns. He has given a sublime example of sterling virtue, of hidden greatness, of humble living. Whatever he did was done to please the Father (Jn. 8:29).

Our response: We ought to take to heart the advice of the prophet Micah: "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to act with justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). To walk humbly with God! That gives God, true honor and glory and engenders true peace of soul. For that is genuine piety.

### BE ON THE ALERT

November 12th, 1978: **Thirty-Second Sunday**

**The Human Situation:** During World War II, some pilots stationed in England had trained their dog to pick up the sound of Nazi bombers crossing the English channel, and to utter short, sharp

barks when it did so. It was uncanny how quickly the extremely sharp ears of the dog could pick up the sound of enemy bombers when they were still far away. At once it sounded the alert. The Allied pilots rushed to their planes, and were often able to meet the enemy half way, and thus ward off much destruction of the mainland.

**The Good News:** Be on the alert? That is what the Lord is telling us in today's gospel. On the alert for his coming. For come again he will without any doubt, be it in the consummation of time, or for everyone of us at the moment of death. But even the People of God who have heard this warning again and again can so often let themselves be wrapped up in business pursuits, engrossed in educational progress, or enmeshed in pleasurable amusements, that their whole effort goes into the things of this life, good though those things may often be. Yet the Savior in his proclamation of the Good News continually tries to raise men's minds and hearts to the realization that life is but a preparation and a pilgrimage for the real life to come. Christ himself will come again to take his Bride, the Church, to the eternal wedding feast, but he will come suddenly and when least expected. That is why he sounds the alert.

The five bridesmaids who took no oil to refuel their lamps were irresponsible in their role as bridesmaids, because they were expected to be on hand with burning lamps to light the way, when the bridegroom was being escorted back to his house after coming for the bride. Sometimes the bridegroom in ordinary life dallied with his friends and came late at night, but at whatever hour he came, the bridesmaids had to be ready. Five of them in today's parable were wise enough to have the fore-thought that they might need more oil should he come late at night, and they brought along enough to re-fuel their lamps. They were alert, and when he came they were ready. Only those five were ushered into the home of the bridegroom for the wedding party. When the others returned it was too late. They had not played their role. They were excluded from the wedding party.

In a parable, one does not try to find a meaning for every detail. The lesson is drawn from the picture as a whole. Here the lesson is evidently the necessity of being prepared and on the alert at all times for the Big Event; it is not to the point to ask what the oil represents. That forms part of the picture. The lesson is evident. The People of God, who are the Spouse of Christ, are to be prepared at all times for his Coming, either as a whole or as individuals at the time of death. The best preparation for his

Coming is the daily endeavor to stay in God's friendship in the companionship of Christ, or to return to that friendship as soon as one becomes aware of having lost it through serious sin. This disposition of heart can be fostered at work or at play, in the midst of a busy city or in the quiet of the country-life. When St. Aloysius as a youth was engaged in a game of billiards, someone asked him what he would do if death summoned him at that moment. He replied that he would continue to do what he was doing, for it was being done for the love of God. Aloysius was always prepared for the Coming of the Savior, because he always endeavored to live in utter simplicity in union with Christ.

For the Christian, death is not the end. It is but the passage-way to true and lasting life. The Christian's real hope is not merely in a ripe old age, spent in happy retirement, but above all in the resurrection, which Christ has put before our eyes in his own glorious resurrection. The risen life is a total transformation of the whole man, fitted out with the splendor and glory of Christ. Well can we apply the words of Paul: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Then it will be seen and experienced how worth while was the preparation on earth of always being on the alert.

**Our Response:** It is a very wholesome practice to form the habit of making an act of perfect contrition for one's sins, or a sincere act of love of God each night on retiring. No one knows but God alone what the night will bring. How often people are whisked into eternity by a sudden fire, earthquake, landslide, or similar catastrophe. How often we read of road accidents or plane crashes! What a boon if man has always been on the alert. An act of sincere contrition or love of God each night on retiring, and each time one enters upon a journey, can insure a happy eternity for the pilgrim on this planet earth.

### GOD-GIVEN GIFTS

**November 19, 1978: Thirty-third Sunday**

**The Human Situation:** It affords genuine pleasure to see a family in which the various members pursue their individual calling with eagerness and zest, developing their own capacities and gifts as far as in them lies: one preparing for medicine, another a teaching career, a nurse's profession, commerce, agriculture and so on. Mother and father are justly proud when they observe that their

children are developing in a healthy and mature manner, for they know that much depends on these years of earnest preparation. On the contrary, how grieved they are when one of the family turns out to be lazy and shiftless, unreliable and constantly dependent on parental care even in later years.

**The Good News:** Today's parable takes the word "talent" in its original meaning of a sum of money, which various translations give as "dollar" or "pounds" or "pesos". The owner of the money had in mind that his servants put his money to good use and thus increase his own possessions, according to the creativeness and ingenuity of each individual. Those who did so were well rewarded, but the lazy fellow who dug a hole and hid it away was rejected from his position, and the money which had been given him was taken away.

In today's parlance, the word "talent" has come to mean the gifts and capacities which each one possesses. In that applied sense, the lesson is also much to the point. All our gifts and "talents" are from the loving hand of the Creator. We are expected to use them well in this life, developing them for the good of the Kingdom, be it for the welfare of ourselves or our fellowmen. Severe judgment will be meted out to the lazy and good-for-nothing who never bothers to develop the abilities he has in any line whatever, or who deliberately abuses those gifts. Rejection from God's household is the threat hanging over him. Drug addicts, alcoholics, sex perverts and all such who abuse the gifts God has given them ought to realize that God is just and will not be mocked. He gave man a mind in order to let it share his creative power. He gave man his senses so that they might enjoy what is good, and help create a better world. He does not want his gifts to be abused.

Not everyone recognizes the fact that these gifts and abilities come from the hand of the Creator. Yet it is the Creator who enables man to invent the marvelous instruments which flood the market today: for education, for transportation, for hospital needs, for business purposes, for recreation. God in his goodness is working in man, his masterpiece, to bring about the continued marvels of our age. It is He who enlightens the mind to unravel the mysteries of his creation, so that man discovers more and more their value for life. Not to recognize the source of these gifts and abilities can lead to rank pride and vanity on man's part, as well as the presumption that he alone can do all things and there is no need of a God to care for him or show him how.

Today, such an attitude prevails in a great part of the world which no longer even believes in the existence of God, let alone

his marvelous providence in the care of man. Yet, how pernicious is this attitude is proving itself right and left. Just when man has discovered stupendous new aids for living, for health, for communication, for travel, all his technology seems to be threatened by an atomic conflagration, world economy is seriously in trouble ecology presents real problems for his continued existence, and many other problems are baffling man who all along refuses to acknowledge his dependence on his Creator and his continued need of him. What he needs to do is to gratefully acknowledge God's gifts and his continued activity, so that he work with his divine Creator in building up a new world of justice, peace and love. Such a spirit of gratitude makes use of each and every God given talent to benefit himself and all mankind. It also insures that all envy and jealousy of another's gifts and accomplishments are put definitely aside, because the same Creator is the source of them all.

One requisite for proper success in the use of God's gifts is hard work and perseverance. It can happen that the best student in the class is not always the most successful. Things have perhaps come too easy for him and he does not have the stamina to go through trials and difficulties which the student who is less talented but who doggedly determines to win does possess. Here the fable of the rabbit and the turtle illustrates our point: both began a race, but the rabbit laughed at the slowly plodding turtle, and, thinking it was a cinch to beat the turtle, he lay down and took a good sleep. Meantime the turtle plodded on, slowly but surely. When the rabbit awoke, the turtle had won the race.

**Our response:** It is not the turtle's pace that is commendable, but his persistence and constant endeavor. He kept on going, no matter what others were doing. And he won! God always rewards those of good will who make the best use of whatever gifts they have been given. Some have ten and others have five. Even the servant in the parable who only was given one, was expected to work just as hard as the others, and would have been rewarded accordingly. As it was, he received severe punishment and rejection. Our course is clear.

### THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

November 26, 1978: Solemnity of Christ the King.

The triumph of our Savior is celebrated today in all the world. It is a triumph of bloodshed and destruction, not bloodshed of people and enemies, but that of his own Blood which he shed on the Cross so as to win this signal victory. Not destruction of men

and women and cities, but that of Satan's hold on men and the consequences of that hold: sin and death. It is a triumph whereby he takes captive those whom Satan had imprisoned, and leads them from slavery to the freedom of the children of God.

Yet, the real triumph of the Savior, that which underlies all the rest, is a triumph of love. God's plan for man is one of singular love, Jesus, the Son of God, entered into this plan and brought the flame of love to a cold and darkened earth, to a mankind lost in the maze of sinful habits and dead-end pathways. The Jews were caught up in a labyrinth of laws, the pagans in a multiplicity of gods and goddesses, the Epicureans in crass materialism, the Stoics in cold indifference. Then the Son of God leapt down from his Father's bosom and flashed the message across the skies that would electrify the world: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. As the Father has loved me, so do I love you. Love one another.

It was love that made him choose the humble birthplace of a sheep's cavern, the simple peasant life at Nazareth, the daily hard toll at the carpenter's bench, the long hours of trudging through hill and vale in Galilee, teaching, preaching and curing all manner of evils. It was love that gave him the stamina to face up to the mounting opposition of the leaders, the unbelief of the people, the cowardice of the disciples, the awful hours of agony and dereliction on the Cross. But love won out. And he rose triumphant from the grave, glorious and immortal, to begin his gigantic task of transforming mankind into a family of love, before handing it over as a Kingdom of love to the Father.

To accomplish this he gave his followers only one commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. By keeping this one commandment, his followers would serve one another in genuine love, and thus gradually transform the entire world. That service of love would be the norm by which he would judge them when he came again as triumphant King of the universe. Today's gospel depicts him seated in judgment. Those who have carried out his commandment of love by serving him in his countless members will be welcomed into his eternal Kingdom to share his divine riches in an atmosphere of divine love. Those who have not done so, are consigned to share the chastisements prepared for the devil and his angels.

Therefore now is the time of decision. Now is the time of action. True love entails suffering and self-sacrifice. That is everyone's experience. The gift of oneself is the true manifestation of love, even though it costs at times to continue giving oneself. Husbands and wives experience this, parents and children, employers and

employees, masters and servants, strangers and friends. In the gospel we are shown the motive enabling one to carry out this commandment of love: it is Jesus living in the hearts of every one of his members. Does he not say: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, naked and you clothed me. And should one be surprised to hear such a statement from the lips of the King, he will tell him: As long as you did it to one of these my least brothers you did it to me. It is truly Christ who lives in the lowly and the forsaken, in the aged and the sick, in the distressed and the despairing, in the cultural minorities as well as in the affluent.

Are we going to enter into the triumph of Christ's love and help him shape up the family of God, thus preparing for his grand Parousia? Then we must be prepared to serve him in each and everyone of his members, no matter how repulsive to our senses or repellant to our pride. To give the words of Jesus a more modern touch, we might ask ourselves: have I ever tried to find a job for some jobless person, paid the bills of a family-father whose meager salary leaves him helpless to buy sufficient food or clothing, covered the hospital expenses of someone whose income could not cope with it, sponsored the education of some seminarian coming from a large family who found it difficult to come up with the monthly payments, given to the St. Vincent de Paul Society clothing that was not cast away but in top shape, yet superfluous as far as I myself was concerned? This is genuine Christian service of love. This is helping build the family of love, and establishing on earth the Kingdom of love, so that Christ may triumph as King of love. How happy shall we be to hear him speak those words: Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.



## Book Review

# **CLEAR LIGHTS ON MARRIAGE, SEX AND CELIBACY**

by

**Rev. Fr. Marciano Malvar Guzman, Ph.D.**

**The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy.** Edited by Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre. Published by Sinag-tala Publishers, Inc., 1976, 388 pp.

Sinag-tala Publishers, Inc. enhances its already prestigious collection of spiritual and doctrinal writings with a highly reassuring book on such timely as well as eternal issues like marriage and the family, and the meaning of celibacy. Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre's **The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy** offers a collection of the Church's enlightening statements, together with the most classical biblical passages directly referring to these themes.

In presenting some of the most important declarations of the Church on the previously mentioned subjects, this volume clearly unmasks the serious threat poised to individuals and societies by the growing secularism and materialism of our times, which seek to deny the supernatural and substitute man for God. Fed by naturalism, which aims to reduce the supernatural to the merely natural, the immanentistic philosophies which began in the Renaissance humanism, and the neo-modernistic trends which seem to creep steadily into some sectors of society, some unchristian elements nowadays launch relentless attacks against the indissolubility of marriage and strive to morally justify the practice of birth control by artificial means, while at the same time debase the dignity of virginity and celibacy which Christians have always highly esteemed. **The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy** gives the reader the consistent position of the Church on marriage, sex and celibacy, helps him see the deceitful snares laid to unenlightened individuals by pressure groups advocating divorce, artificial contraception, sterilization, the commercial exploitation of

sex, and abortion, and makes him perceive the real dignity of marriage and apostolic celibacy in the context of the common good.

Through this highly recommendable volume, Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre makes the reader share the richness of Christian doctrine on marriage, sex and celibacy by letting the Church speak for herself through relevant passages of Holy Scriptures, the teachings of several ecumenical councils (Florence, Trent and Vatican II) and Roman Pontiffs from Leo XIII to Paul VI. The book seeks to achieve a three-fold purpose as the author himself states in the **Introduction**: "The purpose of this book is to gather in one volume some of the most important Church statements on Marriage and Celibacy prefaced by the most classical biblical passages on same. First, in order to show the expected continuity of doctrine in all Church statements: if the Church could change in any point of faith or morals it would not be a **divine** institution; it would have secularized itself — this is not so much conservatism for its own sake, as fidelity to a living tradition received from God: if the tradition is **living**, a change can only be (i) homogenous with what preceded it, and (ii) for the better, not for its own sake, no contradiction with the past, but consistent continuity. Second, so that Catholics may know with certainty what is real Church doctrine, to which they have a right, and what is just opinions of individual theologians... And third, so that both Catholics and non-Catholics may find all this precious material put together for any serious study of the matter, as well as for quick reference".

Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre, a holder of a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, and presently a lecturer in Social Economics and Ethics at the Center for Research and Communication (CRC), has previously written a book entitled **Marxism, Socialism and Christianity**, published last year by CRC, and edited a volume on the Church's teachings on society entitled **Social Morals**, published by CRC in 1975.

The editorial note accompanying the author's most recent work aptly declares, **The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy** has this time "plucked the relevant passages on the subject matter from various religious sources to come up with such a rare collection of priceless doctrine".

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