

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION OF HIS
HOLINESS PAUL VI

*on the Renewal of the Religious Life
according to the teaching of Vatican II*

INTRODUCTION

*EVANGELICAL WITNESS IN THE MIDST
OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD*

Beloved sons and daughters in Christ,

1. *Evangelical witness*

THE EVANGELICAL WITNESS of the religious life clearly manifests to men the primacy of the love of God; it does this with a force for which we must give thanks to the Holy Spirit. In all simplicity — following the example given by our venerated predecessor, John XXIII, on the eve of the Council¹ — we would like to tell you what hope is stirred up in us, as well as in all the pastors and faithful of the Church, by the spiritual generosity of those men and women who have consecrated their lives of the Lord in the spirit and practice of the evangelical counsels. We wish also to assist you to continue in your path of following Christ in faithfulness to the Council's teaching.

¹ Exhortation *Il tempio massimo*, 2 July 1962, A.A.S. 54, 1962, pp. 508-517.

2. *The Council*

By doing this, we wish to respond to the anxiety, uncertainty and instability shown by some; at the same time we wish to encourage those who are seeking the true renewal of the religious life. The boldness of certain arbitrary transformations, an exaggerated distrust of the past — even when it witnesses to the wisdom and vigour of ecclesial traditions — and a mentality excessively preoccupied with hastily conforming to the profound changes which disturb our times have succeeded in leading some to consider as outmoded the specific forms of religious life. Has not appeal even unjustly been made to the Council to cast doubt on the very principle of religious life? And yet it is well known that the Council recognized "this specific gift" as having a choice place in the life of the Church, because it enables those who have received it to be more closely conformed to "that manner of virginal and humble life which Christ the Lord elected for himself, and which his Virgin Mother also chose"². The Council has also indicated the ways for the renewal of religious life in accordance with the Gospel³.

3. *The tradition of the Church*

From the beginning, the tradition of the Church — is it perhaps necessary to recall it? — presents us with this privileged witness of a constant seeking for God, of an undivided love for Christ alone, and of an absolute dedication to the growth of his kingdom. Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the "salt of faith would lose its savour in a world undergoing secularization.

From the first centuries, the Holy Spirit has stirred up, side by side with the heroic confession of the martyrs, the wonderful strength of disciples and virgins, of hermits and anchorites. Religious life already existed in germ, and progressively it felt the growing need of developing and of taking

² *Lumen Gentium*, VI, 46, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 52.

³ *Perfectae Caritatis*, A.A.S. 58, 1966, pp. 702-712.

on different forms of community or solitary life, in order to respond to the pressing invitation of Christ: "There is no one who has left house, wife, brothers, parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not be given repayment many times over in this present time, and, in the world to come, eternal life"⁴.

Who would venture to hold that such a calling today no longer has the same value and vigour? That the Church could do without these exceptional witnesses of the transcendence of the love of Christ? Or that the world without damage to itself could allow these lights to go out? They are lights which announce the kingdom of God with a liberty which knows no obstacles and is daily lived by thousands of sons and daughters of the Church.

4. *Esteem and affection*

Dear sons and daughters, you have wished by means of the practice of the evangelical counsels to follow Christ more freely and to imitate him more faithfully, dedicating your entire lives to God with a special consecration rooted in that of baptism and expressing it with greater fullness: could you but understand all the esteem and the affection that we have for you in the name of Christ Jesus! We commend you to our most dear brothers in the episcopate who, together with their collaborators in the priesthood, realize their own responsibility in regard to the religious life. And we ask all the laity to whom "secular duties and activities belong properly, although not exclusively"⁵ to understand what a strong help you are for them in the striving for that holiness, to which they also are called by their baptism in Christ, to the glory of the Father⁶.

5. *Renewal*

Certainly many exterior elements, recommended by founders of order or religious congregations are seen today to be outmoded. Various encumbrances or rigid forms accumulated

⁴ Lk. 18:29-30.

⁵ Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 43 A.A.S. 58, 1966, p.1062.

⁶ Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, V, A.A.S. 57, 1965, pp. 44-49.

over the centuries need to be curtailed. Adaptations must be made. New forms can even be sought and instituted with the approval of the Church. For some years now the greater part of religious institutes have been generously dedicating themselves to the attainment of this goal, experimenting — some times too hardily — with new types of constitutions and rules. We know well and we are following with attention this effort at renewal which was desired by the Council⁷.

6. *Necessary discernment*

How can we assist you to make the necessary discernment in this dynamic process itself, in which there is the constant risk that the spirit of the world will be intermingled with the action of the Holy Spirit? How can what is essential be safeguarded or attained? How can benefit be obtained from past experience and from present reflection, in order to strengthen this form of evangelical life? According to the singular responsibility which the Lord has given us in his Church — that of confirming our brethren⁸ — we would like to encourage you to proceed with greater sureness and with more joyful confidence along the way that you have chosen. In the "pursuit of perfect charity"⁹ which guides your existence, what attitude could you have other than a total surrender to the Holy Spirit who, working in the Church, calls you to the freedom of the sons of God?¹⁰

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

7. *The teaching of the Council*

Dear sons and daughters, by a free response to the call of the Holy Spirit you have decided to follow Christ, consecrating yourselves totally to him. The evangelical counsels of chastity vowed to God, of poverty and of obedience have now

⁷ Cfr. *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 6 August 1966, A.A.S. 58, 1966, pp. 757ff.; *Renovationis Causam*, 6 January 1969, A.A.S. 61, 1969, pp. 103ff.

⁸ Cfr. Lk. 22:32.

⁹ Cfr. *Praefectae Caritatis*, 1, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 702.

¹⁰ Cfr. Gal. 5:13; 2 Cor. 3:17.

become the law of your existence. The Council reminds us that "the authority of the Church has taken care, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to interpret these evangelical counsels, to regulate their practice, and also to establish stable forms of living according to them"¹¹. In this way, the Church recognizes and authenticates the state of life established by the profession of the evangelical counsels: "The faithful of Christ can bind themselves to the three previously mentioned counsels either by vows, or by other sacred bonds which are like vows in their purpose. Through such a bond a person is totally dedicated to God by an act of supreme love . . . It is true that through baptism he has died to sin and has been consecrated to God. However, in order to derive more abundant fruit from this baptismal grace, he intends, by the profession of the evangelical counsels in the Church, to free himself from those obstacles which might draw him away from the fervour of charity and the perfection of divine worship. Thus he is more intimately consecrated to divine service. This consecration will be the more perfect to the extent that, through more firm and stable bonds, the indissoluble union of Christ with his Spouse the Church is more perfectly represented"¹²

This teaching of the Council illustrates well the grandeur of this self-giving, freely made by yourselves, after the pattern of Christ's self-giving to his Church; like his, yours is total and irreversible. It is precisely for the sake of the kingdom of heaven that you have vowed to Christ, generously and without reservation, that capacity to love, that need to possess and that freedom to regulate one's own life, which are so precious to man. Such is your consecration, made within the Church and through her ministry — both that of her representatives who receive your profession and that of the Christian community itself, whose love recognizes, welcomes, sustains and embraces those who within it make an offering of themselves as a living sign "which can and ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation . . . more adequately manifesting to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed in this world."¹³

¹¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 43, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 49.

¹² *Ibidem*, 44, p. 50.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.

I — FORMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

8. *Contemplative life*

Some of you have been called to the life which is termed "contemplative". An irresistible attraction draws you to the Lord. Held in God's grasp, you abandon yourselves to his sovereign action, which draws you toward him and transforms you into him, as it prepares you for that eternal contemplation which is the common vocation of us all. How could you advance along this road and be faithful to the grace which animates you if you did not respond with all your being, through a dynamism whose driving force is love, to that call which directs you unswervingly towards God? Consider, therefore, every other immediate activity to which you must devote yourselves — fraternal relationship, disinterested or remunerable work, necessary recreation — as a witness rendered to the Lord of your intimate communion with him, so that he may grant you that unifying purity of intention which is so necessary for encountering him in prayer itself. In this way you will contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God by the witness of your lives and with a "hidden apostolic fruitfulness" ¹⁴.

9. *Apostolic life*

Others are consecrated to the apostolate in its essential mission, which is the proclaiming of the Word of God to those whom he places along their path, so as to lead them towards faith. Such a grace requires a profound union with the Lord, one which will enable you to transmit the message of the Incarnate Word in terms which the world is able to understand. How necessary it is therefore that your whole existence should make you share in his passion, death and glory¹⁵.

10. *Contemplation and apostolate*

When your vocation destines you for other tasks in the service of men — pastoral life, missions, teaching, works of charity and so on — is it not above all the intensity of your

¹⁴ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 7, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 705.

¹⁵ Cfr. Phil. 3:10-11.

union with the Lord that will make them fruitful, in proportion to that union "in secret"?¹⁶. In order to be faithful to the teaching of the Council, must not "the members of each community who are seeking God before all else combine contemplation with apostolic love? By the former they cling to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God"¹⁷.

11. *The charisms of founders*

Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within his Church. Thus the Council rightly insists on the obligation of religious to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity. In this it finds one of the principles for the present renewal and one of the most secure criteria for judging what each institute should undertake¹⁸. In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood¹⁹ or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world²⁰, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church.

12. *External forms and interior driving force*

It is precisely here that the dynamism proper to each religious family finds its origin. For while the call of God renews itself and expresses itself in different ways according to changing circumstances of place and time, it nevertheless requires a certain constancy of orientation. The interior impulse which is the response to God's call stirs up in the depth of one's being certain fundamental options. Fidelity to the exigencies of these fundamental options is the touchstone of

¹⁶ Cfr. Mt. 6:6.

¹⁷ Cfr. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 705.

¹⁸ Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 45, A.A.S. 57, 1965, pp. 51-52; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2 b, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 703.

¹⁹ Cfr. Jn. 1:13:

²⁰ Cfr. Rom. 12:2.

authenticity in religious life. Let us not forget that every human institution is prone to become set in its ways and is threatened by formalism. It is continually necessary to revitalize external forms with this interior driving force, without which these external forms would very quickly become an excessive burden.

Through the variety of forms which give each institute its own individual character and which have their root in the fulness of the grace of Christ²¹, the supreme rule of the religious life and its ultimate norm is that of following Christ according to the teaching of the Gospel. It is not perhaps this preoccupation which in the course of the centuries has given rise in the Church to the demand for a life which is chaste, poor and obedient?

II — ESSENTIAL COMMITMENTS

13. *Consecrated chastity*

Only the love of God — it must be repeated — calls in a decisive way to religious chastity. This love moreover makes so uncompromising a demand for fraternal charity that the religious will live more profoundly with his contemporaries in the heart of Christ. On this condition, the gift of self, made to God and to others, will be the source of deep peace. Without in any way undervaluing human love and marriage — is not the latter, according to faith, the image and sharing of the union of love joining Christ and the Church?²² — consecrated chastity evokes this union in a more immediate way and brings that surpassing excellence to which all human love should tend. Thus, at the very moment that human love is more than ever threatened by a "ravaging eroticism"²³, consecrated chastity must be today more than ever understood and lived with uprightness and generosity. Chastity is decisively positive, it witnesses to preferential love for the Lord

²¹ Cfr. 1 Cor. 12:12-30.

²² Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 48, A.A.S. 58, 1966, pp. 1067-1069; cfr. Eph. 5:25, 32.

²³ Cfr. Address to the «Equipes Notre-Dames», 4 May 1970, A.A.S. 62, 1970, p. 429.

and symbolizes in the most eminent and absolute way the mystery of the union of the Mystical Body with its Head, the union of the Bride with her eternal Bridegroom. Finally, it reaches, transforms and imbues with a mysterious likeness to Christ man's being in its most hidden depths.

14. *A Source of Spiritual Fruitfulness*

Thus, dear brothers and sisters, it is necessary for you to restore to the Christian spirituality of consecrated chastity its full effectiveness. When it is truly lived, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, consecrated chastity frees man's heart and thus becomes "a sign and stimulus of charity as well as a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world."²⁴ Even if the world does not always recognize it, consecrated chastity remains in every case effective in a mystical manner in the world.

15. *A Gift of God*

For our part, we must be firmly and surely convinced that the value and the fruitfulness of chastity observed for love of God in religious celibacy find their ultimate basis in nothing other than the Word of God, the teachings of Christ, the life of his Virgin Mother and also the apostolic tradition, as it has been unceasingly affirmed by the Church. We are in fact dealing here with a precious gift which the Father imparts to certain people. This gift, fragile and vulnerable because of human weakness, remains open to the contradictions of mere reason and is in part incomprehensible to those to whom the light of the World Incarnate has not revealed how he who loses his life for him will find it.²⁵

16. *Consecrated Poverty*

Observing chastity as you do in the following of Christ, you desire also, according to his example, to live in poverty in the use of this world's goods which are necessary for your

²⁴ Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 42, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. p. 48.

²⁵ Cfr. Mt. 10:39; 16:25; Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24; Jn. 12:25.

daily sustenance. On this point, moreover, our contemporaries question you with particular insistence. It is certainly true that religious institutes have an important role to fulfil in the sphere of works of mercy, assistance and social justice; it is clear that in carrying out this service they must be always attentive to the demands of the Gospel.

17. *The Cry of the Poor*

You hear rising up, more pressing than ever, from their personal distress and collective misery, "the cry of the poor."²⁶ Was it not in order to respond to their appeal as God's privileged ones that Christ came,²⁷ even going as far as to identify himself with them?²⁸ In a world experiencing the full flood of development this persistence of poverty-stricken masses and individuals constitutes a pressing call for "a conversion of minds and attitudes,"²⁹ especially for you who follow Christ more closely in this earthly condition of self-emptying.³⁰ We know that this call resounds within you in so dramatic a fashion that some of you even feel on occasion the temptation to take violent action. As disciples of Christ, how could you follow a way different from his? This way is not, as you know, a movement of the political or temporal order; it calls rather for the conversion of hearts, for liberation from all temporal encumbrances. It is a call to love.

18. *Poverty and Justice*

How then will the cry of the poor find an echo in your lives? That cry must, first of all, bar you from whatever would be a compromise with any form of social injustice. It obliges you also to awaken consciences to the drama of misery and to the demands of social justice made by the Gospel and the Church. It leads some of you to join the poor in their situation and to share their bitter cares. Furthermore, it calls many of your

²⁶ Cfr. Ps. 9:13; Job. 34:28; Prov. 21:13.

²⁷ Cfr. Lk. 4:18; 6:20.

²⁸ Cfr. Mt. 25:35-40.

²⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 63, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 1085.

³⁰ Cfr. Mt. 19:21; 2 Cor. 8:9.

institutes to rededicate for the good of the poor some of their works—something which many have already done with generosity. Finally, it enjoins on you a use of goods limited to what is required for the fulfilment of the functions to which you are called. It is necessary that in your daily lives you should give proof, even externally, of authentic poverty.

19. *Use of the World's Goods*

In a civilization and a world marked by a prodigious movement of almost indefinite material growth, what witness would be offered by a religious who let himself be carried away by an uncurbed seeking for his own case, and who considered it normal to allow himself without discernment or restraint everything that is offered him? At a time when there is an increased danger for many of being enticed by the alluring security of possessions, knowledge and power, the call of God places you at the pinnacle of the Christian conscience. You are to remind men that their true and complete progress consists in responding to their calling "to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men."³¹

20. *Life of Work*

You will likewise be able to understand the complaints of so many persons who are drawn into the implacable process of work for gain, of profit for enjoyment, and of consumption, which in its turn forces them to a labour which is sometimes inhuman. It will therefore be an essential aspect of your poverty to bear witness to the human meaning of work which is carried out in liberty of spirit and restored to its true nature as the source of sustenance and of service. Did not the Council stress—in a very timely way—your necessary submission to "the common law of labour"?³² Earning your own living and that of your brothers or sisters, helping the poor by your work—these are duties incumbent upon you. But your activities cannot derogate from the vocation of your various institutes, nor

³¹ *Populorum Progressio*, 21 A.A.S. 59, 1967, p. 268.

³² *Perfectae Caritatis*, 13, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 708.

habitually involve work such as would take the place of their specific tasks. Nor should these activities in any way lead you towards secularization, to the detriment of your religious life. Be watchful therefore regarding the spirit which animates you: what a failure it would be if you felt yourselves valued by the payment you receive for worldly work!

21. *Fraternal Sharing*

The necessity, which is so imperative today, of fraternal sharing must preserve its evangelical value. According to the expression in the *Didache*, "if you share eternal goods, with all the more reason should you share the goods that perish."³³ Poverty really lived by pooling goods, including pay, will testify to the spiritual communion uniting you; it will be a living call to all the rich and will also bring relief to your needy brothers and sisters. The legitimate desire of exercising personal responsibility will not find expression in enjoyment of one's own income but in fraternal sharing in the common good. The forms of poverty of each person and of each community will depend on the type of institute and on the form of obedience practised in it. Thus will be brought to realization, in accordance with particular vocations, the character of dependence which is inherent in every form of poverty.

22. *Evangelical Exigency*

You are aware, dear sons and daughters, that the needs of today's world, if you experience them in heart-to-heart union with Christ, make your poverty more urgent and more deep. If, as is evident, you must take account of the human surroundings in which you live, in order to adapt your life style to them, your poverty cannot be purely and simply a conformity to the manners of those surroundings. Its value as a witness will derive from a generous response to the exigencies of the Gospel, in total fidelity to your vocation—not just from an excessively superficial preoccupation for appearing to be poor—and in avoiding those ways of life which would denote a

³³ *Didache*, IV, 8; cfr. Acts 4:32.

certain affectedness and vanity. While we recognize that certain situation can justify the abandonment of a religious type of dress, we cannot pass over in silence the fittingness that the dress of religious men and women should be, as the Council wishes, a sign of their consecration³⁴ and that it should be in some way different from the forms that are clearly secular.

23. *Consecrated Obedience*

Is it not the same fidelity which inspires your profession of obedience, in the light of faith and in accordance with the very dynamism of the charity of Christ? Through this profession, in fact, you make a total offering of your will and enter more decisively and more surely into his plan of salvation. Following the example of Christ, who came to do the will of the Father, and in communion with him who "learned to obey through suffering" and "ministered to the brethren," you have assumed a firmer commitment to the ministry of the Church and of your brethren.³⁵

24. *Evangelical Fraternity and Sacrifice*

The evangelical aspiration to fraternity was forcefully expressed by the Council. The Church was defined as the People of God, in which the hierarchy is at the service of the members of Christ united by the same charity.³⁶ The same paschal mystery of Christ is lived in the religious state as in the whole Church. The profound meaning of obedience is revealed in the fullness of this mystery of death and resurrection in which the supernatural destiny of man is brought to realization in a perfect manner. It is in fact through sacrifice, suffering and death that man attains true life.

Exercising authority in the midst of your brethren means therefore being their servants,³⁷ in accordance with the example of him who gave "his life as a ransom for many."³⁸

³⁴ Cfr. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 17, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 710.

³⁵ Cfr. *Ibidem*, 14, p. 709; Jn. 4:34; 5:30; 10:15-18; Heb. 5:8; 10:7; ps. 40(39):8-9.

³⁶ Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, chaps. I-III, A.A.S. 57, 1965, pp. 5-36.

³⁷ Cfr. Lk. 22:26-27; Jn. 13:14.

³⁸ Mt. 20:28; cfr. Phil. 2:28.

25. *Authority and Obedience*

Consequently, authority and obedience are exercised in the service of the common good as two complementary aspects of the same participation in Christ's offering. For those in authority, it is a matter of serving in their brothers the design of the Father's love; while, in accepting their directives, the religious follow our Master's example³⁰ and cooperate in the work of salvation. Thus, far from being in opposition to one another, authority and individual liberty go together in the fulfilment of God's will, which is sought fraternally through a trustful dialogue between the superior and his brother, in the case of a personal situation, or through a general agreement regarding what concerns the whole community. In this pursuit, the religious will be able to avoid both an excessive agitation and a preoccupation for making the attraction of current opinion prevail over the profound meaning of the religious life. It is the duty of everyone, but especially of superiors and those who exercise responsibility among their brothers or sisters, to awaken in the community the certainties of faith which must be their guide. This pursuit has the aim of giving depth to these certainties and translating them into practice in everyday living in accordance with the needs of the moment; its aim is not in any way to cast doubt on them. This labour of seeking together must end, when it is the moment, with the decision of the superiors whose presence and acceptance are indispensable in every community.

2. *In the needs of daily life*

Modern conditions of life naturally have their effect on the way you live your obedience. Many of you carry out part of your activity outside your religious houses, performing a function in which you have special competence. Others join together in work teams having their own pattern of life and action. Is not the risk which is inherent in such situations a call to reassert and reexamine in depth the sense of obedience?

³⁰ Cfr. Lk. 2:51.

If the risk is to have good results, certain conditions must be respected. First of all, it is necessary to see whether the work undertaken conforms with the institute's vocation. The two spheres ought also to be clearly marked off. Above all, it must be possible to pass from external activity to the demands of common life, taking care to ensure full effectiveness to the elements of the strictly religious life. One of the principal duties of superiors is that of ensuring that their brothers and sisters in religion should have the indispensable conditions for their spiritual life. But how could they fulfil this duty without the trusting collaboration of the whole community?

27. *Freedom and obedience*

Let us add this: the more you exercise your responsibility, the more you must renew your self-giving in its full significance. The Lord obliges each one to "lose his life" if he is to follow him⁴⁰. You will observe this precept by accepting the directives of your superiors as a guarantee of your religious profession, through which you offer to God a total dedication of your own wills as a sacrifice of yourselves⁴¹. Christian obedience is unconditional submission to the will of God. But your obedience is more strict because you have made it the object of a special giving, and the range of your choices is limited by your commitment. It is a full act of your freedom that is at the origin of your present position: your duty is to make that act ever more vital, both by your own initiative and by the cordial assent you give the directives of your superiors. Thus it is that the Council includes among the benefits of the religious state "liberty strengthened by obedience"⁴², and stresses that such obedience "does not diminish the dignity of the human person but rather leads it to maturity through that enlarged freedom which belongs to the sons of God"⁴³.

⁴⁰ Cfr *Ibidem*, 9:23-24.

⁴¹ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 708.

⁴² *Lumen Gentium*, 43, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 49.

⁴³ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 709.

⁴⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 16, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 1037.

28. *Conscience and obedience*

And yet, is it possible to have conflicts between the superior's authority and the conscience of the religious, the "sanctuary of a person where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of his being" ?¹⁴. Need we repeat that conscience on its own is not the arbiter of the moral worth of the actions which it inspires? It must take account of objective norms and, if necessary, reform and rectify itself. Apart from an order manifestly contrary to the laws of God or the constitutions of the institute, or one involving a serious and certain evil—in which case there is no obligation to obey—the superior's decisions concern a field in which the calculation of the greater good can vary according to the point of view. To conclude from the fact that a directive seems objectively less good that it is unlawful and contrary to conscience would mean an unrealistic disregard of the obscurity and ambivalence of many human realities. Besides, refusal to obey involves an often serious loss for the common good. A religious should not easily conclude that there is a contradiction between the judgment of his conscience and that of his superior. This exceptional situation will sometimes involve true interior suffering, after the pattern of Christ himself "who learned obedience through suffering"¹⁵.

29. *The Cross — proof of the greatest love*

What has been said indicates what degree of renunciation is demanded by the practice of the religious life. You must feel something of the force with which Christ was drawn to his Cross—that baptism he had still to receive, by which that fire would be lighted which sets you too ablaze—¹⁶ something of that "foolishness" which Saint Paul wishes we all had, because it alone makes us wise¹⁷. Let the Cross be for you, as it was for Christ, proof of the greatest love. Is there not a mysterious relationship between renunciation and joy, between sacrifice and magnanimity, between discipline and spiritual freedom?

(to be continued)

¹⁵ Heb. 5:8.

¹⁶ Cfr. Lk. 12:49-50.

¹⁷ Cfr. 1 Cor. 3:18-19.

Episcopal Documents

A LETTER TO THE C.C. DELEGATES OF PALAWAN ¹

Bishop's Residence
Puerto Princesa
Palawan
August 30, 1971

Delegates for Palawan
Constitutional Convention
Puerto Princesa City

Honorable Sirs:

Greetings in the Lord. Our country is at the juncture of an important twist in history. The nation has elected delegates to entrust unto them the sublime work of carving for them a better tomorrow by enshrining their noble aspirations in a body of permanent and immutable fundamental laws. Much depend on you. We look with anxious eyes on every turn, decision and step you make. We long and pray for your success. Your success will be ours, your failure, likewise, ours. May God bless you all and illumine your minds to see what is good for our country.

In passing allow me to point out that one issue raised in the campaign in Palawan by the citizenry, the Catholics in particular — spear-headed by the Holy Name Society — was that of Profit Sharing for the working class. It is not a hidden secret that some "Blocks", or interested groups in our Philippine society have heavily lobbied in Congress to block the bill on Profit Sharing. I was sad to see so many of our Congressmen succumb to the pernicious temptations of financial offers

¹ The two delegates from Palawan are Hon. Alfredo Abueg, Jr. and Hon. Jose N. Nollado.