



BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

ON CATECHESIS IN OUR TIME

Pope John Paul II

AGREED STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

**Philippine Episcopal Church
and Catholic Bishops' Conference**

WHAT THE AGREEMENT ON BAPTISM MEANS

Pedro S. de Achutegui, S.J.

A NEW AGE OF MISSION

**Statement of the International
Mission Congress, Manila**

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Herman J. Graf, S.V.D.

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THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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Do We Proclaim The Good News?

"I do not remember any preacher who has really preached the Good News at Mass," remarked a young lady.

She told this to a friend, a missionary who came back to the Philippines after finishing a degree in Sacred Scriptures in Rome. Since the missionary expressed surprise, the young lady elaborated on her remark. She said she had gone from church to church on Sundays to listen to different preachers. Many of them preached well. They preached on interesting subjects: justice, human rights, involvement in social action, love of God and fellowmen. She heard criticisms of martial law, protests against government policies, condemnations of violence and abuses. She also heard praises for the President and First Lady, of the way the government is keeping law and order, of the strategies it has adopted to cope with economic and political problems. There were the usual exhortations to piety, sacrifice, traditional devotions to Mary, to the Santo Niño. She also heard good catechetical instructions and even homilies that stuck to the theme and even to the words of the Gospel Reading for the Sunday. Still, she felt she did not hear **THE GOOD NEWS** in these homilies.

She did not hear preachers proclaiming at length that Jesus Christ is Lord. Not much was ever said about the Kingdom of God being now a reality among us. The key passage in the book of John — "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Son So that those who believe in him may not Perish but have Everlasting Life," — John 3:16, forming an acronym for GOSPEL — was sometimes mentioned in passing, yes, but not really treated as the very center of the sermon. No homilist ever manifested familiarity with themes that give to the Resurrection of Christ the centrality it occupies in authentic Christian life — themes like the incorporation of Christians to the glorious body of Christ, the New Creation, the spiritual realm inaugurated by the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ now

transforming the world. The special joy that hearers of the Good News experience was hardly ever noticed in the faces of Sunday Mass goers.

The young lady knew that an ordinary priest would not understand what she was really complaining about. But she was talking to a specialist in biblical studies and she was certain that he would understand what she had been missing in the staple Sunday spiritual nourishment from the word of God. He did understand, and has since then kept in mind the young lady's remarks. He is now working hard so that priests and catechists would put into practice the desire of Vatican II that "all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture" and in particular by the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As we celebrate Easter this year it is opportune for all those involved in the instruction and education of the People of God to ask themselves how emphatically they show the Resurrection of Christ as the center of authentic Christian life. He is risen! He is alive and he endows us with new life! Let us live in the joy of those who are reborn in the Spirit! These are the saving truths and realities that must always be the core of our sermons — if we really want to proclaim GOOD NEWS.

In this issue

IN OUR TIME, catechesis is where the action is. And rightly so. For in spite of exhaustive studies, innovative approaches, and guidelines from the magisterium, the Church is still groping for the right way of forming Christians to the likeness and stature of Christ. In Europe and in the North American continent, people continue to drift away from the Church and from Christ. In the developing Christian communities of Asia and Africa the Church is growing vigorously but it still has to affirm its identity while assimilating and enriching asian and african cultures. In Latin America the Theology of Liberation still has to be perfected by the

civilization of love. All these raise a challenge to catechesis, and Pope Paul VI convened the Synod of Bishops in October 1977 to deliberate on the Church's answer. He was getting ready to publish an exhortation on catechesis when his labors were ended by death. Pope John Paul I came and his gifts as a catechist amazed us all. But death struck again and the planned exhortation on catechesis failed for the time being to see the light of day. Finally, Pope John Paul II was elected Pope and he also, after the example of his predecessors, turned his attention to catechesis. We now have at hand the Apostolic Exhortation on **Catechesis in our Time**, the work of three popes as well as of the 1977 Synod of Bishops.

We also provide our readers with a document that seeks to usher in **A New Age of Mission**: the statement of the International Mission Congress held in Manila December 2 to 8. It is true that the guiding principles for the Church's missionary efforts today have already been set forth in **Evangelii Nuntiandi** in 1976. Still, the congress document has insights gathered from the experience of the past few years. In a less formal way, the article we reprint from Cor Manila, **The Task of Mission in the World** informs us on what was discussed in the international meeting last December.

Turning to Ecumenism, we are happy to give our readers the **Statement on Baptism** agreed upon by the Philippine Episcopal Church and the Philippine Catholic hierarchy. Fr. Pedro S. de Achutegui's article explains the importance of this document.

Fr. Graf's article on **Mary, Mother of the Church** touches on the doctrinal as well as liturgical aspects of the feast we celebrate on New Year's day.

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilecto filio **EMMANUELI SOBREVINAS**, presbytero Ecclesiae **Manlensis**, electo eiusdem Sedis sacri Praesulis Auxiliari atque Episcopo titulo **Tulanensi**, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Romanum decet Pontificem, Christi vices in terris divino mandato gerentem, cum fratribus in Episcopatu labores participare illorumque votis summa caritate annuere. Quare, optantibus Nobis libenter audire preces Venerabilis fratris Nostri **Jacobi S.R.E. Cardinalis Sin. Archiepiscopi Manlensis**, petentis ut alius sibi Auxillaris tribueretur, peropportunum visum est in te, dilecte fili, id genus muneris conferre posse. Tibi enim necessarias esse scivimus animi ingenique virtutes ad gravissimum sacri pastoris officium obeundum. De sententia igitur Venerabilium fratrum Nostrorum **S.R.E. Cardinalium**, qui Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositi sunt, deque summa Nostra potestate te Auxiliarem nominamus sacrorum, quem diximus, Antistitis simulque Episcopum vacantis Sedis titulo **TULANENSIS**, iustis datis iuribus congruisque impositis obligationibus, sicut explicatur in Apostolicis Litteris Ecclesiae Sanctae a **Paulo VI, Decessore Nostro**, die **VI mensis Augusti** datis, anno **MCMLXVI**. Permittimus insuper ut ordinationem accipias a quolibet catholico Episcopo extra urbem Romam, cui duo assistant eiusdem ordinis episcopalis viri consecratores, sic ut leges liturgicae praescribunt. Antea autem tuum erit catholicae fidei professionem facere, teste quovis rectae fidelis Episcopo, atque iuramentum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, ad statutas formulas, quas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittes, de more signatas sigilloque impressas. Extremum te, dilecte fili, paterne hortamur ut episcopale munus ita geras, quo ditiores de laboribus tuis fructus percipiantur. Datum Romae, apud **S. Petrum**, die septimo mensis **Aprilis**, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo nono, Pontificatus Nostri primo.

✠ **AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI**
a Publicis Ecclesiae Negotiis

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton. Apost.

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili fratri **PHILIPPO F. SMITH**, hactenus Episcopo titulo Lamphuensi et Vicario Apostolico Joloensi, electo Coadiutori cum iure successioneis sacri Praesulis Cotabantensis, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Romani est Pontificis vota suscipere Episcoporum illorumque necessitatibus prompte subvenire. Quare, cum Venerabilis frater Gerardus Mongeau, Episcopus Cotabatensis, Nobis preces adhibuisset ut Coadiutor cum iure successioneis sibi daretur, visum est id genus muneris tibi, dilecte fili, posse committi. Novimus enim egregias animi ingenique tui dotes rerumque pastoralium peritiam. Summa igitur Apostolica Nostra potestate vinculo te solvimus Sedis titulo Lamphuensis Itemque munere Vicarii Apostolici Joloensis teque Coadiutorem cum iure successioneis sacrorum, quem diximus, Antistitis nominamus, datis iuribus obligationibusque impositis sicut explicatur in Apostolicis Litteris — Ecclesiae Sanctae —, a Paulo VI, Decessore Nostro, die VI mensis Augusti datis, anno MCMLXVI. Antea autem, dum te a catholicae fidei professione facienda eximimus, tuum erit, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo, iusiurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, iuxta statutam formulam quam ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittes, de more signatam sigilloque impressam. Nunc denique, Venerabilis frater, Deum omnipotentem precamur ut sua te gratia dignetur confirmare quo promptius sive Ecclesiae Cotabatensis fideles sive eorum sacrum iuves Pastorem. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die undecimo mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo nono, Pontificatus Nostri I.

AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASOROLI
a Publicis Eccl. Negotiis

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton. Apost.

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilecto filio **PETRO MAGUGAT**, e Congregatione Missionariorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu, paroco in dioecesi Cabanatuanensi, electo eiusdem Ecclesiae sacri Praesulis Auxiliari atque Episcopo titulo Scillitano, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Quo plenius spirituali bono Christifidelium dioecesis suae consuleretur, petivit Venerabilis frater Vincentius Reyes. Episcopus Cabanatuanensis, ut Auxiliaris sibi daretur. Cum ergo te, dilecte fili, qui egregiis animi ingenique dotibus praestas, eidem officio exsequendo aptum existimaverimus, de sententia Venerabilium fratrum Nostrarum S.R.E. Cardinalium qui Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositi sunt, deque summa Nostra potestate te Auxiliarem nominamus sacrorum, quem diximus, Antistitis simulque Episcopum vacantis Sedis titulo **SELLITANAE**, iustis datis iuribus congruisque impositis obligationibus, sicut explicatur in Apostolicis Litteris Ecclesiae Sanctae — a Paulo VI, Decessore Nostro, die VI mensis Augusti datis, anno MCMLXVI Quod ad episcopalem ordinationem tuam attinet eam a Nobismet Ipsi accipies Romae, in Petriana Basilica, die vicesimo septimo mensis Maii qui proxime adveniet. Antea autem tuum erit catholicae fidei professionem facere, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo, atque iusiurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, ad statutas formulas, quas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittees, de more signatas sigillaque impressas. Extremum tibi, dilecte fili, Deum rogamus ut supernis te adiuvet donis quo aptius et Episcopo Ecclesiae Cabanatuanensis et ei commissis fidelibus auxiliaris. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo tertio mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo nono, Pontificatus Nostri primo.

✠ **AUGUSTINUS CASAROLI**
A Publicis Ecclesiae Negotiis

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton. Apost.

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilecto filio **SALVATORI QUIZON**, e clero archidioecesis **Lipensis**, electo eiusdem Sedis sacri Praesulis Auxiliari atque Episcopo titulo Feraditano Minori, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Solet Romanus Pontifex, cum id suadeant adiuncta rerum, sacrorum Antistitibus Episcopos adiutores assignare, eo consilio ut illis, quos laborum onus et vitae christianae negotia premunt, quam assidue opitulentur. Qua re, cum Venerabilis frater Richardus Vidal, Archiepiscopus Lipensis, petivisset ut Auxiliaris sibi daretur, visum est Nobis in te, dilecte filii, id genus muneris posse conferri. Tibi enim necessariae sunt animi ingenique virtutes ac rerum pastoralium usus haud minimus. De sententia igitur Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, deque Nostra summa potestate te Auxiliarem nominamus sacrorum, quem diximus, Antistitis simulque Episcopum vacantis Sedis titulo **FERADITANAE MINORIS**, iustis datis iuribus congruisque impositis obligationibus, sicut explicatur in Apostolicis Litteris — Ecclesiae Sanctae — a Paulo VI, Decessore Nostro, die VI mensis Augusti datis, anno MCMLXVI. Permittimus insuper ut ordinationem episcopalem accipias a quolibet catholico Episcopo extra urbem Romam, cui duo assistant eiusdem ordinis episcopalis viri consecratores, sicut leges liturgicae praescribunt. Tibi autem mandamus ut antea fidei professionem facias, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo, atque iurandum des fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, ad statutas formulas, quas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittes, de more signatas sigilloque impressas. Postremo te, dilecte filii, paterne hortamur ut, in tam gravi officio obeundo, omnem adhibeas diligentiam quo aptius tum Ecclesiae Lipensis Antistes, tum ei commissi fideles tua diuturna ope iuventur. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die nono mensis Junii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo nono, Pontificatus Nostri primo.

AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI
a Publicis Eccl. Negotiis

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton, Apost.

CATECHESI TRADENDAE

*of His Holiness Pope John Paul II
to the Episcopate, the Clergy
and the Faithful of the entire Catholic Church*

ON CATECHESIS IN OUR TIME

INTRODUCTION

Christ's final command

1. The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to his Father after his Resurrection, he gave the Apostles a final command to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that he had commanded.¹ He thus entrusted them with the mission and power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning the Word of Life.² He also entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what he had taught them, his words and actions, his signs and commandments. And he gave them the Spirit to fulfill this mission.

Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in his name,³ and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The Church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task.

Paul VI's solicitude

2. The most recent Popes gave catechesis a place of eminence in their pastoral solicitude. Through his gestures, his preaching, his authoritative interpretation of the Second Vatican Council (considered by him the great catechism of modern times), and through the whole

¹ Cf. Mt. 2:19-20.

² Cf. 1 Jn. 1:1.

³ Cf. Jn. 20:31.

of his life, my venerated predecessor Paul VI served the Church's catechesis in a particularly exemplary fashion. On 18 March 1971 he approved the General Catechetical Directory prepared by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, a directory that is still the basic document for encouraging and guiding catechetical renewal throughout the Church. He set up the International Council for Catechesis in 1975. He defined in masterly fashion the role and significance of catechesis in the life and mission of the Church when he addressed the participants in the First International Catechetical Congress on 25 September 1971,⁴ and he returned explicitly to the subject in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.⁵ He decided that catechesis, especially that meant for children and young people, should be the theme of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,⁶ which was held in October 1977 and which I myself had the joy of taking part in.

A fruitful Synod

3. At the end of that Synod the Fathers presented the Pope with a very rich documentation, consisting of the various interventions during the Assembly, the conclusions of the working groups, the Message that they had with his consent sent to the people of God,⁷ and especially the imposing list of "Propositions" in which they expressed their views on a very large number of aspects of present-day catechesis.

The Synod worked in an exceptional atmosphere of thanksgiving and hope. It saw in catechetical renewal a precious gift from the Holy Spirit to the Church of today, a gift to which the Christian communities at all levels throughout the world are responding with a generosity and inventive dedication that win admiration. The requisite discernment could then be brought to bear on a reality that is very much alive and it could benefit from great openness among the people of God to the grace of the Lord and the directives of the Magisterium.

⁴ Cf. AAS 63 (1971), pp. 758-764.

⁵ Cf. 44; Cf. also 45-48 and 54; AAS 68 (1976), pp. 34-35; 35-38; 43.

⁶ According to the *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* of 15 September 1965, the Synod of Bishops can come together in General Assembly, in Extraordinary Assembly or in Special Assembly. In the present Apostolic Exhortation the words "Synod", "Synod Fathers" and "Synod Hall" always refer, unless otherwise indicated, to the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on catechesis, held in Rome in October 1977.

⁷ Cf. *Synodus Episcoporum, De catechesi hoc nostro tempore tradenda praesertim pueris atque iuvenibus. Ad Populum Dei Nuntius, e Civitate Vatican, 28-X-1977; cf. "L'Osservatore Romano", 30 October 1977, pp. 3-4.*

Purpose of this Exhortation

4. It is in the same climate of faith and hope that I am today addressing this Apostolic Exhortation to you, Venerable Brothers and dear sons and daughters. The theme is extremely vast and the Exhortation will keep to a few only of the most topical and decisive aspects of it, as an affirmation of the happy results of the Synod. In essence, the Exhortation take up again the reflections that were prepared by Pope Paul VI, making abundant use of the documents left by the Synod. Pope John Paul I, whose zeal and gifts as a catechist amazed us all, had taken them in hand and was preparing to publish them when he was suddenly called to God. To all of us he gave an example of catechesis at once popular and concentrated on the essential, one made up of simple words and actions that were able to touch the heart. I am therefore taking up the inheritance of these two Popes in response to the request which was expressly formulated by the Bishops at the end of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod and which was welcomed by Pope Paul VI in his closing speech.⁸ I am also doing so in order to fulfill one of the chief duties of my apostolic charge. Catechesis has always been a central care in my ministry as a priest and as a bishop.

I ardently desire that this Apostolic Exhortation to the whole Church should strengthen the solidity of the faith and of Christian living, should give fresh vigour to the initiatives in hand, should stimulate creativity – with the required vigilance – and should help to spread among the communities the joy of bringing the mystery of Christ to the world.

I

WE HAVE BUT ONE TEACHER JESUS CHRIST*Putting into communion with the Person of Christ*

5. The Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops often stressed the Christocentricity of all authentic catechesis. We can here use the word "Christocentricity" in both its meanings, which are not opposed to each other or mutually exclusive, but each of which rather demands and completes the other.

⁸ Cf. AAS 69 (1977), p. 633.

In the first place, it is intended to stress that at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, "the only Son from the Father . . . full of grace and truth",⁹ who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. It is Jesus who is "the way" and the truth and the life",¹⁰ and Christian living consists in following Christ, the sequela Christi.

The primary and essential object of catechesis is, to use an expression dear to Saint Paul and also to contemporary theology, "the mystery of Christ". Catechizing is in a way to lead a person to study this Mystery in all its dimensions: "To make all men see what is the plan of the mystery . . . comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth . . . know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge . . . (and be filled) with all the fullness of God".¹¹ It is therefore to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God's eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ's actions and words and of the signs worked by him, for they simultaneously hide and reveal his mystery. Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ; only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.

Transmitting Christ's teaching

6. Christocentricity in catechesis also means the intention to transmit not one's own teaching or that of some other master, but the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Truth that he communicates or, to put it more precisely, the Truth that he is.¹² We must therefore say that in catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught — everything else is taught with reference to him — and it is Christ alone who teaches — anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. Whatever be the level of his responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavour to transmit by his teaching and behaviour the teaching and life of Jesus. He will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinions and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechizing. Above all, he will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ's teaching and the lessons of his life. Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of

⁹ Jn. 1:14.

¹⁰ Jn. 14:6.

¹¹ Eph. 3:9, 18-19.

¹² Cf. Jn. 14:6.

Jesus: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me".¹³ Saint Paul did this when he was dealing with a question of prime importance: "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you".¹⁴ What assiduous study of the word of Lord transmitted by the Church's Magisterium, what profound familiarity with Christ and with the Father, what a spirit of prayer, what detachment from self must a catechist have in order that he can say: "My teaching is not mine"!

Christ the Teacher

7. This teaching is not a body of abstract truths. It is the communication of the living mystery of God. The person teaching it in the Gospel is altogether superior in excellence to the masters in Israel, and the nature of his doctrine surpasses theirs in every way because of the unique link between what he says, what he does and what he is. Nevertheless, the Gospels clearly relate occasions when Jesus "taught", "Jesus began to do and teach"¹⁵ — with these two verbs, placed at the beginning of the book of the Acts, Saint Luke links and at the same time distinguishes two poles in Christ's mission.

Jesus taught. It is the witness that he gives of himself: "Day after day I sat in the Temple teaching".¹⁶ It is the admiring observation of the evangelists, surprised to see him teaching everywhere and at all times, teaching in a manner and with an authority previously unknown: "Crowds gathered to him again, and again as his custom was, he taught them,"¹⁷ "and they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority".¹⁸ It is also what his enemies note for the purpose of drawing from it grounds for accusation and condemnation: "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judaea, from Galilee even to this place".¹⁹

The one Teacher

8. One who teaches in this way has a unique title to the name of "Teacher". Throughout the New Testament, especially in the

¹³ Jn. 7:16. This is a theme dear to the Fourth Gospel: Cf. Jn. 3:34; 8:28; 12:49-50; 14:24; 17:8, 14.

¹⁴ 1 Cor. 11:23; the word "deliver" employed here by St. Paul was frequently repeated in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelij Nuntiandi* to describe the evangelizing activity of the Church, for example 4, 14, 78, 79.

¹⁵ Acts 1:1.

¹⁶ Mt. 26:55; Cf. Jn. 18-20.

¹⁷ Mk. 10:1.

¹⁸ Mk. 1:22; Cf. Mt. 5:2; 11:1; 13:43; 22-16; Mk. 2:13; 4-1; 6:2, 6; Lk. 5:3, 17; Jn. 7:14; 8:2, etc.

¹⁹ Lk. 23:6.

Gospels, how many times is he given this title of Teacher?²⁰ Of course the Twelve, the other disciples, and the crowds of listeners call him "Teacher" in tones of admiration, trust and tenderness.²¹ Even the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Doctors of the Law, and the Jews in general do not refuse him the title: "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you";²² "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life"?²³ But above all, Jesus himself at particularly solemn and highly significant moments calls himself Teacher: "You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am";²⁴ and he proclaims the singularity, the uniqueness of his character as Teacher: "You have one teacher",²⁵ the Christ. One can understand why people of every kind, race and nation have for two thousand years in all the languages of the earth given him this title with veneration, repeating in their own ways the exclamation of Nicodemus: "We know that you are a teacher come from God".²⁶

This image of Christ the Teacher is at once majestic and familiar, impressive and reassuring. It comes from the pen, of the evangelists and it has often been evoked subsequently in iconography since earliest Christian times,²⁷ so captivating is it. And I am pleased to evoke it in my turn at the beginning of these considerations on catechesis in the modern world.

Teaching through his life as a whole

9. In doing so, I am not forgetful that the majesty of Christ the Teacher and the unique consistency and persuasiveness of his teaching can only be explained by the fact that his words, his parables and his arguments are never separable from his life and his very being. Accordingly, the whole of Christ's life was a continual teaching: his silences,

²⁰In nearly fifty places in the four Gospels, this title, inherited from the whole Jewish tradition but here given a new meaning that Christ himself often seeks to emphasize, is attributed to Jesus.

²¹Cf., among others, Mt. 8:19; Mk. 4:38; 9:38; 10:35; 13:1; Jn. 11:28.

²²Mt. 12:38.

²³Lk. 10:25; Cf. Mt. 22:16.

²⁴Jn. 13:13-14; Cf. also Mt. 10:25; 26:18 and parallel passages.

²⁵Mt. 23:8. Saint Ignatius of Antioch takes up this affirmation and comments as follows: "we have received the faith; this is why we hold fast, in order to be recognized as disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Teacher" (*Epistola ad Magnesios*, 2 Funk 1, 198).

²⁶Jn. 3:2.

²⁷The portrayal of Christ as Teacher goes back as far as the Roman Catacombs. It is frequently used in the mosaics of Romano-Byzantine art of the third and fourth centuries. It was to form a predominant artistic motif in the sculptures of the great Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages.

his miracles, his gestures, his prayer, his love for people, his special affection for the little and the poor, his acceptance of the total sacrifice on the Cross for the redemption of the world, and his Resurrection are the actualization of his word and the fulfillment of revelation. Hence, for Christians, the crucifix is one of the most sublime and popular images of Christ the Teacher.

These considerations follow in the wake of the great traditions of the Church and they all strengthen our fervour with regard to Christ, the Teacher who reveals God to man and man to himself, the Teacher who saves, sanctifies and guides, who lives, who speaks, rouses, moves, redresses, judges, forgives, and goes with us day by day on the path of history, the Teacher who comes and will come in glory.

Only in deep communion with him will catechists find light and strength for an authentic, desirable renewal of catechesis.

II

AN EXPERIENCE AS OLD AS THE CHURCH

The Mission of the Apostles

10. The image of Christ the Teacher was stamped on the spirit of the Twelve and of the first disciples, and the command "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations"²⁸ set the course for the whole of their lives. Saint John bears witness to this in his Gospel when he reports the words of Jesus: "No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you".²⁹ It was not they who chose to follow Jesus; it was Jesus who chose them, kept them with him, and appointed them even before his Pass-over, that they should go and bear fruit and that their fruit should remain.³⁰ For this reason he formally conferred on them after the Resurrection the mission of making disciples of all nations.

The whole of the body of the Acts of the Apostles is a witness that they were faithful to their vocation and to the mission they had received. The members of the first Christian community are seen in it as "devoted to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of

²⁸ Mt. 28:19.

²⁹ Jn. 15:15.

³⁰ Cf. Jn. 15:16.

bread and the prayers".³¹ Without any doubt we find in that a lasting image of the Church being born of and continually nourished by the word of the Lord, thanks to the teaching of the Apostle, celebrating that word in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and bearing witness to it before the world in the sign of charity.

When those who opposed the Apostles took offence at their activity, it was because they were "annoyed because (the Apostles) were teaching the people"³² and the order they gave them was not to teach at all in the name of Jesus.³³ But we know that the Apostles considered it right to listen to God rather than to men on this very matter.³⁴

Catechesis in the apostolic age

11. The Apostles were not slow to share with others the ministry of apostleship.³⁵ They transmitted to their successors the task of teaching. They entrusted it also to the deacons from the moment of their institution: Stephen, "full of grace and power", taught unceasingly, moved by the wisdom of the Spirit.³⁶ The Apostles associated "many others" with themselves in the task of teaching,³⁷ and even simple Christians scattered by persecution "went about preaching the word".³⁸ Saint Paul was in a pre-eminent way the herald of this preaching, from Antioch to Rome, where the last picture of him that we have in Acts is that of a person "teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly".³⁹ His numerous letters continue and give greater depth to his teaching. The letters of Peter, John, James and Jude are also, in every case, evidence of catechesis in the apostolic age.

Before being written down, the Gospels were the expression of an oral teaching passed on to the Christian communities, and they display with varying degrees of clarity a catechetical structure. Saint Matthew's account has indeed been called the catechist's gospel and Saint Mark's the catechumen's gospel.

³¹ Acts 2:42.

³² Acts 4:2.

³³ Cf. Acts 4:18; 5:28.

³⁴ Cf. Acts 4:19.

³⁵ Cf. Acts 1:25.

³⁶ Cf. Acts 6:8 ff.: Cf. also Philip catechizing the minister of the Queen of the Ethiopians: Acts 8:26 ff.

³⁷ Cf. Acts 15:35.

³⁸ Acts 8:4.

³⁹ Acts 28:31.

The Fathers of the Church

12. This mission of teaching that belonged to the Apostles and their first fellow workers was continued by the Church. Making herself day after day a disciple of the Lord, she earned the title of "Mother and Teacher".⁴⁰ From Clement of Rome to Origen,⁴¹ the post-apostolic age saw the birth of remarkable works. Next we see a striking fact: some of the most impressive Bishops and pastors, especially in the third and fourth centuries, considered it an important part of their episcopal ministry to deliver catechetical instructions and write treatises. It was the age of Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom, of Ambrose and Augustine, the age that saw the flowering, from the pen of numerous Fathers of the Church, of works that are still models for us.

It would be impossible here to recall even very briefly, the catechesis that gave support to the spread and advance of the Church in the various periods of history, in every continent, and in the widest variety of social and cultured contexts. There was indeed no lack of difficulties. But the word of the Lord completed its course down the centuries; it sped on and triumphed, to use the words of the Apostle Paul.⁴²

Councils and missionary activity

13. The ministry of catechesis draws ever fresh energy from the Councils. The Council of Trent is a noteworthy example of this. It gave catechesis priority of the constitutions and decrees. It lies at the origin of the Roman Catechism, which is also known by the name of that Council and which is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching and traditional theology for use by priests. It gave rise to remarkable organization of catechesis in the Church. It aroused the clergy to their duty of giving catechetical instruction. Thanks to the work of holy theologians such as Saint Charles Borromeo, Saint

⁴⁰ Cf. Pope John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (AAS 53 [1961], p. 401): the Church is "mother" because by baptism she unceasingly begets new children and increases God's family; she is "teacher" because she makes her children grow in the grace of their baptism by nourishing their *sensus fidei* through instruction in the truths of faith.

⁴¹ Cf. for example, the letter of Clement of Rome to the Church of Corinth, the *Didache*, the *Epistola Apostolorum*, the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons (*Demonstratio Apostolicae Praedicationis* and *Adversus Haereses*), of Tertullian (*De Baptismo*), of Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus*), of Cyprian (*Testimonia ad Quirinum*), of Origen (*Contra Celsum*), etc.

⁴² Cf. 2 Thess. 3:1.

Robert Bellarmine and Saint Peter Canisius, it involved the publication of catechisms that were real models for the period. May the Second Vatican Council stir up in our time a like enthusiasm and similar activity.

The missions are also a special area for the application of catechesis. The people of God have thus continued for almost two thousand years to educate themselves in the faith in ways adapted to the various situations of believers and the many different circumstances in which the Church finds herself.

Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis. It is worthwhile pointing out some of the many lessons to be drawn from the experiences in Church history that we have just recalled.

Catechesis as the Church's right and duty

14. To begin with, it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right. On the one hand, it is certainly a duty springing from a command given by the Lord and resting above all on those who in the New Covenant receive the call to the ministry of being pastors. On the other hand, one can likewise speak of a right: from the theological point of view every baptized person, precisely by reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life; and from the viewpoint of human rights, every human being has the right to seek religious truth and adhere to it freely, that is to say "without coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and any human power", in such a way that in this matter of religion, "no one is to be forced to act against his or her conscience or prevented from acting in conformity to it".⁴³

That is why catechetical activity should be able to be carried out in favourable circumstances of time and place, and should have access to the mass media and suitable equipment, without discrimination against parents, those receiving catechesis or those imparting it. At present this right is admittedly being given growing recognition, at least on the level of its main principles, as is shown by international declarations and conventions in which, whatever their limitations, one

⁴³ Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2: AAS 58 (1966), p. 930.

can recognize the desires of the consciences of many people today.⁴⁴ But the right is being violated by many States, even to the point that imparting catechesis, having it imparted, and receiving it become punishable offences. I vigorously raise my voice in union with the Synod Fathers against all discrimination in the field of catechesis, and at the same time I again make a pressing appeal to those in authority to put a complete end to these constraints on human freedom in particular.

Priority of this task

15. The second lesson concerns the place of catechesis in the Church's pastoral programmes. The more the Church, whether on the local or the universal level, gives catechesis priority over other works and undertakings the results of which would be more spectacular, the more she finds in catechesis a strengthening of her internal life as a community of believers and of her external activity as a missionary Church. As the twentieth century draws to a close, the Church is bidden by God and by events — each of them a call from him — to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith. And an attitude of faith always has reference to the faithfulness of God, who never fails to respond.

Shared but differentiated responsibility

16. The third lesson is that catechesis always has been and always will be a work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible. But the Church's members have different responsibilities, derived from each one's mission. Because of their charge, pastors have, at differing levels, the chief responsibility for fostering, guiding and coordinating catechesis. For his part, the Pope has a lively awareness of the primary responsibility that rests on him in this field: in this he finds reasons for pastoral concern but principally a source of joy and hope. Priests and religious have in catechesis a pre-eminent field for their apostolate. On another level, parents have a unique responsibility. Teachers, the various ministers of the Church, catechists, and also organizers of social communications, all have in

⁴⁴ Cf. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNO), 10 December 1948, art. 18; The International Pact on Civil and Political Rights (UNO), 16 December 1966, art. 4; Final Act of the Conference on European Security and Cooperation, para. VII.

various degrees very precise responsibilities in this education of the believing conscience, an education that is important for the life of the Church and affects the life of society as such. It would be one of the best results of the General Assembly of the Synod that was entirely devoted to catechesis if it stirred up in the Church as a whole and in each sector of the Church a lively and active awareness of this differentiated but shared responsibility.

Continual balanced renewal

17. Finally, catechesis needs to be continually renewed by a certain broadening of its concept, by the revision of its methods, by the search for suitable language, and by the utilization of new means of transmitting the message. Renewal is sometimes unequal in value; the Synod Fathers realistically recognized, not only an undeniable advance in the vitality of catechetical activity and promising initiatives, but also the limitations or even "deficiencies" in what has been achieved to date.⁴⁵ These limitations are particularly serious when they endanger integrity of content. The Message to the People of God rightly stressed that "routine with its refusal to accept any change, and improvisation, with its readiness for any venture, are equally dangerous" for catechesis.⁴⁶ Routine leads to stagnation, lethargy and eventual paralysis. Improvisation begets confusion on the part of those being given catechesis and, when these are children, on the part of their parents; it also begets all kinds of deviations, and the fracturing and eventually the complete destruction of unity. It is important for the Church to give proof today, as she has done at other periods of her history, of evangelical wisdom, courage and fidelity in seeking out and putting into operation new methods and new prospects for catechetical instruction.

III

CATECHESIS IN THE CHURCH PASTORAL AND MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

Catechesis as a stage in evangelization

18. Catechesis cannot be dissociated from the Church's pastoral and missionary activity as a whole. Nevertheless it has a specific character which was repeatedly the object of inquiry during the pre-

⁴⁵ Cf. *Synodus Episcoporum, De catechesi hoc nostro tempore tradenda praesertim pueris atque iuvenibus, Ad Populum Dei Nuntius*, 1: *loc. cit.*, pp. 3-4; cf. "L'Osservatore Romano", 30 October 1977, p. 3.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 6: *loc. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

paratory work and throughout the course of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The question also interest the public both within and outside the Church.

This is not th place for giving a rigorous formal definition of catechesis, which has been sufficiently explained in the General Catechetical Directory.⁴⁷ It is for specialists to clarify more and more its concept and divisions.

In view of uncertainties in practice, let us simply recall the essential landmarks — they are already solidly established in Church documents — that are essential for an exact understanding of catechesis and without which there is a risk of failing to grasp its full meaning and import.

All in all, it can be taken here that catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life. Accordingly, while not being formally identified with them, catechesis is built on a certain number of elements of the Church's pastoral mission that have a catechetical aspect, that prepare for catechesis, or that spring from it. The elements are: the initial proclamation of the Gospel or missionary preaching through the kerygma to arouse faith, apologetics or examination of the reasons for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic and missionary witness.

Let us first of all recall that there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelization. Nor can the two be simply identified with each other. Instead, they have close links whereby they integrate and complement each other.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 8 December 1975, on evangelization in the modern world, rightly stressed that evangelization — which has the aim of bringing the Good News to the whole of humanity, so that all may live by it — is a rich, complex and dynamic reality, made up of elements, or one could say moments, that are essential and different from each other, and that must all be kept in view simultaneously.⁴⁸ Catechesis is one of these moments — a very remarkable one — in the whole process of evangelization.

⁴⁷ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 17-35: AAS 64 (1972), pp. 110-118.

⁴⁸ Cf. 17-24: AAS 68 (1976), pp. 17-22.

Catechesis and the initial proclamation of the Gospel

19. The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion-bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

But in catechetical practice this model order must allow for the fact that the initial evangelization has often not taken place. A certain number of children baptized in infancy come for catechesis in the parish without receiving any other initiation into the faith and still without any explicit personal attachment to Jesus Christ: they only have the capacity to believe placed within them by baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit; and opposition is quickly created by the prejudices of their non-Christian family background or of the positivist spirit of their education. In addition, there are other children who have not been baptized and whose parents agree only at a later date to religious education: for practical reasons, the catechumenal stage of these children will often be carried out largely in the course of the ordinary catechesis. Again, many pre-adolescents and adolescents who have been baptized and been given a systematic catechesis and the sacraments still remain hesitant for a long time about committing their whole lives to Jesus Christ, even though they do not actually try to avoid religious instruction in the name of their freedom. Finally, even adults are not safe from temptation to doubt or to abandon their faith, especially as a result of their unbelieving surroundings. This means that "catechesis" must often concern itself not only with nourishing and teaching the faith but also with arousing it unceasingly with the help of grace, with opening the heart, with converting, and with preparing total adherence to Jesus Christ on the part of those who are still on the threshold of faith. This concern will in part decide the tone, the language and the method of catechesis.

Specific aim of catechesis

20. Nevertheless, the specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God's help, as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by baptism.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Synodus Episcoporum, De catechesi hoc nostro tempore tradenda praesertim pueris atque iuuenibus, Ad Populum Dei Nuntius*, 1: loc. cit., pp. 3-4; Cf. "L'Osservatore Romano", 30 October 1977, p. 3.

Catechesis aims therefore at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's word, so that the whole of a person's humanity is impregnated by that word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like him, to judge like him, to act in conformity with his commandments, and to hope as he invites us to.

To put it more precisely within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavours to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know his "mystery", the Kingdom of God proclaimed by him, the requirements and promises contained in his Gospel message, and the paths that he has laid down for any one who wishes to follow him.

It is true that being a Christian means saying "yes" to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this "yes" has two levels: it consists in surrendering to the word of God and relying on it, but it also means, at a later stage, endeavouring to know better and better the profound meaning of this word.

Need for systematic catechesis

21. In his closing speech at the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod, Pope Paul VI rejoiced "to see how everyone drew attention to the absolute need for systematic catechesis, precisely because it is this reflective study of the Christian mystery that fundamentally distinguishes catechesis from all other ways of presenting the word of God"⁵⁰

In view of practical difficulties, attention must be drawn to some of the characteristics of this instruction:

— it must be systematic, not improvised but programmed to reach a precise goal:

— it must deal with essentials, without any claim to tackle all disputed questions or to transform itself into theological research or scientific exegesis;

— it must nevertheless be sufficiently complete, not stopping short at the initial proclamation of the Christian mystery such as we have in the kerygma;

⁵⁰ Concluding Address to the Synod, 29 October 1977: AAS 69 (1977), p. 634.

— It must be an integral Christian initiation, open to all the other factors of Christian life.

I am not forgetting the interest of the many different occasions for catechesis connected with personal, family, social and ecclesial life — these occasions must be utilized and I shall return to them in Chapter VI — but I am stressing the need for organic and systematic Christian instruction, because of the tendency in various quarters to minimize its importance.

Catechesis and life experience

22. It is useless to play off orthopraxis against orthodoxy: Christianity is inseparably both. Firm and well-thought-out convictions lead to courageous and upright action; the endeavour to educate the faithful to live as disciples of Christ today calls for and facilitates a discovery in depth of the mystery of Christ in the history of salvation

It is also quite useless to campaign for the abandonment of serious and orderly study of the message of Christ in the name of a method concentrating on life experience. "No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience, that is to say, without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ, who is 'the way, and the truth and the life' (Jn. 14:6)".⁵¹

Nor is any opposition to be set up between a catechesis taking life as its point of departure and a traditional, doctrinal and systematic catechesis.⁵² Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church's memory and in Sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living active *traditio*. This revelation is not however isolated from life or artificially juxtaposed to it. It is concerned with the ultimate meaning of life and it illumines the whole of life with the light of the Gospel, to inspire it or to question it.

That is why we can apply to catechesis an expression used by the Second Vatican Council with special reference to priests: "Instructors (of the human being and his life) in the faith".⁵³

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 40 and 46: AAS 64 (1972), pp. 121 and 124-125.

⁵³ Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6: AAS 58 (1966), p. 999.

Catechesis and sacraments

23. Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ, Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings.

In the early Church, the catechumenate and preparation for the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist were the same thing. Although in the countries that have long been Christian the Church has changed her practice in this field, the catechumenate has never been abolished; on the contrary, it is experiencing a renewal in those countries⁵⁴ and is abundantly practised in the young missionary Churches. In any case, catechesis always has reference to the sacraments. On the one hand, the catechesis that prepares for the sacraments is an eminent kind, and every form of catechesis necessarily leads to the sacraments of faith. On the other hand, authentic practice of the sacraments is bound to have a catechetical aspect. In other words, sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns into hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments, and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice.

Catechesis and ecclesial community

24. Finally, catechesis is closely linked with the responsible activity of the Church and of Christians in the world. A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavouring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step. Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis. That is why the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.

Catechesis is likewise open to missionary dynamism. If catechesis is done well, Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it on to their children, to make it known to others, and to serve the human community in every way.

⁵⁴ cf. *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*.

Catechesis in the wide sense necessary for maturity and strength of faith

25. Thus through catechesis the Gospel kerygma (the initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith) is gradually deepened, developed in its implicit consequences, explained in language that includes an appeal to reason, and channelled towards Christian practice in the Church and the world. All this is no less evangelical than the kerygma, in spite of what is said by certain people who consider that catechesis necessarily rationalizes, dries up and eventually kills all that is living, spontaneous and vibrant in the kerygma. The truths studied in catechesis are the same truths that touched the person's heart when he heard them for the first time. Far from blunting or exhausting them, the fact of knowing them better should make them even more challenging and decisive for one's life.

In the understanding expounded here, catechesis keeps the entirely pastoral perspective with which the Synod viewed it. This broad meaning of catechesis in no way contradicts but rather includes and goes beyond a narrow meaning which was once commonly given to catechesis in didactic expositions, namely the simple teaching of the formulas that express faith.

In the final analysis, catechesis is necessary both for the maturation of the faith of Christians and for their witness in the world: it is aimed at bringing Christians to "attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ";⁵⁵ it is also aimed at making them prepared to make a defence to any one who calls them to account for the hope that is in them.⁵⁶

IV

**THE WHOLE OF THE GOOD NEWS
DRAWN FROM ITS SOURCE***Content of the Message*

26. Since catechesis is a moment or aspect of evangelization, its content cannot be anything else but the content of evangelization as a whole. The one message — the Good News of salvation — that has

⁵⁵ Eph. 4:13.⁵⁶ cf. 1 Pt. 3:15.

been heard once or hundreds of times and has been accepted with the heart, is in catechesis probed unceasingly by reflection and systematic study, by awareness of its repercussions on one's personal life — an awareness calling for ever greater commitment — and by inserting it into an organic and harmonious whole, namely, Christian living in society and the world.

The source

27. Catechesis will always draw its content from the living source of the word of God transmitted in Tradition and the Scriptures, for "sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the word of God, which is entrusted to the Church", as was recalled by the Second Vatican Council, which desired that "the ministry of the word — pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction . . . — (should be) healthily nourished and (should) thrive in holiness through the word of Scripture".⁶⁷

To speak of Tradition and Scripture as the source of catechesis is to draw attention to the fact that catechesis must be impregnated and penetrated by the thought, the spirit and the outlook of the Bible and the Gospels through assiduous contact with the texts themselves; but it is also a reminder that catechesis will be all the richer and more effective for reading the texts with the intelligence and the heart of the Church and for drawing inspiration from the two thousand years of the Church's reflection and life.

The Church's teaching, liturgy and life spring from this source and lead back to it, under the guidance of the pastors and, in particular, and the doctrinal Magisterium entrusted to them by the Lord.

The Creed an exceptional important expression of doctrine

28. An exceptionally important expression of the living heritage placed in the custody of the pastors is found in the Creed or, to put it more concretely, in the Creeds that at crucial moments have summed up the Church's faith in felicitous syntheses. In the course of the centuries an important element of catechesis was constituted by the *traditio Symboli* (transmission of the summary of the faith, followed by the transmission of the Lord's Prayer. This expressive rite has

⁶⁷ Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10 and 24; AAS 58 (1966), pp. 822 and 828-829; Cf. also Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 45 (AAS 64 [1972], p. 124), where the principal and complementary sources of catechesis are well set out.

in our time been reintroduced into the initiation of catechumens.⁵⁸ Should not greater use be made of an adapted form of it to mark that most important stage at which a new disciple of Jesus Christ accepts with full awareness and courage the content of what will from then on be the object of his earnest study?

In the Creed of the People of God, proclaimed at the close of the nineteenth centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul my predecessor Paul VI decided to bring together the essential elements of the Catholic faith, especially those that presented greater difficulty or risked being ignored.⁵⁹ This is a sure point of reference for the content of catechesis.

Factors that must not be neglected

29. In the third chapter of his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the same Pope recalled "the essential content, the living substance" of evangelization.⁶⁰ Catechesis, too, must keep in mind each of these factors and also the living synthesis of which they are part.⁶¹

I shall therefore limit myself here simply to recalling one or two points.⁶² Anyone can see, for instance, how important it is to make the child, the adolescent, the person advancing in faith understand "what can be known about God";⁶³ to be able in a way to tell them: "What you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you";⁶⁴ to set

⁵⁸ cf. *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*, 25-26; 1831187.

⁵⁹ cf. AAS 60 (1968), pp. 436-445. Besides these great professions of faith of the Magisterium, note also the popular professions of faith, rooted in the traditional Christian culture of certain countries; Cf. what I said to the young people at Gniezno, 3 June 1979, regarding the Bogurodzica song-message: "This is not only a song: it is also a profession of faith, a symbol of the Polish Credo, it is a catechesis and also a document of Christian education. The principal truths of faith and the principles of morality are contained here. This is not only a historical object. It is a document of life. (It has even been called) 'the Polish catechism'" (AAS 71 [1979], p. 754).

⁶⁰ 25: AAS 68 (1976), p. 23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, especially 26-39: *Lc.*, pp. 23-25; the "principal elements of the Christian message" are presented in a more systematic fashion in a more systematic fashion in the *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 47-69 (AAS 64 [1972], pp. 125-141), where one also finds the norm for the essential doctrinal content of catechesis.

⁶² Consult also on this point the *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 37-46 (*Lc.*, pp. 120-125).

⁶³ Rom. 1:19.

⁶⁴ Acts 17:23.

forth briefly for them⁶⁵ the mystery of the Word of God become man and accomplishing man's salvation by his Passover, that is to say, through his death and Resurrection, but also by his preaching, by the signs worked by him, and by the sacraments of his permanent presence in our midst. The Synod Fathers were indeed inspired when they asked that care should be taken not to reduce Christ to his humanity alone or his message to a no more than earthly dimension, but that he should be recognized as the Son of God, the mediator giving us in the Spirit free access to the Father.⁶⁶

It is important to display before the eyes of the intelligence and of the heart, in the light of faith, the sacrament of Christ's presence constituted by the mystery of the Church, which is an assembly of human beings who are sinners and yet have at the same time been sanctified and who make up the family of God gathered together by the Lord under the guidance of those whom "the Holy Spirit has made . . . guardians, to feed the Church God".⁶⁷

It is important to explain that the history of the human race, marked as it is by grace and sin, greatness and misery, is taken up by God in his Son Jesus, "foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come".⁶⁸

Finally, it is important to reveal frankly the demands — demands that involve self-denial but also joy — made by what the Apostle Paul liked to call "newness of life",⁶⁹ "a new creation",⁷⁰ being in Christ,⁷¹ and "eternal life in Christ Jesus",⁷² which is the same thing as life in the world but lived in accordance with the beatitudes and called to an extension and transfiguration hereafter.

Hence the importance in catechesis of personal moral commitments in keeping with the Gospel and of Christian attitudes, whether heroic or very simple, to life and the world — what we call the Christian or evangelical virtues. Hence also, in its endeavour to educate faith, the concern of catechesis not to omit but to clarify properly realities such as man's activity for his integral liberation,⁷³ the search for a society with greater solidarity and fraternity, the fight for justice and the building of peace.

⁶⁵ cf. Eph. 3:3.

⁶⁶ cf. Eph. 2:18.

⁶⁷ Acts 20:28.

⁶⁸ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 39: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 1056-1057.

⁶⁹ Rom. 6:4.

⁷⁰ 2 Cor. 5:17.

⁷¹ cf. *Ibid.*

⁷² Rom. 6:23.

⁷³ cf. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 30-38: AAS 68 (1976), pp. 25-30.

Besides, it is not to be thought that this dimension of catechesis is all together new. As early as the patristic age, Saint Ambrose and Saint John Chrysostom — to quote only them — gave prominence to the social consequences of the demands made by the Gospel. Close to our own time, the catechism of Saint Pius X explicitly listed oppressing the poor and depriving workers of their just wages among the sins that cry to God for vengeance.⁷⁴ Since *Rerum Novarum* especially, social concern has been actively present in the catechetical teaching of the Popes and the bishops. Many Synod Fathers rightly insisted appropriate forms, find a place in the general catechetical education of the faithful.

Integrity of content

30. With regard to the content of catechesis, three important points deserve special attention today.

The first point concerns the integrity of the content. In order that the sacrificial offering of his or her faith⁷⁵ should be perfect, the person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive "the word of faith"⁷⁶ not in mutilated, falsified or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigour and vigour. Unfaithfulness on some point to the integrity of the message means a dangerous weakening of catechesis and putting at risk the results that Christ and the ecclesial community have a right to expect from it. It is certainly not by chance that the final command of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel bears the mark of a certain entirety: "All authority... has been given to me... make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all... I am with you always". This is why, when a person first becomes aware of "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus",⁷⁷ whom he has encountered by faith, and has the perhaps unconscious desire to know him more extensively and better, "hearing about him and being taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus",⁷⁸ there is no valid pretext for refusing him any part whatever of that knowledge. What kind of catechesis would it be that failed to give their full place to man's creation and sin, to God's plan of redemption and its long, loving preparation and realization, to the Incarnation of the Son of God, to Mary, the Immaculate One, the Mother of God, ever Virgin, raised body and soul to the glory of heaven, and to her role in the mystery of salvation, to the mystery of lawlessness at work in our lives⁷⁹ and the power

⁷⁴ cf. *Catechismo maggiore*, Fifth part, chap. 6, 965-966.

⁷⁵ cf. Phil. 2:17.

⁷⁶ Rom. 10:8.

⁷⁷ Phil. 3:8.

⁷⁸ cf. Eph. 4:20-21.

⁷⁹ cf. 2 Thess. 2:7.

of God freeing us from it, to the need for penance and asceticism, to the sacramental and liturgical actions, to the reality of the Eucharistic presence, to participation in divine life here and hereafter, and so on? Thus, no true catechist can lawfully, on his own initiative, make a selection of what he considers important in the deposit of faith as opposed to what he considers unimportant, so as to teach the one and reject the other.

By means of suitable pedagogical methods

31. This gives rise to a second remark. It can happen that in the present situation of catechesis reasons of method or pedagogy suggest that the communication of the riches of the content of catechesis should be organized in one way rather than another. Besides, integrity does not dispense from balance and from the organic hierarchical character through which the truths to be taught, the norms to be transmitted, and the ways of Christian life to be indicated will be given the proper importance due to each. It can also happen that a particular sort of language proves preferable for transmitting this content to a particular individual or group. The choice made will be a valid one to the extent that, far from being dictated by more or less subjective theories or prejudices stamped with a certain ideology, it is inspired by the humble concern to stay closer to a content that must remain intact. The method and language used must truly be means for communicating the whole and not just a part of "the words of eternal life"⁸⁰ and "the ways of life".⁸¹

Ecumenical dimension of catechesis

32. The great movement one certainly inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, that has for some years been causing the Catholic Church to seek with other Christian Churches or confessions the restoration of the perfect unity willed by the Lord brings me to the question of the ecumenical character of catechesis. This movement reached its full prominence in the Second Vatican Council⁸² and since then has taken on a new extension within the Church, as is shown concretely by the impressive series of events and initiatives with which everyone is now familiar.

⁸⁰ Jn. 6:69; Cf. Acts 5:20; 7:38.

⁸¹ Acts 2:28, quoting Ps. 16:11.

⁸² cf. the entire Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 90-112.

Catechesis cannot remain aloof from this ecumenical dimension, since all the faithful are called to share, according to their capacity and place in the Church, in the movement towards unity.⁸³

Catechesis will have an ecumenical dimension if while not ceasing to teach that the fullness of the revealed truths and of the means of salvation instituted by Christ is found in the Catholic Church,⁸⁴ it does so with sincere respect, in words and in deeds, for the ecclesial communities that are not in perfect communion with this Church.

In this context, it is extremely important to give a correct and fair presentation of the other Churches and ecclesial communities that the Spirit of Christ does not refrain from using as means of salvation; "moreover, some, even very many, of the outstanding elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church herself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church".⁸⁵ Among other things, this presentation will help Catholics to have both a deeper understanding of their own faith and a better acquaintance with and esteem for their other Christian brethren, thus facilitating the shared search for the way towards full unity in the whole truth. It should also help non-Catholics to have a better knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic Church and her conviction of being the "universal help towards salvation".

Catechesis will have an ecumenical dimension if, in addition, it creates and fosters a true desire for unity. This will be true all the more if it inspires serious efforts — including the effort of self-purification in the humility and the fervour of the Spirit in order to clear the ways — with a view not to facile irenics made up of omissions and concessions on the level of doctrine, but to perfect unity, when and by what means the Lord will wish.

Finally, catechesis will have an ecumenical dimension if it tries to prepare Catholic children and young people, as well as adults, for living in contact with non-Catholics, affirming their Catholic identity while respecting the faith of others.

⁸³ cf. *Ibid.*, 5: *l.c.* p. 96; Cf. also Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 15: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 963-965; Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 27; AAS 64 (1972), p. 115.

⁸⁴ cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3-4; AAS 57 (1965), pp. 92-96.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3: *l.c.*, pp. 93.

Ecumenical Collaboration in the field of Catechesis

33. In situations of religious plurality, the Bishops can consider it opportune or even necessary to have certain experiences of collaboration in the field of catechesis between Catholics and other Christians, complementing the normal catechesis that must in any case be given to Catholics. Such experiences have a theological foundation in the elements shared by all Christians.⁸⁶ But the communion of faith between Catholics and other Christians is not complete and perfect; in certain cases there are even profound divergences. Consequently, this ecumenical collaboration is by its very nature limited: it must never mean a "reduction" to a common minimum. Furthermore, catechesis does not consist merely in the teaching of doctrine: it also means initiating into the whole of Christian life, bringing full participation in the sacraments of the Church. Therefore, where there is an experience of ecumenical collaboration in the field of catechesis, care must be taken that the education of Catholics in the Catholic Church should be well ensured in matters of doctrine and of Christian living.

During the Synod, a certain number of Bishops drew attention to what they referred to as the increasingly frequent cases in which the civil authority or other circumstances impose on the schools in some countries a common instruction in the Christian religion with common textbooks, class periods, etc., for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Needless to say, this is not true catechesis. But this teaching also has ecumenical importance when it presents Christian doctrine fairly and honestly. In case where circumstances impose it, it is important that in addition a specifically Catholic catechesis should be ensured with all the greater care.

The question of textbooks dealing with the various religions

34. At this point another observation must be made on the same lines but from a different point of view. State schools sometimes provide their pupils with books that for cultural reasons (history, morals or literature) present the various religions. An objective presentation of historical events, of the different regions and of the various Christian confessions can make a contribution here to better mutual understanding. Care will then be taken that every effort is made to ensure that the presentation is truly objective and free from the distorting influence of ideological and political systems or of prejudices with claims to be

⁸⁶ cf. *Ibid.*, cf. also Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Genium*, 15: AAS 57(1965), p. 19.

scientific. In any case, such schoolbooks can obviously not be considered catechetical works: they lack both the witness of believers stating their faith to other believers and an understanding of the Christian mysteries and of what is specific about Catholicism, as these are understood within the faith.

V

EVERYBODY NEEDS TO BE CATECHIZED

The importance of children and the young

55. The theme designated by my predecessor Paul VI for the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was: "Catechesis in our time, with special reference to the catechesis of children and young people". The increase in the number of young people is without doubt a fact charged with hope and at the same time with anxiety for a large part of the contemporary world. In certain countries, especially those of the Third World, more than half of the population is under twenty-five or thirty years of age. This means millions and millions of children and young people preparing for their adult future. And there is more than just the factor of numbers: recent events, as well as the daily news, tell us that, although this countless multitude of young people is here and there dominated by uncertainty and fear, seduced by the escapism of indifference or drugs, or tempted by nihilism and violence, nevertheless it constitutes in its major part the great force that amid many hazards is set on building the civilization of the future.

In our pastoral care we ask ourselves: How are we to reveal Jesus Christ, God made man, to this multitude of children and young people, reveal him not just in the fascination of a first fleeting encounter but through an acquaintance, growing deeper and clearer daily, with him, his message, the plan of God that he has revealed, the call he addresses to each person, and the Kingdom that he wishes to establish in this world with the "little flock"⁸⁷ of those who believe in him, a Kingdom that will be complete only in eternity? How are we to enable them to know the meaning, the import, the fundamental requirements, the law of love, the promises and the hopes of this Kingdom?

There are many observations that could be made about the special characteristics that catechesis assumes at the different stages of life.

⁸⁷Lk. 12:32.

Infants

36. One moment that is often decisive is the one at which the very young child receives the first elements of catechesis from its parents and the family surroundings. These elements will perhaps be no more than simple revelation of a good and provident Father in heaven to whom the child learns to turn its heart. The very short prayers that the child learns to lisp will be the start of a loving dialogue with this hidden God whose word it will then begin to hear. I cannot insist too strongly on this early initiation by Christian parents in which the child's faculties are integrated into a living relationship with God. It is a work of prime importance. It demands great love and profound respect for the child who has a right to a simple and true presentation of the Christian faith.

Children

37. For the child there comes soon, at school and in church, in institutions connected with the parish or with the spiritual care of the Catholic or State school not only an introduction into a wider social circle, but also the moment for a catechesis aimed at inserting him or her organically into the life of the Church, a moment that includes an immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. This catechesis is didactic in character, but is directed towards the giving of witness in the faith. It is an initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child's moral and religious life. It is a catechesis that gives meaning to the sacraments, but at the same time it receives from the experience of the sacraments a living dimension that keeps it from remaining merely doctrinal, and it communicates to the child the joy of being a witness to Christ in ordinary life.

Adolescents

38. Next comes puberty and adolescence, with all the greatness and dangers which that age brings. It is the time of discovering oneself and one's own inner world, the time of generous plans, the time when the feeling of love awakens, with the biological impulses of sexuality, the time of the desire to be together, the time of a particularly intense joy connected with the exhilarating discovery of life. But often it is also the age of deeper questioning, of anguished or even frustrating searching, of a certain mistrust of others and dangerous

introspection, and the age sometimes of the first experiences of setbacks and of disappointments. Catechesis cannot ignore these changeable aspects of this delicate period of life. A catechesis capable of leading the adolescent to reexamine his or her life and to engage in dialogue, a catechesis that does not ignore the adolescent's great questions — self-giving, belief, love and the means of expressing it constituted by sexuality — such a catechesis can be decisive. The revelation of Jesus Christ as a friend, guide and model, capable of being admired but also imitated; the revelation of this message which provides an answer to the fundamental questions; the revelation of the loving plan of Christ the Saviour as the incarnation of the only authentic love and as the possibility of uniting the human race — all this can provide the basis for genuine education in faith. Above all, the mysteries of the Passion and death of Jesus, through which, according to Saint Paul, he merited his glorious Resurrection, can speak eloquently to the adolescent's conscience and heart and cast light on his first sufferings and on the suffering of the world that he is discovering.

The young

39. With youth comes the moment of the first great decisions. Although the young may enjoy the support of the members of their family and their friends; they have to rely on themselves and their own conscience and must ever more frequently and decisively assume responsibility for their destiny. Good and evil, grace and sin, life and death will more and more confront one another within them, not just as moral categories but chiefly as fundamental options which they must accept or reject lucidly, conscious of their own responsibility. It is obvious that a catechesis which denounces selfishness in the name of generosity, and which without any illusory over-simplification presents the Christian meaning of work, of the common good, of justice and charity, a catechesis on international peace and on the advancement of human dignity, on development, and on liberation, as these are presented in recent documents of the Church,⁸⁹ fittingly completes in the minds of the young the good catechesis on strictly religious

⁸⁹ cf. for example, Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 1025-1120; Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 267-299; Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*: AAS 63 (1971), pp. 401-441; Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: AAS 68 (1976), pp. 5-76.

realities which is never to be neglected. Catechesis then takes on considerable importance, since it is the time when the Gospel can be presented, understood and accepted as capable of giving meaning to life and thus of inspiring attitudes that would have no other explanation, such as self-sacrifice, detachment, forbearance, justice, commitment, reconciliation, a sense of the Absolute and the unseen. All these are traits that distinguish a young person from his or her companions as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Catechesis thus prepares for the important Christian commitments of adult life. For example, it is certain that many vocations to the priesthood and religious life have their origin during a well-imparted catechesis in infancy and adolescence.

From infancy until the threshold of maturity, catechesis is thus a permanent school of the faith and follows the major stages of life, like a beacon lighting the path of the child, the adolescent and the young person.

The adaption of catechesis for young people

40. It is reassuring to note that, during the fourth General Assembly of the Synod and the following years, the Church has widely shared in concern about how to impart catechesis to children and young people. God grant that the attention thus aroused will long endure in the Church's consciousness. In this way the Synod has been valuable for the whole Church by seeking to trace with the greatest possible precision the complex characteristics of present-day youth; by showing that these young persons speak a language into which the message of Jesus must be translated with patience and wisdom and without betrayal; by demonstrating that, in spite of appearances, these young people have within them, even though often in a confused way, not just a readiness or openness, but rather a real desire to know "Jesus . . . who is called Christ";⁹⁰ and by indicating that if the work of catechesis is to be carried out rigorously and seriously, it is today more difficult and tiring than ever before, because of the obstacles and difficulties of all kinds that it meets; but it is also more consoling, because of the depth of the response it receives from children and young people. This is a treasure which the Church can and should count on in the years ahead.

Some categories of young people to whom catechesis is directed call for special attention because of their particular situation.

⁹⁰ Mt. 1:16.

The handicapped

41. Children and young people who are physically or mentally handicapped come first to mind. They have a right, like others of their age, to know "the mystery of faith". The greater difficulties that they encounter give greater merit to their efforts and to those of their teachers. It is pleasant to see that Catholic organizations especially dedicated to young handicapped people contributed to the Synod's a renewed desire to deal better with this important problem. They deserve to be given warm encouragement in this endeavour.

Young people without religious support

42. My thoughts turn next to the ever increasing number of children and young people born and brought up in a non-Christian or at least non-practising home but who wish to know the Christian faith. They must be ensured a catechesis attuned to them, so that they will be able to grow in faith and live by it more and more, in spite of the lack of support or even the opposition they meet in their surroundings.

Adults

43. To continue the series of receivers of catechesis, I cannot fail to emphasize now one of the most constant concerns of the Synod Fathers, a concern imposed with vigour and urgency by present experience throughout the world: I am referring to the central problem of the catechesis of adults. This is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form.⁹⁰ The Christian community cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults, whether as receivers or as promoters of catechetical activity. The world, in which the young are called to live and to give witness to the faith which catechesis seeks to deepen and strengthen, is governed by adults. The faith of these adults too should continually be enlightened, stimulated and renewed, so that it may pervade the temporal realities

⁹⁰ cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 14: AAS 58 (1966), p. 679; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 14: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 962-963; Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 20: AAS 64 (1972), p. 112; cf. also *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*.

in their charge. Thus, for catechesis to be effective, it must be permanent, and it would be quite useless if it stopped short just at the threshold of maturity, since catechesis, admittedly under another form, proves no less necessary for adults.

Quasi-catechumens

44. Among the adults who need catechesis, our pastoral missionary concern is directed to those who were born and reared in areas not yet Christianized, and who have never been able to study deeply the Christian teaching that the circumstances of life have at a certain moment caused them to come across. It is also directed to those who in childhood received a catechesis suited to their age but who later drifted away from all religious practice and as adults find themselves with religious knowledge of a rather childish kind. It is likewise directed to those who feel the effects of a catechesis received early in life but badly imparted or badly assimilated. It is directed to those who, although they were born in a Christian country or in sociologically Christian surroundings, have never been educated in their faith and, as adults, are really catechumens.

Diversified and complementary forms of catechesis

45. Catechesis is therefore for adults of every age, including the elderly — persons who deserve particular attention in view of their experience and their problems — no less than for children, adolescents and the young. We should also mention migrants, those who are bypassed by modern developments, those who live in areas of large cities which are often without churches, buildings and suitable organization, and other such groups. It is desirable that initiatives meant to give all these groups a Christian formation, with appropriate means (audio-visual aids, booklets, discussions, lectures), should increase in number, enabling many adults to fill the gap left by an insufficient or deficient catechesis, to complete harmoniously at a higher level their childhood catechesis, or even to prepare themselves enough in this field to be able to help others in a more serious way.

It is important also that the catechesis of children and young people, permanent catechesis, and the catechesis of adults should not be separate watertight compartments. It is even more important that there should be no break between them. On the contrary, their perfect complementarity must be fostered: adults have much to give to young people and children in the field of catechesis, but they can also receive much from them for the growth of their own Christian lives.

It must be restated that nobody in the Church of Jesus Christ should feel excused from receiving catechesis. This is true even of young seminarians and young religious, and of all those called to the task of being pastors and catechists. They will fulfill this task all the better if they are humble pupils of the Church, the great giver as well as the great receiver of catechesis.

VI

SOME WAYS AND MEANS OF CATECHESIS

Communications media

46. From the oral teaching by the Apostles and the letters circulating among the Churches down to the most modern means, Catechesis has not ceased to look for the most suitable ways and means for its mission, with the active participation of the communities and at the urging of the pastors. This effort must continue.

I think immediately of the great possibilities offered by the means of social communication and the means of group communication: television, radio, the press, records, tape-recording — the whole series of audio-visual means. The achievements in these spheres are such as to encourage the greatest hope. Experience shows, for example, the effect had by instruction given on radio or television, when it combines a high aesthetic level and rigorous fidelity to the Magisterium. The Church now has many opportunities for considering these questions — as, for instance, on Social Communications Days — and it is not necessary to speak of them at length here, in spite of their prime importance.

Utilization of various places, occasions and gatherings

47. I am also thinking of various occasions of special value which are exactly suitable for catechesis for example, diocesan, regional or national pilgrimages, which gain from being centred on some judiciously chosen theme based on the life of Christ or of the Blessed Virgin or of the Saints. Then there are the traditional missions, often too hastily dropped but irreplaceable for the periodic and vigorous renewal of Christian life — they should be revived and brought up to date. Again, there are Bible-study groups, which ought to go beyond exegesis and lead their members to live by the word of God. Yet other instances

are the meetings of ecclesial basic communities, in so far as they correspond to the criteria laid down in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.⁹¹ I may also mention the youth groups that, under varying names and forms but always with the purpose of making Jesus Christ known and of living by the Gospel, are in some areas multiplying and flourishing in a sort of springtime that is very comforting for the Church. These include Catholic Action groups, prayer groups and Christian meditation groups. These groups are a source of great hope for the Church of tomorrow. But, in the name of Jesus, I exhort the young people who belong to them, their leaders, and the priests who devote the best part of their ministry to them: No matter what it costs, do not allow these groups — which are exceptional occasions for meeting others, and which are blessed with such riches of friendship and solidarity among the young, of joy and enthusiasm, of reflection on events and facts — do not allow them to lack serious study of Christian doctrine. If they do, they will be in danger — a danger that has unfortunately proved only too real — of disappointing their members and also the Church.

The catechetical endeavour that is possible in these various surroundings, and in many others besides, will have all the greater chance of being accepted and bearing fruit if it respects their individual nature. By becoming part of them in the right way, it will achieve the diversity and complementarity of approach that will enable it to develop all the riches of its concept, with its three dimensions of word, memorial and witness — doctrine, celebration and commitment in living — which the Synod message to the People of God emphasized.⁹²

The homily

48. This remark is even more valid for the catechesis given in the setting of the liturgy, especially at the Eucharistic assembly. Respecting the specific nature and proper cadence of this setting, the homily takes up again the journey of faith put forward by catechesis, and brings it to its natural fulfillment. At the same time it encourages the Lord's disciples to begin anew each day their spiritual journey in truth, adoration and thanksgiving. Accordingly, one can say that catechetical teaching too finds its source and its fulfillment in the Eucharist, within the whole circle of the liturgical year. Preaching, centred upon the Bible texts, must then in its own way make it possible to familiarize the

⁹¹ cf. 58: AAS 68 (1976), pp. 46-49.

⁹² cf. *Synodus Episcoporum, De catechesi hoc nostro tempore tradenda praesertim pueris atque invenibus, Ad Populum Dei Nuntius*, 7-10:loc. cit., pp. 9-12; cf. "L'Osservatore Romano", 30 October 1977, p. 3.

faithful with the whole of the mysteries of the faith and with the norms of Christian living. Much attention must be given to the homily: it should be neither too long nor too short; it should always be carefully prepared, rich in substance and adapted to the hearers, and reserved to ordained ministers. The homily should have its place not only in every Sunday and feast-day Eucharist, but also in the celebration of baptisms, penitential liturgies, marriages and funerals. This is one of the benefits of the liturgical renewal.

Catechetical literature

49. Among these various ways and means – all the Church's activities have a catechetical dimension – catechetical works, far from losing their essential importance, acquire fresh significance. One of the major features of the renewal of catechetics today is the rewriting and multiplication of catechetical books taking place in many parts of the Church. Numerous very successful works have been produced and are a real treasure in the service of catechetical instruction. But it must be humbly and honestly recognized that this rich flowering has brought with it articles and publications which are ambiguous and harmful to young people and to the life of the Church. In certain places, the desire to find the best forms of expression or to keep up with fashions in pedagogical methods has often enough resulted in certain catechetical works which bewilder the young and even adults, either by deliberately or unconsciously omitting elements essential to the Church's faith, or by attributing excessive importance to certain themes at the expense of others, or, chiefly, by a rather horizontalist overall view out of keeping with the teaching of the Church's Magisterium.

Therefore, it is not enough to multiply catechetical works. In order that these works may correspond with their aim, several conditions are essential:

a) they must be linked with the real life of the generation to which they are addressed, showing close acquaintance with its anxieties and questionings, struggles and hopes;

b) they must try to speak a language comprehensible to the generation in question;

c) they must make a point of giving the whole message of Christ and his Church, without neglecting or distorting anything, and in expounding it they will follow a line and structure that highlights what is essential

d) they must really aim to give to those who use them a better knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, aimed at true conversion and a life more in conformity with God's will.

Catechisms

50. All those who take on the heavy task of preparing these catechetical tools, especially catechism texts, can do so only with the approval of the pastors who have the authority to give it, and taking their inspiration as closely as possible from the General Catechetical Directory, which remains the standard of reference.⁹³

In this regard, I must warmly encourage the Episcopal Conferences of the whole world to undertake, patiently but resolutely, the considerable work to be accomplished in agreement with the Apostolic See in order to prepare genuine catechisms which will be faithful to the essential content of Revelation and up to date in method, and which will be capable of educating the Christian generation of the future to a sturdy faith.

This brief mention of ways and means of modern catechetics does not exhaust the wealth of suggestions worked out by the Synod Fathers. It is comforting to think that at the present time every country is seeing valuable collaboration for a more organic and more secure renewal of these aspects of catechetics. There can be no doubt that the Church will find the experts and the right means for responding, with God's grace, to the complex requirements of communicating with the people of today.

VII

HOW TO IMPART CATECHESIS*Diversity of methods*

51. The age and the intellectual development of Christians, their degree of ecclesial and spiritual maturity and many other personal circumstances demand that catechesis should adopt widely differing methods for the attainment of its specific aim: education in the faith. On a more general level, this variety is also demanded by the social and cultural surroundings in which the Church carries out her catechetical work.

The variety in the methods used is a sign of life and a resource. That is how it was considered by the Fathers of the Fourth General

⁹³ cf. Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium Catechisticum Generale*, 119-121; 134: AAS 64 (1972), pp. 166-167; 172.

Assembly of the Synod, although they also drew attention to the conditions necessary for that variety to be useful and not harmful to the unity of the teaching of the one faith.

At the service of Revelation and conversion

52. The first question of a general kind that presents itself here concerns the danger and the temptation to mix catechetical teaching unduly with overt or masked ideological views, especially political and social ones, or with personal political options. When such views get the better of the central message to be transmitted, to the point of obscuring it and putting it in second place or even using it to further their own ends, catechesis then becomes radically distorted. The Synod rightly insisted on the need for catechesis to remain above one-sided divergent trends — to avoid “dichotomies” — even in the field of theological interpretation of such questions. It is on the basis of Revelation that catechesis will try to set its course, Revelation as transmitted by the universal Magisterium of the Church, in its solemn or ordinary form. This Revelation tells of a creating and redeeming God, whose Son has come among us in our flesh and enters not only into each individual's personal history but into human history itself, becoming its centre. Accordingly, this Revelation tells of the radical change of man and the universe, of all that makes up the web of human life under the influence of the Good News of Jesus Christ. If conceived in this way, catechesis goes beyond every form of formalistic true Christian moral teaching. Chiefly, it goes beyond any kind of temporal, social or political “messianism”, it seeks to arrive at man's innermost beings.

The message embodied in cultures

53. Now a second question. As I said recently to the members of the Biblical Commission: “The term ‘aculturation’ or ‘inculturation’ may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the Incarnation”.⁹⁴ We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. For this purpose, catechesis will seek to know these cultures and their essential components; it will learn their most significant expressions; it will respect their particular values and riches. In this manner it will be able to offer these cultures the knowledge of the hidden mystery⁹⁵ and help

⁹⁴ cf. AAS 7 (1979), p. 607.

⁹⁵ cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:5.

them to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought. Two things must however be kept in mind.

On the hand the Gospel message cannot be purely and simply isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted (the Biblical world or, more concretely, the cultural milieu in which Jesus of Nazareth lived), nor, without serious loss, from the cultures in which it has already been expressed down the centuries; it does not spring spontaneously from any cultural soil; it has always been transmitted by means of an apostolic dialogue which inevitably becomes part of a certain dialogue of cultures.

On the other hand, the power of the Gospel everywhere transforms and regenerates. When that power enters into a culture, it is no surprise that it rectifies many of its elements. There would be no catechesis if it were the Gospel that had to change when it came into contact with the cultures.

To forget this would simply amount to what Saint Paul very forcefully calls "emptying the cross of Christ of its power".⁶⁶

It is a different matter to take, with wise discernment, certain elements, part of the cultural heritage of a human group and use them to help its members to understand better the whole of the Christian mystery. Genuine catechesis know that catechesis "takes flesh" in the various cultures and milieux: one has only to think of the peoples with their great differences, of modern youth, of the great variety of circumstances in which people find themselves today. But they refuse to accept an impoverishment of catechesis through a renunciation or obscuring of its message, by adaptations, even in language, that would endanger the "precious deposit" of the faith,⁶⁷ or by concessions in matter of faith or morals. They are convinced that true catechesis eventually enriches these cultures by helping them to go beyond the defective or even inhuman features in them, and by communicating to their legitimate values the fullness of Christ.⁶⁸

The contribution of popular devotion

54. Another question of method concerns the utilization in catechetical instruction of valid elements in popular piety. I have in mind devotions practised by the faithful in certain regions with

⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 1:17.

⁶⁷ cf. 2 Tim. 1:14.

⁶⁸ cf. Jn. 1:16; Euh. 1:10.

moving fervour and purity of intention, even if the faith underlying them needs to be purified or rectified in many aspects. I have in mind certain easily understood prayers that many simple people are fond of repeating. I have in mind certain acts of piety practised with a sincere desire to do penance or to please the Lord. Underlying most of these prayers and practices, besides elements that should be discarded, there are other elements which, if they were properly used, could serve very well to help people advance towards knowledge of the mystery of Christ and of his message: the love and mercy of God, the Incarnation of Christ, his redeeming Cross and Resurrection, the activity of the Spirit in each Christian and in the Church, the mystery of the hereafter, the evangelical virtues to be practised, the presence of the Christian in the world, etc. And why should we appeal to non-Christian or even anti-Christian elements, refusing to build on elements which, even if they need to be revised and improved, have something Christian at their root?

Memorization

55. The final methodological question the importance of which should at least be referred to — one that was debated several times in the Synod — is that of memorization. In the beginnings of Christian catechesis, which coincided with a civilization that was mainly oral, recourse was had very freely to memorization. Catechesis has since then known a long tradition of learning the principal truths by memorizing. We are all aware that this method can present certain disadvantages, not the least of which is that it lends itself to insufficient or at times almost non-existent assimilation, reducing all knowledge to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood. These disadvantages and the different characteristics of our own civilization have in some places led to the almost complete suppression — according to some, alas, the definitive suppression — of memorization in catechesis. And yet certain very authoritative voices made themselves heard on the occasion of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod, calling for the restoration of a judicious balance between reflection and spontaneity, between dialogue and silence, between written work and memory work. Moreover certain cultures still act great value on memorization.

At a time when, in non-religious teaching in certain countries, more and more complaints are being made about the unfortunate consequences of disregarding the human faculty of memory, should we not attempt to put this faculty back into use in an intelligent and even an original way in catechesis, all the more since the celebration or "memorial" of the great events of the history of salvation require

a precise knowledge of them? A certain memorization of the words of Jesus, of important Bible passages, of the Ten Commandments, of the formulas of profession of the faith, of the liturgical texts, of the faith, of the liturgical texts, of the essential prayers, of key doctrinal ideas, etc., far from being opposed to the dignity of young Christians, or constituting an obstacle to personal dialogue with the Lord, is a real need, as the Synod Fathers forcefully recalled. We must be realists. The blossoms, if we may call them that, of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis. What is essential is that the texts that are memorized must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life on the personal level and the community level.

The plurality of methods in contemporary catechesis can be a sign of vitality and ingenuity. In any case, the method chosen must ultimately be referred to a law that is fundamental for the whole of the Church's life: the law of fidelity to God and of fidelity to man in a single loving attitude.

VIII

THE JOY OF FAITH IN A TROUBLED WORLD

Affirming Christian Identity

56. We live in a difficult world in which the anguish of seeing the best creations of man slip away from him and turn against him creates a climate of uncertainty.⁹⁹ In this world catechesis should help Christian to be, for their own joy and the service of all, "light" and "salt".¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly this demands that catechesis should strengthen them in their identity and that it should continually separate itself from the surrounding atmosphere of hesitation, uncertainty and insipidity. Among the many difficulties, each of them a challenge for faith, I shall indicate a few in order to assist catechesis in overcoming them.

⁹⁹ cf. *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis*, 15-16: AAS 71 (1979), pp. 286-295.

¹⁰⁰ cf. Mt. 5:13-16.

In an indifferent world

57. A few years ago, there was much talk of the secularized world, the post-Christian era. Fashion changes, but a profound reality remains. Christians today must be formed to live in a world which largely ignores God or which, in religious matters, in place of an exacting and fraternal dialogue, stimulating for all, too often flounders in a debasing indifferentism, if it does not remain in a scornful attitude of "suspicion" in the name of the progress it has made in the field of scientific "explanations". To "hold on" in this world, to offer to all a "dialogue of salvation"¹⁰¹ in which each person feels respected in his or her most basic dignity, the dignity of one who is seeking God, we need a catechesis which trains the young people and adults of our communities to remain clear and consistent in their faith, to affirm serenely their Christian and Catholic identity, to "see him who is invisible"¹⁰² and to adhere so firmly to the absoluteness of God that they can be witnesses to him in a materialistic civilization that denies him.

With the original pedagogy of the faith

58. The irreducible originality of Christian identity has for corollary and condition no less original a pedagogy of the faith. Among the many prestigious sciences of man that are nowadays making immense advances, pedagogy is certainly one of the most important. The attainments of the other sciences — biology, psychology, sociology — are providing it with valuable elements. The science of education and the art of teaching are continually being subjected to review, with a view to making them better adapted or more effective, with varying degrees of success.

There is also a pedagogy of faith, and the good that it can do for catechesis cannot be overstated. In fact, it is natural that techniques perfected and tested for education in general should be adapted for the service of education in the faith. However, account must always be taken of the absolute originality of faith. Pedagogy of faith is not a question of transmitting human knowledge, even of the highest kind; it is a question of communicating God's Revelation in its entirety. Throughout sacred history, especially in the Gospel, God himself used a pedagogy that must continue to be a model for the pedagogy of faith. A technique is of value in catechesis only to the extent that it serves the faith that is to be transmitted and learned; otherwise it is of no value.

¹⁰¹ cf. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, Part Three, AAS 56 (1964), pp. 637-659.

¹⁰² cf. Heb. 11:27.

Language suited to the service of the Credo

59. A problem very close to the preceding one is that of language. This is obviously a burning question today. It is paradoxical to see that, while modern studies, for instance in the field of communication, semantics and symbology, attribute extraordinary importance to language, nevertheless language is being mis-used today for ideological mystification, for mass conformity in thought and for reducing man to the level of an object.

All this has extensive influence in the field of catechesis. For catechesis has a pressing obligation to speak a language suited to today's children and young people in general and to many other categories of people — the language of students, intellectuals and scientists; the language of the illiterate or of people of simple culture; the language of the handicapped, and so on. Saint Augustine encountered this same problem and contributed to its solution for his own time with his well-known work *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. In catechesis as in theology, there is no doubt that the question of language is of the first order. But there is good reason for recalling here that catechesis cannot admit any language that would result in altering the substance of the content of the Creed, under any pretext whatever, even a pretended scientific one. Deceitful or beguiling language is no better. On the contrary, the supreme rule is that the great advances in the science of language must be capable of being placed at the service of catechesis so as to enable it really to "tell" or "communicate" to the child, the adolescent, the young people and adults of today the whole content of doctrine without distortion.

Research and certainty of faith

60. A more subtle challenge occasionally comes from the very way of conceiving faith. Certain contemporary philosophical schools, which seem to be exercising a strong influence on some theological currents and, through them, on pastoral practice, like to emphasize that the fundamental human attitude is that of seeking the infinite, a seeking that never attains its object. In theology, this view of things will state very categorically that faith is not certainty but questioning, not clarity but a leap in the dark.

These currents of thought certainly have the advantage of reminding us that faith concerns things not yet in our possession, since they are hoped for; that as yet we see only "in a mirror dimly";¹⁰³ and that

¹⁰³ 1 Cor. 13:12.

God dwells always in inaccessible light.¹⁰⁴ They help us to make the Christian faith not the attitude of one who has already arrived, but a Journey forward as with Abraham. For all the more reason one must avoid presenting as certain things which are not.

However, we must not fall into the opposite extreme, as too often happens. The Letter to the Hebrews says that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen",¹⁰⁵ Although we are not in full possession, we do have an assurance and a conviction. When educating children, adolescents and young people, let us not give them too negative an idea of faith — as if it were absolute non-knowing, a kind of blindness, a world of darkness — but let us show them that the humble yet courageous seeking of the believer, far from having its starting point in nothingness, in plain self-deception, in fallible opinions or in uncertainty, is based on the word of God who cannot deceive or be deceived, and is unceasingly built on the immovable rock of this word. It is the search of the Magi under the guidance of a star,¹⁰⁶ the search of which Pascal, taking up a phrase of Saint Augustine, wrote so profoundly: "You would not be searching for me, if you had not found me".¹⁰⁷

It is also one of the aims of catechesis to give young catechumens the simple but solid certainties that will help them to seek to know the Lord more and better.

Catechesis and theology

61. In this context, it seems important to me that the connection between catechesis and theology should be well understood.

Obviously this connection is profound and vital for those who understand the irreplaceable mission of theology in the service of faith. Thus it is no surprise that every stirring in the field of theology also has repercussions in that of catechesis. In this period immediately after the Council, the Church is living through an important but hazardous time of theological research. The same must be said of hermeneutics with respect to exegesis.

Synod Fathers from all continents dealt with this question in very frank terms: they spoke of the danger of an "unstable balance" passing from theology to catechesis and they stressed the need to do

¹⁰⁴ cf. 1 Tim. 6:16.

¹⁰⁵ Heb. 11-1.

¹⁰⁶ cf. Mt. 2:1 ff.

¹⁰⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Le mystère de Jésus: Pensées*, 553.

something about this difficulty. Pope Paul VI himself had dealt with the problem in no less frank terms in the introduction to his Solemn Profession of Faith¹⁰⁸ and in the Apostolic Exhortation marking the fifth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰⁹

This point must again be insisted on. Aware of the influence that their research and their statements have on catechetical instruction, theologians and exegetes have a duty to take great care that people do not take for a certainty what on the contrary belongs to the area of questions of opinion or of discussion among experts. Catechists for their part must have the wisdom to pick from the field of theological research those points that can provide light for their own reflection and their teaching, drawing, like the theologians, from the true sources, in the light of the Magisterium. They must refuse to trouble the minds of the children and young people, at this stage of their catechesis, with outlandish theories, useless questions and unproductive discussions, things that Saint Paul often condemned in his pastoral letters.¹¹⁰

The most valuable gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith. Catechesis will teach this to them, and will itself be the first to benefit from it: "The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly — and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being — must come to Christ with his unrest and uncertainty, and even his weakness and sinfulness, his life and death. He must, so to speak, enter into Christ with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' Christ and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself".¹¹¹

IX

THE TASK CONCERNS US ALL

Encouragement to all responsible for catechesis

62. Now, beloved Brothers and sons and daughters, I would like my words which are intended as a serious and heartfelt exhortation

¹⁰⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Sollemnis Professio Fidei*, 4: AAS 60 (1968), p. 434.

¹⁰⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Quinque Iam Anni*: AAS 63 (1971), p. 99.

¹¹⁰ cf. 1 Tim. 1:33 ff.; 4:1 ff.; 2 Tim. 2:14 ff.; 4:15; Tit. 1:10-12; Cf. also *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 78: AAS 68 (1976), p. 70.

¹¹¹ *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis*, 10: AAS 71 (1979), p. 274.

from me in my ministry as pastor of the universal Church, to set your hearts aflame, like the letters of Saint Paul to his companions in the Gospel, Titus and Timothy, or like Saint Augustine writing for the deacon Deogratias, when the latter lost heart before his task as a catechist, a real little treatise on the joy of catechizing.¹¹² Yes, I wish to sow courage, hope and enthusiasm abundantly in the hearts of all those many diverse people who are in charge of religious instruction and training for life in keeping with the Gospel.

Bishops

63. To begin with, I turn to my brother Bishops: the Second Vatican Council has already explicitly reminded you of your task in the catechetical area,¹¹³ and the Fathers of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod have also strongly underlined it.

Dearly beloved Brothers, you have here a special mission within your Churches: you are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence. Together with the Pope, in the spirit of episcopal collegiality, you too have charge of catechesis throughout the Church. Accept therefore what I say to you from my heart.

I know that your ministry as Bishops is growing daily more complex and overwhelming. A thousand duties call you: from the training of new priests to being actively present within the lay communities, from the living, worthy celebration of the sacraments and acts of worship to concern for human advancement and the defence of human rights. But let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis yield to no other care whatever in any way. This concern will lead you to transmit personally to your faithful the doctrine of life. But it should also lead you to take on in your diocese, in accordance with the plans of the Episcopal Conference to which you belong, the chief management of catechesis, while at the same time surrounding yourselves with competent and trustworthy assistants. Your principal role will be to bring about and maintain in your Churches a real passion for catechesis, a passion embodied in a pertinent and effective organization, putting into operation the necessary personnel, means and equipment, and also financial resources. You can be sure that if catechesis is done well in your local Churches, everything else will be easier to do. And needless to say, although your zeal must sometimes

¹¹² *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, PL 40,310-347.

¹¹³ Cf. Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 14: AAS 58 (1966), p. 679.

impose upon you the thankless task of denouncing deviations and correcting errors, it will much more often win for you the joy and consolation of seeing your Churches flourishing because catechesis is given in them as the Lord wishes.

Priests

64. For your part, priests, here you have a field in which you are the immediate assistants of your Bishops. The Council has called you "instructors in the faith";¹¹⁴ there is no better way for you to be such instructor than by devoting your best efforts to the growth of your communities in the faith. Whether you are in charge of a parish, or are chaplains to primary or secondary schools or universities, or have responsibility for pastoral activity at any level, or are leaders of large or small communities, especially youth groups, the Church expects you to neglect nothing with a view to a well-organized and well-oriented catechetical effort. The deacons and other ministers that you may have the good fortune to have with you are your natural assistants in this. All believers have a right to catechesis; all pastors have the duty to provide it. I shall always ask civil leaders to respect the freedom of catechetical teaching; but with all my strength I beg you, ministers of Jesus Christ: Do not, for lack of zeal or because of some unfortunate preconceived idea, leave the faithful without catechesis. Let it not be said that "the children beg for food, but no one gives to them".¹¹⁵

Men and women religious

65. Many religious institutes for men and women came into being for the purpose of giving Christian education to children and young people, especially the most abandoned. Throughout history, men and women religious have been deeply committed to the Church's catechetical activity, doing particularly apposite and effective work. At a time when it is desired that the links between religious and pastors should be accentuated and consequently the active presence of religious communities and their members in the pastoral projects of the local Churches, I whole-heartedly exhort you, whose religious consecration should make you even more readily available for the Church's service, to prepare as well as possible for the task of catechesis

¹¹⁴ Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6: AAS 58 (1966), p. 999.

¹¹⁵ Lam. 4:4.

according to the differing vocations of your institutes and the missions entrusted to you, and to carry this concern everywhere. Let the communities dedicate as much as possible of what ability and means they have to the specific work of catechesis.

Lay catechists

66. I am anxious to give thanks in the Church's name to all of you, lay teachers of catechesis in the parishes, the men and the still more numerous women throughout the world, who are devoting yourselves to the religious education of many generations. Your work is often lowly and hidden but it is carried out with ardent and generous zeal, and it is an eminent form of the lay apostolate, a form that is particularly important where for various reasons children and young people do not receive suitable religious training in the home. How many of us have received from people like you our first notions of catechism and our preparation for the sacrament of penance, for our first communion and confirmation! The Fourth General Assembly of the Synod did not forget you. I join with it in encouraging you to continue your collaboration for the life of the Church.

But the term "catechists" belongs above all to the catechists in mission lands. Born of families that are already Christian or converted at some time to Christianity and instructed by missionaries or by another catechist, they then consecrate their lives, year after year, to catechizing children and adults in their own country. Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up without them. I rejoice at the efforts made by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples to improve more and more the training of these catechists. I gratefully recall the memory of those whom the Lord has already called to himself. I beg the intercession of those whom my predecessors have raised to the glory of the altars. I whole-heartedly encourage those engaged in the work. I express the wish that many others may succeed them and that they may increase in numbers for a task so necessary for the missions.

In the parish

67. I now wish to speak of the actual setting in which all these catechists normally work. I am returning this time, taking a more overall view, to the "places" for catechesis, some of which have already been mentioned in Chapter VI: the parish, the family, the school, organizations.

It is true that catechesis can be given anywhere, but I wish to stress, in accordance with the desire of very many Bishops, that the parish community must continue to be the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis. Admittedly, in many countries the parish has been as if shaken by the phenomenon of urbanization. Perhaps some have too easily accepted that the parish should be considered old-fashioned, if not doomed to disappear in favour of more pertinent and effective small communities. Whatever one may think, the parish is still a major point of reference for the Christian people, even for the non-practising. Accordingly, realism and wisdom demand that we continue along the path aiming to restore to the parish, as needed, more adequate structures and, above all, a new impetus through the increasing integration into it of qualified, responsible and generous members. This being said, and taking into account the necessary diversity of places for catechesis (the parish as such, families taking in children and adolescents, chaplaincies for State schools, Catholic educational establishments, apostolic movements that give periods of catechesis, clubs open to youth in general, spiritual formation weekends, etc.), it is supremely important that all these catechetical channels should really converge on the same confession of faith, on the same memberships of the Church, and on commitments in society lived in the same Gospel spirit: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father".¹¹⁰ That is why every big parish or every group of parishes with small numbers has the serious duty to train people completely dedicated to providing catechetical leadership (priests, men and women religious, and lay people), to provide the equipment needed for catechesis under all aspects; to increase and adapt the places for catechesis to the extent that it is possible and useful to do so, and to be watchful about the quality of the religious formation of the various groups and their integration into the ecclesial community.

In short, without monopolizing or enforcing uniformity, the parish remains, as I have said, the pre-eminent place for catechesis. It must rediscover its vocation, which is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have been baptized and confirmed become aware of forming the People of God. In that home, the bread of good doctrine and the Eucharistic Bread are broken for them in abundance, in the setting of the one act of worship;¹¹⁷ from that home they are sent out day by day to their apostolic mission in all the centres of activity of the life of the world.

¹¹⁰ Eph. 4:5-6.

¹¹⁷ cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 35, 52: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 109, 114; cf. also *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, promulgated by a Decree of the Congregation of Rites on 6 April 1969, 33, and what has been said above in Chapter VI concerning the homily.

In the family

68. The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable. This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council.¹¹⁸ Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age,¹¹⁹ is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. This catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events (such as the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of great liturgical feasts, the birth of a child, a bereavement) care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events. But that is not enough: Christian parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives.

Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. Furthermore, in places where anti-religious legislation endeavours even to prevent education in the faith, and in places where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism makes real religious growth practically impossible, "the Church of the home".¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Since the High Middle Ages, provincial councils have insisted on the responsibility of parents in regard to education in the faith: cf. Sixth Council of Arles (813), Canon 19; Council of Mainz (813), Canons 45, 47; Sixth Council of Paris (829), Book 1, Chapter 7; Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, XIV, 62, 74, 542. Among the more recent documents of the Magisterium, note the Encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* of Pius XI, 31 December 1929: AAS 22 (1930), pp. 49-86; the many discourses and messages of Pius XII; and above all the texts of the Second Vatican Council: the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11, 35: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 15, 40; the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11, 30: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 847, 860; the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 52: AAS 58 (1966), p. 1073; and especially the Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3: AAS 58 (1966), p. 731.

¹¹⁹ cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3 AAS 58 (1966), p. 731.

¹²⁰ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11: AAS 57 (1965), p. 16; cf. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11: AAS 58 (1966), p. 848.

remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis. Thus there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children's catechists and to carry it out with tireless zeal. Encouragement must also be given to the individuals or institutions that, through person-to-person contacts, through meetings, and through all kinds of pedagogical means, help parents to perform their task: the service they are doing to catechesis is beyond price.

At school

69. Together with and in connection with the family, the school provides catechesis with possibilities that are not to be neglected. In the unfortunately decreasing number of countries in which it is possible to give education in the faith within the school framework, the Church has the duty to do so as well as possible. This of course concerns first and foremost the Catholic school: it would no longer deserve this title if, no matter how much it shone for its high level of teaching in non-religious matter, there were justification for reproaching it for negligence or deviation in strictly religious education. Let it not be said that such education will always be given implicitly and indirectly. The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils. While Catholic establishments should respect freedom of conscience, that is to say, avoid burdening consciences from without by exerting physical or moral pressure, especially in the case of the religious activity of adolescents, they still have a grave duty to offer a religious training suited to the often widely varying religious situations of the pupils. They also have a duty to make them understand that although God's call to serve him in spirit and truth, in accordance with the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, does not apply constraint, it is nevertheless binding in conscience.

But I am also thinking of non-confessional and public schools. I express the fervent wish that, in response to a very clear right of the human person and of the family, and out of respect for everyone's religious freedom, all Catholic pupils may be enabled to advance in their spiritual formation with the aid of a religious instruction dependent on the Church, but which, according to the circumstances of different countries, can be offered either by the school or in the setting of the school, or again within the framework of an agreement with the public authorities regarding school timetables, if catechesis takes place only in the parish or in another pastoral centre. In fact,

even in places where objective difficulties exist, it should be possible to arrange school timetables in such a way as to enable the Catholics to deepen their faith and religious experience, with qualified teachers, whether priests or lay people.

Admittedly, apart from the school, many other elements of life help in influencing the mentality of the young, for instance, recreation, social background and work surroundings. But those who study are bound to bear the stamp of their studies, to be introduced to cultural or moral values within the atmosphere of the establishment in which they are taught, and to be faced with many ideas met with in school. It is important for catechesis to take full account of this effect of the school on the pupils, if it is to keep in touch with the other elements of the pupil's knowledge and education; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the pupils in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith. Accordingly I give encouragement to the priests, religious and lay people who are devoting themselves to sustaining these pupils' faith. This is moreover an occasion for me to reaffirm my firm conviction that to show respect for the Catholic faith of the young to the extent of facilitating its education, its implantation, its consolidation, its free profession and practice would certainly be to the honour of any Government, whatever be the system on which it is based or the ideology from which it draws its inspiration.

Within organizations

70. Lastly, encouragement must be given to the lay associations, movements and groups, whether their aim is the practice of piety, the direct apostolate, charity and relief work, or a Christian presence in temporal matters. They will all accomplish their objectives better, and serve the Church better, if they give an important place in their internal organization and their method of action to the serious religious training of their members. In this way every association of the faithful in the Church has by definition the duty to educate in the faith.

This makes more evident the role given to the laity in catechesis today, always under the pastoral direction of their Bishops, as the Propositions left by the Synod stressed several times.

Training institutes

71. We must be grateful to the Lord for this contribution by the laity, but it is also a challenge to our responsibility as Pastors, since these lay catechesis must be carefully prepared for what is, if not

a formally instituted ministry, at the very least a function of great importance in the Church. Their preparation calls on us to organize special Centres and Institutes, which are to be given assiduous attention by the Bishops. This is a field in which diocesan, interdiocesan or national cooperation proves fertile and fruitful. Here also the material aid provided by the richer Churches to their poorer sisters can show the greatest effectiveness, for what better assistance can one Church give to another than to help it to grow as a Church with its own strength?

I would like to recall to all those who are working generously in the service of the Gospel, and and to whom I have expressed here my lively encouragement, the instruction given by my venerated predecessor Paul VI: "As evangelizers, we must offer . . . the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelization is certainly bound up with the witness of unity given by the Church. This is a source of responsibility and also of comfort".¹²¹

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit, the Teacher within

22. At the end of this Apostolic Exhortation, the gaze of my heart turns to him who is the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work — the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit.

In describing the mission that this Spirit would have in the Church, Christ used the significant words: "He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you".¹²² And he added: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth . . . he will declare to you the things that are to come".¹²³

The Spirit is thus promised to the Church and to each Christian as a Teacher within, who, in the secret of the conscience and the heart, makes one understand what one has heard but was not capable of grasping: "Even now the Holy Spirit teaches the faithful", said

¹²¹ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 77: AAS 68 (1976), p. 69.

¹²² Jn. 14:26.

¹²³ Jn. 16:13.

Saint Augustine in this regard, "in accordance with each one's spiritual capacity. And he sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him love what he already knows and desire what he has yet to know".¹²⁴

Furthermore, the Spirit's mission is also to transform the disciples into witnesses to Christ: "He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses".¹²⁵

But this is not all. For Saint Paul, who on this matter synthesizes a theology that is latent throughout the New Testament, it is the whole of one's "being a Christian", the whole of the Christian life, the new life of the children of God, that constitutes a life in accordance with the Spirit.¹²⁶ Only the Spirit enables us to say to God: "Abba, Father".¹²⁷ Without the Spirit we cannot say: "Jesus is Lord".¹²⁸ From the Spirit come all the charisms that build up the Church, the community of Christian.¹²⁹ In keeping with this, Saint Paul gives each disciple of Christ the instruction: "Be filled with the Spirit".¹³⁰ Saint Augustine is very explicit: "Both (our believing and our doing good) are ours because of the choice of our will, and yet both are gifts from the Spirit of faith and charity".¹³¹

Catechesis, which is growth in faith and the maturing of Christian life towards its fullness, is consequently a work of the Holy Spirit, a work that he alone can initiate and sustain in the Church.

This realization, based on the text quoted above and on many other passages of the New Testament, convinces us of two things.

To begin with, it is clear that, when carrying out her mission of giving catechesis, the Church — and also every individual Christian devoting himself to that mission within the Church and in her name — must be very much aware of acting as a living pliant instrument of the Holy Spirit. To invoke this Spirit constantly, to be in communion with him, to endeavour to know his authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every catechist.

Second, the deep desire to understand better the Spirit's action and to entrust oneself to him more fully — at a time when "in the Church we are living an exceptionally favourable season of the Spirit", as my predecessor Paul VI remarked in his Apostolic Exhortation

¹²⁴ *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 97, 1: PL 35, 1877.

¹²⁵ Jn. 15:26-27.

¹²⁶ cf. Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6.

¹²⁷ Rom. 8:15.

¹²⁸ cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

¹²⁹ Eph. 5:18.

¹³¹ *Retractationum Liber I*, 23, 2: PL 32, 621.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*¹³² — must bring about a catechetical awakening. For “renewal in the Spirit” will be authentic and will have real fruitfulness in the Church, not so much according as it gives rise to extraordinary charisms, but according as it leads the greatest possible number of the faithful, as they travel their daily paths, to make a humble, patient and persevering effort to know the mystery of Christ better and better, and to bear witness to it.

I invoke on the catechizing Church this Spirit of the Father and the Son, and I beg him to renew catechetical dynamism in the Church.

Mary, Mother and Model of the Disciple

73. May the Virgin of Pentecost obtain this for us through her intercession. By a unique vocation, she saw her Son Jesus “increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favour”.¹³³ As he sat on her lap and later as he listened to her throughout the hidden life at Nazareth, this Son, who was “the only Son from the Father”, “full of grace and truth”, was formed by her in human knowledge of the Scriptures and of the history of God’s plan for his people, and in adoration of the Father.¹³⁴ She in turn was the first of his disciples. She was the first in time, because even when she found her adolescent son in the Temple she received from him lessons that she kept in her heart.¹³⁵ She was the first disciple above all else because no one has been “taught by God”¹³⁶ to such depth. She was “both mother and disciple”, as Saint Augustine said of her, venturing to add that her discipleship was more important for her than her motherhood.¹³⁷ There are good grounds for the statement made in the Synod Hall that Mary is “a living catechism” and “the mother and model of catechists”.

May the presence of the Holy Spirit, through the prayers of Mary, grant the Church unprecedented enthusiasm in the catechetical work that is essential for her. Thus will she effectively carry out, at this moment of grace, her inalienable and universal mission, the mission given her by her Teacher: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”.¹³⁸

With my Apostolic Blessing.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on 16 October 1979, the second year of my pontificate.

JOANNES PAULUS PP. II

¹³² 75; *AAS* 68 (1976), p. 66.

¹³³ cf. Lk. 2:52.

¹³⁴ cf. Jn. 1:14; Heb. 10:5; S. Th. III, Q. 12, a. 2; a. 3, and 3.

¹³⁵ cf. Lk. 2:51.

¹³⁶ cf. Jn. 6:45.

¹³⁷ cf. *Sermo* 25, 7: *PL* 46, 937-938.

AGREED STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

between

THE PHILIPPINE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

and

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

The fundamental meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism is incorporation into Christ, and thus incorporation into the Church which is his Mystical Body. Baptism is the effective sign of our participation in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord, whereby the baptized receives adoption by the Father and becomes a child of God, receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, obtains the forgiveness of sins, shares in Christ's eternal priesthood, participates in his messianic mission in the world, and becomes an inheritor of God's kingdom.

Therefore, our two Churches, recognizing the necessity of Baptism and affirming our common doctrine and practice in respect to this Sacrament as borne witness to by our common tradition and by various dialogues and agreements, do declare;

1. That our two Churches mutually recognize and respect each other's Rite of Baptism as contained in the Book of Common Prayer and in the official Roman Catholic Rite of Baptism;

2. That the Rite of Baptism performed by our two Churches is valid and therefore is not to be repeated even conditionally;

3. That although our Churches have always recognized the Sacrament of Baptism administered according to the New Testament, his present declaration constitutes an act whereby our Churches mutually give guarantee of the validity of the Baptism administered by their respective ministers;

4. That baptisms administered by our respective ministers are to be duly recorded in the proper registry-books, and certificates of Baptism delivered to all who are baptized. The presentation of the said Certificate of Baptism shall be deemed sufficient evidence of the fact and validity of the Baptism. We agree, in cases of real doubt, to consult one another in these matters;

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5. That we commit ourselves to earnest and continual prayer, consultation, and working together, especially in those areas of Church doctrine and life in which real and serious different between us still exist, that we may come to that fulness of our unity in Christ of which Baptism is the foundation, the impetus and the pledge.

In testimony thereof, we affix our signatures this 20th day of January, in the year of the Lord 1980, at the Cathedral of St. Mary and St. John, Quezon City, Philippines.

FOR THE PHILIPPINE EPISCOPAL CHURCH:

The Most Rev. Constancio B. Manguramas, Prime Bishop and Bishop of the Southern Philippines

The Rt. Rev. Richard Abellon, Bishop of the Northern Philippines

The Rt. Rev. Manuel C. Lumpias, Bishop of the Central Philippines

FOR THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

His Eminence, Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, D.D., Archbishop of Manila;
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

The Most Rev. Cirilo R. Almario, Jr., D.D., Bishop of Malolos;
Secretary Gen., Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

The Most Rev. Cornelius de Wit, M.H.M., D.D., Prelate of San Jose, Antique, Chairman, Bishops' Commission for Prom. Christ. Unity

Statement of
The Philippine Episcopal Church
and the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines

WHAT THE AGREEMENT ON BAPTISM MEANS

By

Pedro S. de Achútegui, S.J.

The first contacts on this matter that led finally to the present, agreement, were made between the Secretariat of the Roman Catholic Bishops Commission for Promoting Christian Unity and Bishop Benito Cabanban in 1971, on the occasion of the visit to the Philippines of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Arthur Michael Ramsey. The formal conversations, however, started only in June 1977. The Joint Ecumenical Committee composed of members from both Churches prepared a tentative formula of agreement that was then submitted to the respective hierarchies for further study, comments and eventual approval. The Fifty-Seventh National Convocation of the Philippine Episcopal Church passed a resolution formally approving the document in June 1978. In July 1979, the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines gave also its final approval. Only some clarifications were requested and made to the satisfaction of all, and some very minor changes introduced into the final text.

With this as immediate background let me briefly explain what the Agreement means, what it does not mean, and some consequences that derive from it.

I. WHAT THE AGREEMENT MEANS

1. The Agreed Statement constitutes a formal recognition by the respective hierarchies that our two Churches administer a valid Baptism. Obviously, this fact has always been recognized by sound theology and historical research, although it must be confessed that at times the pastoral practice has not been consistent with the principles. Today's Agreement confirms a doctrine already accepted, and in that sense it makes the measure we are taking today retroactive.

2. The Agreement also officially recognizes that, in virtue of the Sacrament of Baptism validly administered, there is a certain real union among Christians of both Churches and between the Churches themselves. Baptism, thus, is recognized as being the sacramental bond of unity, indeed the foundation of communion among all baptized Christians.

3. This existing union, imperfect as it is, leads the members of both Churches to strive together for the living up of a deeper Christian life, and for greater expression of their oneness in Christ and unity in all areas of faith.

The present agreement, therefore, represents a little, yes, but still a positive step on the road to Christian unity.

II. WHAT THE AGREEMENT DOES NOT MEAN

1. The Agreement does not mean, operate or imply any kind of merger. Unfortunately the two Churches, although recognizing that there is a certain union between them, still remain two. This is a sad fact; but the sadness may operate as a challenge.

2. Neither does the Agreement mean that ministers of either Church are, or even can be, authorized to perform the ceremony of Baptism for the other. Such a conclusion is out of the scope and against the spirit of the Agreement. Episcopalian parents will continue having their children baptized in the Episcopal Church, and Roman Catholic parents will continue having their own children baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.

3. As corollary of what has been said, the present Agreement cannot in any way be used as a pretext for proselytism. In other words no member or minister of either Church may invoke this Agreement to try persuading the faithful of the other to have their children baptized in the Church to which the parents do not belong. This would be a betrayal of their own sincere faith and a travesty of a sincere Christian agreement.

Thus at the same time we rejoice for the unity we already have in Christ, and we are saddened for the division in which we still live.

III. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES THAT DERIVE FROM THE AGREEMENT.

1. The first practical consequence that results from the Agreement is obvious: Baptism can be conferred only once. Hence indiscriminate conditional baptism cannot be approved. The sacrament of baptism cannot be repeated; therefore, to be baptized again conditionally is not allowed unless there is prudent doubt of the fact or of the validity of a baptism already administered. The Philippine Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines today give each other mutual guarantees of the seriousness with which they perform their sacramental duties.

2. In virtue of today's agreement, the presentation of the baptismal certificate issued by either Church will be proof enough of the validity of baptism conferred when needed by ministers of the other Church. Such may be cases of inter-church marriage between an Episcopalian and a Roman Catholic, the passing from one Church to the other for reasons of conviction and conscience, or similar ones. By acknowledging the validity of the Baptism as certified by the document, situations can be avoided which may cause friction or at least produce unpleasant reactions, as the case has been more than once in the past.

3. The guarantees mutually offered by our Churches on the validity of the Baptism administered by them, commit both hierarchies and ministers to the most conscientious fulfillment of all liturgical prescriptions regulating the administration of baptism in the respective Churches.

In closing let me repeat with the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II that baptism "of itself is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed towards the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ" (UR, 22).

In 1972, a similar agreement was entered into between the Lutheran Church in the Philippines and the Roman Catholic Church. Today we may say that the ecumenical dialogue on basic questions even if proceedings at a slow pace has proven fruitful. Its results may extend to other Christian communities that have the same serious desire of fidelity to Christ and that want to give each other mutual guarantees of the faithful performance of Christ's baptism. But today's Agreement covers exclusively the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Philippine Episcopal Church.

Without any religious triumphalism, but overwhelmed by God's gift to us, we joyously accept that a Christian, by the fact of being baptized, has been the object of God's special love, for he always bears not only the name of Christ on his forehead but Christ's actual image in his soul deeply and idelibly imprinted there by baptism. Hence we must be, "one in the Spirit, one in the Lord", since as the Apostle says: "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

A NEW AGE OF MISSION

The joyous and grateful celebration of the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the diocese of Manila has brought us together — Bishops, priests, religious men and women, representatives of the laity from some forty countries and every continent in the world, in an International Congress on Mission co-sponsored by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and by the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies of the Philippines.

It was fitting that our gathering together began as an act of thanksgiving, for the first and most spontaneous sentiment that arises in our hearts is truly an act of gratitude to the merciful love of the Father in Jesus Christ His Son. For He has called us and our peoples into His marvelous light, and given us the good news that is His Gospel, and the gift, beyond all pricing, of our Faith, of baptism and fellowship in the community of the Church. He has given us the gift of His Spirit poured out into our hearts, the Spirit through whom we call Him Father, the Spirit through whom we call each other — of whatever race and color and nation, — brother and sister beloved in His Son, our Brother Jesus Christ.

We raise an act of gratitude to God for all those who have brought the Gospel, and with dedication and self-sacrifice planted and nurtured the Church not only in Manila and in this Christian country, but also throughout Asia, — from the very time of the Apostles, when Christian faith first came to this continent. We recall with grateful reverence the scores of Asian martyrs whose blood has watered the faith that we treasure and proclaim today.

Several assemblies of our Asian Bishops and their collaborators have preceded ours, and many of them have situated the work of evangelization in this continent within the context of this vast and varied, this restless and swiftly-changing world of nearly two and a half million people, nearly two-thirds of all mankind. Like them we have been deeply moved by a vision of a new world being born, of millions of men and women in search of new social structures and relationships, of a renewed humanity.

We discern a common search, every year more tangible and increasingly more articulate, for light in the midst of so much confusion and groping, for life in the midst of so much suffering, conflict and death, for love in an age of growing violence, oppres-

sion and inhumanity. In a sense this search is a search of many centuries, even of millennia, but no one will deny that in breadth, restlessness and urgency it is indeed new, and that it defines the turbulent history of our time.

The ancient religions and religious traditions of this part of the world, which in the past have shaped the histories of our people, and which are written into the very fabric of our cultures, our character, our very humanity, have reawakened in a remarkable manner in the last few decades. They too, are joined in this effort to seek a better way and to create a new world of the future for our peoples.

We Christians and the Church with us are part of this common search. In this Congress we have realized anew how great a challenge this moment of history places before the Gospel and the Church. We have heard the imperatives it addresses to all of us who, in all unworthiness, have yet been chosen to tell the story of Jesus, to speak His message before our brothers and sisters, and as His people to carry His Spirit and live His life in our own, to bear His light so that by it we ourselves and others may come to the Truth and the fullness of life all men seek.

Throughout Asia a profound religious sense still remains and many retain and cherish religious values, which greatly influence their lives. But many too, have begun to turn away from religions, partly because of the inroads of materialism and secularism, partly too because they have been disillusioned by men of religion. In some similar way many have turned away too, from ideologies and political systems because they have been betrayed by leaders who have failed them, by promises not kept and hopes which have not been fulfilled.

Many in our Asian countries have in diverse ways met Christ and His Gospel and have been deeply attracted by them. With sorrow we confess that many have not been equally drawn to the Church because so often they did not see in us, in our institutions and in our lives the image and the realization of the Good News we proclaim. Have we not too frequently made His message mere words and doctrines, His deeds mere precepts and practices, His life merely a complex of rites and institutions?

We believe that what our peoples are seeking they will find in Jesus and His Gospel. This conviction is born from our own experience of faith, hope and love. And yet somehow we have not been able to find ways to release this power of the Gospel, so that it can truly reach and move the minds and hearts of multitudes of our

Asian peoples. We have not spoken His Word and lived out His deeds in such a way that these are heard and seen as bearing the promises and hopes of the future of mankind.

Thus the communities of Christian faith in Asia are challenged to an ever renewed conversion to God's Word, and (as the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* tells us) to a constant reevangelization of themselves (EN, 15). They are ever summoned to a deepening of faith and life in the experience of the power of the Spirit. They must respond creatively to the imperatives of a deeper and more extensive inculturation of the Christian life, so that our Asian peoples may find the Christian existence and message truly transparent to Jesus and His Gospel, genuinely vibrant with His life.

We do not, of course, now face these challenges and try to respond to them for the first time. Already, we believe, the Spirit has been at work among the faithful, quickening their response. Already we discern, with wonder and gratitude, some signs of this renewal even now taking place in our local churches.

There is today an undeniable thirst and hunger for prayer and contemplation. We see this all around us, but especially among the laity, especially among the young. Surely this is a sign of the presence and action of the Spirit. There is the longing to hear and reflect on the Word of God, especially with others in a community of prayer. There is the eucharistic assembly increasingly celebrated and experienced as truly the heart of the Christian's pilgrimage through life. There is the desire in many also for greater simplicity of life and even the experience of poverty as a following of Jesus, and as solidarity with the suffering and powerless poor. There is the increased commitment to tasks and struggles for justice and human rights. There is, in some countries, the rapid multiplication of "grassroots ecclesial communities," so often alive with the freshness and enthusiasm of early Christian times. In these communities an experience of genuine Christian fellowship and love is often found as well as the emergence of diverse charisms and ministries. These enable the laity to participate ever more actively in every phase of ecclesial life. There are the new missionary initiatives among the former "mission churches", i.e. among priests and religious, and — most encouraging of all — among the laity.

It is our belief, confirmed by the exchanges of this Congress, that with God's grace this reevangelization and renewal of our local churches is a promise and earnest of a new age of mission. Through it the Holy Spirit, we are convinced, is readying them for a true renewal of mission in Asia and throughout the world.

What is the newness of this "new age of mission?" First, the realization in practice that "mission" is no longer, and can no longer be, a one-way movement from the "older churches" to the "younger churches," from the churches of the old Christendom to the churches in the colonial lands. Now — as Vatican II already affirmed all clarity and force — every local church is and cannot be but missionary. Every local church is "sent" by Christ and the Father to bring the Gospel to its surrounding milieu, and to bear it also into all the world. For every local church this is a **primary task**. Hence we are moving beyond both the vocabulary and the idea of "sending churches" and "receiving churches" for as living communities of the one church of Jesus Christ, every local church must be sending church, and every local church (because it is not on earth ever a total realization of the Church) must also be a receiving church. Every local church is responsible for its mission, and cor-responsible for the mission of all its sister-churches. Every local church, according to its possibilities, must share whatever its gifts are, for the needs of other churches, for mission throughout mankind, for the life of the world.

Once again, what is the newness of this "new age of mission"? We believe that the Spirit of the Lord calls each people and each culture to its own fresh and creative response to the Gospel. Each local church has its own vocation in the one history of salvation, in the one Church of Christ. In each local church each people's history, each people's culture, meanings and values, each people's traditions are taken up, not diminished nor destroyed, but celebrated and renewed, purified if need be, and fulfilled (as the Second Vatican Council teaches in *Ad Gentes*) in the life of the Spirit.

In many christian communities in our midst something of this "original vocation to the Gospel" so often emerges. We may discern how, in the Spirit, they become manifestation of the joyousness, freedom and purity that the grace of Christ brings to full flowering within the heart of every people, race and nation. This actualization of the unique vocation of peoples within the catholic unity we cannot but rejoice in.

It is then with an immense joy and hope, despite what seems like the gathering darkness of our time, that we foresee the dawning of this "new age of mission." We do this, not in any spirit of triumphalism or vain glory. Rather we believe in the perennial youthfulness the Spirit gives to the Church. For by His action and charisms He constantly quickens God's holy people to new life and new initiatives. Our task is to follow where He leads us, to discern His guidance amidst the many movements of our age, and to second it with all the courage and fidelity at our command.

This task of renewal of our local churches in the Gospel and by the power of the Spirit, we must admit, still has a long way to traverse. The discussions of this Congress have made us see with even greater evidence how much remains to be done in all the crucial areas of evangelization we tried to take up in our reflection. In our consensus papers we have developed this agenda more fully.

It suffices for the present to indicate here the continued building up of the local church as the focus of the task of evangelization today, with dialogue as its essential mode, through a more resolute, more creative and yet truly discerning and responsible inculturation; through inter-religious dialogue undertaken in all seriousness; through solidarity and sharing with the poor and the advocacy of human rights; through the creation of "grassroots ecclesial communities" with structures of genuine corresponsibility and ministries of charism and service; through the fostering of evangelizing education in schools and by non-formal education modes, and through an adequate media-ministry.

A more thorough-going renewal is called for in catechesis, in the knowledge and study of the Scriptures, in our methods of formation for ministries, in the fostering of family life within contemporary society, in forms and processes of our institutional structures, in the life-style of our clergy and other leaders, in the hierarchy of values we set for ourselves and our communities, and the like.

This congress has reawakened our awareness of what mission today and in the future, especially in Asia, demands of us. It has shown us more clearly what ongoing efforts and labors it will ask of us for many years to come. For we have reached a decisive turning point in the mission history of the Third World. There is no return to the past, neither to the past mission theories, nor to past mission methods, nor to the past mission goals.

We commit ourselves to these tasks of reevangelization and renewal, and to the new tasks of mission which the future demands of us, with a resoluteness born of our confidence in the promise of Jesus who told us that He would be with us all days until the end of time.

The exchange of this assembly have impressed on us how small we are in number and influence in the world of Asia, and throughout the globe. We have seen how inadequate we are for the mission to.

We conclude this Congress on Mission with the conferral of mission mandate and cross to seventy Filipino men and women who will, from this country, bear the Word of the Lord to almost every

part of the earth. Gathered around the Special Envoy of our Holy Father, officiating at this rite, we joyfully reaffirm our bonds of communion with the Roman Pontiff, Pope John Paul II. From this assembly we send our greetings to him and to the bishops, priests, religious and laity in all our sister-churches, in Asia and all the other continents of the world.

We wish to turn to our parish priests and parishes which have supported the work of mission through the years, to catechists on whom so much of the work of evangelization depends, and in a special way to the youth whom today above all the Lord summons to fields "white already for the harvest."

We address ourselves too, to the religious men and women who have rendered such outstanding service in the tasks of mission. *Evangelii nuntiandi* has spoken of the religious life itself as a privileged means for effective evangelization; with deep gratitude for the past we seek to affirm our support.

We thank our brothers and sisters in other Christian churches who have carried out in times past and up to today such great missionary labors. We are grateful for the participation of their observers, and pray for the increase of collaborative efforts and common Christian witness to the world.

To our brothers and sisters of the "living faiths of Asia" we send, in the heart of Christ, a special message of brotherhood and peace. Joined with them in the common quests for truth and freedom, justice and love for our peoples, we pray that the coming decade may be one of greater mutual understanding, forgiveness, collaboration and oneness.

We speak again to our fellow Christians in the widening Asian "Church of silence" as well as all those who suffer under totalitarian regimes of every kind. We have noted with sadness the absence of those whom we expected to be with us at this assembly. We know of the steadfastness of their faith, the courage of their suffering, the fidelity of their witness. We have kept them in our hearts and in our prayers during this Congress, and reach out to them in solidarity and with shared hope and trust in the Lord.

We wish to call to the urgent attention of our fellow-Christians as well as to that of all governments and of all people of good will and compassion, the desperate plight and the terrible suffering of hundreds of thousands of refugees from different countries, but especially those from Indo-China, now in camps or on the high

seas or seeking to cross frontiers. We urge on all to show them the concern, acceptance and welcome that they so greatly need as being in a special way the poor and the powerless in our midst. We ask the leaders of nations to do all they can to come to their relief and assistance. And we call on our fellow-Christians in Asia and other parts of the world to translate into deeds on their behalf the many statements of our concern for the poor and the suffering, the deprived and oppressed of the earth.

We close this Congress, which has been for all of us a source of joy and grace, on the eve of the Feast of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, patroness of this entire land. We recall with gratitude the role She has played in the evangelization of this Christian people, and in the faith and devotion that is their today: in almost every home her image is found, in almost every corner of this nation her shrines are placed. We turn to her during this Advent season, asking her to pray that the Good News her Son brought to the world may reach more and more hearts, and that the fulfillment of His prayer that all when men may be one might be more fully realized in our time.

THE TASK OF MISSION IN THE WORLD

The International Mission Congress held in Manila Dec. 2-7 did not break any theological grounds as expected but it was considered highly successful because it voiced out in clear, unequivocal terms the task facing mission in the world, particularly in Asia.

The congress, the participants felt, ushered in a new age of mission where mission no longer refers to foreign missionaries and funding alone, but to the responsibility of every Catholic to be a credible witness to the faith in all aspects of his or her life.

The Congress attracted six cardinals, headed by Angelo Cardinal Rossi, prefect of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of People and 200 delegates and observers from all parts of the world.

The heart of the Congress was the Theological Conference where the participants were divided into nine workshops representing the various concerns of the Mission. At the close of the congress each workshop presented a Consensus paper embodying the result of the discussions held among the members of the group.

Two dimensions of Asian life heavily influenced the thinking of the delegates the degrading poverty and oppression that dominate the lives of the vast majority of Asia's people, and the fact that Catholics are only a microscopic one per cent of the total population. Such a minority position, unique throughout the world, inspires a deep humility.

"It would be a mockery of God's providence and of His will to save all the peoples of the earth," stated one of the workshop groups, "to suppose that one half of the world's population, the two billion faces of Asia, only await conversion to Christianity... in order to be saved."

Besides humility it prepares Asian Christians for dialogue: if conversion is not the sole goal of the Church's activity, Christians and non-Christians together must discover what truly are the plans of God.

Here is a summary of the Consensus Papers of the nine workshops.

* From Cor Manila, January 15, 1980, page 3.

THEOLOGY FOR MISSION IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT

The first workshop reaffirmed the need for local churches to engage in dialogue with the local cultures; the masses of the poor and the oppressed in the region; and the religious traditions of "our Asian neighbors." It stresses the need for an attitude which presupposes awareness and acceptance of the present orientations of Vatican II and sounds a call for "greater cognizance of the severe situation of war and conflict in the area that calls for efforts to bring about reconciliation and recognition of the challenges posed by modernization both to Asian religious traditions and to Christianity."

How should local churches be mission today? The delegates agreed that the "old manner" of missionwork where the gospel was preached to the natives in a "somewhat haughty manner" is past. Mission today must possess the politeness of dialogue "if not all its deeper theological values." "They should give a sample, not a sermon of what the Christ-life is; other people must not only hear the gospel but witness it. Essential to this witness is unselfish service to the world."

The Consensus Paper also touched on the delicate problem of baptism. Baptism, because of the situations in some countries, has carried with it not only its basic meaning of death to sin and life to God in Christ, but also sociological implications severely detrimental to the socio-economic life of the prospective Christian. The problem of baptism raises a host of questions but the delegates insisted that "we must continue to preach the whole gospel; work to prepare the ground for its explicit proclamation where it can't be preached explicitly at present; and strive to obtain an atmosphere of greater religious freedom for all."

The primary task of the Church, Workshop I said, is to represent effectively through personal witness, life style, concern for others, commitment, joyful hope, the meaning of human existence as revealed in Jesus Christ. The Church must become the sign of joy and hope to peoples.

*LOCAL ASIAN CHURCHES & THE TASKS OF MISSION
(INCULTURATION)*

Fundamental to the task of mission in the Third World particularly Asia which is poor and overwhelmingly non-Christian is the process of inculturation.

The problem of inculturation sprung up with the realization that past concepts of the mission which were directed at changing

situations to conform to what were generally regarded as modern did more damage than good and did not really achieve the chief goal of mission.

Inculturation, the workshop said, paves the way for the "discovery of the seeds of the Word which lie hidden in the given cultures and living traditions (cf. AG, n. 11). The mutual exchange of their discoveries among the local churches lead to their enrichment as well as that of the universal Church.

The Workshop realized that inculturation is a difficult and delicate task. What is vital to the work of inculturation, the consensus paper said, is the proper attitude. There are those who think that inculturation is impossible because it endangers the unity of the Church and would introduce a pluralism that might damage the very content of revelations. The obstacles to inculturation, it was pointed out, are over-eagerness to see results, irresponsible experimentation and undue imposition without sufficient preparation of the people.

Successful inculturation demands from those involved mature freedom in the Spirit which is characterized by docility and trust in God's guidance. This implies the willingness to take risks and profit from mistakes, to be open to correction and be willing to dialogue with others in sincere openness.

As concrete steps towards inculturation the consensus paper made the following recommendations:

1. The Episcopal Conference of each country should give encouragement to initiatives and programs of inculturation in consonance with the spirit and the directives of Vatican II, the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" and the documents of the FABC.

2. A continuing search for and effective working towards common vision of evangelization in Asian countries should be fostered. In the face of the pluralistic cultural and religious condition of the countries of Asia, this common vision is all the more necessary. Episcopal conferences, in close collaboration with the Conferences of Major Religious Superiors, should take initiatives toward this end.

3. Christian communities should develop a positive appreciation of the culture of their own countries. Such appreciation is a grateful acknowledgment of God's gift to a people. This love and acceptance of one's own culture, without being blind to its imperfections, will be shown in the creation of an indigenous spirituality, liturgy and art and a relevant theological reflection and the adoption of style of life in harmony with one's cultural heritage. Centers of research can be established to promote a deeper understanding of one's culture and provide leadership in experimentation.

4. In order to forestall confusion resulting from inculturation and innovative methods in evangelization should animate their communities towards responsible experimentation proceeding by stages and subject to evaluation. The alternation of experience and reflection will mark the process of authentic inculturation.

5. In order to ensure that deepening of faith which is part of genuine inculturation, the following should be undertaken:

a. The use of the Bible by the faithful should be encouraged and promoted;

b. Catechesis should not be merely a handing down of a set of truths but an initiation to the Christian life leading to the development of a spirituality beyond the merely cultic level;

c. Theologizing should be contextual, taking into consideration the ways of thinking and the sets of meanings and values that shape the lives of the people;

d. Efforts should be exerted to foster the contemplative dimension of the Christian faith through a study of the holy writings of Asian cultures and encouragement and guidance in indigenous forms of prayer and ascetism should be provided;

e. Seasonal festivals and other community celebrations should be given a Christian meaning by interpreting them in the light of the faith.

THE URGENCY OF DIALOGUE FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

The members of Workshop III explored the "why" of dialogue, the consequences of its impact on the local church and its ability to offer a servant role to the local church itself.

The paper gave two types of dialogues: one that appeals to individuals of all religious traditions and one that appeals primarily to Christians.

A dialogue among men of different paves the way for the rediscovery a dynamic spiritual dimension sorely needed in the world which is changing so rapidly. Among these men too who are divided by conflicts which at times emanate from differences in religion, the process of dialogue becomes urgent for harmony and peace.

Among Christian dialogue becomes the spark which inflames them to discover that they are partness in bringing forth the love of God in the building up of the Kingdom. They dialogue because they are aware of God's commandment to love their neighbor as themselves.

The process of dialogue brings about an openness and an integration into the mainstream of various cultures among the local churches. Through dialogue, inculturation is made possible.

Since the building up of the Kingdom of God is an essential part of dialogue, dialogue itself gives a greater understanding to mission. It leads to new and more extensive pastoral commitments. The local church becomes a sign and sacrament in its own respective culture.

THE GOSPEL, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A Christian viewing the poverty of Asia must commit himself to work for the development and liberation of his brothers and sisters, the delegates of Workshop IV said. Trying to correct a tendency among Catholics in Asia to see religion in a narrow, spiritualistic fashion, the members of the workshop on Gospel, Development and Liberation state that the mission or task of the Church "is not simply to convert people to an organized religion... It is rather to convert people to authentic human values and to deepen and fulfill these values in Christ..." The formation of values is seen as the specific role of the Church in social action on behalf of the poor.

The workshop also called for the need, specially now, in this time, for the Church of Asia to become the Church of the poor. "It is not that nothing has been achieved. In spite of our sinfulness and weakness much has been done, to make the Church of Asia resemble a little bit more the face of the poor Christ. We do not wish to deny rightful acknowledgments of admirable, often heroic efforts of Christian communities and missionaries, both past and present to bring the Good News to the poor."

This it seems is not enough. What exists, the delegates pointed out was a disparity between the Word and Witnessing. This is traced to several causes: lack of exposure to or actual experience of the misery, the powerlessness and insecurity of the poor; naivete of all too many Christians regarding the structural causes of poverty and injustice which often leads to the adoption of ineffective measures in their attempts to promote justice and human rights; and serious deficiencies in the training of ministers and missionaries of the Church (e.g., an inadequate theology of mission, ignorance of the social teaching of the Church, a certain spiritualism in seminary formation which neglects the laying of solid anthropological foundations).

How to transmit the word to action and thus become the Church of the Poor in Asia? The delegates proposed the following:

1. We must, first of all, rid ourselves more and more thoroughly of that ecclesiocentric attitude which puts institutional interests above the needs of our fellow human beings.

2. All who desire to be counted as missionaries and ministers in Asia must hold it as a first priority somehow to experience in their lives the actual condition of the poor: their insecurity, their powerlessness, their vulnerability — in a word, the life-style of the poor man.

3. A formation for mission and ministry which overcomes those ecclesiocentric attitudes and life-styles counter to evangelization should involve the lived experience of genuine brotherhood and mutual concern, which is ordinarily had in basic Christian communities.

4. A delicate and effective sensitivity to human needs in whatever form it may be found should characterize the Church of Asia. The Church should be ready to put her resources and her influence at the service of those who suffer from hunger, disease, homelessness, persecution, discrimination and oppression.

BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES & LOCAL MINISTRIES

Basic Christian Communities is a phenomenon sweeping through several Catholic countries in the world. It is a movement gaining wide acceptance on the pastoral level. Defying single definition and a structured mode of implementation, BCCs have sprung up, stirring the local churches into a beehive of activity.

Still the question remains: What are Basic Christian Communities and what is their role in the Mission?

The Basic Christian Community as a form of a fuller participation in the life of the Church, the Paper said, deserve the sincere support of all. "In our contemporary context of non-Christian environment and of ideological struggles, the individual Christian can obviously best grow and develop as a Christian person in the midst of a self-nourishing, self-ministering and self-propagating Christian community."

On the problem of ministries, the Paper said, that to achieve the objectives of renewal there must be an effort to come face to face with pastoral inadequacies and problems. "The priestly vocation in its present form does not appear to offer an attractive challenge to the young Asians of today. The ordained minister is often called

today by new services for the integral development of the human person to work beyond his competence. The all-round collegiality and corresponsibility, subsidiarity and collaboration that should flow from the leadership function of these ministers are not yet operative as a matter of course.

If the ordained ministries are to render their special service to the life and mission of the Church, the delegates proposed the following priorities:

1. Inculturation. Ministry as the visible institution in expression and support of Christian life has a primary need to be incarnated into our particular cultures, if it is to become relevant, meaningful and effective for the salvation of our peoples.

2. Leadership in the eradication of poverty and in the fight against social injustices. The selection, formation and maintenance of our ordained ministries should be suited to the local churches.

3. The form of our ordained ministries in Asia should be determined by the communitarian development of our ecclesial awareness. As we grow in our consciousness of the rights and duties of our churches to be local and inculturated, so also our ordained ministries must tend away from hierarchical status and become more and more ecclesial, community-based and oriented.

PRAYER, SPIRITUALITY & FORMATION FOR MISSION

More than in any other part of the world is the need for Christian communities and especially their leaders to be "more ardent in contemplation and adoration" felt and deeply heightened in Asia, the home of age-old living faiths.

Aware of this, the delegates composing Workshop VI expressed concern over "the general tendency among the clergy not to care much for spiritual things." This, they felt, could lead to the ineffectual ministering of "the thirst and hunger of our people in Asia."

The heart of missionary spirituality and the driving force in the orientation of the missionary's interior life to the non-believer is the love of God and the desire to tell others of this love.

An encounter with God, the delegates noted, is experienced through community celebration of life events as the cycle of life, seasonal celebrations and festivities. Thus the delegates stressed that popular piety and folk religiosity must be taken seriously,

examined and fostered. The paper also encouraged the gathering in prayer groups, which show the Church to be "sign and sacrament of God's presence in our midst.

What are essential to the formation of mission especially in Asia?

1. Formation of mission must aim at making the missionary totally immersed in the mystery of the Holy Trinity which he keeps in his heart in silence and contemplation.

2. Formation like prayer and spirituality must be integrated into life and be carried out within the context of Asian reality. To achieve integration the following barriers must be overcome: theological narrowmindedness, psychological roots of faith and life inconsistencies, cultural prejudices and spiritual immaturity.

3. Existential and not merely theoretical opportunities for growth must be provided, to allow for the integration of experiences and theories for questioning ways of thinking instead of simply providing ready-made answers.

4. There should be opportunities for service. Formation for mission indicates a direction of service that needs programming, because the understanding of the reality of mission is complex. Thus formation must be interdisciplinary, going beyond philosophy and theology to growth in cultural awareness, and be open to the real challenges of service in the varied needs of our Asian people.

5. Formation for mission is not to be the exclusive responsibility of those in seminaries or houses of formation for religious. Since missionary activity is to be an activity of the whole People of God, there is a need to bring out ever more emphatically the urgency of this activity in Asia. Thus, there is need to hold retreats, especially of small groups, seminars, workshops and the like to train and develop the laity in his responsibility and to help form the nucleus of basic Christian communities, which appear to be the future form of Christian witness in our secularized and non-Christian communities.

The local church is the center and source of evangelization. In order to facilitate the growth of responsibility for its evangelizing task, the local church should be structured in such a way as to encourage every member bishop, priests, religious and laity to exercise this responsibility. Only in this way can the community, centered in Christ become the authentic people of God.

Those directives issued by and since Vatican II about the setting up of structures which by their very nature are geared to the exercise of co-responsibility within the local church should be implemented

as a matter of urgency. Structures such as parish councils, diocesan pastoral councils, regular meetings of the bishop with the presbyterium, senate of priests, meetings of bishop with religious superiors should be set up, the Paper said.

Co-responsibility at the grassroots level can also be effectively promoted through the building of basic christian communities.

The paper emphasized role of lay people in bringing the Word of God into all areas of christian life. Laymen, the paper said, are called to transform within the professional economic, educational and family life through their witness and their struggle for justice.

Also, the paper said, the candidates for the priesthood and the religious life should receive a formation which is oriented towards the evangelizing task which awaits them. This is equally true of catechists and lay leaders who should be given special formation in seminars, workshops, formal and ongoing training.

To facilitate the exercise of co-responsibility between bishops and religious there should be consultation and planning between bishops and religious. There should be consultation and planning between them — in the spirit of the norms of *Mutuae Relationes*. Bishops in their meetings and conferences should be aware of the thinking of religious and the latter in their turn should be aware of the thinking of the bishop when they meet in provincial chapters.

Each local church is coresponsible with its sister churches every where Rome being the foundation and center for the building of the up of the Kingdom of God throughout the world.

Missionaries from sister churches are not only living signs of the universality of the church and the exercise of coresponsibility but because of their different cultural and christian background, they enrich and fruitfully challenge the local church. The local church should welcome, accept and help integrate them into her life.

An area of special concern is the financial assistance of the poorer churches by those which are better off. In the granting and acceptance of such assistance however it is important that the growth towards self reliance of the receiving church be safeguarded.

In order to be credible to the world of today, a christian community must witness to the poverty of Christ as a sign of its dependence on the power of God and is readiness to share the poverty of the people.

MISSION AND EDUCATION

Aware of the conditions prevailing in Asia today (vast population, poverty, minority Christian and high proportion of young people) and recognizing the church's educational mission at present, the consensus paper on Mission and Education has made the following recommendations:

1. In all her educational endeavors, the Church should make a preferential option for the poor leading to "a genuine commitment and effort to bring about social justice in societies" (FABC, EMDA, 21). This implies that, since evangelizing education touches on liberation for a more humane socio-economic conditions, the Church must break with educational orientations which cater to elitism. Consequently, provisions must be made for widening the possibilities of universal access to education, equalization of educational opportunities, and stimulating the young and adults to discover with the light of faith that they are called to live their Christian vocation in a more responsible manner within the context of solidarity with others (CS, 58).

2. With the immense majority of Asians being young, the dynamism they bring to the Church is so far-reaching that evangelization of the young is definitely a priority for the Church in Asia.

3. Acquisition of knowledge through education is not to be considered as a means for material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others. For this reason educational ministry, in whatever form, should strive to make the educand an agent not only of his own proper development but of the development but also of the development of his community, implying an education for service.

4. There is a need to promote an efficacious education for justice aimed at conversion of heart, the overcoming of individualism, cultivating a sense of solidarity and developing the capacity to be critical of unjust situations violating human rights and dignity.

5. Since every person has the inalienable right to education according to his possibilities and culture (GE, 1), it is incumbent upon the state to recognize its subsidiary role and to respect and protect the rights of parents to educate their children as well as the duty of the Church to freely establish and conduct schools of every type and level.

6. The Church's mission of evangelization through the Catholic school can only be adequately realized by means of the individual

and collective commitment of all the members of the school community. Every effort therefore must be made towards the promotion of Catholic schools. This is where the involvement of the laity must be given full support and encouragement.

The Catholic school should strive to create an educative community permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity which makes possible the communication of Christian values for living. Accordingly, the Catholic school should become a meeting place of believers where the children and the young can encounter Christ as the integral Liberator, the Savior, the man-for-others.

MEDIA AND EVANGELIZATION

Media for social communications is no longer an option but an obligation incumbent on all those responsible for the task of evangelization. This was the declaration of the Workshop on Media and Evangelization.

Other Christian churches are increasingly using their resources for the establishment and use of media for their own purposes. This indicates the importance of media for evangelization. Governments, various ideologies and even anti-religious agencies have understood and utilized the vast potential of the media long ago.

The Consensus Paper has made the following "Practical" recommendations:

1. Media training (mass, group and folk media) should be an integral part of training in seminaries and houses of formation. We strongly recommend the program of seminary training planned by the FABC/CSC for Asia.

2. Opportunities should be provided, especially for Bishops assigned to the National Commissions for Social Communications and Missions, to acquaint themselves with the immense field of media through workshops specifically designed for that purpose.

3. All priests, religious and laity, working in the field of media, should be given the opportunity for professional training. Moreover, it is urgent that full recognition and practical support be given to their apostolate in the contemporary Church.

4. Particular attention should be given to lay men and women involved in this field of media. Orientation of these professionals through seminar/workshops is an important task of evangelization.

Through them the Church can "penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the Spirit of the Gospel" (vat. II, Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, II, 5).

5. "The first priority in our work of evangelization must be given, from the very first stage of our missionary witness and proclamation, to the presentation of the good news seen as "total liberation of the socially and economically oppressed. This is the topmost priority that has to be proclaimed in the Third World under the given circumstances, before time runs out for the missions and other forces take over" (D'Souza). This calls for collaboration of the Church with other christian churches and other religious traditions of Asia without, however, losing their individual identity. Since the social communications media is a powerful instrument for this "total liberation", then collaboration in this expensive field is indispensable. This "inter-faith" use of media can draw strength from the words of Pope John II in Ankara. Turkey, last December 2, when he said: "I wonder whether it is not urgent, precisely today when Moslems and Christians have entered a new period of history, to recognize and develop the spiritual links which unite us to promote and defend together... moral values of peace and liberty."

5. To implement this collaboration; we seek the help of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications and its agencies, namely: UNDA, OCIC, and UCIP, supported by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the People, for the broadening of the efforts at this "total liberation".

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

H. J. Graf, S.V.D.

The Title "Mother of the Church" at Vatican II

At the beginning of Vatican II the commission on faith and morals gave to the Council Fathers a long document of eleven chapters and an appendix, the latter with the title "The Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Men." But there was no opportunity during the first session (1962) to discuss this appendix. For the second session the same appendix was presented to the Fathers as an independent document with the new title, "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church." But during the same session (October 26, 1963) the Fathers voted against an independent Council document on the Blessed Virgin. The appendix was to become a part of the Council document on the Church.

For the third session (1964), however, a new draft for the Marian chapter in the Constitution on the Church had been prepared under the title, "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church." In the subsequent discussions (Sept. 16-18, 1964) some speakers pleaded for the restoration of the title "Mother of the Church" as the heading of the Marian chapter. Others opposed the draft because of its alleged minimalistic tendencies. The Primate of Poland, Cardinal Wyszyński, backed by the entire episcopate of his country, strongly recommended to giving the Blessed Virgin solemnly the title "Mother of the Church."

The results of the discussion in the Council hall were incorporated by the theological commission into the draft text. Though the approved text of the Constitution on the Church stresses the maternal inclination of Mary to the Church, it avoids the title "Mother of the Church," which, as the spokesman of the theological commission said, is theologically legitimate, but open to misunderstandings, and relatively rarely and used only late in Tradition.¹

¹ The expression "mater ecclesiae" is found for the first time in the so-called Magus-Epitaph from the fifth or sixth century. Its text is a free composition, taking elements from the writings of St. Cyprian. It seems to be certain that the lapicide through an error wrote 'ecclesiae' for 'ecclesia'. The text, consequently, refers to the Church as mother, not to a "mother of the Church". Cf. Johannes C. Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesiae. An Inquiry into the Concept of the Church as Mother in Early Christianity* (The Catholic University of America. Studies in Christian Antiquity, No. 5). (Washington, D.C., 1943), p. 80 f.

Tradition

When Mary is called "Mother of the Church" the term mother is used in a figurative sense; it is an image or comparison. Images of speech and comparisons are true from a particular point of view only.

The writers who, in the Middle Ages, called Mary occasionally "Mother of the Church" were fully aware of this insight. The first who called Mary "Mother of the Church" was probably Berengar of Tours who died in A.D. 1088. His work on the Apocalypse of St. John went for a long time under the name of St. Ambrose. Berengar writes on the Woman clothed with the sun: "The woman mentioned in this passage can also mean the Blessed Virgin who is the Mother of the Church, because she gave birth to him who is the head of the Church." But he adds immediately: "She is also a daughter of the Church, because she is the greatest member of the Church."² Consequently, for Berengar the title "Mother of the Church" does not render adequately Mary's relationship to the Church. It has to be supplemented by the opposing statement that Mary is also a daughter of the Church.

An anonymous work of the Middle Ages (from the early thirteenth century), sees Mary's maternity toward the Church in the context of a variety of meanings of the word mother. "Mary is the daughter of the universal Church is the mother of all living. But Mary seems also to be the mother of the Church, because she is certainly the mother of the Head, and may also most fittingly be understood as the mother of the body. Consequently, the Church is the Mother of Mary, and Mary is the mother of the Church."³

Carol Wojtyla, Vicar Capitular of Cracow, together with Jan Jaroszewics, Apostolic Administrator of Kielce (Poland) argued in a similar way in a paper submitted to the theological commission of Vatican II.⁴ Mary's maternity toward the Church stems from the fact that the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. Mary is the physical mother of Christ, the Head, and therefore also the mother of the members of the Mystical Body. How does the physical maternity of Mary to Jesus turn into the spiritual or mystical

² Pseudo-Ambrosius-Berengaudus-Berengarius, *Expositio in Apocalypsin* 12,3,4; PL 17,960.

³ J.B. Pitra, *Dist. Monast.* 3,174; *Spicilegium Solesmense* III, 130 f, quoted by W. Duerig, *Maria — Mutter der Kirche* (St. Ottilien, 1979), p. 17 and 79.

⁴ *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Vol. II Periodus Secunda* (1963). Pars III (Vatican City, 1972), p. 856.

motherhood towards the Church? Here the two Polish bishops referred in their paper to a written intervention of the Polish Bishops' Conference to the theological commission.⁵ The Polish bishops wrote that there is a double motherhood in Mary, a physical and a moral one. She is the physical mother of Jesus whom she conceived in her womb, to whom she gave birth and whom she nursed and raised. In a moral sense she is the mother of all whom Christ redeemed, the mother of all whom Christ was to acquire with his precious blood with the aim to make them one with himself in his Mystical Body. Therefore, Mary is at the same time the (physical) mother of Christ the man, and the (moral, mystical or spiritual) mother of men. She is the physical mother of the Head and the spiritual mother of the members of the Body.

In this theological deliberation the image of the Mystical Body is of utmost importance for the understanding of Mary's motherhood toward the Church. For Bishop Wojtyla it is not a mere image of the Church; it is a closer determination of the very nature of the Church from a Christological, Incarnational and Soteriological point of view.⁶

Not only the term mother but also that of church has a double meaning. We are accustomed to see the Church as that pre-existing community which receives new members. We think of this community as the mother of those whom she has born in the sacrament of baptism, the baptismal font being considered as her maternal womb. Here the Church appears as the spiritual mother of the faithful. If we consider the Church in this sense, then we cannot attribute to Mary the title "Mother of the Church." If we understand the Church as pre-existing society, then Mary is not the mother, but a member of the Church. "Mary is holy; Mary is blessed, but the Church is better than the Virgin Mary. Why? Because Mary is a part of the Church, a holy member, an excellent member, a supereminent member, but still a member of the whole body. If she is a member of the whole body, then the body is more than its member".⁷ To this membership of the Blessed Virgin in the Church also Pope Paul VI referred in his closing address at the end of the third session of Vatican II, when he quoted the medieval abbot Rupert of Deutz saying that Mary is "the greatest part, the chosen part" of the Church."⁸

⁵ Ibid., p. 762.

⁶ Ibid., p. 857: "Aliae enim Ecclesiae imagines non tam profunde naturam eius explicant quam Corpus Christi Mysticum, quod plus est quam imago — est enim determinatio ipsius naturae Ecclesiae sub aspectu christologico et simul sub aspectu mysteriorum Incarnationis et Redemptionis."

⁷ St. Augustine, Sermo 25, 7: PL 46, 937-938. Cf. Liturgy of the Hours, Presentation of the B.V.M., Nov. 21, Office of Readings.

⁸ X. Rynne, *The Third Session* (New York, 1965), p. 386.

If Mary would be the mother of the Church as pre-existing society, then she would be — as a bishop during the discussions of Vatican II said — the grandmother of the individual faithful.⁹ Mary, the mother of the Church; the Church in turn the mother of the individual faithful. Here we have one of the main reasons why the majority of the Council Fathers was reluctant to insert the title "Mother of the Church" in the Constitution on the Church.

But if we understand the Church as the sum total of the believers, as the collection of the many faithful, who as lay people and clergy form the members of the Mystical Body, then we can call her legitimately "Mother of the Church."

Here we have the reason why recent popes, like Leo XIII (enc. *Adiutricem Populi*, 1895), St. Pius X (enc. *Ad Diem Illum*, 1904), Pius XI (enc. *Lux Veritatis*, 1932), Pius XII (enc. *Mystici Corporis*, 1943), John XXIII repeatedly in allocutions and even more frequently Pope Paul VI have called Mary "Mother of the Church."¹⁰

In his closing address to the third session of Vatican II in which the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church with its Marian chapter had been promulgated, Pope Paul VI sated solemnly: "For the glory of the Virgin Mary and for our own consolation, we proclaim the Most Blessed Mary Mother of the Church, that is to say of all the people of God, of the faithful as well as of pastors, who call her the most loving mother... "Mary's divine maternity" also constitutes the principal basis for the relations between Mary and the Church, since she is the mother of Him, who, right from the time of his incarnation in her virginal bosom, joined to himself as head his Mystical Body which is the Church, Mary, then, as Mother of Christ, is mother also of the faithful and of all the pastors."¹¹

The Liturgy

In this sense, subsequently, this title has been inserted into the reformed liturgical books of the Church. For the first time this title has its place in the prayer after communion on the solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God ((January 1).¹²

⁹ O. Semmelroth in: H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. Vol. I (New York, 1967), p. 293.

¹⁰ For references see W. Duerig, *Maria — Mutter der Kirche* (St. Ottilien, 1979), pp. 33-48.

¹¹ X. Rynne, *The Third Session* (New York, 1965), p. 387.

¹² *Latin Missale Romanum* (Vatican City, 1970) p. 163.

Sempalmus Domine,
 laeti sacramenta caelestia:
 praesta, quaecumque,
 ut ad vitam nobis proficiant sempiternam,
 qui beatam semper Virginam Mariam
 Eili tu Genetricem et Ecclesiae Matrem
 profiteri gloriamur.
 Per Christum Dominum.

Father,
 as we proclaim the Virgin Mary
 to be the Mother of Christ
 and the Mother of the Church
 may our communion with her Son
 bring us to salvation.

We ask this through Christ.

The translation of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) glosses over several important points stressed in this prayer after communion. One of the basic Christian attitudes is joy, so that St. Paul exhorts his faithful to "rejoice always in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4; cf. 1 Thess. 5:16). In this attitude of joy (*laeti*) the faithful have received the bread from heaven, which is therefore called "heavenly sacrament."

Christ had said at Capernaum that he is "the bread come down from heaven... he who eats this bread will live for ever" (Jn. 6:58). Quite naturally, therefore, the reception of holy communion leads to the petition that it may bring the communicants to everlasting life. This petition is more concrete, and says more than ICEL's abstract formulation of "salvation."

All sacraments are sacraments of faith.¹³ From the earliest centuries the Church's Creed contains the profession that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, was born in time of the Virgin Mary. In this prayer after communion we refer to this article of faith. Actually, "we glory" (*gloriamur*) in the fact that Mary is the ever-virgin; that she is the Mother of the eternal Father's Son — not only "the mother of Christ" as the ICEL rendition states; that she is the Mother of the Church, because she is the Mother of Christ, the Church's Head. This we profess: Mary is Virgin; Mary is Mother — Mother of God and the Church. This is a fitting profession on the first of January, when we celebrate the solemnity of Mary, the holy Mother of God.

A Votive Mass

Rome approved a Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church for Poland in 1971.¹³ In preparation of the Holy Year 1975 the Central Commission for the Celebration of the Holy Year published in 1973 a booklet,¹⁴ which contained a Mass in honor of Mary "Mother of the Church." It was made accessible

¹³ Constitution on the Liturgy, art. 59.

¹⁴ *Notitiae* 7 (1971), 389.

to a wider public in English speaking countries in a translation by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy.¹⁵

When the first typical edition of the reformed Latin Missale Romanum (1970) had been sold out, a new, revised and augmented edition was published in 1975 which contained among other elements some new Mass formularies among which was also a votive Mass of Mary, the Mother of the Church,¹⁷ though without the readings that had been found in the booklet for the Holy Year 1975.

The euchological texts and the liturgical chants of this Mass refer frequently to the biblical basis of Mary's spiritual motherhood: to her assent to the incarnation of the Son of God (Lk. 1:26-38), to the wedding at Cana (Jn.2:1-11), to her standing by the cross of Jesus (Jn. 19:25-34) and to her prayerful presence among the disciples waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:12-14). All these readings, together with Gen. 3:9-15.20 (mother of the living) were parts of the Mass for the celebration of the Holy Year 1975.

Entrance Antiphon

Erant discipuli perseverantes
unanimiter in oratione
cum Maria, Matre Iesu (cf. Acts 1:14).

The disciples were
constantly at prayer
with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

After the Ascension Mary associated herself with the nascent Church in prayer for that same "power from on high" (Lk. 24:49) that had over-shadowed herself (Lk. 1:35) when she gave her consent to the redemptive incarnation of the Son of God. She had fostered that same Spirit in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19.51) so that the Word that had been made flesh in her, would sink its roots ever more deeply into the fertile ground of her soul and bring forth a hundredfold fruit (cf. Lk. 8:8). Now as the mother of the nascent Church she is to foster in the Church's members the Spirit of her Son who dwells in the Church as in a temple (1 Cor. 3:16). What she began in her prayer during that first novena in the Upper Room, that she continues as long as the pilgrim Church on earth exists. This was the message of the alternative Alleluia-acclamation in the Mass of Mary,

¹⁵ Ordo Anni Sancti Celebrandi in Ecclesiis Particularibus (Vatican City, 1973), pp. 88-90.

¹⁶ Order for the Celebration of the Holy Year in the Local Churches (Washington D.C., 1974), pp. 82-84 and 132-134. The English translation is taken from this booklet.

¹⁷ Missale Romanum. Editio typica altera (Vatican City, 1975), pp. 867-869.

the Mother of the Church for the Holy Year 1975: "O happy Virgin, you gave birth to the Lord! O blessed Mother of the Church, you foster in us the Spirit of your Son Jesus Christ."¹⁸

Opening Prayer

Deus, misericordiarum Pater,
cuius Unigenitus, cruci affixus
beatam Mariam Virginem
Genetricem suam,
Matrem quoque nostram constituit,
concede, quaesumus,
ut, eius cooperante caritate,
Ecclesia tua, in dilecti fecundior,
prolia sanctitate exsultet
et in gremium suum cunctas
attrahat familias populorum.
Per Dominum.

Father of mercies,
your only Son, hanging on the Cross,
gave us his Virgin Mother Mary
to be our mother also.

Under her loving care
may her children grow
daily in holiness,
so that all mankind
may see in your Church
the mother of all nations.
We ask this.

"Hanging on the cross Jesus said to the disciple whom he loved: 'There is your mother!'" (Jn, 19:26-27)¹⁹ From about the twelfth century on these words of the Lord are used to describe and explain the universal motherhood of the Blessed Virgin. John the apostle is here seen as the representative of the whole of mankind, while Mary is the mother of all those who through faith and baptism have been incorporated into the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. St. Antonine of Florence (+ 1459) used this text as proof for Mary's spiritual motherhood: "What says this man Jesus to Zion, i.e., to the Church? He says, 'Mother,' that is to say, she is your mother. You had a father of mercies.²⁰ Receive now also a mother of mercy and consolation. Zion, behold, here is your mother. O Church, I will that she who is my mother is to be your mother also. She is my natural mother; she is to be your spiritual mother."²¹

From earliest times Mary and the Church have been seen together. Mary is, so to say, an archetype of the Church, both in her virginity and in her motherhood. At the same time we have to retain that Mary is also a member of the Church. Both as member

¹⁸ "O felix Virgo, quae Dominum genuisti, o beata Mater Ecclesiae, quae in nobis foves Spiritum Filii tui Iesu Christi: "Ordo Anni Sancti . . . (Vatican City), 1973), p. 88.

¹⁹ The sentence in quotation marks is one of the alternative communion antiphons of this Mass.

²⁰ See the opening line of this prayer.

²¹ Summa Theologica, Pars IV, Titulus XV, Cap. II (Verona 1740, reprint Graz 1959), Col. 917: "Quid autem dicit iste homo Jesus Zion, id est Ecclesiae? Illud, mater scilicet est tibi: patrem habebas misericordiarum, accipe et matrem totius consolationis et miserationum. Ecce mater tua, O Sion. O Ecclesia, quae est mater mea, volo ut sit et mater tua. Mea est mater naturalis, tua est mater spiritualis." This is part of an explanation of Ps. 87(86):5.

of the Church and as mother of the Church she is deeply interested in the Church. Therefore, "under her loving care" (*eius cooperante caritate*), under her loving cooperation, the Church is supposed to grow in the holiness of her children and in the number of members from all nations and races. In the Latin term *cooperante* the opening prayer stresses the fact that Mary does not act independently but in close connection with her Son in the Church. Weak and pale is here the ICEL-translation when it asks "that all mankind may see in (the) Church the mother of all nations." As a matter of fact, the Latin original asks that the Church may attract to her maternal bosom all nations of the world.

The opening prayer of this Mass is, therefore, mission-minded. It asks that the Church, through the loving care of Mary, our mother — expressed in her intercession — may become fruitful in holiness and grow in numbers. It asks that in the Church's maternal womb, the baptismal font, ever new children may be born to her. These same children are then supposed to grow in holiness to the joy of the Church. Here we must not forget that holiness is one of the Church's essential attributes.

Prayer over the Gifts

Suscipe, Domine, oblationes nostras
et in mysterium salutis converte,

cuius virtute
et caritate Virginis Mariae,
Ecclesiae Matris, inflammemur
et operi redemptionis cum ea
arctius sociari mereamur.
Per Christum.

Lord, accept our offerings,
and make them the sacrament
of our salvation:
By its power
warm our hearts with the love of the
Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church
and bring us closer to her in
sharing the work of your redeeming love.
We ask this through Christ.

The prayers over the gifts usually refer to the gifts prepared for the eucharistic celebration, set apart on the altar, from the realm of everyday life, to become for us the bread of life and our spiritual drink. The Latin *converte* expresses the change that is to take place here: God is to change our earthly gifts into the *mysterium salutis*, the mystery or sacrament of our salvation. This is the petition of the first part of this prayer over the gifts.

Then follows a new one. By the power of this "sacrament of our salvation" (*cuius virtute*) and through the loving care and concern of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church, may we be set aflame, i.e., get a deeper, more intensive love, and thus become more intimately associated with Mary in the work of redemption.

Here the text subtly alludes to the fact that whenever the eucharist is celebrated *opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur*.²² What Mary experienced under the cross "enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associated herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her"²³ that we ask in this prayer for ourselves who are now brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, in the moment, when in the eucharistic prayer *opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur*. We want like Mary, to be more intimately associated, we want to take part more actively and sincerely, we want to enter more intensely into the work of our redemption that becomes sacramentally present and accessible to us in the celebration of the eucharist.

The prayer over the gifts continues an idea of the opening prayer, where Mary's association with the sacrifices on the cross is described. We are supposed to become as intimately associated, as deeply involved in the eucharistic sacrifice as Mary was in the sacrifice of her Son on the cross.

Preface

De Maria, forma et matre Ecclesiae.

Vere dignum. . .

aeterne Deus:

Et te in celebratione

Beatae Mariae Virginis
debitis magnificare praekonis.

Quae Verbum tuum immaculato
corde suscipiens

virgineo meruit sinu concipere
atque, pariens Conditorum,

Ecclesiae fovit exordia.

Quae iuxta crucem testamentum
divinae caritatis accipiens,

universos homines
in filios assumpsit,

Christi morte
ad supernam vitam generatos.

Quae, cum Apostoli Promissum
expectarent tuum,
supplicationem suam discipulorum
precibus iungens,
exemplar extitit orantis Ecclesiae.

Mary Model and Mother of the Church

Father, all-powerful . . .

to give you thanks,
and, as we honor
the Blessed Virgin Mary,
to offer you fitting praise.

She received your Word
in the purity of her heart,
and conceived him
in her virgin's womb;
she gave birth to her Creator
and watched over the Church
at its first beginning.

She accepted God's parting gift
of love as she stood beside the Cross,
and so became the Mother of all
the living, her children brought
to new life through the death
of her Son.

One in prayer with the apostle
as they waited for the promised
Gift of your Spirit,
she became the perfect pattern
of the Church at prayer.

²² Const. on the Liturgy, art. 2 — Constitution on the Church, art. 3. — Prayer over the gifts in the Mass of the Lord's Supper and in several other Masses of the Roman Missal.

²³ Constitution on the Church, art. 58.

Ad gloriam autem evecta caelorum,
 Ecclesiam peregrinantem
 materno prosequitur amore
 eiusque gressus ad patriam
 tuetur benigna,
 donec dies Domini gloriosus adveniat.
 Et ideo cum Sanctis
 et Angelis universis
 to collaudamus, sine fine dicentes:

Raised to the glory of heaven,
 she cares for the pilgrim Church
 with a mother's love,
 following its progress homewards
 until the Day of the Lord
 dawns in splendor.
 Now, with all the saints
 and angels
 we praise you for ever:

In the preface the Church praises God for the role he has assigned to Mary in the history of salvation, in the work of redemption. The first statement is that she has "received the Word in the purity of her heart." Why this assertion before the text goes on to praise the Father that he has made her the mother of his Son through Whom and for Whom all things were created (cf. Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3)?

The beginning of all saving activity in which God and man cooperate is faith. Faith comes from hearing (cf. Rom. 10:17). Mary heard the angel's word, answered in faith and was rightly praised for it by Elizabeth (Lk. 1:45). Here we have the reason why St. Leo the Great could say that Mary "conceived in her soul before she conceived him in her body."²⁴ Vatican II echoed this assertion of St. Leo when it stated that Mary "at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body."²⁵ Because of her willingness to accept in faith the message of God communicated by an angel, she was considered worthy "to conceive" the eternal Son of the Father "in her virgin's womb" and "gave birth to her Creator."

In the conception of the Divine Word in her womb she laid, through her consent also the first foundation of the building of the Church, because in Christ, in his humanity we have the beginnings of the Church. Mary fostered in her loving care this "Church" in its first beginnings, from the day of Christ's birth to the time in Egypt and the silent years in Nazareth.

Standing by the cross Mary heard the words: "Women, behold your son!" In faith she accepted this last will and testament of her Son, and thus received all the redeemed as sons and daughters in the place of the Son of God who had deigned to become also her Son. Not only John is given to her in place of Jesus, not only the Son of Zebedee in the place of the Son of God. Here she

²⁴ Sermo 1 in Nat. Domini 2, 3: PL 54, 191, found in the Liturgy of the Hours on July 16 (Our Lady of Mount Carmel).

²⁵ Constitution on the Church, art. 54.

received all those as sons and daughters who were to be united to the death of her Son in the sacrament of rebirth, in baptism (c. Rom. 6:3-9).

According to the opening prayer Mary is the archetype of the Church in her virginity and maternity. Now the preface adds: she is also the Church's model in her prayer, as the image of the bride who, in prayer, addresses the bridegroom,²⁰ as the model of the virgin who is "anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit" (1 Cor. 7:34). She is so intimately connected with Christ, the Head of the Church as no one else. When the community of the faithful is mentioned for the first time in the Acts of the Apostles, it is gathered together at prayer "with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14) asking for the Spirit in the days between the Ascension and Pentecost.

A third time in this Mass — after the opening prayer and the prayer over the gifts — the maternal love of the Blessed Virgin is mentioned in the preface. In her glory, Mary joins, so to say, her divine Son who is now "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hb. 7:25 cf. Rom. 8:34). In her bliss in heaven she does not forget her spiritual sons and daughters of the pilgrim Church on earth. With maternal care she observes their every step on their way to the heavenly homeland. In and through Christ, her Son, she continues to do so until the day of the glorious Parousia dawns, when all the chosen ones will be raised to the glorious resurrection to join Jesus and his glorified mother in the happiness of heaven, in that dwelling which Jesus went ahead to prepare for them (Jn. 14:3).

Communion antiphon

*Nuptiae factae sunt in Cana Galilaeae,
et erat Mater Iesu ibi;
tunc fecit initium signorum Iesus
et manifestavit gloriam suam,
et crediderunt in eum discipuli
eius (Cf. Jn. 2:1-11).*

*There was a wedding at Cana in
Galilee, and the mother of Jesus
was there. Jesus performed the
first of his signs there and
revealed his glory, and his
disciples believed in him.*

Only the first and last verses of this gospel passage are mentioned, though — since they include the entire section — they mean the whole. Mary intervenes with her Son for the couple to whose wedding she had been invited. She appeals to his mercy and love: "They have no wine." Then she turns to the attendants: "Do whatever he tells you."

²⁰ Cf. Const. on the Liturgy, art. 84.

Until the day of Cana Mary had acted as the physical mother of Jesus taking care of her Son. Now she begins to extend her maternal concern to the people around Jesus, to his spiritual body, which, in the course of the centuries, is to grow continuously in number and perfection. For this Body, Mary is to become the mother, doing the same she had done for Jesus in his earthly life. This will come to pass when "the Hour" has come. Cana saw only the humble and silent beginnings of her intercession and exhortation. In the time of the Church it will repeat itself again and again.

Is it not significant that this activity of Mary began at a wedding, at a festival of love? Is it not equally significant that what Mary asked of Jesus was a gift of love in the service of human joy, "wine to gladden the heart of man" (P 104:15)? Perhaps we have in this communion antiphon — suggested by its context — a hint at the precious wine, the Blood of Christ, that Mary had prepared in her "Yes" to the Incarnation of the Son of God.

The event at Cana has also an eschatological dimension; it is an image of the heavenly wedding banquet (cf. Apoc. 19:9). At Mass we "share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem."²⁷ Therefore we hear in the reformed Mass rite before the distribution of holy communion: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Apoc. 19:9).²⁸ Until we reach this blessed supper, in the time of the Church Mary continues to act for us and speak to us in spiritual form. She acts for us. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church calls this activity "intercession" through which Mary procures for us the "wine," the gifts of salvation. Secondly, she speaks to us exhorting us to turn to Jesus, to listen to him, to do what he commands us to do, and to receive the gifts won for us by him. Also to this, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church refers repeatedly.

Prayer after communion

Sumplo, Domine, pignore
redemptionis et vitae,
supplices adprecamur,
ut Ecclesia tua,
materna Virginis ope,
et Evangelii praeconio
universas gentes erudiat
et spiritus effusione
orbem terrarum adimpleat.
Per Christum.

Lord, we have received
the promise and foretaste
of the fullness of redemption:
we pray that your Church,
through the intercession
of the Virgin Mother,
may proclaim the Gospel
to all nations, and fill
the whole world with the presence
of your Spirit. Through Christ.

²⁷ Const. on the Liturgy, art. 8.

²⁸ The reference to the "supper of the Lamb" has been omitted in the ICEL translation of the Mass rite. This deprived the text of its eschatological meaning and explains why so many priests say: "Happy are we who are called to this supper," meaning, this eucharistic celebration.

The prayer after communion is hardly ever a prayer of thanksgiving. It is a prayer of petition, usually for the fruits of holy communion and of the eucharistic celebration as such. These fruits must not only be felt in the life of the individual communicant. They may also have ecclesial dimensions. They may be fruits like those asked for in the communion epiclesis of the eucharistic prayers, where we ask, e.g., that "all of us, who share in the body and blood of Christ, may be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit."²⁹

In the Mass of Mary, Mother of the Church, this ecclesial petition is taken up. After we have received in communion the eucharistic body and blood of Christ as the pledge of redemption and life, we pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the whole earth, that under the Spirit's guidance and illumination all people may come to the knowledge of the truth through the proclamation of the Gospel.

This ecclesial dimension of the prayers after communion is not very frequent, but it is not entirely missing. It is present especially in the prayers of the Mass formularies for the Universal Church. In the first of these three Masses³⁰ we ask that, sustained and renewed by the Eucharist, we may become a leaven in the world and bring salvation to mankind. The second prayer asks that the work of the Church may continue to make known the mystery of salvation to the poor whom Christ has promised the chief place in his Father's kingdom; (cf. Mt. 5:3). The third postcommunion prayer of these Masses asks that "our work on earth may build" God's "eternal kingdom in freedom." Quite naturally, the same ecclesial dimension is found in the Mass formularies for the Spread of the Gospel.

Such concern for the salvation of the whole world and its final gathering in the one Church of Christ is very fitting theme for the prayer after communion in the Mass of Mary, Mother of the Church. Mary's role is seen here as an auxiliary one (*ope*). She never acts independently. She prayed in the midst of the apostles for the descent of the Holy Spirit who was to teach the Church and bring to its remembrance all that Jesus had said to his disciples (cf. Jn. 14:26). His coming on the young Church was to make the disciples witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit is seen here as the impelling force that sends the apostles into the world for the proclamation of the Good News.

²⁹ Eucharistic Prayer II.

³⁰ The Sacramentary (Catholic Trade Inc., Manila, 1974), pp. 867 ff.

Mary's prayer for the spread of the Gospel and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the whole world, did not come to an end on the day of Pentecost. It continues through the time of the Church until the day when the kingdom of God will have reached its fullness. Consequently, the Second Vatican Council concluded its Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church with the petition that "through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, the nations may be led to the knowledge of the truth as soon as possible (1 Tim. 2:4), and that the splendor of God which brightened the face of Jesus Christ may shine upon all men through the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 4:6) (art. 42).

Toward a special Feast?

The calendar reform after Vatican II aimed, among others, at a reduction in number of so-called devotional feasts,³¹ i.e., feasts which do not commemorate an event within the mystery of salvation, but some particular aspect of one of these events (Sacred Heart, Precious Blood), or of one of the titles of the Lord or Our Lady (Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Holy Name of Mary). It seems that the title of Our Lady as "Mother of the Church" is gradually becoming a liturgical feast of its own. In the meantime the bishops' conferences of Poland and Yugoslavia³² obtained from home the permission to celebrate Mary as Mother of the Church with the rank of feast on Monday after Pentecost. This seems to be a well-chosen day. Many countries celebrate this day as a public, non-religious holiday, as in Great Britain, where it is a so-called bank holiday. Frequently, this day belongs still to the month of May, which is particularly dedicated to the devotion of Mary. The closeness to Pentecost intimates that Mary's role as Mother of the Church is centered around Pentecost and the Holy Spirit. The entrance antiphon, the preface and, in a more subtle way, the prayer after communion refer to Mary's prayer in the midst of the nascent Church for the coming of the Spirit and for the spread of the Church through the proclamation of the Gospel. It remains to be seen whether this is a first step in a development which may eventually lead to the extension of such a celebration to the whole Church.

Much will depend on the man, who, as bishop Carol Wojtyła was so deeply interested in this Marian title during the Second Vatican

³¹ *Calendarium Romanum*. Commentarius (Vatican City, 1969) p. 66.

³² *Notitiae* 15 (1979), 162. For OFM: *Ibid.*, p. 307.

Council, and today as Pope John Paul II continues to venerate the Blessed Virgin as Mother of the Church. He referred to her right after his election, when he presented himself to the City of Rome and to the world on the evening of October 16, 1978. He explained this title in his first encyclical Letter "Redemptor Hominis" where he states both that the Church is a mother and that this Church has need of a mother, and concludes: "I implore Mary, the heavenly Mother of the Church, to be so good as to devote herself to this prayer . . . together with us who make up the Church, that is to say the Mystical Body of her only Son. I hope that through this prayer we shall be able to receive the Holy Spirit coming upon us and thus become Christ's witnesses 'to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8), like those who went forth from the Upper Room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost" (IV, 22).

HOMILETICS

BIBLICAL NOTES AND HOMILIES FOR APRIL

By

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

(April 3, 1980)

First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8.11-14. The Paschal Lamb was both sacrifice (v. 17) and sacrificial meal. It eminently prefigures Christ, our true Paschal Lamb, who has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7) and of whom we partake (Jn. 6:54). Innocent and without blemish, the lamb was immolated toward evening, its flesh eaten, its blood communicated to the dwelling places as a sign of salvation and well-being. All this is fulfilled in Christ. St. Justin also mentions that the paschal lamb was placed on two spits in the form of a cross before it was immolated.

The actions and gestures accompanying the passover meal as it was celebrated year after year were to remind God's People of their passing out of slavery to the freedom of the promised land. The word "passover" was given a popular root-meaning, taken from the Hebrews pesach (Aramaic pascha), meaning both to pass over and to pass through. Both meanings are applied by the sacred writer to the situation at hand: God passed over Israel, sparing their lives, and Israel passed through the sea to freedom.

Second Reading: First Corinthians 11:23-26. Together with 10:21 this is the earliest witness to the Eucharist (written about 56 A.D.). It contains clear statements about the nature of the Eucharist:

1) The Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Christ. The words are crystal clear as is the inference from v. 29. In the original Greek it is simply stated: "This is my Body, which is for you", body meaning himself totally as manifested. His is a life for others, now a total sacrifice for man. In the second part, "this cup is the new covenant in my Blood", two figures of speech are employed: the container (cup) stands for what is contained in it, and the

effect (the covenant) is given instead of the cause (the Blood, that is, the sacrificial death), which brings about the permanent covenant between God and man.

2) The Eucharist is a true sacrifice: The Body and Blood are mentioned separately, the pouring out being the sign of sacrifice. The same reference to sacrifice is found in v. 12. Then there is an inescapable allusion to the sacrifice on Mt. Sinai, when the Old Covenant was sealed by the pouring out of the blood of animal sacrifices with the words: This is the blood of the covenant Ex. 24:8.

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

4) The Apostles are empowered to perpetuate the very act which Christ performed: vv. 24,26. The power passes on to their successors, because it must be enacted "until he comes" (v. 26).

Reading of the Good News: John 13:1-15. Two trends of thought are presented in this passage:

1) The stupendous example of humble service, given by him "who was fully aware that he came from God" (v. 3), by an action usually performed by slaves, to summarize and climax an entire life of total service to others in this supreme symbol of service.

2) The emphasis on cleaning by means of Christ's salvific work, realized through his "self-emptying", as well as the need of accepting Christ's standpoint in this matter, in order to have any fellowship with him. The "washing" and "cleansing" conjure up the sacrament of initiation into Christ, which is baptism.

But the passage is also replaced with other considerations: 1) It is the first time that John mentions the real motive behind the passion and death is Christ's extreme love, an important factor in understanding the mystery of the Cross.

2) Behind the scenes invisible forces are at work to undo the work of Christ, a personal archenemy working through one of the closest companions of Jesus, who had turned traitor, Judas Iscariot.

3) Christ's command to live a similar life of service as given by him in the example of the washing of the feet.

HOMILY THE EUCHARIST

On this very evening, almost 2000 years ago. Jesus reclined at table with his chosen disciples. He had just given them the supreme example of loving service which was to characterize his disciples:

he had knelt down before them and washed their feet, the task of a slave for his master. But now it is the master who washes the feet of his servants. "The great ones in the world" he said, "lord it over their subjects, but he who wishes to be great among you must be the servant of all" (Lk. 22:25f).

To cap his example of love and service, he resumed his place at table, and taking bread into his sacred hands, he instituted the stupendous mystery of the Eucharist. "This is my Body", he said, "take and eat". And over the cup of wine: "This is the cup of my Blood, which is poured out for you". From that day till now, we have celebrated the Eucharist, wherein Jesus crystallized his entire life of sacrifice and loving service. In churches and chapels, in prisons and hovels, in open and in secret, Christ's ministers have celebrated the Eucharist as he told them: "Do this in remembrance of me."

The Eucharist is first of all, the great and unique sacrifice of the New Covenant, the memorial sacrifice of his passion and death, of his resurrection and ascension. Again it is Christ offered in sacrifice under the appearance of bread and wine as he was that first time in the upper room. He offers himself to the Father for the sins of men, but specially to thank the Father as a dutiful Son for his immense goodness toward men. But the Eucharist is not only a sacrifice, it is a sacrificial meal, instituted in the very midst of a meal, that last supper before he died. Truly it is Christ's love-feast, for he gives himself utterly out of love to all who will come to receive him. The family of God gathers around the table of the Lord. That is why it is celebrated with joy and festive song.

Moreover, the Eucharist is the sign of unity and love. Just as many grains go into the making of one loaf of bread, and many grapes into one drink, so we, though many, are one Christ (1 Cor. 10:17). It is a sign of unity between God and man for it is the renewal of the Covenant in Christ's Blood. Likewise it is the sign of unity between all those who are one in Christ. Therefore ought all men love one another for we eat and drink of the same sacred banquet, which ought to unite us all in a community of love.

Just as the paschal lamb was immolated and eaten by the People of God of old, so the Eucharist is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. He is the true Lamb, whose Blood redeems men and saves them from eternal death. His flesh is food indeed, and by him we are nourished for eternal life, for he who eats his flesh and drinks his blood will live forever. Today we renew ourselves in our awareness of Christ's immense love for us, in his instituting this unique testimony of his goodness. He remains

always with us as our sacrifice and our food, to enable us as God's children to grow into the full stature of Christ, until we see him face to face in the realms above, and partake of the divinity of which the Eucharist is a foretaste.

GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION
(April 4, 1980)

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOMILIES ON THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

1. **Father forgive them (Lk. 23:34).**
 - a. The Sufferings of the victim-lamb: See Is. 52:13 as far as 53:7.
 - b. Christ's loving forgiveness of his worst enemies. He finds an excuse: v. 14.
 - c. Our duty of forgiving those who wronged us: see Mt. 6:12; 18:35.
2. **This day you will be with me in paradise (Lk. 23:43).**
 - a. The fruit of the Lamb's sufferings (see Isaiah 53:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:21-24).
 - b. Christ's love for each and every sinner. See Gal. 2:20; Mt. 11:28).
 - c. Compunction and repentance in view of Christ's undying love in death.
3. **Woman, there is your son (Jn. 19:26).**
 - a. The last gift of Jesus before he died to all his faithful ones: his Mother. Mary's spiritual Motherhood over all the Church promulgated.
 - b. The spiritual birthpangs of the Mother to bring forth the children of God.
 - c. The faithful disciple (Jn. 19:27) looks to the Mother for guidance and help. His life is not his but Christ's living in him (Gal. 2:20a).
4. **My God, my God why have you forsaken me (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34).**
 - a. His last agony: inner darkness; cursed and mocked by man; seemingly alone in death. (See Ps. 22:7-12; Is. 53:4).
 - b. In reality, the object of the Fathers's good pleasure: Hebr. 2:10; 2:18; 5:7-10; Phil. 2:8-11.
 - c. Jesus, solace of those in inner darkness, hope of the dying, Savior of men.

5. **I thirst:** Jn. 19:28.
 - a. The excruciating pain of those dying of thirst (See Ps. 22:15-16). 22:15-16).
 - b. The spiritual thirst of the Heart of Jesus for the hearts of all men whom he redeemed by such sufferings and even by his death: See Jn. 7:37-38.
 - c. The song of the redeemed: Ps. 23 and Rev. 5:9.12.
6. **Now it is finished** (Jn. 19:30)
 - a. The great work of redemption accomplished (See Jn. 17:4; Hebr. 1:1-4). Satan dethroned; heaven opened; God glorified forever.
 - b. Man's ingratitude: the indifference of the worldly-minded. The sin of unbelief.
 - c. Gratitude of those faithful to Christ, as shown in these days of the paschal triduum. Return to God. Love for Christ. Renewal in the Christ-life.
7. **Father, into your hands I commend my spirit** (Lk. 23:46)
 - a. The childlike obedience of Jesus all thru life to the very end (Jn. 4:34).
 - b. Submission to the Father's will, his last act on earth.
 - c. Our model when death comes to take us to the Father (See 1 Pet. 4:1-2.19).

EASTER SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

(April 6, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 10: 34a.37-43. A resumé of the chief content of the oral kerygma (which kept developing until it formed the material for the written gospels). God's plan of salvation for mankind is concentrated in Jesus of Nazareth, climaxing Israel's salvation history. Peter proclaims the Good News in its salient points:

- 1) The divine mission of Jesus, anointed by the Spirit.
- 2) His death on the cross.
- 3) His resurrection. The Apostles are witnesses to the Risen Lord.
- 4) His command to proclaim the Good News of salvation.
- 5) His glorious Coming as Judge of all.
- 6) Forgiveness of sin: the result of his salvific work.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-4. The Risen Christ is the source of new life for every Christian who also has risen spiritually (or in Spirit) to new life in Christ. Since Christ is enthroned at the

Father's right hand, let the Christian pursue the aims of Christ, and not merely material aims. Even though his work be in the things of earth, his aim must be to further the work of Christ, who, as head of the universe, builds through each of his members the world to come. In baptisms, the Christian had died to all that displeases God. His new life, lived in the midst of the world, is interior and hidden in Christ. Thus he can live the Christ-life to the full, by doing good to his fellowmen. When Christ comes in glory, the faithful Christian will openly share his glory.

Reading of the Good News: John 20:1-9. Though no one was present to witness the resurrection itself, all the Apostles bore witness to the fact that Jesus had risen, and was alive in their midst. They had never understood it when he prophesied about rising from the dead, so it is no wonder that only now even John came to believe it. Although the Apostles (except Thomas) were all given to see the Risen Christ in person that same day, yet already now the very fact that the tomb was empty with the linens retaining the same position of the body laid in the tomb (and not thrown aside) convinced John of what had happened. The recent controversy whether the dead body of Jesus might still be found (since his glorified body is a totally transformed one) is pointless, because the enemies could so easily have removed the stone and made a laughing stock of the Apostles' testimony. The ridiculous story of the Apostles' stealing the body needs no refutation, as if Pilate would have let it go at that. The entire tenor of the Gospel narrative argues against it. Only the Risen Christ, the identical Christ they knew for sure had died, could have made the Apostles the staunch witnesses they proved to be, and only then when he first gave them his Spirit. The fact of the resurrection, preached far and wide by the Apostles made such an impression on contemporaries, that it brought in conversions by the thousands. Christ has died, but Christ is risen, and lives in our midst!

HOMILY

AFTER DEATH, LIFE, TRUE AND UNENDING

(Note: pointers for other homilies are given in the biblical notes above).

They thought he was an imposter when he died, but he rose triumphant from the grave and proved to all Israel that he was her Messiah-King, the One sent by the Father for the salvation of all mankind, Jesus of Nazareth, crucified three days previous. He died the death of a criminal, the Roman crucifixion, but he

rose glorious and immortal, he the Holy One of Israel, the innocent Lamb of God, having accomplished the mission given him by the Father. He seemed to have been taken away by an untimely death in the height of manhood, but he entered upon a life of glory that never ends, and he lives on in the believing community, the Church, which is his Body. Jesus of Nazareth born of the Virgin Mary, has conquered death, and death has no longer any hold on him. He has entered into life, that never ends, for he himself is the Life that was with the Father and has been manifested to man (1 Jn. 1:2), the Life which all the powers of darkness could not succeed in overcoming (Jn. 1:5).

Now the heart of man can take courage, for Life itself has conquered death, and all who die in Christ have this same hope, that though they die, they will rise again in the glory of the Risen Christ. They will enter upon a new life, free from sorrow and pain, for man's miseries will be absorbed by the sufferings of Christ, and will enable him to merit a glorious reward at the throne of the Most High. The poor who had little in this world, yet trusted in God, will share the riches of the Godhead. The downtrodden who never could win out over those who lorded it over them will themselves be lords of the world to come, and rule with Christ forever. The handicapped who never succeeded in making a success of life will enjoy the lasting success of having remained faithful to God with a clean conscience. All those who strove to do God's will in their own calling and their individual capacities, will glory in the God who loves them with infinite love and has prepared a dwelling place for them that is incorruptible and everlasting.

Easter joy rings with Alleluja: Praise the Lord! All praise is due to him who gallantly went the way of the Cross and is now gloriously reigning at the throne of the Most High. Alleluja: Praise the Lord! God has seen fit to give us his own Son to be our Savior and Brother, who bore all our sufferings and miseries, turning them into capital for acquiring the riches of God. Alleluja: Praise the Lord! Jesus the Savior has tasted life on earth, has tasted our sufferings even unto death, now he is the Hope of every human heart. He reigns forever, and we shall reign with him. Buoyed up with new Easter joy, our hearts are ready to take up our daily tasks again, for soon the everlasting Easter shall dawn, and on our lips will be the eternal Alleluja; Praise the Lord.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (April 13, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 5:12-16. A glimpse into the early Christian community. The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit was accom-

panied by many "signs" and "wonders". All were made to see that the community headed by the Apostles was the work of God and not merely the work of man. They met as a body in one of the porches of the Temple-grounds toward the East. Only those who professed their belief in Jesus could belong to their group. Peter's prominence stands out as he continues the role of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Second Reading: Revelation 1:9-11, 12-13, 17-19. The author makes it clear that sharing Christ's kingly reign on earth entails sufferings, in bearing witness to Christ and the gospel-message. Darkness will always hate the Light and try to snuff it out (Jn. 1:4). Patient endurance wins the crown.

The ensuing brilliant vision unveils Christ gloriously reigning in the midst of the Church, symbolized by the lampstands (v. 20), seven being the symbolic number of fulness. Christ is equally present to all. His garment reaching to the ankles marks him as high priest (Ex. 28; 4; 29:5). "Girt at the loins" is a symbol of continence and sinlessness (see 1 Pet. 1:13). Gold stands for royalty. The vision is overpowering but Christ assures him that there is nothing to fear. All things are in his hands. He has overcome all hostile powers, even those of the underworld. Now he is the source of eternal life for all who accept him. With authority he communicates a revelation for the universal church (the seven lampstands).

Reading of the Good News: John 20:10-31. It is the climax and closing chapter of John's Gospel (ch. 21 is a later inspired addition). Jesus now imparts the fruits of his salvific work: 1) three times he wishes his disciples the Easter Shalom-Peace, which he had promised them in the farewell discourses (14:27). It contains the fulness of identical mission he received from the Father, whereby they become his "apostles" or "those who are sent (from the Greek apostello: to send). 3) He imparts the Spirit, the first-fruits of the Passion-Death-Resurrection-salvation. We are reminded how God breathed on man in the beginning to make him truly human (Gen. 2:7). Now by the gift of God's Spirit, man is to become the son of God (Gal. 4:6). In Acts ch. 2, Luke describes the outpouring of the same gift from his own liturgical and theological standpoint. (Chronology is not in question). 4) Jesus truly imparts the power to forgive sins. It is exercised in the sacrament of reconciliation (Council of Trent). That the power did not die out with the death of the apostles but passed on to those who represent them as long as the Church exists on earth, is the only reasonable conclusion. Why should it be confined to the first century only, when men of all ages need to have their sins forgiven?

The doubt of Thomas and his subsequent profession of faith only serves to confirm the reader's conviction that the Apostles are proclaiming the truth about the Risen Lord, On the lips is placed the profession of faith of the entire believing community.

John follows this up with the double aim of this gospel-writing: to deepen their faith in Jesus, Messiah-King (Christ) and Son of God, and then by means of this living faith to share in the divine life which Christ imparts. This twofold purpose runs throughout the entire gospel of John and lights up every chapter.

HOMILY

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Human Situation: Twenty-five prisoners of war escaped from an army camp by boring a tunnel through solid rock. It must have taken them many months to accomplish the feat, because the tunnel was only wide enough for one man to work at a time. Their only tools were coal-stove shovels. What ingenuity, patience and perseverance this task took! What hardships they endured, what doubts and discouragements they encountered. Their one thought that drove them on was the freedom they would again enjoy once they escaped from prison. And of Christ it is written: "For the sake of the joy which lay before him, he endured the cross, heedless of its shame. He has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God" (Hebr. 12:2).

The Good News: The prisoners of war tunneled their way through hard rock to reach their goal. If anyone tunneled his way through hardships and sufferings to reach the desired goal it is Jesus our Savior. Only it was to free us from prison, not himself. If anyone could announce "Mission Accomplished" after a difficult task was given to him it was Christ the Lord. In today's gospel, he imparts with joy and deep serenity the fruits of his salvific work for man.

First of all, he greets his chosen band with the meaningful phrase: Shalom: Peace be to you! He had told them before he died: "My peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you" (Jn. 14: 27). The peace of Christ imparts deep calm to the soul. It is replete with blessings which he won for us by his death and resurrection. The liturgy takes up the theme of peace just before the communion-banquet when "peace" is mentioned seven times, the number of fulness, so desirable is the Church that we really experience this fruit of the Lord's sufferings. In fact, the celebrant urges everyone to give a sign of loving peace to his companions around him.

Secondly, Jesus shares with his chosen apostles his own sending or mission which he received from the Father: As the Father

has sent me, so do I send you. This is the meaning of the word "apostle": one who is sent. This is the commission to continue the work of Christ, by going to all nations and preaching the Good News to every creature. The salvation and sanctification of man is bound up with their acceptance of the Good News, and their acting upon it by their works of faith and love. How generous is Christ the Lord to share his very mission with his friends!

Thirdly, Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit, that first fruit of his passion and death. He had longed all during life to win that Holy Spirit for man, and now with his mission accomplished, it becomes a reality. Impelled by that Holy Spirit within them, the heralds of the word go to all nations and are imbued with the power and strength to witness to Christ under all circumstances. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, man is helpless to carry out the stupendous work of converting the world to Christ. It is the Spirit himself, working in man, that brings about this marvel.

Fourthly, Jesus shares with his chosen ones the power to forgive sins. Truly, only God can forgive sins but today's gospel makes it clear that Christ has shared this power with men. In fact, it is Christ himself who forgives sins, acting through and by means of his representatives. In the sacrament of reconciliation the priest does not say: Christ forgives you, but: I forgive you. How close is the union of Christ and his priest! It is most important, then, to have a genuine estimation of this sacrament of reconciliation and healing, by which men's sins are truly forgiven.

These are the chief fruits of Christ's work of redemption. Truly he can say: mission accomplished! Father, I have finished the work you have given me to do (Jn. 17:4). What would we be today if we did not possess the peace of Christ? What would be without the apostles and the hierarchy that succeeded them? What would we be without the gift of the Holy Spirit, and without the blessed sacrament of reconciliation? Ought we not thank God on our knees for his manifold blessings? Like Thomas, we will put our hand into the wounded side of Christ, and with deepest conviction cry out: My Lord and my God! We have not seen you but we do believe. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (April 20, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 5:27-32.40-41. The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit has made the Apostles fearless in bearing witness to Christ. They preach the straight truth without trying to water

down the message, and that even in front of the highest officials in Israel. Peter's reply to the high priest shows how seriously he took the command of the angel in v. 20. His sermon puts forth in digest form the same essential points of the proclamation (kerygma) as in the preceding chapters: Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation, as God-given Leader and Savior to bring reconciliation to Israel, and concluding with the outpouring of the Spirit on all who believe. Gladly the apostles share the sufferings of Jesus, being filled with the joy of the Spirit (see Lk. 6:22).

Second Reading: Revelation 5:11-14. A vision depicting the glorification of the Lamb who was slain and now lives forever. He shares the throne with the Father (22:11), receives equal honor, glory and adoration with the Father (5:13). He is the Lamb of immolation (v. 12), but by his passion and death he became the supreme Arbiter and Judge of all men. The celestial court, symbolized by the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders and innumerable angels, send forth a song of sevenfold praise in homage to him (seven being the number of fulness). The entire universe takes up the response with a mighty "Amen" (so be it) and a four-fold word of applause (four being the symbolic number of creation).

Reading of the Good News: This chapter represents an independent tradition and is an inspired appendix to the gospel already concluded in 20:30f. The Sea of Galilee was also called the Sea of Tiberias because of the important center of learning at its Southwest corner. The similarity to Lk. 5 is so great that it would seem that the author is rather giving us a symbolical presentation of theological import. The great fish-catch is a miraculous sign manifesting the power and presence of Christ. Although the meaning of the sign is first recognized by the disciple whom Jesus loved, it is Peter who takes the first initiative, signifying his pre-eminence. The net and the boat are the Church with the apostles as the fishermen of God's People. The net remains intact in spite of the great many fish enclosed in it. In the Early Church, a fish symbolized the Christian. Though 153 remains a problem, St. Jerome states that the men of his day classified that many groups of fish, (though this cannot be further ascertained), which would symbolize the universality of nations entering the Church. Jesus awaits them at the shore, and feeds them with symbols of himself, either of the Eucharist, or preferably of his divinity at the shores of eternity.

Then follows the celebrated passage of Jesus conferring the total guidance of his flock on Peter (called the primacy of jurisdiction by Vatican II). Even though he denied knowing the Master three times, he now proves his loyalty by a threefold profession of love. However, he is no longer the self-confident Peter as on

the night of the passion, but humbly states that Jesus knows how much he loves him. Thereupon Jesus makes him the Chief Shepherd of his flock. That entails following Christ closely (v. 19), suffering and even dying for the flock as Christ did. His death is foretold in veiled terms (c. 18). Tradition mentions that he was crucified upside down. Of the death of the beloved disciple Jesus makes no statement.

HOMILY

CHRIST ABIDING IN THE CHURCH

The Human Situation: Whenever you enter a Church, you will always find little red light near the tabernacle. It is the sanctuary lamp and it has a message for all who enter. It tells you that Jesus is there in the tabernacle, offering himself continually to the Father for man's salvation, and waiting for your homage and love. Day and night Jesus remains with the children of men in the sacrament of his love.

Today's Good News shows us other ways by which the Lord manifests his presence in our midst. He is present by his power assisting the Church in her work of salvation. The boat with the apostles signifies the Church in her active role of fishers of men, endeavoring to bring them into the net, to bring them to the shores of eternity. But it is Christ by his mighty power who grants her an increase of members by drawing all nations to himself. The Early Church represented the Christian with the symbol of a fish in the waters of baptism, and the number of fish represents the great number of nations that make up the Church of Christ. At times the boat of Peter is rocked by severe storms, but at other times it gathers in a host of converts, like in Africa today where Christian converts surpass yearly any other religion. In the entire world, the Church is active through many organizations, faithful workers, missionary men and women, all trying to bring the hearts of men to Christ to be saved for all eternity. It is Christ's power that is at work.

On the shore Jesus invites his chosen friends to a meal of fish and bread. Both are symbols of himself. He called himself the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35), and the letters of the Greek word for fish (ichthys) are the first letters in Greek of the profession of faith: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. He himself nourishes his friends with himself, now in the Eucharist, and on the shores of eternity with the reality of the divine. God is all love and through Christ he wishes to import himself to all who remain in his friendship.

Finally, Jesus wishes to remain with his flock through the ministry of those he appoints over it. He confers on Peter a very special privilege that of Chief Shepherd of the entire flock. He is to take the place of Christ as his highest representative. He is the Vicar of Christ. At first he demands of Peter a threefold protestation of his love. Peter does so, this time not with that self-confidence he boasted of the night of the passion when shortly afterwards he denied knowing Christ three times, but with great humility he now avows that Jesus knows everything and knows how much he loves him. Then three times Christ tells Peter to feed the entire flock, thus taking the place of Christ himself. (This is called the primacy of jurisdiction by Vatican I). Thus Christ is always with his Church, guiding it through the hierarchy, and drawing all men to himself by the arduous and selfless labors of his members.

What part are we playing in this missionary endeavor to save mankind and bring it to Christ? The Church is missionary by nature and every member must do his or her part of help to save mankind and bring it to Christ. It is the members who now make Christ visible by their words and deeds, but it is Christ abiding in the Church who works through his Spirit the divine work of salvation and sanctification. Until he comes... the Church must labor and toll. Only then on the shores of eternity will we enjoy the messianic banquet forever.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (April 27, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 13: 14.3-52. Paul and Barnabas, on their first missionary journey in Asia Minor, experience at first great success in spreading the Good News. Both Jews and non-Jews (pagans, Gentiles) listen eagerly. So great is the following of the pagans that it arouses the jealousy of the Jews, who soon violently oppose the missionaries, and eventually drive them away. The same pattern repeats itself in the other towns, and it becomes the occasion of Paul's turning more and more to the pagans, which in time became his universal mission. In obedience to the Master's injunction (Mt. 10:14), they shake off the dust from their feet, a symbolic gesture, disavowing any further responsibility in the conversions of those in question. Luke is contrasting the eagerness of the pagans to receive the Good News with the machinations of the Jews to oppose it.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9.14b-17. This passage lines up with the reading of today's Good News but now it is on the shores of

eternity. Christ is now the victorious Lamb, and the flock is the huge crowd of redeemed humanity, portrayed as victors around the Lamb and the throne of the Father. They have conquered all evil by continually purifying themselves in the Lamb's Blood (his sacrificial death), that is, by means of their continued sharing in his Paschal Mystery. Now they enjoy the eternal loving care of the Father, and the Lamb shares with them all the blessings of his Spirit, symbolized by the springs of Living Water. Earth's miseries are over. Divine life is now theirs forever.

Reading of the Good News: John 10:27-30. A short passage but one replete with deep theological content: 1) Jesus knows (knowledge with love) those who belong to him, and lovingly cares for all their needs until they reach their goal. 2) They in turn gladly listen to his voice and follow him, that is, conform their lives to his. 3) The pasture land to which he is leading them is not merely a temporal one, but life that never ends, with death and all its concomitants completely conquered. 4) No one can oppose him in this not even all the powers of hell, for the flock is the Father's gift to him, and no one can take them from his "hand" (care), which is identical with that of the Father's because 5) he and the Father are one, not only in mind and will and action, but in the very Oneness of divine Being.

HOMILY

THE LORD TRULY CARES

The Human Situation: A childless couple decided to adopt a six year old boy, who was born without arms, with one eye, and flippers for legs, a victim of the sedative thalidomide drug (which has since been withdrawn from the market). Only the greatest courage and immense love enabled them to patiently teach the lad, who was an intelligent boy, to gradually help himself, and do without the cumbersome artificial limbs. Though the husband's salary was meager, and debts as well as bills often started him in face, he manifested remarkable inventiveness by inventing one vehicle after another to enable the lad to do everything by himself, by means of gadgets plus his own usable muscles. The wife's initial fright and reluctance were conquered by sheer love. Today the lad has his own house and garden, goes to school and back on his own, and plans his own future. A superb triumph of loving care of two devoted people who overcame every obstacle by hard work and sheer love.

The Good News: The Lord chose a particularly appealing comparison to describe his loving care for his own. It is the loving care of a shepherd for his sheep, which is proverbial. The shepherd knows his sheep individually from the moment they are born, and he has the greatest interest in their well-being. He even gives a special mark teach one to denote ownership. He guards them sedulously from the foe that seeks to destroy them, and leads them faithfully to good pasture and streams of water. The Savior's love for every member of his Body, the Church, is a loving knowledge which is inexpressible. With what love he sacrificed himself for each one, gave each one an indelible mark in baptism, nourishes each one with his own Body and Blood, guards each one by his Indwelling Spirit from the Evil One, cleanses the sheep that falls into the mire of sin, and leads it to the good pastures of his divine words, and eventually to the eternal shores, to give them life that never ends. There is not the least selfish interest in the actions of Christ. He does all things because he loves man. That is why he became man; to manifest that love.

The sheep on the other hand know the voice of their shepherd. They follow wherever he leads them because they trust him. They know he will not lead them to injurious pastures or harmful waters, because he has at heart only their well-being. So, too, the sheep of the Divine Shepherd follow him eagerly, which means that they want to conform their lives to his more and more. Following Christ is a real challenge. It means denying oneself, as Jesus himself declared, taking up one's daily cross, and following in his footsteps. They strive to deny themselves and put away the former deeds which do not reflect the Christ life of his true followers. It means learning from him those virtues which he has so clearly taught us in the Good News: his love for all men, his forgiveness of injuries, his willingness to come to the aid of anyone in need, his life of prayer and submission to the Father's will. The following of Christ is no small venture, but it carries with it the sharing of his glory.

In the hands, that is, in the care of the Good Shepherd the sheep are safe. Satan will attempt to draw them away from the Shepherd by the false allurements of the world, by the poison of immoral advertisements, by the unruly desires of the flesh and by the inordinate ambitions of pride. But if the sheep keep their eyes on the Shepherd and do not deliberately stray from the fold, they are safe. He and the Father have the same vital interest in them, for they both love each one with their identical Spirit of Love. Only if the sheep of their own free will separate themselves from him or from the flock, do they risk the danger of being lost and devoured by the Evil One. The Father in heaven wants all to be saved and

through his Son, the Good Shepherd, he is constantly drawing all men to the eternal shores, so that they can enjoy the delights of the Godhead eternally.

How great is the Christian calling! What dignity the Christian enjoys! If the love of the Good Shepherd does not succeed in winning a return of love from the heart of man, what will succeed? He has used every possible means to win us to himself. Only sheer ingratitude and apathetic indifference will keep man away from that loving Heart, that has so loved man. Are we responding to that love?

BIBLICAL NOTES AND HOMILIES FOR MAY

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (May 4, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 14:21-27. On their return trip during their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas visited the communities they had founded, and made it very clear that in the plan of God, suffering and trials were part of their Christian calling. They also set up in each community a definite organized body, by appointing religious leaders. Since the Eucharist with liturgical prayer was the backbone of the Christian community from the very outset (see 2:42), it is only reasonable to suppose that these religious leaders were ordained ministers to preside over those functions. Any wise organizer would do the same. (To state that Luke is here anticipating a later Church institution is a gratuitous assertion). On returning to the mother church, they report their great success in the Gentile (pagan) world, with humble recognition of the divine source of their success.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23. Here we have God's end-kingdom in its glorious fulfillment. Entire creation is transformed, befitting regenerated humanity. All hostile forces (symbolized by the violent and raging waters of the sea) are put out of the way. New Jerusalem, the glorified People of God, shining bright in her holiness, is now the Bride of Christ forever. In Christ, God and man are united in an everlasting nuptial bliss. All the evils of this mortal life have completely vanished forever. Joy, peace and love of the Spirit reign supreme for endless ages.

Reading of the Good News John 13:31-33a, 34-35. At the last supper, once Judas is no longer present, Jesus unbosoms himself in sentiments that had best be given in three themes:

1) The theme of glory: God's glory is a manifestation of his inner Being. For God's People of old, it was chiefly in his power and majesty (Sinai, Ezekiel's vision), but in Jesus it is chiefly God's immense love. The love of Christ is most forcefully manifested by his sufferings and death for all mankind, which simultaneously manifests the love of the Father. In turn, the Father will manifest his love for the Son by the far-reaching effects of the resurrection and the exaltation at the Father's right, mighty and godlike beyond all estimation.

2) The theme of separation: It is made necessary for a while by his death. Jesus announces it most tenderly, using the term "children" (teknia), an expression found in John's Gospel only here.

3) The theme of fraternal love. It returns over and over again in the following chapters, like a last will and testament. The disciples are to imitate to the full his own love for them, heroic to the extreme, coming to expression by his life of utter service and total self-sacrifice. Such love would reveal the genuine disciple, as it revealed on the part of Jesus the true inner Being of God. Though love was enjoined on God's People of old, it is now new, both in its ideal (Jesus himself) and in its extension (universal love for all).

HOMILY

THE LAST WILL OF JESUS

The Human Situation: It is a fact that when a person dies and the will is read out to the heirs, it is something hotly disputed, and there arises between the claimants a deep resentment and even hatred which keeps them from speaking to each other for years. This is especially ugly if it is the immediate family where the sons and daughters are at variance with one another because of the will, and refuse to speak to each other for a long period of time. Family reunions are impossible and instead of love there is hatred. Yet they claim to be Christians.

The Good News: Jesus did not leave his chosen friends any money or property to dispute about, nor anything in the line of worldly goods. When he died, he owned practically nothing. They raffled off his garments and laid him in someone else's tomb. His last will was a spiritual one and was in the form of a command: "Love one another as I have loved you". It was this concern to call themselves Christians would really learn how much God loved them in the Son, and then try their level best to learn what it means to love their fellowmen as he loved them.

Have you ever given much thought to how our Lord and Savior loved us? He could so easily have redeemed us by any number of easy ways, but he chose the hardest of all, that is, the horrible Roman crucifixion, where he was mocked and cursed, stripped and nailed to the cross, called an imposter and cast out from his people as a criminal, hanging exposed before the sight of every passerby. Only love could have made him go to such an extreme to convince man of God's love for him. No wonder the Beloved Disciple, St. John, exclaims: "Love consists in this: not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10). He continues immediately: "Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (v. 11).

But what do we see in the Christian world today? Wars, riots, dissension, rivalry. And at times even in the homes of Christians, continual arguing and fighting, to the disgust of the children and the scandal of the neighbors. Truly, Christ's command is not easy. It takes a determined will to overcome selfishness and reach out to others as Christ has reached out to us. Selfishness, greed, and anger prevent love from healing the inner wounds which love alone could heal. Love melts the cold of selfishness, changes greed into generosity, turns anger into forgiveness and understanding. Love can do all things, if it is only given sway.

Praise the Lord! There are many hearts and homes in which true Christian love reigns, and who go out of their way to let Christ's love burn brightly to all around. They are the true disciples and followers of Jesus. For them, success is not measured by money or possessions, but by the degree of love they have been able to acquire by earnestly following the command of Jesus and his counsels as given in the Sermon on the Mount. There they have found any number of practical suggestions given by Jesus how to practice the highest of virtues, love, the acme of perfection. "There remain these three things: Faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

(May 11, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 15:1-2,22-29. Paul was convinced that Christ's sacrifice of himself was all-sufficient for man's salvation, be he Jew or pagan. While the moral law was perfected by his Coming (Mt. 5:17), the many laws regarding ceremonial worship, food

restrictions, circumcision and a host of other legalities were meant to prepare men for his Coming (Gal. 4:23f), but were abrogated by his death and resurrection (Col. 2:16f; Hb. 8:10; 9:10). When some convert Jews began insisting on circumcision as a requisite for the convert pagans to be saved, Paul and Barnabas strenuously opposed this, and the matter was relayed to Jerusalem. There, the authorities in the Christian community decided the matter and an apostolic letter was sent to Antioch. Note how the Apostles are fully convinced they act under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas are fully vindicated in their views. Christ's salvific work is all sufficient for salvation, provided it is accepted by the individual. However, pagan converts were requested to abstain from certain usages which were offensive to Jewish sensitivities, living as they were in a plurality society. Three of the points regard abstinence from certain foods, and the last pertains to sexual unions within certain degrees of kinship, which was quite prevalent among the pagans. It was a local ordinance intended for the provinces of Asia Minor mentioned in the letter.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23. A dazzling vision of the glorified People of God, the New Jerusalem, transfigured by the very glory of God, glittering like diamonds as was the throne of God in 4:3. Square in the Greek symbol of perfection as is the number twelve for the Semite, hence representing both the Greek and the Jewish world. Those who dwell in the New Jerusalem are symbolized by the representative names of Israel's twelve tribes and the Lamb's twelve apostles, thus combining into one the entire regenerated humanity of old and new covenants. Angelic guardians complete the picture. The temple which indicated God's presence to the People of old, gives way to the Reality and Presence of God himself and the Lamb in the glory of the beatific vision. Created light is now superfluous, for God is Light itself, beamed through the Triumphant Lamb of God. What hope this vision inspires!

Reading of the Good News: John 14:23-29. A passage full of theological import: 1) While awaiting Christ's glorious return, sincere lovers of him will observe his instructions, and thus be blessed with the stupendous gift of the Divine Indwelling, involving a most intimate friendship with the Blessed Trinity, the Father giving them his Love (the Spirit), who together with Father and Son come to take up permanent abode in man. Worldlings will not enjoy this intimacy because of lack of faith and obedience to Christ's message. 2) Christ's message of Good News is the Father's will for all men. Nothing more beneficial can be imagined. If only man would heed it! 3) Though Christ's mission is about to end, he promises the

gift of the Paraclete, the Helper, who is sent in his name, that is, he will make known who Jesus really is (the name) and also the fullness of his revealed message. 4) Shalom-Peace is not merely the parting Oriental farewell phrase, but it is transformed by Jesus into a parting gift of himself (he is our peace; Eph. 2:14), a gift fraught with all possible blessings of peace, harmony and love. 5) If their love for Jesus is selfless, they will not grieve over his departure, but rejoice with him, for his mission is about to climax in glorification and exaltation. 6) Although Father and Son are one in Being (10:30), the Father is the supreme goal of Jesus life, and the source from which he proceeded. To do his will in the work of salvation is Christ's whole ambition as Man. His whole human existence is a "going to the Father." In this sense the Father is greater than he. 7) Fulfillment of his words will corroborate his divine knowledge and be an added proof of his divine mission.

HOMILY

HIDDEN TREASURE

The Human Situation: Some things that man treasures most are found deep in the earth, as for instance, diamonds, the hardest of all precious substances and most valuable in man's eyes. Even in the South African mines, which are the richest source of gem diamonds in the world, many tons of "blue ground" must be taken from deep in the earth, crushed, and sorted to obtain one small diamond. Gold and silver veins (lodes) are also deep in the earth. From earliest times, man has treasured these precious metals and dug laboriously to obtain them. Once possessed, they were carefully guarded and treasured.

The Good News: Deep in the heart of every believer is the greatest of treasures. If the Lord himself had not revealed it in today's Gospel-message, who would have believed it? That God is everywhere present by his essence and his power, because he is infinite, can be known by reason alone, but that the Three Divine Persons, the Blessed Trinity, dwell lovingly in the heart of those who enjoy God's friendship (that is, are in the state of sanctifying grace) can only be known by revelation. Jesus himself revealed it when he declared: "Anyone who loves me, will be true to my word, and I will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling-place with him always." Father and Son breathing forth Love, which is their personal Spirit, come to dwell in little man!

Take not that the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity is not just a passing event, like a visit from some high dignitary to the home of a friend, but it is permanent; We will make our dwelling place with him always". What a privilege for God's friends to have with them always, wherever they are, on land or sea, in the air or deep in the earth or under the sea, this Treasure of divine Love! We have the word of the Lord for it. He promised it to those who are true to his word.

What does that mean: to be true to his word? It means to take his message serious, to examine it carefully, live it out, model our lives on what Christ demands. The one great demand of Christ is that we love one another, our neighbors, and what is perhaps the hardest of all, our adversaries and those who make life hard for us: "Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father . . . If you love those who love you, what merit is therein that?" (Mt. 5:44ff). This is the love Jesus showed all men while on earth: he instructed he cured, he fed, he clarified his teaching, he reproved when salutary; But above all, from the cross he forgave all who did him harm, all from a motive of love. Not once did Jesus seek any remuneration or salary for all his deeds. He labored sheerly out of love, to redeem man from his sins, to teach him the way of salvation, to win for him peace on this earth and salvation forever. He asks all his followers to be motivated in their daily duties out of love.

In order that the friends of God can return adequate love to him, Jesus promises that the Father would send in his name the Spirit of Love, the Paraclete, Helper and Consoler. He will enable weak little man to conquer all selfishness, and render a proper return of love to the Indwelling Trinity. It is he who cries in our hearts: Abba Father (Gal. 4:6). It is he who enables us to profess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). Only with the Spirit moving us can we love God in return as he wishes to be loved.

Do we ever stop to ponder on this Treasure in our hearts? If man guards so sedulously his diamond mines and gold mines, should we not be more aware of this infinite Treasure in our very possession and guard it carefully, lest we lose it? We lose the friendship of God by seriously offending him. No wonder St. Leo the Great cried out: O Christian! Recognize your dignity! And Blessed Arnold Janssen could walk up and down arm in arm with one of the older members of his congregation exclaiming over and over: O beata Trinitas! O Blessed Trinity! Our resolve is to be more aware of the Treasure we possess, so that we may come to possess God Holy and Triune one day in the bliss of the beatific vision. Until then let us guard this Treasure sedulously so as never to lose it.

SOLEMNITY OF THE LORD'S ASCENSION
(May 18, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 1:1-11. The period after the resurrection of Jesus was of the greatest importance for the chosen band. He continued to give them proofs of his being alive, so that they would be staunch witnesses of that fact. He also concentrated on the special preparation needed for their role in the believing community where God would reign. Furthermore, he impressed upon them the importance of the Spirit, the promised Gift of the Father, in which they would be invested (baptized). "Forty days" is symbolic, and used by Luke as it often used in the Old Testament for a definite period of preparation for a specific work, as for example, Moses receiving divine instructions on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:18).

Jesus also corrects their idea of a temporal kingdom and of an imminent Parousia or Second Coming. At first there lay before them the gigantic task of bearing witness to all nations on earth, something they could only perform properly when endowed with the Spirit.

In describing the Ascension, Luke is emphasizing the parting of the Lord's visible presence. His manner of describing it belongs to his literary technique as author, to drive home his point. Both Luke and John in their Gospel accounts give the impression that Easter and Ascension took place on the same day, but that is a theological perspective. Here in the Acts, Luke's perspective is symbolic, and may be connected with the end of the forty days when Moses received the Law, while the forty days after the resurrection are in preparation for the New Law of Love which is the gift of the Spirit.

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17-23. Paul's prayer for his Christians is intimately bound up with the Father, the Son and the gifts of the Spirit. Its objects is that they clearly know God (wisdom) and appreciate his work in them (insight). Such insight involves a better understanding of their calling, a fuller appreciation of the riches of their inheritance, and a deeper grasp of God's power working within them. That power is identical with the power at work in Christ's resurrection, his exaltation at God's right hand, making him superior to every possible created being, giving him universal domination, and thus supremely exalted, constituting him Head of the Church. Thus the future of the Christian is inconceivably great.

The Church is both the Body of Christ and his fulness. The word "fulness" in all five passages where it occurs in the "captivity

letters" is used to signify with great emphasis the concentration of sanctifying power of God (Cerfaux). This has been concentrated in Christ, God's primordial sacrament for man's salvation, and he in turn concentrated it in his Body-Person, the Church, which as his extension on earth is likewise the fundamental sacrament which communicates Christ and salvation to men (by various avenues of grace). God is the fulness which lives in Christ, and eventually will replenish regenerated humanity (Rev. 21:22-24).

Reading of the Good News: Luke 24:46-53. In giving his last injunction to his chosen ones, the Lord 1) reminds them that his passion and death were foretold, and thus were in the plan of God for man's salvation. 2) He sends them out in his name and authority, with a message of reconciliation coupled with a call for a change of heart (metanoia). 3) He orders them to begin with the chosen people at Jerusalem, but not before they were invested with the Father's Promise, the mighty Spirit, by whom they would be enabled to be his staunch witnesses.

The Lord's last gesture was one of priestly blessing (see Sir. 50:20). Then he was taken from them visibly. Luke projects all this on the day of the resurrection from his theological perspective, so that he can end his gospel in Jerusalem where it began, namely, in the temple where God dwelt with men. Only now it is the true Temple, the Lord Jesus, in whom all continue to praise the Father. Their final act is one of adoration of him in whom they now believe, and of joy, in accordance with the word of Jesus in Jn. 14:28, and in acceptance of their noble mission.

HOMILY

REJECTED BY MEN, BUT EXALTED ON HIGH BY GOD

The Human Situation: A very striking resemblance to Christ is the figure of Joseph of Egypt whose life is described by the Holy Spirit in the book of Genesis in such a way as to prefigure in striking details the life of Jesus. Joseph was also the beloved of his Father, he was sent on a mission to his brothers, he was rejected by them, sold for twenty pieces of silver, falsely accused and imprisoned between two malefactors of which one was pardoned, vindicated as innocent and raised to the highest throne in Egypt after Pharaoh. In the years of famine he became the Savior of the People, and of his own brethren, whom he forgave and cared for with great solicitude. It is easy to see the resemblance in all these details with Jesus who was similarly treated, rejected by his own, and then

raised on high to share the throne of the Most High in heaven. **The Good News:** The Ascension of the Lord is his exaltation at the Father's right hand. Now he whom his own people rejected is raised to the throne of the Father. Now all mankind acknowledge that he whom they crucified has become the Cornerstone of God's Building and the True Spiritual Temple. Now all people come to him asking for pardon and forgiveness of their sins. All look to him to be their shepherd and to nourish them with food that sustains. How well the hymn of the Early Church expressed it: "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit; seen by the angels; preached among the nations; believed in throughout the world; taken up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16).

The Feast of the Ascension gives every believing Christian hope. The trials of this life are often weighing heavily on one's shoulders, but St. Paul reminds us that "we are heirs of God, heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so as to be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). Today the entire Body of Christ looks up to their glorified Head with new vigor and courage, because it sees what lies ahead after this valley of tears has passed. God does not give man suffering for suffering sake. Suffering is the paved road to exaltation and glory, provided one suffers with Christ the Savior.

It is with good reason that today's second reading gives us the prayer of Paul for his Christians. In it we see the broad vistas of the Apostle's mind as we paraphrase. May God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know him clearly and the insight to realize that all the trials of life are preparatory for the glory to come. May your inner vision be enlightened so that you grasp the great things in store for you, which hope holds out to you; the wealth of your inheritance in Christ is inestimable. The scope of his power will work similarly as it worked in Christ, raising you from the dead and placing you at the throne of God in heaven.

Dearly beloved, let us go forth today, reassured by Christ himself who is our exalted Head, knowing for sure that if we remain faithful to him here below in the tasks and calling he has given us, we shall be united to him in the possession of his glory in the realms above. May the peace of Christ remain always with you!

PENTECOST SUNDAY

(May 25, 1980)

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11. Pentecost in Israel was a harvest festival (Ex. 23:16). Thus it symbolized fulfillment and from that aspect St. Luke depicts the outpouring of the Spirit, for it is the fulfill-

ment of the salvific work of Jesus. It was celebrated seven weeks or fifty days after Passover, and hence was called Pentecosté the Greek word for fifty. Fifty was the sacred number of the jubilee year, which signalled the remission of all debts and a new start for the People of God (Lev. 25:6). It is these theological dimensions of Pentecost that Luke has in mind rather than any stress on chronology. Pentecost is thus seen as the fulfillment of Christ's Paschal Mystery, when the believing community came alive with the life of the Spirit of Christ.

The Promised Gift is that of the invisible Spirit of God himself (v. 4) who is communicated to all present. Clearly to be distinguished from this divine invisible Gift is the visible and ostensible manifestation of his Presence in the charism of tongues poured out on those present. In this scene, the object of the charism of tongues is the public praise of God for his marvellous deeds (v. 11), above all for the accomplishment of the Paschal Mystery of the Savior, the fruit of which is the gift of the Spirit. Luke is also possibly giving us an idealized picture of the Early Church, comprising events that happened over a longer period of time, for he is writing a theology of events. His essential message is that the Spirit of God is the great Gift of the Father and the Son for the entire believing community in the final age.

By the power of this Spirit, the Apostles are endowed from on high to proclaim everywhere (with tongues of fire!) to all nations the mighty salvific work of God. Luke's "table of nations" is a selection of peoples of the then known Mediterranean world, symbolizing all nations united in the one community of Christ by and in his Spirit, the Bond of union and love. Thus the events at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11) are reversed. Salvation is universal, and for all nations, but gained by belonging to the New People of God.

Wind, fire, tongues (for speech) all symbolize the Spirit. In both Hebrew and Greek, spirit and wind are identical words (*ruach*, *pneuma*), though Luke uses a slightly different word here, yet from the same root. John, the Baptizer foretold that Jesus would immerse his followers in Spirit and fire (Lk. 3:16). Tongues, coming from a central source, indicate that one and same divine Spirit is imparted to all, to speak the new language of the Spirit to the world, the message of love concerning Christ and his universal salvific work, to which the Spirit bears constant witness.

Second Reading: First Corinthians 12:3b-7.12-13. A passage rich in content. Paul writes to the Corinthian community which experienced the abundance of Spirit's charismatic outpouring. Yet he makes clear that the primary activity of the indwelling Spirit is to enable the Christian to confess the divinity and sovereignty

of Jesus (12:3). Only then does he mention the gifts of the Spirit (which include here various ministries and functions). Moreover, it is the same identical Spirit at work in everyone, imparting his gifts to the individual members as he pleases, but all for the benefit of the whole body (v.7). Comparing the Body of Christ with the human body, Paul shows the necessity of variety functions. That all should have the same function is against the very notion of an organized body. So also in the Body of Christ, each member contributes in his own way and by means of his particular gift to the good of the whole community. What one member accomplishes affects all the others.

The reality of our incorporation into the Body-Person of the glorified Christ is clearly asserted by authors today: "Baptism incorporates the Christian into the risen, glorified Body of Christ, so that the Church is the manifestation and extension of the Lord's Body in this world. Its members share in the life of the Risen Lord" (Jerome Bibl. Comm.). Paul can speak of "drinking of the Spirit" since Jesus referred to the Spirit as the "Living Water" (Jn. 4:10: 7:38f).

Reading of the Good News: John 20:19-23. Since the outpouring of the Spirit climaxes the entire salvific work of Jesus or his Paschal Mystery, John wishes to portray this close connection between the giving of the Spirit and the resurrection-event, before bringing his gospel-account to a close (originally ch. 20). It is not the time element that John is indicating but a theological dimension (which differs from Luke's in Acts 2). In order that the Apostles (that is, those sent, from the Greek word "apostello", to send) carry out the identical mission that Jesus received from the Father, he breathes into them the Spirit (symbolized by the breath of Jesus), so that they in turn, as other Christs, continue his work of transforming the world by cleansing it from sin, and re-creating it in the Spirit (see Gen. 12). Since the mandate of Christ is both to forgive and to retain sins of the believers, the duty incumbent on the ministers of Christ is to judge the sins so as to act properly. But one cannot judge without the believers making known their sins, or confessing them. Hence the integral part of the sacrament of penance is confession of sins.

OUTLINE FOR HOMILY TAKEN FROM THE ABOVE NOTES:

A. HOMILY FROM FIRST READING:

1. Pentecost is fulfillment. O.T. harvest festival: harvest completed. Fifty is jubilee number. Remission of all debts. new start. N.T. fulfillment of Christ's Paschal Mystery. New People of God come alive in his Spirit.

2. **Essential message of the passage:** the Gift of the Spirit in person. Charism of tongues a subsequent manifestation of his Presence. Object of charism: praise of God from all nations for his wonderful works esp. in Christ.
3. **Idealized picture of the universal Church:** many nations, one Body, one Spirit. Reversal of Babel (confusion). Pentecost: unity, harmony, oneness.
4. **Apostles endowed with the Spirit preach with tongues of fire about Christ.** Wind, fire, tongues all symbols of the mighty Spirit of love. The work of the world's conversion has begun.

Conclusion The Church is missionary. Moved by the Indwelling Spirit, all members of Christ should make Christ and his salvific message known to their fellowmen, and praise God for his marvellous works. Praise the Lord! Alleluia.

B. HOMILY FROM THE SECOND READING:

1. The primary activity of the Indwelling Spirit is enabling us to witness to the divinity and sovereignty of Christ. Christ is Lord!
2. Each member is moreover given a special charism, calling, ministry, but all function for the good of the whole Body, the Body of Christ, moved by the same Spirit who imparted to each one as he pleased.
3. Variety of functions belongs to the very notion of an organized body. All cannot have the same function. No room for vanity or for jealousy.

Conclusion: Be open to the Spirit, and develop the gifts given by him, so as to glorify the Father and build up the Body of Christ in love.

C. HOMILY FROM THE GOOD NEWS:

1. The threefold action of Christ: he imparts the blessings of his peace, he gives them further proof of his resurrection, he shares with the apostles his own mission. They make him visible and continue his work.

2. The outpouring of the Spirit, symbolized by the breath of Christ. This is the climax of Christ's Paschal Mystery. John brings it in here before closing his gospel-account, to show their close connection. The Spirit is the first fruit of his Paschal Mystery and its climax.
3. The apostles and those who represent them are empowered to forgive sins or retain them. A stupendous power but clearly stated. To make this distinction one must judge and discern. Therefore the need of confessing one's sins to those empowered.

Conclusion Pentecost brings peace, the gift of the Spirit, the prolongation of Christ's mission in the Church, the power to forgive sins. O the goodness of God whose love so cares for man!

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