

## PASTORAL SECTION

### HOMILETICS

● Fernando Yusingco, C.SS.R.

3rd Sunday after Pentecost (June 7)

#### NEED FOR FRIENDSHIP

There are many talents among our people — musical talents, dramatic talents, etc. Our farmers speak in concrete imagery. They talk in pictures of nature, the earth, the plants, the animals and the life moving and throbbing. If some of them were to speak out now, I am sure they would write these lines: "Am I really that which other men tell of or am I only what I myself know of myself, restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage, struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat, yearning for colors, for flowers, for the voices of birds, thirsting for words of kindness, pausing in expectation of great events, powerlessly trembling for friends at infinite distance, weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at working, faint and weary to say farewell to it all." This is the frustration of mind that most of our people are feeling deep within, feelings like this surge beneath the surface. They are told that they are indolent. They are told that they lack initiative, they are told that they are poor, ignorant. Yes, they acknowledge all these. But why are they poor? Why are they ignorant? Why are they lazy, if they are? Years and years of want, of working from sunrise till sunset, how we deprive them of hope, of initiative. Years and years of seeing the good part of the harvest, going to people who have not lifted a finger to bring about the harvest. Years and years of toiling under the sun, in mud, when the rains have made them still poor, still ignorant, still unable to call the land they sweat over they till, their own.

Again and again we warn those who can do something to at least go out and do feel this among our people, to feel what they are feeling.

restless and longing and sick and struggling for God. They want a feeling of oneness, cohesion with the earth, the plants, everything about them, yet they are tied down to drudgery and poverty from sunrise to sunset and their dreams are haunted on what to eat tomorrow. They are haunted how to procure medicine for the baby crying in the night.

We can still give hope, assurance. We can give hope of our words, assurance of our presence and better still the courage of our action for them, with them, we should allow them to organize, we should help them to organize, we should unify their feelings, their yearning, their longing.

The main reasons why there should be organization of farmers, workers and people is because there's a need for united efforts to get their rights respected but aside from this, man we know is social being. He needs to share his suffering with others. He needs to be with others one way or the other, for fun or for work. There's a quotation, it reads: "If each of us is forever a stranger and alone here and now, then how much strange, how much more alone would we feel in a world where we belong to no one and no one belongs to us." To belong is a necessity of any human person. That's why we see a proliferation of organization, of clubs, yet the type of organization that has just the personal need to belong somehow breaks up eventually, but on the other hand too, organization formed and existing solely on a need to acquire rights eventually breaks up once the rights are acquired. We need the two kinds of organization or rather the two in one, that of common need and that of personal need, these two elements should be there, hence fighting for a cause and establishing personal bonds of friendship with each other must be the reasons for organizing.

Our landowners and our factory owners and our managers should not be afraid of the people, their employees, their tenants, their workers organizing. They should recognize these basic needs hence these basic rights in man. They should perhaps for their own good also try to seek people who will help them organize in the right way for the right ends, but they should not, never try to be paternalistic or to control their workers or their tenant's organization. They should recognize these basic need and right and try to seek people who also recognize this basic need and right and recognize the value of the human person. It's about

time that we create power, mass power, of our people, of the many, to balance the money power, the political power of the few.

#### 4th Sunday after Pentecost (June 14)

### CRIME OF CONTENTMENT

Why is it that in any active movement for social reforms or any activity that fight and seek for justice, that involves a personal commitment very few grown ups or elders are there? Have they lost their idealism and settled down to a life of mediocrity? Are they complacent or perhaps too busy feathering their nest? Will they, the younger generation, rise up in judgment on their elders and ask them what they have done to give them a better world to live in.

Really, this is a question which the older generation will have to ask themselves. Often elders complain what is happening to our young people, and often they say, "When we were young, how proper and how behaved we were." Yes, perhaps they were just too behaved and too proper, they just nodded and said amen to what was happening and remained proper and prim and behaved. No letter of the law or rule was broken, only the purpose and the spirit of the law was shattered and killed. Legalities and superficialities were the only things left, conventions—a way of acting. So this, lives were lived in empty peace and contentment and contentment like the contented cow. Nothing alive. Nothing challenging. Nothing really happening. Only events are allowed to happen.

Perhaps, this quotation I'd like to share with you of Patricia Mack, which she wrote of Christ, maybe some thought, useful thought: "for death that cast its shadows grim upon the walls of time after ten thousand years, the verdict and the sentence passed, involvement was his crime." What is your crime? Is it involvement? Just as Christ was? Or is your life just too prim and proper and well behaved to be so lifeless and so loveless? Or do you believe that it is better for the poor and the oppressed to stand up and to organize and fight for their rights? In doing this they gain self-confidence, they break the bonds of paternalism that make them subservient and slavish. They grow up and behave becoming the dignity of human beings. They need the conflict but conflict of a known bloody type. This is necessary for the growth of the oppressed.

But to do this is painful, it means going against tradition, well ordered structures, even friends and benefactors. It means not being accepted when formerly one is welcomed.

However, that quotation 'involvement was his crime . . .' is precisely what Christ had pointed out to us in his life, when he was left by himself on the cross because he has dared to stand up against Judaism of his day. We too have to stand up against oppression, the universal injustices of our days. If involvement should be our crime and not complacency. Really, Christianity is just that. That's why the symbol of Christianity is the symbol of the cross. Feelings, interest — personal or otherwise, sometime cross with principles. Every Christian at one time or the other will come to the crossroads and he'll have to take a decision, he'll have to make a decision to just lie down horizontally or to stand up vertically upon his cross, open his arms and welcome the consequences of abiding by his principles. For those, with a lot of possessions it is hard. It is hard to open up your arm and welcome the implementation, the social doctrines and principles of the church, to share your profit, to share justly your land and its fruit, to share the sweat, to share the suffering of your people, your own Filipino brothers and sisters, your own Christian brothers and sisters.

**5th Sunday after Pentecost (June 21)**

### **HOPE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

Social reforms or 'change must be build' on hope, but what kind of a hope? Is this hope a longing, a desire or a wish for a better life? A better life in the form of a house, a car, gadgets, material security? Definitely no. Because such kind of a hope would mean that once it is fulfilled there is no need for change and reforms. But change or reforms must still go on to keep with the ever constantly changing situations.

What then is the hope upon which social change and reform must be based? Has it the quality of passiveness, a kind of waiting for something to happen, a kind of resignation, of hope against hope? This is the kind of hope that is uplifting our society. It comes in different forms. For some it takes the form of dictatorializing, talking and planning. It

is like a man waiting and waiting to see a government official, of waiting and waiting for the process of law and the red tapes of bureaucracy to take their long, long course. There is no ceasing of the opportunity and standing up for the rights. Hope for social change and reforms can also take the form of radicalism but a radicalism that is based really on hopelessness and fear. It is opposite of real hope. It is a total disregard of legality but something can be done yet to enkindle the divine spark in man. There is a forcing of circumstances a lack of timing in this kind of hope for social change.

But the hope of social change and reform is neither a passive waiting or resignation nor is it an unrealistic forcing of circumstances. It is like a man ready to act, watching for the right moment to act. It is a hope that is ever ready to move into action once the circumstances are right. It is a hope that is aware of the signs of the times. It is a consciousness that man can rise to heights yet unscaled, it is a positive and active hope. It moves the man to something that can be done and sells others to it that now the time has come. Many times this hope moves man to put all time, energies and means at his command to get ready for the moment of action in concrete. This means that activity, constant activity, constant thinking, constant listening is the form of this hope and all activities are directed to the moment when that which is hopeful, the chance to effect social change arrives.

We believe that the time has arrived, that each one of us should now move — move into action, otherwise, if we just wait for something to happen then it would be too late, then something would really happen, something that we wouldn't like. In the gospel of today, Christ rebuked the wind and said to the sea: "Quiet now, be calm." The tide dropped and all was calm and he said to them: "Why are you so frightened, how is it that you have no faith?" Thus the hope that social involvement and change must be viewed is a hope that has come but yet like a flame it burns, it moves man into action because he sees the ray of light that will dispel the darkness of injustice. It is quite ironical that we can create a situation of hopelessness even in seeking for social reforms and justice, if we don't stress that the objective of this reforms that we seek, the justice that we seek is really development of the human individual person, in the person of the farmer, in the person of the worker, in the

person of the landowner in the person of the employer, in the person of everyone that each one of us in being good and just and in fulfilling justice, in changing or being changed will become really free. We seek to remove the obstacles of pride, of greed, of selfishness, of hate, these obstacles that are really at the bottom of our situation today where injustice lies.

We seek in our efforts for justice and for reforms that man, every Filipino man and woman would come to realize that we are a people, realize our worth and our contribution to betterment of the world here and now, to realize the need of respect for each one, each other and for everybody. Human and Christian values like these — respect, worth of the human person, freedom, love are what the soul is to the body, culture to nationalism, music to the ears — without these values we can cease to be human and humane. We become machinelike, cold and calculating. When people become things not beings with feeling, problems, emotions, joys and dreams then we have perhaps progress but no reforms, perhaps justice but not social justice, in other words justice all around not just justice by the law. In short, hope must be the base, hope that things can change, situation can change and people can change and be changed.

**6th Sunday after Pentecost (June 28)**

### **CONCERN FOR OTHERS**

Margaret Bannings, a novelist, wrote this incident in her life. She had a secretary, one day she scolded the secretary for a small mistake. It was a serious scolding, the secretary cried and had a heavy heart. Years later the secretary died. She died young and Margaret Banning wrote a friend at about the time of the secretary's death: "I have always regretted having caused a few hours of hurt and pain in her short life."

I wonder if all hacendados and our factory owners and our politicians ever thought of the years of hurt and pain they have caused in the entire lives of our people. Christ tells us we must love and perhaps we never did really love, we do not really care for others, we do not really respond to the need of others, we do not really respect others, we do not really know others and ourselves. For love is this four together: care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. That love implies

care is most evident in a mother's love for her child. No matter how much a mother assures us that she loves her child, yet if we see her neglecting to feed, to bath, to give physical comfort to a child, all her assurance, all her words will strike us as insincere. So no matter how we profess to be Christians and go to the rites and sacraments and the Christian religion, yet, if we neglect our neighbor, neglect to give them a decent living, then, whatever we do in Church, whatever we say will always be insincere.

To be 'responsible' is to respond. By having response, the life of his brother is not his brothers' business alone but also his own. He sings a song — 'Each man's joy is joy to me, each man's grief is my own'. If he is responsible for his fellowmen as he feels responsible for himself, but when he is irresponsible in his duties as a Christian, of justice, of respect, then he is not loving nor in love. Really, he is not a Christian.

But then this responsibility must be joined with respect. Otherwise it deteriorates into domination and possessiveness. Respect means the concern that the other person should grow and unfold and mature as he is. Respect implies the absence of exploitation. Respect means allowing the other to make mistakes. Respect means to treat him as a grown up person or at least to allow him to grow up and not guiding him by the nose all the time. Yet above all the other three — respect, responsibility, care — there must be knowledge. All the three must be guided by knowledge. But the person as he is with his problems, his conditions, his dreams, his weakness and his strength, we must know him. If we know, say, our tenant well, if we know our workers well, if we know our neighbor well, if we know our driver well, we can care. Then we can respect, then we can feel responsible and then you will have peace which is the peace of Christ; the peace of a Christian, the peace of a Christian society.

**7th Sunday after Pentecost (July 5)**

### **OWNERSHIP OF LAND**

We wonder what do we mean when we say we own a person. Can we own a person? Of course, you may be shocked at this question. Of course, you will say no — we can never own a person. Yet we see or

hear new songs that she or he is mine, his possession. But what kind of a possession, what kind of an ownership? Now, there's a question for you to answer. I'd like to discuss ownership or possession of land. Is ownership of land same as ownership, say of book? Can you say I own this land and do what I like just as I own this book? If I don't use the book will I throw it away, give it away or destroy it? Really, does it matter very much to others? It really does not matter so much to anybody else what I do with a book but yet regarding the land, if you own a land, I mean a piece of land, can you really do with it as you like? In other words, is your ownership of your land in accordance with its use to society? On the use of the land depends the economic, family and even moral life of people, a land cannot be just like a book or a shirt. Its uses should not depend totally and absolutely on your arbitrary will. The common good and the fruit of the people depends a lot on the use of your land. But then, how is the right to the ownership of the land acquired? By what title has a person to the land? Legally, we have a title of purchase or inheritance. But, basically what is the title of the claim to ownership. It is labor. The money used for the purchase of the land, it is basically labor-saved. Inheritance is labor-saved land.

So, let's take the case of an owner who had bought a piece of land and allowed another person to actually till the land while he, the owner, just receives the fruits of the land. Maybe he invested in fertilizers and seeds but the time will come when the owner will have recovered his capital plus his profits, and the tiller, who has worked on the land and put into the land labor that equal at least the investment and the capital of the owner is still left with nothing, never yet acquired an inch of the land. Now, the question is, since both had put into the land equal investments more or less and since they both have got returns from the land then who has the right of ownership of the land, the legal owner or the tiller? Well, what do you think? Should the legal owner keep enjoying the fruits of the land he never actually worked on? Should the tiller never get to own the land to which he puts in parts of himself? This quotation from *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XII — 1898 nearly a hundred years ago may provide some light: "When man spends the industry of his mind to the strength of



his body in procuring the fruits of nature, by that act, he makes his own portion of nature's field which he cultivates, that portion on which he lives, as it were the interest of his own personality; and it cannot be just that he should possess that portion as his own, and should have a right to keep it without molestation." These words of Pope Leo XII are the basis of the slogan: land to the tiller.

Christianity has really some revolutionary principles especially in social doctrines but they hurt, they hurt very much because to the very owner it means a source of income is cut off but yet this source of income is not his own. He has more than got his share. He has not put in his personality, he has not put in himself directly into the land he should have give away to the tiller the man whose sweat has mingled with the solid, the man whose hands have touched the earth and his feet have trodden the soil. He should, but will he? That is a question that most of our landowners should be asking and they should resolve to be really unselfish and reasonable, then they should give up the land they own for so many, many years now.

8th Sunday after Pentecost (July 12)

### WEAPONS FOR THE POWERLESS

Fashion or fad?

First what is fashion and what is fad?

Fashion seems to be a novelty in style while fad is a novelty in gadget, perhaps. It looks like before you used to ask: are demonstrations, strikes, protest rallies, walk-outs fashionable fads? Are riots, violence fashionable fads? It looks like it is neither one or the other. They are here to stay. They are the weapons found by the powerless, by the voiceless to have will power and to be heard. Students found out that they can exert pressure on the highest office of the land for what they think is due to them. Even those that are traditionally conservative, like teachers, found demonstrations, rallies, etc. as very handy weapons to exert pressure. Is this right or is this wrong? No doubt this is a sign of growth.

As a person grows, he encounters more conflicts and tension. Conflict is necessary in a free society. Gunnar Myrdal started his speech in the Canada Expo '70 this way: "Neither in history has an upper class climbed down from its privileges and open its monopolies out of sheer idealism. Although, idealism can play its role when the pressure from the underprivileged has been ineffectively applied." No wonder if the effective application of this from below has been found in demonstration, rallies and most specially in organizations. This leverage of pressure is specially necessary when the elite or the upper class is well entrenched socially, economically and politically and the lower class has very little. It seems to be the only powerful enough weapon that the exploited and the underprivileged have at present in our situation. The danger now lies in the abuse of this new-born power — not that a demand will be unfair or unreasonable but there are priorities like the needs of power for the implementation of land reform, of teachers, of nurses and other employees for basic salary increases. The needs — root needs — like a free election of delegates to the constitutional convention — needs like a representative delegates from every class and every section of our society.

Yet, if each group, each sector of our society, students, teachers, upper and lower class, squatters, farmers workers, laborers, business section and landowners, if each group is aware of the strength of the other and respect the other as a cooperating partner, then the temptation to achieve the goal by force alone will be far less. Conflict force men to reach higher for a mutual satisfactory solution. It prevents facile and superficial solutions. This can make a better society. In short, we need pickets; we need demonstrations, we need walk-outs, strikes. We are here to stay till better society emerges. But towards this better society both sides have to exercise quick courage, understanding and utter unselfishness. We are living in the age of change. We are in that road of rebirth. The pangs of the birth of a new society or a death rattle of a totalitarian society. Either we surge up or we plunge down, either to be really democratic and free or we will be communistic slaves.

When Christ stood and looked over the city of Jerusalem, he cried, he wept. He said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I long to gather as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused. So, be

it. Your house will be left to you desolate. My promise, you will not see me anymore, until you say, 'Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Here we would like to appeal again to our people, to our leaders, to you who hear me now who have in your power to rectify past errors, to heed again the signs of the times. To try to effect the remedies that are in your hands. To forget your own greed. To forget your interest and to think of everybody including yourself, too. Now, is the time to act. Now is the time to be really a Christian. Whatever errors in the past, whatever injustice in the past, let it not continue to the present and let it not appear in the future.

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**Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (July 19)**  
**Mk. 6, 30 - 34**

● **Efren Rivera, O.P.**

### V.I.P.

If someone very important, very famous and very popular comes to visit our town, I am sure there will be a lot of excitement. People will decorate the streets and organize a parade. When the famous guest arrives, a band will play, children will run in the streets to keep up with the parade. People will gather to see the celebrity and cheer. There will be a fiesta in the town hall. Everyone, young and old will want to see the great visitor smiling at them.

The Gospel text we have read tells us that people showed enthusiasm like this when Jesus Christ and his disciples were still very popular. Do you know what made them popular? It is not hard to answer this question. As they went to the towns and villages preaching, they cast out devils, they gave sight to the blind, they made the lame walk, they cured all kinds of sickness. No wonder people forgot to eat and drink in their eagerness to see Christ and his disciples.

Do you think Christ enjoyed being popular? No. He liked helping people. He loved to talk with everybody. But he did not care

about the excitement and enthusiasm of the people. He was really very different from charlatans who want to be the idols of the masses although they have nothing to offer but big smiles, handshakes, wisecracks and empty promises. Christ was different. He wanted simply to be a teacher. He wanted to teach the truth to people. He wanted people to love the truth and nothing but the truth. When great crowds looked for him, he did not just wave his hand at them, he did not just stand up to be idolized with applause and wild cheers. No. The Gospel tells us that "he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length." For Jesus Christ, it was much, much more important to be a teacher of truth than to be popular.

For us, my dear people, it is much, much more important to hear the words of Jesus Christ and learn the truth from him, than just to go about clapping for movie actors and actresses and listening to the empty promises of politicians. People today are like sheep without a shepherd—not because there is no Shepherd, but because people run away from him. Is it not true, my people? Is it not true that you are running away from Jesus Christ and you do not want to hear his words? Is it not true that you do not read the Gospels? You know "komiks" much better than your Catechism... you know top tunes better than prayers like the *Act of Contrition* and the *Hail Holy Queen*... Is it not true that you know so little about the life of Christ and so much about the scandalous lives of actors and actresses?

Christ is not popular today. But he is still a *very important person*. He is still the Teacher who can tell us the saving Truth, show us the only Way, and give us eternal Life. So, let us give him the VIP treatment by listening to his words in the Bible and inviting the Blessed Sacrament into our hearts.

**Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (July 26)**  
Jn. 6. 1-15

### FIT FOR A BLOWOUT

A "blowout" not only for ten or ten times ten but for five hundred times ten people is certainly something big. What reason or occasion

would be good enough for such a great affair? A victory celebration? A propaganda gimmick? These reasons may be good for politicians or businessmen. But not for Jesus Christ. He fed five thousand men for one simple reason: to teach them a lesson.

Just think of it. If Jesus performed the great miracle of feeding five thousand men by multiplying five loaves of bread and two fish, just to teach a lesson, that lesson must be very, very important! Yes, it is lesson number one. So let us pay careful attention to that lesson.

It is a lesson of love. Jesus wanted to show that he cares for people—for us. He would not think of telling people to go home and risk collapsing in the way because of hunger. Like a mother providing food for her children to show her tender love for them, Jesus gave bread to five thousand hungry men in order to show to all men by this symbolic action, that his heart overflows with love for them.

But did people understand the lesson? No, they did not. Instead of recognizing the miracle as a gesture of love, they thought it was an exhibition of power. They wanted a powerful king. So, they began thinking: here, at last, is a powerful man who can be our king. If he can multiply loaves and fish, certainly he can also give us gold and all kinds of riches. He can abolish taxes and work. He can conquer the Romans and make us lords of all peoples. They thought this way. So they wanted to make Jesus their King.

Jesus, however, did not want to be a political king. Certainly, he is a King—but his kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is a kingdom of love.

Isn't it strange that some people are impressed by power but not by love? If the earth quakes for one minute, you will see people falling down on their knees right in the middle of the street, asking God to forgive their sins, to have mercy. But tell these people that, not only for one minute but minute after minute for hundreds of years Jesus has been in the Blessed Sacrament offering himself as our spiritual food, proving his love with his self sacrifice, inviting people to a life of love—tell this to people and they will not listen to you.

When shall we learn that God truly loves us? He sent his Son Jesus Christ to tell us his loving plan for our salvation — but men prefer to follow their own plans. Jesus Christ died on the cross with open arms to show his love for us — but we ran away from him as from a bandit. Jesus Christ stays in the Blessed Sacrament to give witness to his persevering love — but we prefer to go to movies and cockfights and forget to spend even just a few minutes before the tabernacle and feel the greatness of divine love.

My dear people, let us not wait for a calamity before we turn to Jesus Christ. War, earthquakes, typhoons, fire — or miracles — these lead some people to recognize Christ as their king. But Christ does not want to be a king only in time of war, earthquake, typhoon or fire, he does not want to be a king only on account of a miracle. He wants to be a king because of his love for us and our love for him. This is the lesson fit for that miraculous blowout in which he fed five thousand men. This is the lesson he still teaches as he remains with us in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us listen to him. Let us make him the King of our hearts.

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