



# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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**FOR A JUST SOCIETY**

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Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., D.D.

## For A Just Society

Almost eight years ago, President Marcos launched the Philippines on a Martial Law course towards a New Society. Today we see many new things around us — new roads, new buildings, new parks, new uniforms. There is a new look. But is there a new society? The old problems are still with us, either patently or latently. There is graft and corruption in the government, dishonesty in trade and industry, abuse of authority in the police and armed forces, a disoriented educational system, an off-tangent system of values in most of our cultural undertakings, a sense of hopelessness among the masses.

Amidst all these persistent problems the Catholic hierarchy and laity, by and large, have stuck to the stand of "critical collaboration" with the government. Some, it must be said, have opted to join the revolutionaries. They have to pay the price not only of being classified as outlaws but also of losing their good standing in the Church. Clearly they are taking a position which is contrary to principles repeatedly emphasized by the Pope. In Brazil, recently, the Pope strongly reminded priests that they have to steer clear of Marxism. He also said that social changes through violence would be "without any long-term result and benefit for man."

The "critical collaboration" of the Church with the Martial Law government, however, should take a cue from the Pope's visit to Brazil. The Pope made it a point to advertise his support for priests

and Bishops who were not in the good graces of the right-wing government because they were persistently championing the rights of the poor. When the Pope spoke to 120,000 workers in Sao Paulo's Morumbi soccer stadium, he quoted from discourses of Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns. He used words of the Cardinal that the Brazilian government had in the past denounced as subversive. He said, for example: "The evangelization proper to the Church would not be complete if it were not to take account of the relationships that exist between the Gospel message and the personal and social life of men, between the commandment to love one's neighbour who suffers and is in need, and the concrete situations of injustice which have to be fought and of justice and peace which have to be established." Instead of reproving the Cardinal who only lately was accused by President Joao Figueiredo of inciting workers, the Pope had him at his side to receive the acclamations of the workers.

When a journalist asked the Pope point-blank, "Does your visit to Recife mean that you are backing up Dom Helder Camara?" the Pope did not hesitate to say, "Certainly." This church leader who was often called a communist because he defended the rights of the poor was proclaimed by the Pope "brother of the poor and my brother". The Pope spent the night at the Archbishop's house in spite of threats that Dom Helder Camara would be harmed if this ever happened.

The Pope's message to Brazil and Latin America as a whole was: work for a JUST SOCIETY more than you have ever done before. This, too, is our task in the Philippines: to work not just for a New Society but for a JUST SOCIETY.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Far from the European scene, we in the Philippines have not been much affected by the Hans Küng affair. Nevertheless, the issue of papal infallibility, highlighted in the discussion, is something we must think about clearly. It is for this reason that this issue of the Boletín gives readers a number of documents on the HANS KÜNG AFFAIR.

Catechesis continues to be the subject of episcopal meetings. The mid-year convention of Bishops issued **NORMS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTRY OF CATECHESIS**. The Archdiocese of Manila simultaneously published its **CATECHETICAL NORMS AND PROGRAMS**.

In a commentary, Bishop Leonardo Legaspi shares with us his thoughts on the Pope's Apostolic Exhortation, "**CATECHESIS IN OUR TIMES**".

The 1980 Synod of Bishops will soon take place in Rome. For an orientation on its theme, the comments of the **VATICAN PRESS OFFICE ON THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN THE MODERN WORLD** will be helpful.

We welcome the **BIBLICAL NOTES AND HOMILIES** sent by the Rector of the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay, Fr. Herman Mueller, who is a Professor of Scripture. We asked him some time ago to take care of the Boletin's homiletics but it is only now that he has been able to honor our request.

## DOCUMENTATION ON THE HANS KÜNG AFFAIR

### SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

## DECLARATION ON SOME MAJOR POINTS ON THE THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF PROFESSOR HANS KÜNG

(*L'Osservatore Romano*, January 7 1980, p. 5)

The Church of Christ has received from God the mandate to keep and to safeguard the deposit of faith so that all the faithful, under the guidance of the Sacred Magisterium through which Christ himself exercises his role as teacher in the Church, may cling without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints, may penetrate it more deeply by accurate insights, and may apply it more thoroughly to life.<sup>1</sup>

In order to fulfill the important task entrusted to itself alone<sup>2</sup> the Magisterium of the Church avails itself of the work of theologians, especially those who in the Church have received from the authorities the task of teaching and who therefore have been designated in a certain way as teachers of the truth. In their research the theologians, like scholars in other fields, enjoy a legitimate scientific liberty, though within the limits of the method of sacred theology. Thus, while working in their own way, they seek to attain the same specific end as the Magisterium itself, namely, "to preserve, to penetrate ever more deeply, to explain, to teach, to defend the sacred deposit of revelation; and in this way to illumine the life of the Church and of the human race with the light of divine truth."<sup>3</sup>

It is necessary, therefore, that theological research and teaching should always be illumined with fidelity to the Magisterium since no one may rightly act as a theologian except in close union with the mission of teaching truth which is incumbent on the Church

1) Cf. Conc. Vatic. I, Const. dogm. *Dei Filius*, cap. IV "De fide et ratione": DS 3018; Conc. Vatic. II, Const. dogm. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12.

2) Cf. Conc. Vatic. II, Const. dogm. *Dei Verbum*, n. 10.

3) Paulus VI, *Allocut. and Congress. Internat. de Theologia Conc. Vatic. II*, 1 Oct. 1966; AAS 58 (1966), p. 891.

itself.<sup>4</sup> When such fidelity is absent, harm is done to all the faithful who, since they are bound to profess the faith which they have received from God through the Church, have a sacred right to receive the word of God uncontaminated, and so they expect that vigilant care should be exercised to keep the threat of error far from them.<sup>5</sup>

If it should happen, therefore, that a teacher of sacred doctrine chooses and disseminates as the norm of truth his own judgment and not the thought of the Church, and if he continues in his conviction, despite the use of all charitable means in his regard, then honesty itself demands that the Church should publicly call attention to his conduct and should state that he can no longer teach with the authority of the mission which he received from her.<sup>6</sup>

This canonical mission is in fact a testimony to a reciprocal trust: first, trust on the part of the competent authority that the theologian will conduct himself as a Catholic theologian in the work of his research and teaching; secondly, trust on the part of the theologian himself in the Church and in her integral teaching, since it is by her mandate that he carries out his task.

Since some of the writings — spread throughout many countries, — and the teaching of Professor Hans Küng, a priest, are a cause of disturbance in the minds of the faithful, the Bishops of Germany and this Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, acting in common accord, have several times counselled and warned him in order to persuade him to carry on his theological work in full communion with the authentic Magisterium of the Church.

In this spirit the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in order to fulfill its role of promoting and safeguarding the doctrine of faith and morals in the universal Church,<sup>7</sup> issued a public document on 15 February 1975, declaring that some opinions of Professor Hans Küng were opposed in different degrees to the doctrine of the Church which must be held by all the faithful.

4) Cf. Ioannes Paulus II, Cost. apost. *Sapientia Christiana*, art. 70; Encycl. *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 19; AAS 71 (1979) pp. 493, 308.

5) Cf. Conc. Vatic. II, Const. dogm. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11 and 25; Paulus VI Adhort. apost. *Quinque iam anni*; AAS 63 (1971) p. 99f.

6) Cf. *Sapientia Christiana*, tit. III, art. 27, par. 1; AAS 71 (1979), p. 483.

7) Cf. Motu proprio *Integrae Servandae*, n. 1, 3 and 4; AAS 57 (1965) p. 954.

Among these opinions it noted especially, as of greater importance, those which pertain to the dogma of faith about infallibility in the Church, to the task of authentically interpreting the unique sacred deposit of the word of God which has been entrusted only to the living Magisterium of the Church, and finally to the valid consecration of the Eucharist.

At the same time this Sacred Congregation warned Professor Küng that he should not continue to teach such opinions, expecting in the meantime that he would bring his opinions into harmony with the doctrine of the authentic Magisterium.<sup>8</sup>

However, up to the present time he has in no way changed his opinion on the matters called to his attention.

This fact is particularly evident in the matter of the opinion which at least puts in doubt the dogma of infallibility in the Church or reduces it to a certain fundamental indefectibility of the Church in truth, with the possibility of error in doctrinal statements which the Magisterium of the Church teaches must be held definitively. On this point Hans Küng has in no way sought to conform to the doctrine of the Magisterium. Instead he has recently proposed his view again more explicitly (namely, in his writings, *Kirche-Gehalten in der Wahrheit?* — Benziger Verlag, 1979, and *Zum Geleit*, an introduction to the work of A.B. Hasler entitled *Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde* — Piper Verlag, 1979), even though this Sacred Congregation had affirmed that such an opinion contradicts the doctrine defined by Vatican Council I and confirmed by Vatican Council II.

Moreover, the consequences of this opinion, especially a contempt for the Magisterium of the Church, may be found in other works published by him, undoubtedly with serious harm to some essential points of Catholic faith (e.g., those teachings which pertain to the consubstantiality of Christ with his Father, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary), since the meaning ascribed to these doctrines is different from that which the Church has understood and now understands.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the afore-said document of 1975 refrained at the time from further action regarding the above mentioned opinions of Professor Küng, presum-

8) Cf. AAS 67 (1975) pp. 203-204.

ing that he himself would abandon them. But since this presumption no longer exists, this Sacred Congregation by reason of its duty is constrained to declare that Professor Hans Küng, in his writings, has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and therefore he can no longer be considered a Catholic theologian nor function as such in a teaching role.

At an audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II approved this Declaration decided upon at an Ordinary Meeting of this Sacred Congregation, and ordered its publication.

In Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on 15 December 1979.

**FRANJO CARDINAL SEPER**  
Prefect

**FR. JÉRÔME HAMER, O.P.**  
Titular Archbishop of Lorium  
Secretary



## **REGARDING THE DECLARATION ON ERRORS OF PROFESSOR HANS KUNG**

The Declaration dated 15 December 1979 and published today, is connected with another one that preceded it: the Declaration of 15 February 1975 (cf. AAS 67 (1975), pp. 203-204). The latter, in its turn, had a precedent in another Document of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiar* of 24 June 1973 (cf. AAS 65 (1973) pp. 396-408) which, though setting out in the first place to clarify some fundamental truths discussed in the last few years, is in a sense the first public stand of the same Sacred Congregation with regard to Hans Kung, in whom it had been interested for many years already.

A glance, even a rapid one, at the events that followed one another in this by no means short span of time, can offer a useful key to the understanding of the Declaration now promulgated.

### **I. The Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of 24 June 1973**

1. In substance, the Catholic doctrine on the Church is recalled in this Declaration, for the purpose of defending it from serious errors spreading here and there.

In particular it reaffirms the points concerning the various aspects of infallibility in the Church, an immediate premise of our faith: for it is only believing in it that we believe in divine Revelation as the Church teaches it to us in Christ's name.

This faith in infallibility in the Church cannot be reduced, therefore, to the admission of a certain indefectibility or permanence in truth, which cannot be expressed in clearly determined enunciations. It is, on the contrary, these enunciations that determine the subject of faith; they are, therefore, also the certain and immutable norm both for faith itself and for theological science, which has the task of studying its content and perfecting its expression.

As regards, moreover, the authority competent to make enunciations of faith understood in this way, or dogmatic definitions, it lies only with the whole episcopal College and its head the Roman Pontiff: not as substitutes of theologians, but by reason of the

divine mandate of interpreting truly and guarding faithfully the one sacred deposit of the Word of God (cf. II Vat. Council, *Dei Verbum*, n. 10; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25).

The verticality that exists by the will of Christ in his Church on the doctrinal plane has a correlative on the sacramental plane, and it is expressed in the peculiarity of the ministerial priesthood: that is, the priesthood which has its origins in the sacrament of Holy Orders, and which therefore qualifies only those who have received this sacrament to carry out some sacramental acts, first and foremost the celebration of Holy Eucharist. This celebration is therefore precluded for any other member of the faithful not only by ecclesiastical regulation, but also by dogmatic exigency, by virtue of which the ministerial priesthood differs essentially, and not just in degree, from the priesthood common to all the baptized (cf. II Vat. Council, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10).

2. The errors denounced in the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* were to be found also, and mainly, in two works by Hans Küng: *Die Kirche* (Herder 1967), regarding which the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had notified serious reservations to the author; and *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage* (Benzinger 1970), where it is affirmed that the Church does, indeed, remain fundamentally in truth, but that the latter does not assume concrete expression in infallible definitions, and, in fact, does not lend itself to definitions which, instead of determining it, may repress or distort it.

In 1971 the German Episcopal Conference (as well as the Italian and French ones) rightly saw in this thesis a tampering with the very concept of Catholic faith, which, by its very nature, includes unmistakable and clear affirmations and negations, without which it would be impossible for the Church to remain in the truth of Jesus Christ.

It was not by chance that at the moment of the publication of *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, on 5 July 1973, it was officially communicated that, among the theologians who falsify faith in infallibility in the Church, and therefore her understanding of herself and her mission, Hans Küng was particularly included; he was therefore requested to give his assent to the Declaration itself, in order that the proceedings in progress with regard to him might be considered concluded. At the same time the same communication was sent to him personally by letter.

But all the ways suitable for the due clarification turned out to be impracticable. And in the case of such serious problems it

would certainly not have sufficed to spread a veil of silence over them, while waiting for an unlikely alignment of Hans Küng with the doctrine of the authentic Magisterium of the Church. Silence in this case, would have been abdication before a duty to the whole believing community.

## II. The Declaration on two works of Hans Küng on 15 February 1975

1. In order, therefore, that no doubts should remain on some opinions of fundamental points of Catholic faith, a Declaration became necessary with the explicit mention of the two works mentioned, on the Church and on infallibility: precisely the Declaration of 15 February 1975.

Among the errors which are opposed, in differing degrees, to Catholic doctrine, three are expressly mentioned, as being more important: Namely, the negation of infallibility, such as to exclude any possibility of error in the judgments passed definitively by the Magisterium of the Church; the negation of the specific and exclusive function of the same Magisterium to interpret truly the revealed deposit; the recognized competence, in extraordinary cases of merc-baptized persons to celebrate the Eucharist thus implying that the sacrament of Holy Orders does not confer any specific power in this connection; and therefore that the ordained priesthood remains, on this view, essentially a "lay" priesthood.

Even on that account, however, all hope was not abandoned that Hans Küng, as he himself, moreover, had not excluded, might arrive at a harmonization of his own opinions with the doctrine of the true Magisterium of the Church. Therefore, he was warned at that time, on the mandate of Pope Paul VI, not to continue to teach them. And he was also reminded that he had received the office of teaching in harmony with the doctrine of the Church, and not, rather opinions that demolished or question it.

The Declaration of the Sacred Congregation was followed, on 17 February 1975, by the Declaration of the German Episcopal Conference (to which also the bishops of Switzerland and Austria adhered), which said, among other things, that in the theology of Küng the binding, determinate and permanent character of the decisions of the Magisterium of the Church is not guaranteed. And an appeal was made to him to re-examine his theological method and his problematic doctrinal positions.

2. In spite of that pontifical admonition, and in spite of the appeals of the Bishops of the country that gives him hospitality as professor at Tübingen University, Hans Küng did not show any intention of changing his mind.

An emblematic example is his imposing volume *Christ sein* (Piper Verlag 1974), which he presents as a little "summa" of Christian faith. The German Episcopal Conference had directed its concerned attention to it in the Declaration of 17 February 1975. In the meantime the volume continued to be diffused unchanged, and to be translated into various languages. The same Episcopal Conference returned to it specially with an appropriate and articulated Declaration on 14 November 1977, pointing out its radical danger in the fact that the very foundation of faith, Jesus Christ, is subverted (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11): since He is considered just as God's representative, and not also as the eternal Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, who, having become man in time, assumed human nature in his personal unity.

This radical Christological reduction compromises in an irreversible way also the dogma of the Holy Trinity as it has always been professed by the Church: one God in three equal and distinct Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If Christ, in fact, is deprived of the uniqueness of his eternal generation from the Father, then also God's fatherhood is no longer an eternal reality within divine life, but only the external projection of his love for men who, by means of the sanctifying power called the Holy Spirit, receive the capacity of becoming his sons following the example of Jesus, the son *par excellence*, but ontologically none other than a man like them.

And, still because of that Christological reduction, what becomes of Our Lady, whom faith and Catholic piety venerate just as the "Virgin"? Once removed from the article of the Creed, in which we profess faith in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God who, owing to the Holy Spirit, became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary, her virginal maternity becomes just a legend emerging in the margin of the New Testament.

The substratum and the structure of another volume of Hans Küng *Existiert Gott?* (Piper Verlag 1958) is not dissimilar. It was intended to be a deeper study and clarification of the preceding one.

Intentions apart, the result does not rectify, but confirms. The problems of God, Christ, and the Trinity are dealt with there in

a functional perspective, and not also in their specific reality. The slightest hope of a solution fully in conformity with the faith of the Church is, therefore, wiped out at the outset.

Just one example, with regard to Christology: it is not enough to say that Jesus is God's unequalled representative or even the Son of God, if these features are not based on the divinity of Christ, understood as consubstantiality with the Father, as a result of which He is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made".

These words of the **Creed** express the central core of faith common to all Christians: Catholics, Orthodox, and members of the Reformed Churches. In the Declaration of 14 Nov. 1977, the German Episcopal Conference rightly saw in the safeguarding of this common heritage the foundation of the ecumenical dialogue, in which all Churches and ecclesial Communities are happily engaged today. Without it, the way to the unity of all believers in Christ would not be in continuity with the origin of Christianity.

3. More recently, in support and verification of his fundamental choices, Hans Küng has dedicated two writings to the question of infallibility in the Church.

They are **Kirche-gehalten in der Wahrheit?** (Benzinger 1979) and **Zum Geleit** to the work of the priest A.B. Hasler **Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde** (Piper Verlag 1979).

The main idea that the two writings have in common is that infallibility in the Church, as inherent in the definitive decisions of the Magisterium, does not exist, has never existed, and is not necessary; and no one will ever be able to prove it, just as it not possible to prove a special assistance of the Holy Spirit for the Magisterium itself.

There exists only infallibility "in belief", or indefectibility, in the sense that the People of God, owing to God's pure grace, is always able to find the way to truth, that is, the right way to follow Christ, to be faithful to Him.

But this fundamental permanence in truth is not carried out through and in the definitions of the Magisterium of the Church, but in spite of these definition, since none of them is infallible in itself and therefore not subject to reform; first and foremost the dogmatic definition of the infallibility of magisterium of the Roman Pontiff created by the First Vatican Council. On the contrary, it should be said that this definition which took place owing to a

trick of Pius IX's, is a dogma that is better suited to the system of the Curia than to the Catholic Church. Today it would not be defined. A public opinion poll would show that only a minority of Catholics still believe in it, and the word "infallibility" itself is now disappearing from theological vocabulary.

And Hans Küng asks himself, how then, could anyone venture to call "non-Catholic" one who thinks in this way?

### III. The Declaration of 15 December 1979

The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith could certainly have intervened even before, in the sense in which it passes judgment now: that is, by declaring that Hans Küng cannot be considered a Catholic theologian. It wanted to wait, however, because, as it said in the 1975 Declaration, there remained a marginal possibility that he might give up the opinions mentioned above.

For this purpose, in the spirit of collegiality and subsidiarity of Vatican Council II which presides over its action (cf. *Motu Proprio Integrae Servandae*), the Sacred Congregation, in agreement with the Bishops most directly concerned, did its utmost to persuade Hans Küng to revise his positions.

But the facts briefly outlined here show that every attempt had failed, and that also that presumption had now vanished.

Therefore a definitive decision could not be postponed any further.

It was expected by healthy public opinion which could rightly wonder how a theologian could continue to teach on behalf of the Church, though systematically contesting her doctrine. Once the relationship of mutual trust, between the theologian and the Church and between the Church and the theologian, which is included in the mission given and accepted, has disappeared, to declare that he can no longer teach by virtue of this mission becomes an exigency of mere honesty. In this way it cannot but be realized that a theology which does not meet the primary requisite of the theological method, that is, joint faithfulness to the Magisterium and to the People of God as a whole, has no right of citizenship in the Church. Are not the highest intellects of Christianity such because they abided by his twofold faithfulness, teaching in the Church nothing but what they had learned in her? (cf. St. Augustine, *Contra Iulian*, II, 10, 34: PL 44, 698).

A definitive decision was awaited above all by the faithful; who, as they have the duty to profess publicly the faith received from God through the Church, so they have the right to due vigilance with regard to divinely revealed truth on the part of leader in the Church, so that errors which distort or obscure it in various ways may be kept at bay (cf. II Vat. Council *Lumen Gentium* nos. 11, 25). They have the right to peace and joy in faith (cf. Rom. 15:13). But how could they have peace and joy if faith were not for them a certainty, but a question without answer, or with answers that were always changeable and therefore replaceable with others, endlessly?

This is the context, doctrinal and pastoral at the same time, in which this Declaration is set.

With it the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith merely notes a fact now matured in all its aspects, and indicates its consequences.

1. Hans Küng, in spite of the unmistakable pronouncement of the Declaration of 15 February 1975, has explicitly reaffirmed once again the opinion that at least questions (but it is already a negation of) the dogma of faith of infallibility in the Church or reduces it to some fundamental permanence in truth, reconcilable with errors in the definitive judgments of the Magisterium.

This opinion contradicts the definition of Vatican Council I: it is divinely revealed dogma that the Roman Pontiff, when he defines that a doctrine concerning faith or morals must be held by the whole Church, has the same infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed to endow the teaching Church, that is, the whole episcopal College, in the accomplishment of the magisterial office itself (cf. *Pastor Aeternus*, chap. IV: DS 3074). Everyone can see the consequences of the rejection of this definition as regards the permanence of the Catholic faith in the fullness of truth and in the very unity of the Church (cf. I Vat. Council, Gasser report: Mansi 52, 1227 B).

Furthermore, Hans Küng radically changes not a few other essential points of Catholic faith, attributing to them a meaning different from the one that the Church understood and understands (cf. I Vat. Council *Dei Filius*, "de fide et ratione" can. 3: DS 3043). Mention is made for the sake of example of the doctrine concerning the divinity of Christ and his Virgin Mother Mary, to be set in the context referred to before (cf. II, 2).

2. Consequently, Hans Küng in his writings has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and not just from one or other truth of faith itself, since its whole theological thought is involved. The dogmas, in fact, constitute together an organic unity, and are an objective though inadequate, expression of the organic unity of divine Revelation. The revealed deposit does not permit either selections of content or gradation in the obedience of faith. There exists, it is true, a hierarchy of the dogmas of the Church (cf. II Vat. Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 11), in the sense that some are based on others as the principal ones and the illuminated by them; all however, must be equally believed as divinely revealed.

Hans Küng's writings include inspiring and fascinating pages, but they cannot heal the fractures made within the edifice of faith.

Therefore Hans Küng cannot be considered a Catholic theologian; or can he carry out a teaching role in the Catholic Church.

3. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with this Declaration, did not intend to reply to Hans Küng's challenge that no one would venture to declare a non-Catholic anyone who is opposed to fundamental and qualifying points of the faith professed by the Catholic Church. It merely wished to end a period of waiting that was already too long.

As on their side the Bishops, who by virtue of the apostolic succession are placed in defense of the Gospel (cf. Phil. 1:16), so the Sacred Congregation, which derives from the Successor of Peter the office of promoting and safeguarding the doctrine about faith and morals in the universal Church, has carried out a duty of justice and ecclesial charity.

This was a duty imposed by faithfulness to the pastoral testament of St. Paul who orders us to guard "what has been entrusted" to us (cf. I Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14), in order that the disciples of Christ may not be deceived by anyone with beguiling arguments and that all, by means of faith, may be guarded by the power of God (cf. Col. 2:4; 1 Pt. 1:5).



## **DECLARATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE**

*(L'Osservatore Romano, January 14, 1980, p. 18)*

1. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a declaration of 15 December 1979, noted that Professor Hans Küng, in his writings, has departed from the integral truth of Catholic faith, and therefore can no longer be considered a Catholic theologian or exercise, as such, his task as a teacher.

Consequently, the competent diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Georg Moser, has revoked with immediate effect the "Nihil obstat" granted to Prof. Hans Küng 19 years ago on the occasion of his call to Tübingen University. After having tried for nearly ten years to arrive at a clarification with regard to some fundamental theological issues questioned by Prof. Hans Küng, the inevitable consequences have thus been taken. The German Episcopal Conference expresses its regret that it has been necessary to reach this painful decision. It shares unreservedly the decision of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the measures consequently taken by Bishop Moser. As a result of the way the matter had developed as a whole, there was no other way out.

2. The main reason for this decision is seen by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Prof. Küng's opinion with regard to infallibility in the Church.

All Christian Churches and ecclesial communities teach that the Church of Jesus Christ is indestructible, because she is founded on the inviolable power and on the firm reliability of the Word of God. Even if it is always in need of new reflection and never fully complete until the conclusion of history, the faith of the Church involves, however, a binding "yes" and on univocal "no". Otherwise it is not possible for the Church to remain in the truth of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church is convinced that on the Church as a whole and, in a special and specific way, on Authority (Episcopate, Council, Pope, in her, is conferred the gift of the Spirit of guarding and interpreting correctly, by virtue of her own truth, the Word of God revealed once and for all. The permanence of the Church in truth is connected, therefore, with some enunciations of faith, whose obligatory nature exists in differing degrees. Formu-

lations which serve to interpret the testimony as understood by Holy Scripture and which are pronounced by the Church, and whose obligatory nature is really definitive, are called "dogmas" in the strict sense. Vatican Council I (1870) declared as a dogma the infallibility of the Pope in his doctrinal teaching and at the same time described the conditions for such an authoritative pronouncement on the basis of the Tradition of the Church. Vatican Council II confirmed and completed this doctrine.

Prof. Hans Küng in his Book *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage (Infallible? A Question)*, Zurich 1970, and in other writings of his, has reduced this doctrine in the sense of maintaining a fundamental permanence of the Church in truth, which, however, is, according to him reconcilable with actual errors in decisions of faith taken by the Church irrevocably. The Church, therefore, remains in truth, according to this view, "in spite of all the errors that are always possible". The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith sees in this opinion a lessening of the Church's gift of infallibility and a violation or a radical obscuring of the 1870 dogma. Prof. Küng has recently spoken even of a "revision of the decisions of Vatican I".

The dogma of infallibility in the Church may seem at first sight a marginal phenomenon in the whole of faith; actually, fundamental problems are concentrated in it, such as, for example, the knowledge of truth and the interpretation of revelation, its verbal form and its tradition, the certainty of faith and the validity of the power of Authority in the Church. In this field which serves for true knowledge of divine revelation, the manifestation of errors harms faith itself.

The theological method practised by Prof. Küng with its dangerous limitations that have been pointed out several times, has as a consequence a break with the theological tradition of faith and doctrine on essential points. This is revealed above all in Küng's affirmations about the Person of Jesus Christ. In the central Christological question, whether Jesus Christ is really the son of God, that is, whether He is of the degree and level of the being of God without diminution. Küng, in spite of all his attempts at clarification, avoids a decided confession, formulated with binding words. Since ancient times Christians have professed: "we believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all time: God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father" (as in the great profession of faith of Nicaea, 325). This implies consequences for our salvation: if God Himself did not give him-

self in Jesus Christ for men, then the central point of Christian revelation falls. All the enunciations, even those on the "human" being, or humanity of Jesus, are really important for Christian faith only if they are connected deep down with the fact that Jesus Christ is truly God.

Prof. Küng gives the assurance in general that he wishes to preserve and give new value to the contents of Christological dogmas, but actually he obscures and reduces their univocal enunciations. When fundamental points concerning the mystery of the Person of Jesus Christ lack clarity, the heart not only of Catholic faith but of Christian faith in general is threatened. It is no mere chance, therefore, that Prof. Küng presents in an insufficient way also the doctrine on the divine Trinity, the Church, the Sacraments and Mary.

These deficiencies have contributed to a distressing confusion in faith. The faithful on the other hand, are entitled to a full and univocal presentation of the inalienable truths of faith. The authority of the Magisterium and of pastoral government in the Church must see to this.

3. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith admonished Prof. Küng about his conception of the Church as early as 1967, after the publication of his book *Die Kirche* (The Church). Freiburg im B., 1967. On 30 April 1968 the Congregation communicated to Prof. Küng that it had examined his book "Die Kirche". At the same time the Congregation invited Prof. Küng to a conversation. Although the latter declared he was, in general, willing, this conversation did not take place in spite of repeated invitations. After the publication of the book *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage* (Infallible? A Question), 1970, the Congregation started doctrinal proceedings with regard to some opinions expressed in that book and asked Prof. Küng to answer the questions transmitted to him by the Congregation. The voluminous exchange of letters did not lead to an answer that satisfied the Congregation. Consequently, the Congregation for the Faith, by reason of its task of protecting and promoting faith in the whole Church, published on 6 July 1973 the declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae", in which the doctrine of the Tübingen Professor was rejected. With reference to the declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae", the Congregation communicated to Prof. Küng in writing that the possibility of a conversation about the two doctrinal proceedings remained open. If Prof. Küng had recognized the doctrine contained in the declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae", the proceedings in progress with regard to the two books would have been closed. In spite of the mediation of Cardinal Dopfner, the conversation proposed by Rome to clarify the matter did not take place.

After Prof. Küng in a letter of 4 September 1974 had assured the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that he wished to take advantage of the "time for reflection" granted to him, not excluding the possibility that he might subsequently "conform" his doctrine to that of the Magisterium, the Congregation, in a declaration of 15 February 1975, addressed "on the mandate of Paul VI for the present the admonition not to sustain such doctrines any longer". The doctrinal proceedings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith were "declared closed for the present with regard to this matter".

In a collateral declaration of 17 February 1975, the German Episcopal Conference reminded Prof. Küng of the principles for the fundamental understanding of Catholic theology, which were not taken sufficiently into account in some of his theological works. This applied above all to the doctrine on the Person of Jesus Christ contained in Küng's book *Christ sein*. In the meantime also the correspondence on the matter was published. The promise subsequently made by Küng to clarify the contested themes in his more recent work *Existiert Gott? (Does God exist?)* Munich 1978, was again not kept.

In spite of the admonition of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 15 February 1975, Prof. Küng, in the spring of 1979, not only repeated his opinions about infallibility in the Church, but presented them again in an even more emphatic way (cf. *Kirchegehalten in der Wahrheit? (The Church — preserved in truth?)* Theologische Meditationen 51, Zurich 1979; "Der neue Stand der Unfehlbarkeitsdebatte" ("The new state of the debate on infallibility"), a preface to A.B. Haster's book. *Wie der Papst unfehlbar wurde. Macht und Ohnmacht eines Dogmas*, Munich 1979, XIII-XXXVII). The Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith, in its decision on 15 December 1979, refers to this flagrant violation of the conditions imposed for the temporary suspension of the doctrinal proceedings in February 1975.

4. The decision that has been taken can be understood only in the light of this period, almost a decade, of discussion and controversy. The representatives of the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Presidents of the German Episcopal Conference, first and foremost Cardinal Julius Döpfner and Herman Volk, and the competent Bishop of Rottenburg Most Rev. Georg

Moser in many letters of different character, in personal talks and in numerous initiatives, have tried to reach a clarification of the situation that had come about. In that they have always recognized theological discussion as having an important role. Prof. Küng did not accept the invitations to a conversation expressed for years by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, nor did he answer the questions put to him by the German Episcopal Conference. The temporary suspension of the doctrinal proceedings and the "admonition" of 1975, for which no provision is made from the juridical and procedural point of view, constituted a means to do as much as possible to meet him halfway and an attempt to settle conflicts in a new way.

Prof. Küng did not avail himself of this possibility. With unprecedented inflexibility and with unusual incorrigibility — this holds good in spite of contrary declarations on his part that he is willing to dialogue — he did not let himself be induced either by the vast theological discussion or by initiatives on the part of the Magisterium to integrate, modify or correct his doctrines. Also his attacks, sometimes excessive, against the discipline and order of the Church, must be set in this same context.

5. For these reasons the decision taken by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith became inevitable. The German Episcopal Conference regrets that so many attempts for another solution have failed. In the last few years the ecclesiastical Authority has often been reproached with tolerating within the Church dissenting doctrines of this kind while proceeding, on the other hand, against Archbishop Lefebvre, for example, and his followers. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the German Episcopal Conference, as well as the Bishop of Rottenburg, have left no doubt that they will not lose sight of their task of protecting the faith of the Church. Members of the Church, on their side, are entitled to have faithful preaching and certainty in faith (not to be confused with false confidence!), also made possible through the magisterial authority of the Church and thereby, also through infallibility by means of the Spirit of God. To commit oneself to this conviction means maintaining the identity of the Catholic Church. This identity is, moreover, the premise for a real ecumenical dialogue and for the accomplishment of the Church's tasks in society.

The German Episcopal Conference requests the faithful of the Catholic Church, other Christians and all men interested in the

life of the Church to see and judge the decision of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith keeping in mind this background. The events have been made known for years and as such can be checked. The Authority of the Church will not let itself be deterred by this disappointing matter from seeking also in the future, if it is a question of arriving at a clarification on controversial theological opinions, a solution on the basis of a sincere dialogue .

6. Prof. Küng is not for this reason excluded from the Church and remains a priest. But as a result of the revocation of the "Nihil obstat", he loses the mandate of teaching Catholic theology on behalf of the Church and as a teacher recognized by the Church.

Cologne-Bonn, 18 December 1979.

JOSEPH CARD. HOFFNER  
President  
of the German Episcopal Conference

## STATEMENT BY HANS KUNG

*(Doctrine and Life, February, 1980, pp. 115-116)*

I am deeply ashamed of my church. Even in the 20th century it is conducting secret inquisitorial proceedings. Many people are scandalized that a Church which appeals to Jesus Christ and which has now begun to defend human rights, defames and discredits its own theologians with such methods.

In my recent book, now under attack, concerning the problem of infallibility, I did nothing but repeat my old and as yet unanswered question, and at the same time I asked the Pope to call together a commission of internationally respected experts which could clear up this matter.

The Objections to **On Being A Christian** and my stand on other dogmas have not been the object of Roman proceedings. Finally, in my most recent book, **Does God Exist?** I tried to clarify certain Christian issues, and my clarifications have not yet been the object of Church criticism.

But obviously all of this has been nothing but a pretext for silencing a rather irksome critic. And while the Dutch Cardinal (Jan) Willebrands of Utrecht, defended his theologian, (Father) Edward Schillebeeckx, by personally intervening with the Pope on his behalf, certain German cardinals and bishops collaborated with the Roman inquisition in order to destroy the credibility of one of their own theologians in a surprise pre-Christmas attack.

After the Pope had finally, after 350 years, conceded that the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had committed

a fundamental error in the case of Galileo, now that same inquisitorial authority has resumed the same inhumane policies not only against me, but also against numerous other theologians.

But I plan to continue as a Catholic theologian, in the Catholic Church, to be an advocate for numerous Catholics, and I know that I have behind me countless theologians, pastors, religion teachers and lay people in our Church. At the same time, I shall fight in my own Church until this disciplinary measure is formally revoked, just as Pope John XXIII revoked the condemnation of such prominent theologians as (Pierre) Teilhard de Chardin, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac and others. I am certain that the struggle of so many people for a more Christian Church will finally succeed.



## HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE COMMUNIQUE DECEMBER 30, 1979

*(L'Osservatore Romano, January 14, 1980, p. 19)*

1. The Declaration issued on 15 December 1979 by the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith about some points of the theological doctrine of Prof. Hans Küng, had been made inevitable in order to protect, as is necessary, the right of the faithful to receive in its entirety the truth taught by the Church, after all the efforts of the Holy See, the German Episcopal Conference and the diocesan Bishop, to induce Prof. Küng to renounce his own erroneous positions, had proved to be in vain.

2. Prof. Küng having expressed in a talk with the diocesan Bishop, Mons. Moser, his readiness to clarify his opinions, the same Bishop endeavoured once more with great patience and understanding to help Prof. Küng to solve his problem. Learning of a "stand" (Stellungnahme) drawn up by Prof. Küng after this contact with Bishop Moser, the Holy Father decided to invite the German Cardinals, Bishop Moser and the Metropolitan of Freiburg in Breisgau, Mons. Saier, to a special consultation, in the presence of the Cardinal Secretary of State, the Cardinal Prefect and the Secretary of the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Following upon a thorough evaluation of Prof. Küng's most recent affirmations, all the participants in the consultation reached the conclusion that, unfortunately, they do not constitute a sufficient basis to be able to modify what was decided in the Declaration of 15 December.

3. In view, of this situation, Prof. Küng plainly cannot continue to carry out the role of a theologian, teaching by the mandate of the Church. And the competent Ordinary is bound to draw from that the canonical and concordatory consequences.

4. For years the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had been making efforts to clarify with Prof. Küng the ideas circulated by him, without meeting with the corresponding readiness

on his part. The consultation that took place on 28 December is another proof that both the Apostolic See and the German Episcopate continue to treat the problem of Prof. Küng with the best will.

The decision taken, most regretfully, after so many efforts previously made is dictated exclusively by a sense of serious pastoral responsibility.

It does not mean in any way — as was already stressed in the Declaration of 15 December — a restriction of the rightful and necessary freedom of theological research.

The decision does not change at all the position of the Church in the commitment for the unity of Christians, according to the principles expressed in the declaration of the Second Vatican Council *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

5. Although the "stand" (Stellungnahme) of Prof. Küng cannot constitute a sufficient basis to change the decision contained in the Declaration of the S. Congregation of the Faith on 15 December, the Apostolic See and the German Episcopate do not cease to cherish the hope that Prof. Küng — who has expressed more than once his desire to continue to be a Catholic theologian — will after thorough reflection take up a position that will make it possible to restore the faculty of teaching by the mandate of the Church.

The Holy See and the German Episcopate will continue to commend this problem to God in prayer and ask all men of goodwill to do likewise.

## HANS KÜNG REPLIES

*(Doctrine and Life, February, 1980, pp. 117-118)*

The results of the negotiations in Rome have caused me deep sorrow and are beyond my comprehension. The Pope has condemned a man whom he has not heard. The Roman maxim, "Audiatur et altera pars" (The other side should also be heard), seems to have no validity in Rome. Although I wrote to the Pope several times and recently asked the bishop of Rottenburg to arrange an audience for me, the Pope did not deem it necessary to talk personally to a Catholic theologian who has tried for a quarter of a century to serve his Church loyally. All means of ecclesiastical power are being employed to silence an irksome critic. Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council are forgotten. Rome obviously cannot tolerate "correctio Fraternalis," loyal criticism, fraternal co-operation, inquiries undertaken in the spirit of solidarity. Human rights and Christian love are preached to the outside world, but internally, in spite of all the fine words, they are ignored.

The Roman attack came as a total surprise to me and, on top of that, at Christmas time. Due to the Roman strategy of negotiations, I was always the object and never a partner in the proceedings. Nevertheless, I did everything which I, in good conscience, could do in this extremely difficult situation. I spoke with Bishop Moser, I prepared a statement for the Pope.

It was all in vain. I was not heard. Nor were the many appeals of Christians from all over the world heard. Also left unheard were the vehement protests of numerous theologians, pastors and lay people from the various denominations.

Even the admonition of the World Council of Churches was not heeded. The Roman authorities and German bishops have failed to appreciate that this conflict is not just an issue of Hans Küng, but also of that Church which is in the process of gambling away all of its chances for renewal. It is not just an issue of a single theologian, but also of all of those, be they known or unknown, who have been and will be censured by church authorities. It is

not just an issue of individual believers, but also of the unity of the entire Church and the credibility of Church leadership. It is not just a question of the infallibility of the Church. It is not just a question of an inner Catholic conflict, but also of the success of ecumenism.

I asked myself, if I am no longer supposed to be Catholic, how many of our theologians, pastors and lay people will be able to call themselves Catholic?

In spite of all of this, I do not consider this Roman verdict as a defeat, but rather as a challenge to our Church to clarify the basis of Catholic theology and preaching, a task which is long overdue. If I had made a dishonest compromise, I might still have my "missio canonica" today and even a brief period of peace and quiet. But this would have been no service to the Church, and I would have lost my Christian identity and my moral credibility.

I will continue to pursue my central concern, which is to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ intelligible to contemporary people. I will do this as decisively as in the past.



*On May 15, 1980, Pope John Paul II wrote a letter to the German Episcopal Conference on the Hans Küng affair. The BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO will publish the letter in the next issue.*

# SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO EPISCOPIS

## SORSOGONENSIS

### Administrationis Apostolicae

## D E C R E T U M

Ad consulendum regimini vacantis dioecesis Sorsogonensis, Summus Pontifex JOANNES PAULUS, Divina Providentia PP. II, praesenti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Decreto nominat et constituit Administratorem Apostolicum ad nutum Sanctae Sedis memoratae Ecclesiae, usque dum aliter provideatur, Exc.mum P.D. **Concordium Sarte**, Episcopum titulare Thunusudensem, eique iura et facultates tribuit quae Episcopis residentialibus, ad normam sacrorum canonum, competunt.

Contrariis quibusvis minime obstantibus.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, die 19 Ianuarii 1980.

✠ S. CARD. BAGGIO  
Praef.

✠ FR. LUCAS MOREIRA NEVES, O.P.  
Archiepiscopus tit. Feraditan, Maior  
A Seretis

# **CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES**

## **NORMS AND GUIDELINES FOR**

### **THE MINISTRY OF CATECHESIS**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

##### **Purpose of this Document**

In issuing this Document, we wish to affirm our deep commitment to catechesis as one of the primary tasks of our Church in the Philippines as it is of the universal Church (Cfr. *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT), 1). We wish likewise to manifest our unwavering conviction "that if catechesis is done well in our local Churches, everything else will be easier to do." (CT, 63). For the more we give catechesis priority over other works and undertakings the more will we find in catechesis a strengthening of the internal life of our faithful and of the external activity of our Church. (CT, 15).

While "catechesis always has been and always will be a work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible" (CT, 16), we acknowledge that beyond all others we, as Bishops, are primarily responsible for catechesis. Above all, we should "bring about and maintain in our 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" (CT, 63). It is in this context therefore that we transmit to you these Norms and Guidelines for the ministry of catechesis.

##### **Scope of this Document**

These norms and guidelines are concerned with catechesis in general and catechesis within the school context, or religious education. The section on catechesis in general responds to only one question: **what are the main criteria to measure authentic catechesis?** Obviously there are many other areas of catechetical ministry that need clear-cut directives. We are confident however that those areas will be included in the **National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines** which is in the process of preparation.

The particular norms and guidelines for catechesis in the context of our Catholic schools should be read with the findings of the Episcopal Commission on Education and Religious Instruction in mind. These findings are contained in the ECERI's report last 1979 under the title of *The Shape of Religious Education in the Philippines Today*.

## II. NORMS FOR AN AUTHENTIC CATECHESIS

1. **Catechesis should center on the mystery of the Trinity and Christ's saving work.**

The spirit and content of catechesis is inspired by the axiom, "through Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit." If catechesis loses sight of these three elements or neglects their close relationship, it is not faithful to the Christian message (GCD, 4-42). *Catechesi Tradendae* considers this as "the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work" (CT, 72).

2. **Catechesis should be christocentric, i.e. it should center on the Person of Jesus Christ and Christ's teaching which is at the same time a lesson about life.**

"The Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops often stressed the Christocentricity of all authentic catechesis . . . It is 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 Spirit" (CT, 5).

3. **Catechesis should present the Christian message in its entirety and in such a way that the inter-relationship of its parts is maintained.**

To expound only what people want to hear, or to explain the Christian message in such a fragmentary and disjointed way that the faithful lose a sense of mystery, and reverence fails the catechetical mission. The Creeds — the Apostles' and the Nicene — are examples of brief best comprehensive statements of the Christian message. For this reason *Catechesi Tradendae* calls our attention to this point: "In order that the sacrificial offering of his or her faith should be perfect, the person who becomes a disciple of Christ has the right to receive "the word of faith" not in mutilated

falsified or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor. 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." (C. T., 30).

**4. Catechesis should recognize a certain hierarchy of truths.**

A careful reading of the GCD brings about the point that hierarchy of truth does not mean that some truths pertain less to faith itself, that others do, but rather, that some truths of faith enjoy a higher priority inasmuch as other truths are based on and illumined by them.

**5. Authentic catechesis should adapt to the circumstances of those being catechized.**

Catechesis must take learning theory and other factors — Cultural, sociological, psychological, which influence human behavior and values into account. In a catechetical context, effective communication is as important as doctrinal orthodoxy. This is what *Catechesi Tradendae* means when it says: "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 should be organized in one way rather than another." (C.T., 31).

**6. Catechesis should interpret the present life in the light of revelation and at the same time disposes people for the world to come.**

"In the time past, it began," as the General Catechetical Directory (GCD) states, "made progress, and in Christ reached its highest point; in the present time it displays its force and awaits its consummation in the future." (GCD, 44). Compare this with C.T.'s no. 22: "This revelation is not however isolated from life and it illumines the whole life with the light of the Gospel, to inspire it or to question it."

**7. The bishop has the primary responsibility for catechesis in the diocese, and under him the pastor is directly responsible for the local church.**

*Catechesi Tradendae* has this to say: "You (bishops) are, beyond all others, the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence." (C. T., 63). When this text is read together with the other recent documents of the Church — its meaning and impact emerge in bolder relief. The decree of Vatican II on the Pastoral Office of Bishops (*Christus Dominus* (CD) describes their responsibility in regard to catechesis (nos. 13-14). The message to



the People published at the close of the 1977 Synod of Bishops states, "the bishops has the primary role in the catechetical activity of the local church. It is his task to coordinate the activity of all who dedicate themselves to catechize in his own local church. Along with him, all their own ways must collaborate in the ministry of catechesis" (n. 14). So also the parish priest. Although he holds "the office of direct responsibility" he too is answerable to the bishop. For one, the parish priest should see to it that the diocesan catechetical directive are implemented.

*Catechesi Tradendae* in Chapter II precisely underlines this point when it traces catechesis in the course of the Church's history from the teaching of the apostles and their fellow workers, the Letters and Gospels the instructions and treatises of the Fathers of the Church, the Councils, the missions, etc. From this Exhortation draws the conclusion that catechesis is a duty and a right of the Church in every country. It is the priority task to which the Church must devote her best resources.

### III. NORMS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

#### Objectives

1. Religious education in our schools should aim not only to a simple intellectual assent to religious truths but also to a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ (**The Catholic School** (TCS), 50).

"Without entering into the whole problem of teaching religion in schools, it must be emphasized that, while such teaching is not merely confined to "religious classes" within the school curriculum, it must, nevertheless also be imparted explicitly and in a systematic manner to prevent a distortion in the child's mind between general and religious culture. The fundamental difference between religious and other forms of education is that its aim is not simply intellectual assent to religious truths but also a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ" (TCS, 50).

"Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought action and will according to the Gospel making the beatitudes his norms of life." (TCS, 34)

2. Religious education should be imparted not only implicitly and indirectly, but also explicitly and in a systematic manner. (TCS, 50).

'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 matters, 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... 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 the adolescents, they still have a grave duty to offer 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.'" (CT, 69).

3. Since faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it, our educational personnel should strive to create in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. (TCS, 53-55).

### ORGANIZATION

4. When feasible, in all our schools, there should be a specific office to take care of religious education. This particular office shall design, with the cooperation of other sectors within the school community, specific programs whereby religious values are instilled into the learner while at the same time enabling him to experience his Christian faith.

5. To promote a more coordinated and effective faith environment within the school community, the office of religious education should take charge of both the more organized religious education classes and the activities meant to experience Christian faith.

6. Inasmuch as the faith-dimension is the determinant element of our educational apostolate, and because this should be the common concern of the entire school community, an organizational structure in which all sectors of the school are represented should be established in each of our Catholic school.

7. Considering the centrality of religious education in the context of our educational apostolate, religious education subjects should be given priority in terms of both the most convenient time, qualified teaching staff, and material resources.

8. Considering the importance of continuity of systematic religious education, Catholic schools should work closely with the parents, the parish priest and other agents of the community. (Cfr. TCS, 48).

### FACULTY MEMBERS

9. "While the Bishop's authority is to watch over the orthodoxy of religious instruction and the observance of Christian morals in the Catholic schools, it is also the task of the whole educative community to ensure that a distinctive Christian educational environment is maintained" (TCS, 73). It is highly recommended that periodical meeting between the authorities of Catholic schools and the ordinary of the place be held. Among other things, special attention should be given to the criteria used in the recruitment of religious education teachers.

10. Everything being equal, the salaries of religious education teachers should be equivalent or at par with those of the teachers in other academic departments within the same school.

11. The person in charge of religious education program should see to it that faculty members of religious education are given adequate opportunities for up-dating their knowledge of Christian faith and for deepening their Christian life in faith.

### BISHOPS

12. The ordinarius loci should be informed at the end of each schoolyear on items with reference to religious education in the different Catholic schools of his diocese by way of a report. This report will be made according to the different levels (elementary, secondary and collegiate level) and should provide following information:

- Number of subjects of religion offered.
- List of faculty members with educational attainment.
- Textbook used in the various offerings.
- Person responsible for religious education.
- Religious activities held for faculty members.
- Religious activities held for students.

13. From time to time the Ordinarius loci will conduct a written examination to all students of a given class in his diocese in order to appraise himself of the knowledge students have gained in religious subjects.

"The bishop has the primary role in the catechetical activity of the local Church. It is his task to coordinate activity of all who dedicate themselves to catechize in his own local Church. Along with him all their own, ways must collaborate in the ministry of catechesis" (**Message to the People**, 14).

"The Catholic school... receives from the Bishops in some manner the "mandate" of an apostolic undertaking" (TCS, 71; also, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, **Apostoloam Actuositatem**, 24).

"The essential element of such a mandate is "union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule God's Church and this link is expressed especially in overall pastoral strategy. "In the whole diocese or in given areas of it the coordination and close inter-connection of all apostolic works should be fostered under the direction of the Bishop. In this way all undertakings and organization, whether catechetical, missionary, charitable, social, family, educational, or any other programme serving a pastoral goal will be coordinated. Moreover, the unity of the diocese will thereby be evident (CD, 17)". (TCS, 72).

"The assigning of various responsibilities is governed by the principle of subsidiarity, and, with reference to this principle, ecclesiastical authority respects the competence of the professionals in teaching and education." (TCS, 70).

"While the Bishop's authority is to watch over the orthodoxy of religious instruction and the observance of Christian morals in the Catholic schools, it is the task of the whole educative community to ensure that a distinctive Christian educational environment is maintained in practice." (TCS, 73).

#### **PARTICULAR TO THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES**

14. We gratefully appeal to all our Catholic Institutions of Higher Learning and major ecclesiastical academic centers to jointly undertake the following urgent task: to elaborate a "societal and historical analysis of Philippine society acceptable to Christians and premised by a genuinely Christian world vision and a Christian view of history and man. It should be done with all possible seriousness and depth, free from distorting ideological bias (cf. I.C. **PUEBLA**

Document, nn. 535-537), thoroughly aware of the best actual contemporary developments both in Christian social teaching and in the social and historical sciences.<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that in our Catholic schools and universities our departments of social sciences and history have often been content with "repeating" the sociological and historical analysis of Philippine society which are influenced by other uncritical liberal (ideological viewpoints, and that conscientization seminars, and other like groups, looking for social analyses more critically aware of, e.g. structures of injustice, of domination, etc., have had to resort to "structural analysis" rather uncritically drawing from an opposed ideological viewpoint.

It remains an urgent need for our educational task that "societal and historical analyses" of Philippine society acceptable to Christians and premised by a genuinely Christian world vision and a Christian view of history and man be elaborated with all possible seriousness and depth, free (as much as possible) from distorting ideological bias (in the sense not acceptable to Christians, cf. PUEBLA, nn. 535-537), thoroughly aware of the best critical contemporary developments both in Christian social teaching and in the social and historical sciences.

Such a social analysis following the general lines of contemporary texts of the Church's magisterium, e.g., *Octogesima Adveniens*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Justice in the World*, the *Puebla Conference*, could perform the service of a critical evaluation of views of Philippine society deriving largely from competing "ideologies" present in the Philippine scene.

*Approved by the General Assembly  
of the Catholic Bishops' Conference  
of the Philippines on July 8, 1980*

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<sup>1</sup> It has been remarked, perhaps not without foundation, that our Catholic centres of higher studies have not met the need — still very urgent — of various organizations, groups in the Church for a *societal analysis* which builds on a Christian and Gospel perspective, which is coherent with Catholic social teaching and a genuinely Christian anthropology and vision of history.

# **CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES**

## **POLICY GUIDELINES ON**

### **GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

1. The ultimate objective of any government financial subsidy to Catholic schools should be to promote the equalization of educational opportunities. It must be based on the principle of equity that each citizen is entitled to equal protection of the law and the enjoyment of general welfare clause.
2. The Policy on assistance would be consistent with the principle of the preservation of the integrity of the private educational system and the autonomy of the privately supported school circumscribed only the standards laid out by legislative policy on accountability for public funds. Hence, government subsidy to Catholic schools should not infringe upon the Catholic schools' right to determine such goals and policies as are essential to their specificity as Catholic schools and must respect the basic institutional freedoms of the Catholic schools, among them, the freedom to decide on who may teach, what may be taught, how, what is to be taught shall be taught, and who may be admitted to the school.
3. Government subsidy, to be truly of help to Catholic schools, should not add more financial burden to Catholic schools,<sup>1</sup> for increase the per student cost of education at the expense of the school.
4. Government subsidy should not take such forms where the principle of separation between Church and state is likely to be placed in jeopardy, (Vide, Art. XV, Sec. 15 of the Philippine Constitution)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As what happens in the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) Scholarship Program.

<sup>2</sup> Art. XV, Sec. 15

The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable.

5. Therefore, the preferred form of subsidy should be one where the beneficiaries of the subsidy are directly the students and their parents and only secondarily the school. For this reason, the system of student aid through the voucher system offers the best promise of a good subsidy program. (Vice, Art. II, Sec. 4 and Art. VIII, Sec. 18, (2) of the Phil. Const.)<sup>3</sup>

*Approved by the General Assembly  
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<sup>3</sup> Art. II, Sec. 4.

The State shall strengthen the family as a basic institution. The natural right of parents in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character shall receive the aid and support of the government.

Art. VIII, Sec. 18, (2)

(2) No public money or property shall be appropriated, applied, paid, or used, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, sectarian institution, or system of religion, or for the use, benefit, or support of any priest, preacher, minister or other religious teacher or dignity as such, except when such priest, preacher, minister or dignity is assigned to the armed forces, or to any penal institution, or government orphanage or leprosarium.

# CATECHETICAL NORMS AND PROGRAMS

Archdiocese of Manila

1980

- \* **VISION** of Catechetical Ministry in the Archdiocese of Manila
- \* **Catechetical THRUST** of the Archdiocese
- \* **Programs**

## I. V I S I O N

We wish to proclaim the Mystery of the Incarnate Christ,  
unique Son of the Father and our only Savior,  
as presented by the Church,  
in order to bring our people in communion with  
Jesus Christ,  
leading them in the power of the Holy Spirit,  
to maturity in faith,  
global adherence to the Gospel,  
in integral Christian development,  
and an ever deepening personal commitment to Christ.  
The proclamation is done by  
bringing out the evangelical values in authentic  
Filipino popular religiosity and cultural patterns,  
by awakening the sense of ecclesial community  
by formation to justice and participation in the  
redemptive transformation of the world, as an  
integral part of  
the missionary character of this community.

## II. T H R U S T

The following shall be the principal thrusts in the  
Archdiocese of Manila:

1. To deepen commitment of the faithful, particularly the  
bishops and parish priests to the catechetical ministry; and,



2. To gradually attain a substantial increase of better spiritually formed and qualified catechists who are true witnesses to Christ in school and in the different ecclesial communities in the parishes.

### III. PROGRAMS

#### A. Personnel

##### 1. ARCHBISHOP/BISHOPS

The Archbishop/Bishops are urged to reawaken and reinforce the importance and priority of catechesis, specifically by:

- a. a **Pastoral Letter** on the subject;
- b. in **Pastoral Visitations**, meetings with lay coordinators, etc. that catechesis be brought out sharply;
- c. in working with **Seminary Rectors**, for better catechetical formation in seminaries thru **ABRE**
- d. in **Priests' Assembly**, Annual Retreat-Renewal — that catechesis be studied, discussed, etc. Cf. *Catechesi Tradendae*.
- e. audience for catechesis being brought into **Papal visit plans**.
- f. coordinate the various **Catechetical Centers** in their work and with the district centers.

##### 2. PRIESTS/RELIGIOUS

Priests/religious need conscientization regarding the priority of catechesis, through:

- a. stressing need for **better parish catechetical programs**; the more successful parishes should be used as models for possible improvement in other parishes;
- b. religious and religious communities should be explicitly asked to help with catechesis in public schools, to help their **neighborhood ecclesial community**, and in parish ministry, e.g., Pre-marital instructions; Adult catechesis; Sacramental catechesis; this request thru **ALSWAM/ALSMAN**.

3. **TEACHERS/CATECHISTS/PARENTS**

Teachers/catechists/parents — coordinate with the **MAFLEP** in developing an interest/awareness in catechesis:

- a. educating the parents to their duty as 1st catechists of their children;
- b. interest-rousing means (seminars, recollections,\* etc.) for teachers, e.g., thru **CMFS** seminars of **ACEAM**

**B. Catechetical Activity**

1. **Recruitment** of more active personnel — laymen/women, religious, etc. in the catechetical ministry, is of prime importance.

Some steps:

- a. a yearly drive during the month of December and February;
  - b. - a **Catechetical Week**, in which the importance/urgency of catechesis is brought out in various ways;
  - c. use of the media, esp. **COR MANILA** and **Radio Veritas**, to bring before the people the activity of catechists;
  - a. a **Fund Drive** in the parishes and schools for-catechetical work.
2. **Training of catechists**, both spiritual formation and academic, needs to be greatly stressed:
    - a. by systematic screening, testing of applicants; interviews and on-going formation and training in district centers, parish programs, etc.
    - b. by retreats, recollections, etc. seminars for catechists;
    - c. by coordinating the work of the **Formation Centers** and the Archdiocesan district centers, and parish groups;
    - d. and with the materials and guidelines formulated by an Archdiocesan board under **ABRE**, and **ACEAM**

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\* Needed: an adequate, just scale of standardized salary; according to a system of ranking.

3. Quality of catechetical activity with all ages, needs serious efforts at improvement; this involves:
  - a. training of catechists in the necessary skills, using up-to-date approaches and methods from education and psychology;
  - b. focusing on "those-to-be-catechized" — their level of psychological, intellectual, moral and spiritual formation, and in their concrete social context;
  - c. thus developing different models of catechizing different groups, and how to effectively train catechists in using these models.
4. Focusing on the place of catechizing, (esp. the public elementary & HS); further steps be taken by Church authorities, directly or indirectly, to improve the conditions (time, place etc.) of teaching, by dialogue with the proper government authorities.
5. Out-of-school youth, and adults, should be the object of new parish efforts, supported by archdiocesan and parish organizations, e.g., Legion of Mary, Core groups formed for youth work,\* etc.
6. ACEAM should increase its seminars for teachers/school administrators.

### C. Materials

1. ACEAM or ABRE or ICD are to prepare seminars for up-dating catechetical courses.
2. A series of Basic Catechisms should be written and published:
  - a. Domestic or Family (birth — 7 yrs.) including basic doctrine, morals and prayer, with stress on family and community, 1st Communion, etc.
  - b. School Catechism (7-12 yrs.) including doctrine (Church) liturgy;

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\* Plans for summer programs and training sessions for summer 1981, precisely to form and develop these core groups should be prepared.

c. **Community Catechism (12-16 yrs.) on love, service responsibility thru modern means of communicating.**

3. **Additional materials:**

for 16-25 yr. group, on vocation in life,

for Sunday liturgical celebration

for Radio catechism-course

for publication-series in COR MANILA.

4. **An Archdiocesan Catechetical Directory should be prepared through the ABRE and ACEAM, together with some coordinating centers.**

## THEME OF THE 1980 SYNOD OF BISHOPS

### **THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN THE MODERN WORLD**

The theme chosen by John Paul II for the next General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1980, "The role of the Christian family in the modern world", was presented and illustrated to accredited journalists in the Vatican Press Office.

The Press Conference, presided over by H.E. Mons. Ladislau Rubin, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, was introduced by the Director of the Holy See Press Office who, after recalling that problems concerning marriage and the family had been considered for some time a subject on which a Synodal Assembly should make a pronouncement, said:

"After the Synods on Evangelization and on Catechesis, the Family appeared more and more clearly and eminently as a privileged subject of Christian catechesis itself and an important element of evangelization."

Among the propositions of the last Synod on Catechesis, presented to the Pope, here is one that says explicitly: "In spite of the problems and changes with which it has to cope today, the family remains the first community in which man opens to truth, love and to relationship with others."

Answering the consultations of the Secretariat of the Synod on themes to present to the Pope, the Episcopal Conferences proposed the Family.

The Council of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, which met at an ordinary session from 16 to 19 May 1978, noted that the moment had come to devote the whole synodal assembly to the study of family problems. Paul VI of venerated memory, on examining the proposals of the Council of the Secretariat, directed his choice to the theme of the Family.

This choice was confirmed also by John Paul I, and by the present Sovereign Pontiff; the theme has been formulated definitively in this way: "De muneribus familiae Christianae in mundo bodierno" (The role of the Christian family in the modern world).

Immediately afterwards H.E. Mons. Rubln began to speak, illustrating to the journalists the various stages of the preparation and the outlines of the document which intends to offer the Bishops an overall view of problems concerning the family.

### PREPARATION OF THE SUBJECT

The Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod was convened, for its ordinary meeting, from 12 to 16 December 1978. On the agenda there figured, in the first place, preparation of the Outlines document, which was to be sent to the world Episcopate, in order that the whole Church might examine the theme proposed and that study of problems concerning the family might be brought about.

In this first phase of preparation for the Assembly, it was a question of asking and obtaining from all Episcopal Conferences suggestions, observations and above all, proposals, which could constitute the basis of discussion at the Synod. Subsequently the Experts, who had prepared the first draft and had followed the discussions of the Council carefully, in collaboration also with some Members of the Council itself, drew up a new draft according to the deliberations of the Council, so that it would correspond better to the requests of the Bishops and the expectations of the People of God.

The text of the consultation document, in its definitive form, was submitted to the attention of the Pope, who authorized that it should be printed and sent to all the Patriarchs, Bishops, Heads of Congregations and Members of the Union of Superiors General.

As far as possible, the consultation document will be examined also by priests and laity of the whole church.

From the replies, which will arrive by the end of the current year, the Secretariat of the Synod will draw up a new document, which will be called "Instrumentum laboris", intended, this time, for Members of the future Assembly only.

For this reason, the Episcopal Conferences have already been requested to proceed with the election of their representatives, according to the sphere of competence of each one and to the theme now proposed for consultation, which will be, next year, discussed by the Synod.

### OUTLINES

The Outlines intend to offer Bishops a certain general view of problems concerning the family.

The Outlines document is based on the family in its totality and unity, according to the requests of the Episcopal Conference.

Dealing with the "Role of the family", the Synod does not aim at drawing up a list of the rights and duties of the family, but wishes to see better the mission that God confers on spouses and on the family with the Sacrament of Marriage, in order to study, afterwards, the essential conditions in order that the family may carry out this mission in the Church and in the world.

The outlines document is, therefore, subdivided into three parts preceded by an introduction.

The introduction points out the connection between this subject and the subjects of the preceding Synods, that is, Justice in the World, the Ministerial Priesthood, Evangelization and Catechesis.

All these ministries of the Church need operators and means.

No one is better suited than the Christian family to bring forth priestly and religious vocations to meet these necessities. Therefore, the Christian family is important for the community, as its first social cell, and for the Church, as "ecclesia domestica."

The significance of the subject is also clarified in the introduction. It is a question of the role of the family in the modern world.

The word "Role" must be taken in a theologico-pastoral sense, in a dynamic sense which calls the family of today to its mission in the Church and in civil society. For this reason, it is desired to stress the general conditions of the family and to specify the specific ones of the Catholic family.

1. In the first part, the document sets to observe the situation of the family today, fifteen years after Council, which had dedicated special attention to it. Since then many things have changed, both in the Church and in the world.

Among the elements that influence the pastoral life of the family, the document indicates some, for the sake of example.

For instance, mention is made of the existence of a new awareness of the pastoral importance of the Christian family, which can be observed in the family as a school of love, in family spiritual life, in the role of the family in society and in the Church.

Under the title "The Christian family in the transformation of the role incumbent on the family in society today", a study is made of the influence of modern society on the family, with the various legislations and provisions of modern law, with the change in the status of women, with economic and social changes and with the very concept of marriage and of the family.

This view of the situation does not ignore or underestimate the particular difficulties of the Christian family, such as, for example, the religious pluralism which distinguishes modern society, the rejection by certain environments of the doctrine of the Church in the field of morals, external circumstances, the growing lack of the concept of the sacred and sacramental nature of marriage, ignorance.

2. In the second part, the document dwells on some doctrinal motivations, such as, for example, "the mission and the responsibility of the Magisterium and of the Church with regard to the conjugal and family community".

As for the responsibility of the Magisterium regarding the conjugal and family pact, the Outlines stress that the Christocentric aspect of the family and marriage does not harm its human aspect, because in marriage there exist something greater than in the human pact.

The union of man and woman embraces the whole span of their existence and their whole "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thess 5.23). The union, in fact, in the image of the covenant of God, the Creator with his people and of Christ the Saviour with his Church, transcends the two persons who give and receive each other, since from this union there will be born sons and daughters.

Then mention is made of the plan of God the Creator with regard to the conjugal and family community. In the wake of *Gaudium et Spes* the document recalls that God's plan, as the guide of human realities, teaches that the deep community of life and conjugal love, founded by the Creator and structured with its own laws, is established by the conjugal pact, which is an irrevocable personal consent.

To help reflection on this reality, the document considers some aspects of the religious significance of family life: "personalistic" aspect, which is expressed in the bilateral relationship between man and woman, in which the spouses educate, elevate, and enrich each other; and the aspect of "fertility", which is the logical evolution of conjugal love. This love leads the spouses to procreation and to the upbringing of new persons.



The Outlines also specify that, according to the recent Magisterium — especially of Paul VI, of venerated memory, in the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* — the two aspects of union and procreation in marriage are inseparable.

The document goes on to recall how, in the plan and work of God the Redeemer, there has been constituted by means of the mystery of Christ a new and eternal covenant, thanks to which the whole human family is gathered in the society of children of God and brothers united by means of Christ's charity.

The marriage of Christians is integrated in the mystery of Christ; the new pact, the new union "in Christo", takes the place of the purely human contract, raising conjugal love to the firmness of Christ's charity, without taking anything away from its specifically human element.

The perfecting of conjugal love is realized, therefore, by means of the will of God who confers his graces on the spouses. The permanence of God's gift, which calls for faithfulness and demand in-dissolubility, is at the same time a source of graces which help the spouses to overcome their difficulties.

Thus, asceticism and conjugal chastity are imposed as constant duties and commitments for married couples who wish to live their consecration to God in a specific way. This calls for generosity, complete donation, constant attention to the other, mutual respect, forgiveness of offences and, in particular, it demands the practice of conjugal chastity.

The latter does not imply hatred of the body, or contempt for conjugal acts and legitimate pleasure, but it demands that every dimension of conjugal life should be subordinated to and referred to God, honouring the partner and manifesting true love.

3. The role of the Christian family in the modern world. Set in its socio-pastoral context and enlightened by the reminder of some doctrinal principles, the mission and the function of the family is summed up in some considerations of a practical and topical nature in the third part of the document.

After specifying that the purpose of the Synod is not to draw up a list of the duties and rights of the family but recognition of the specific gift that God confers on married couples by means of the Sacrament of Marriage, the Outlines, following the Catechesis of Vatican II envisage:

— the role of the family in the upbringing of children and in the transmission of faith;

— the role of the family in the preservation of spiritual values and in the sanctification of its members;

— the role of the family in the advancement and animation of social life.

With this order it was desired to follow the teaching of the Council on the threefold mission of the People of God — prophetic, sanctifying and kingly.

1) The prophetic role of the family is carried out in the sector of education and the transmission of faith. Every family, which has collaborated with God in giving birth to new creatures, has the duty of teaching them what is necessary to lead a fully human life. Parents are the first and principal educators of their children. The other members of the family, who communicate to the young their own wisdom and experience, are particularly fitted to help in this task.

When the family entrusts its children to academic institutions, it does not intend to, and cannot, renounce its own educative responsibility. True Christian education must promote the formation of the human person in view of his ultimate purpose.

Therefore those who are born in a Christian family are marked by baptism, they are called children of God and consequently, they have the right to acquire the mentality and to see examples that will open to them the way to holiness on earth and eternal happiness in heaven. The parents are, from the early infancy of their children, proclaimers and educators of their faith.

Furthermore, it is the duty of Catholic parents to get their children to take part in the life of the parish and other communities and associations which are necessary and useful for their Christian education and formation.

It is also their right — which cannot be denied by any power — to choose for their children the school and religious instruction that will ensure them the spirit to conform to their Catholic faith.

2) The role of the family in the preservation of spiritual values. The family, defined by Vatican II "the most complete and rich school of humanity", is a guardian and teacher of virtue. It guards the deposit of love, generosity and faithfulness.

Love establishes between the spouses a mutual open mindedness and agreement about the decisions to be taken. The same love that becomes fruitful and is realized in the transmission of life brings forth in parents the desire and inclination to transmit the

riches received in heritage, such as, for example, culture, wholesome traditions, virtues . . . And since various generations coexist in the same family, a biblical sign of the Lord's blessing, the family itself becomes a school of wisdom and communicability in helping one another, living and operating.

The role of the Christian family, in this field, is to aim at sanctification: from the moment of the commitment assumed at the celebration of marriage to the mutual promise of help in daily sanctification, to the transmission of sanctification lived and testified to the children and, through them, as new citizens, to the whole of society.

Among the present-day problems of the Catholic family, with which the Synod will have to deal, mention is made, among other things, of the question of family prayer, love and conjugal faithfulness, witness to Christ's love and missionary and priestly vocations.

3) The role of the family in the advancement and animation of social life.

This is what reveals and testifies to the royal mission of the family.

For the Second Vatican Council the family is the first and vital cell of society. The Author of all things constituted marriage as the principle and foundation of human society. He did so, not only because the new citizens are born of the family, but also because it is the first school of social virtues.

Owing to this complex identity, the family has its own peculiar reality and purpose, it has duties and rights in society.

The civil community must respect the autonomy and initiative of the family, and it is the duty of the family to carry out its tasks in the economy of redemption and also of the life and temporal development of the People of God.

The rights and duties of the family, Vatican II teaches, are universal and inviolable. Therefore all things that man needs to lead a worthy and really human life, must be made accessible to him.

In the first place alongside the right to freedom, the Outlines stress the right of every man to found a family and have children. For this reason, the Church invites everyone to collaborate effectively for the advancement of marriage, the first conditions for the formation of the family.

The civil authorities must take into account the nature and requirement of the family as regards housing, the upbringing of children, working conditions, social security. . . And this in order that the young will be able to found a family and maintain it decently.

The family — the Christian one in particular — has the task and the possibility of opening the hearts and minds of its members to the necessities of the whole of mankind. The sons of faith must learn that God, the Father of all men, conferred the same dignity and the same right to respect on everyone.

The Christian family is called to expand beyond itself and to offer society its specific aid and its own spiritual riches.

### **PROBLEMS OF THE CATHOLIC FAMILY TODAY**

Changes in the conditions of life, work, and free time, have a deep impact on the very structure of everyday life, and, in interpersonal relations, they often cause imminent evils, which violate the integrity of the person and offend man's dignity.

Christian-families would be able to bring a remedy, if they really undertook to exercise their rights and carry out their duties according to the nature of their kingly task.

Therefore, the Synod should seek the best way to recall the principles regarding the rights of the family: for example, how to integrate it actively in pastoral works and the apostolate, how to help so many parents, tired by the hubbub of the city and the weight of their work, not to flee society, but to shoulder their social responsibilities which begin, in the first place, at home with regard to children.

The Outlines wonder whether, in the process of social innovations that concern the family, especially in the social and medical field, family associations should intervene on the national and international plane to concern themselves with the problems of the family and meet the requirements of the fundamental rights of the person.

The problems and prospects are many indeed. They indicate the dangers and the stakes involved with regard to the future of the family and of society.

We have listed some, the Outlines recall others, and with the answers that will reach the Secretariat, a good many will emerge.

## ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY 341

The Assembly of Synod Fathers will deal with them after a wide survey and a real sensibilization, lived within the People of God in its varied conditions of existence.

Faced with the new changes and new ideologies, the circle of family and responsibility extends to the national and international society.

The Church is aware that it is important that the family should be strong and healthy in order to bear witness to love and to operate for justice in a humble and constant catechesis which ranges from care for the children to awareness of the commitment for the defence of the other.

In this the Church needs the collaboration of everyone. She needs the young particularly in order that, formed and strengthened in their Christian identity, they may behave as children of God in the service of the society of brothers.

There are a great many different means of bringing this about. They are found when the artisan is aware of his capacities.

Therefore, the new mentality of modern man, who has become more and more convinced of this temporal responsibility, must remain open to the vertical dimension of his being and action.

The media of social communication, of every kind, have a specially important role in this field.

At the end of the exposition, H. E. Mons, L. Rubin, who was accompanied by Mons. Edmond Farhat, an Official of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, answered the questions posed by the journalists.

# COMMENTARY ON "CATECHESIS IN OUR TIME"

By

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

There is something indicative in the date of publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*: October 16, 1979. It is the anniversary of the election of John Paul II to the supreme pontificate. This coincidence goes beyond merely the element of time. It is also indicative of the unmistakable imprint of his thinking, style and personal interest: "Catechesis has always been a central core in my ministry as a priest and as a bishop." (CT, 4).

At the same time *Catechesi Tradendae* is meant to be an affirmation of the happy results of the Synod of Bishops held in October 1977 on the subject "Catechesis in our time, especially that of children and young people." In real sense then it is a synthesis of the conclusions and recommendations presented by that synod. The Pope was himself a member of that synod. "...I myself had the joy of taking part in." (CT, 2). Using a conversational style, and without claiming to be exhaustive, he dwells on the most decisive aspects of catechesis, those that evoke encouragement or vigilance.

This is, of course, mainly dictated by the very nature of the document which is an apostolic exhortation: "The theme is extremely vast and the Exhortation will keep to a few only of the most topical and decisive aspects of it, as affirmation of the happy results of the Synod." (CT, 4).

## *CATECHESIS OR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?*

Why catechesis and not the more familiar term **religious education**? The question is not altogether insignificant. A change of name, after all, is always a significant event. It indicates a change of character or a change of destiny. The term **religious education**, although it has a familiar ring, means a lot of things to many people, each one implying a different relationship to the Church

mission. It also appears unable to get away from the altogether academic context and therefore does not allow for the many "non-school" forms of the ministry of the word.

On the other hand, the term catechesis is a more ancient word which appears often in the documents of the Church. The word catechesis is derived from a Greek word which means "to resound" or "to sound from above". It means therefore more than to instruct, which seems to be the focal point of religious education as a term. To catechize is to resound or to echo, what is resounded or echoed is the Word, the Word of the scriptures and the Word made flesh. The Church, as a catechetical community, resounds the Word. A catechist is like an echo. An echo is not a new word. It is the original word heard in different places at different times.

### 1. CHRISTOCENTRIC

The object and content of this resounding is precisely what Chapter I is all about. Catechesis centers upon the person of Christ (CT, 5). This is because catechesis is above all about the putting of the person being catechized into contact with the Person of Christ. This is one meaning of the christocentricity of catechesis. The other meaning is that catechesis is also about transmitting Christ's teaching, which is at the same time a lesson about life (CT, 6, 7). All our teaching must be with reference to Him. It is, in fact, He who teaches.

There is an important corollary to this: the catechist therefore has to efface himself or herself before Christ in order to be His faithful spokesman, resounder, or echo. Here is a call for great detachment on the part of the catechist. In addition, there is also the invitation to maintain, if we wish to be effective, a harmony between our teaching and our living: "Only in deep communion with Him will catechists find light and strength for an authentic desirable renewal of catechesis." (CT, 9).

### 2. CATECHESIS IN THE COURSE OF CHURCH HISTORY

In this Chapter II we find a series of reflections on the history of catechesis. The mission of making disciples of all nations is very much an essential part of the mission of the apostles (CT, 10). Their fellow workers in the ministry of apostleship shared in this mission. The Fathers were explicit too in considering catechetical instruction to be an essential part of their ministry (CT,

12). This same interest was taken up by the great councils especially the council of Trent: "it gave catechesis priority in its constitution 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." (CT, 13).

The Exhortation draws several lessons from the foregoing:

1. Catechesis is a sacred duty and an inalienable right of the Church. It is '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 . . . 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 . . ." (CT, 14). For this reason the Pope makes a strong protest against regimes where freedom to catechize is denied: '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.' (CT, 14).

2. He urges all areas of the Church to spare nothing in resources of people or energy to give catechesis a priority over all other works or undertakings, even those which might have more spectacular results (CT, 15).

3. He explicitly appeals to all members of the Church, bishops; priests, religious, parents, teachers, catechists, underlining that all share this responsibility although it is a differentiated responsibility (CT, 16).

### 3. NATURE OF CATECHESIS

This Chapter deals with the nature of catechesis. No doubt this should be a welcome document for professional catechist searching for a more precise definition of her work and activity.

The mission of the Church is to continue the mission of Jesus, His mission of prophet, priest and servant king. The purpose of this mission to bring about the fulfillment of God's kingdom. There this three aspects to this one mission of Jesus and the Church — proclaiming and teaching, celebrating the mysteries and serving the people of the world, the ministry of worship and the ministry of



service. These are, of course, inseparably linked in reality — each implies and includes the other — but it is possible to discuss and study them separately.

Catechesis is part of the ministry of the word. This ministry takes four forms depending on circumstances and the particular ends in view (GCD, 17). These four forms of proclamation and teaching are identified as evangelization, liturgy, theology and catechesis. The GCD does not explain the relationship among these four forms. It is content to state, 'for our purpose it is important to keep these forms distinct, since they are governed by their own laws. Nevertheless they are closely bond together.' (GCD, 17). *Catechesi Tradendae* provides the explanation.

#### **Evangelization and Catechesis (CT, 18)**

"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 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 knowledge and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ." (CT, 18-19).

The foregoing quotations are clear to need any further commentary. Let me just briefly re-state it. Catechesis is primarily a ministry to believers. It presupposes prior pre-evangelization, activities which aim at evolving a faith response. Evangelization proclaims the Good News of salvation to someone who, for whatever reason, has no knowledge of it or does not fully accept it. It lays a foundation for conversion of life.

#### **Liturgy and Catechesis (CT, 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." (CT, 23). When this text is read together with GCD's n. 25 which describes how catechesis should "promote an active, conscious, genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church", several interesting points emerge:

(1) Catechesis is the means and the liturgy is the end. Not vice versa. We should not be carried away by catechesis that we end up exploiting the educative and formative value of liturgical

celebrations for their own sake. For these reasons *Catechesi Tradendae* says: "Catechesis always had reference to the sacraments." (23).

(2) Sacramental catechesis is best achieved through active participation in good liturgical celebrations and not merely by explaining the meaning of ceremonies.

(3) Adults should be made to recognize the importance of ongoing sacramental catechesis. Christians are in a better position to understand and appreciate the sacred mysteries only after they participate in them. In this connection, we may distinguish two kinds of sacramental catechesis: one of which prepares for the reception of the sacraments, marks only the beginning and is used for a specified period of time. This is pre-sacramental catechesis. The other, the post-sacramental catechesis which is a lifelong matter.

#### **Theology and Catechesis (CT, 61)**

Theology differs from catechesis both in terms of goals, methods, and criteria.

The goal of theology is to seek an ever fuller understanding of the gospel message through reflection on the life of Christians and formal teachings of the Church. Theology presupposes an effective catechesis which, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, leads individual Christians and the community to maturity in faith. The more living, conscious and active the faith of the community, the richer it is as a source for theology.

Theology's method is scientific in that it approaches the sacred and human sciences critically in an analytic and systematic fashion. Catechesis, on the other hand, uses these sciences more as resources and means to better proclaim the faith.

Catechesis, of course, draws on theology, and theology draws in turn on the richness of the Church's catechetical experience. In different ways both are forms of the ministry of the word and at the service of the Church. Theology is faith seeking a fuller understanding of the gospel message, while catechesis seeks to nurture a richer living of that same message.

On the pastoral level this distinction is the measure of what qualities the catechists should have. A catechist is not expected to be a professional theologian. But he or she is expected to have a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine and worship and familiarity with Scriptures.

What then is catechesis? It is a proclamation of the faith, under the influence of and in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, that leads individual Christians and the community to maturity of faith, to a richer living of the fullness of the gospel message.

#### 4. CONTENT

"The living source of the word of God in tradition and the scriptures" (CT, 27) constitute the source of catechesis. At the same time, from this source flow the Church teaching, liturgy and life which are, in turn, sources themselves of catechesis.

God's self-revelation is the **content** of catechesis. In addition to this, the content of catechesis may be extended to embrace all the ways that God's word is at work in the lives of people exercising their faith under the guidance of the magisterium. In other words, all those activities of the community and individuals that make a person's faith become living, conscious and active, through the light of instruction (GCD, 17).

The Exhortation identifies the "three important points" of an authentic catechesis: the integrity of content, the use of properly adopted pedagogical language and process to transmit the message in its entirety, and the ecumenical dimension. In this connection the issue of the criteria or norms to measure authentic catechesis confronts us.

Let me mention some of these norms:

1. **Catechesis centers on the mystery of the Trinity and Christ's saving work.** The spirit and content of catechesis is inspired by the axiom, "through Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit". If catechesis loses sight of these three elements or neglects their close relationship, it is not faithful to the Christian message (GCD, 40-42). *Catechesi Tradendae* considers this as "the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work" (CT, 72).

2. **Catechesis presents the Christian message in its entirety and in such a way that the inter-relationship of its parts is maintained.** To expound only what people want to hear, or to explain the Christian message in such a fragmentary and disjointed way that the faithful lose a sense of mystery, and reverence fails the catechetical mission. The Creeds — the Apostles' and the Nicene — are examples of brief but comprehensive statements of the Christian message. For this reason *Catechesi Tradendae* calls our attention to this point: "In order that the sacrificial offering of his or her faith should be perfect, the person who becomes a disciple of Christ

has the right to receive "the word of faith" not in mutilated falsified or diminished form but whole and entire, in all its rigor and vigor. 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." (C.T., 30).

3. **Catechesis recognizes a certain hierarchy of truths.** A careful reading of the GCD brings about the point that hierarchy of truths does not mean that some truths pertain less to faith itself than others do, rather, that some truths of faith enjoy a higher priority inasmuch as other truths are based on and illumined by them.

4. **Authentic catechesis adapts to the circumstances of those being catechized:** Catechesis must take learning theory and other factors — cultural, sociological, psychological, which influence human behavior and values into account. In a catechetical context, effective communication is as important as doctrinal orthodoxy. This is what *Catechesi Tradendae* means when it says: "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 should be organized in one way rather than another." (C.T., 31).

5. **Catechesis interprets the present life in the light of revelation and at the same time disposes people for the world to come.** "In time past, it began," as GCD states, "made progress, and in Christ reached its highest point; in the present time it displays its force and awaits its consummation in the future." (GCD, 44). Compare this with C.T.'s no. 22: "This revelation is not however isolated from life and it illumines the whole life with the light of the Gospel, to inspire it or to question it."

6. **The bishop has the primary responsibility for catechesis in the diocese, and under him the pastor is directly responsible for the local church.** *Catechesi Tradendae* has this to say: "You (bishops) are, beyond all others, the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence." (C.T., 63). When this text is read together with the other recent documents of the Church — its meaning and impact emerge in bolder relief. The decree of Vatican II on the Pastoral Office of Bishops describes their responsibility in regard to catechesis (nos. 13-14). The *Message to the People* published at the close of the 1977 Synod of Bishops states, "the bishop has the primary role in the catechetical activity of the local Church. It is his task to coordinate the activity of all who dedicate themselves to catechize in his own local church. Along with him, all their own ways must collaborate in the ministry of catechesis" (n. 14). So also the parish priest. Although he holds

"the office of direct responsibility" he too is answerable to the bishop. For one, the parish priest should see to it that the diocesan catechetical directives are implemented.

*Catechesi Tradendae* in Chapter II precisely underlines this point when it traces catechesis in the course of the Church's history from the teaching of the apostles and their fellow workers, the Letters and Gospels, the instructions and treatises of the Fathers of the Church, the Councils, the missions, etc. From this the Exhortation draws the conclusion that catechesis is a duty and a right of the Church in every country. It is the priority task to which the Church must devote her best resources.

## 5. CATECHESIS: LIFE-LONG PROCESS

Chapter V underlines some observations about the special characteristics that catechesis assumes at the different stages of life. What is implied in this Chapter is the life-long process involved in catechesis. There is, accurately speaking, no time or situation in life when catechesis is not helpful and, in some circumstances, essential. It has now become almost common place to say that catechesis extends from cradle to grave. All ages and circumstances of life are moments for catechesis.

Consequently, dioceses and parishes should make an honest and concerted effort to begin catechesis at the earliest possible stage and extend it to, literally speaking, the moment of death. Special conditions of life also need to be taken into account: catechesis for parenthood, family catechesis, catechesis for the sacraments, young adult catechesis, catechesis for the engaged, the remarried, the widowed, working and business people, catechesis for civic responsibilities — just to mention a few by way of example.

There are many things, insights deserving of mention and consideration in this Chapter. Permit me to comment on the **adult catechesis**.

Adult catechesis should not be considered important only by reason of its relationship to the catechesis of children, that is, adults must be catechized so that they can catechize the young, or that parent and teacher education are the whole of adult catechesis — though we should all recognize that they are certainly valid and important forms of adult catechesis. In truth, the primary reason for adult catechesis — its first and essential objective — is to help adults themselves grow to maturity of a faith as members of both the church and society. The GCD views adult catechesis as the

**summit** of the entire catechetical enterprise. Listen to St. Paul: "This is the Christ we proclaim while we admonish all men and teach them in the full measure of wisdom, hoping to make every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

Why is adult catechesis the chief form of catechesis? In addition to their role as teachers of the young, adult Christians are capable of mature faith. It is their lives that gives the example of gospel values to the young members of the Christian community and the rest of society. It is they who strongly influence the way in which children perceive faith.

It is essential, then, that adults express gospel values by living with the hope and joy that come with faith. The Church, for its part must encourage its adult members to grow in faith and must give them opportunities to do so. In this context, it is easy to understand why adult catechesis is genuinely the summit, center and chief form of catechesis. The only conclusion possible is that the Catholic Church at the national, diocesan and parish levels must reflect this priority in their budgets and programs.

#### 6-7. MEANS, METHODS AND PARTICULAR PROBLEMS

Chapters VI — VII provides a series of considerations about means, methods and particular problems. Regarding the communications media: "I think of the great possibilities offered by the means of communication and the means of group communication: television, radio, the press, records, tape-recordings — the whole series of audio-visual means." (CT, 46). The principal focus however is on the various places and occasions where people gather: pilgrimages, missions, Bible-groups, ecclesial basic communities, Catholic action groups, prayer and meditation groups. The possibilities for diversity and complementarity of the forms of catechesis associated with these places, occasions and gatherings should be explored with a view to developing the three dimensions of the Christian life: "word, memorial and witness-doctrine, celebration and commitment in living — which the Synod's Message to the People of God emphasized" (CT, 47).

A special place is given to the homily (at Mass and in connection with the sacraments). The homily is a special form of catechesis, but not the only one. Indeed it is and should be "the source and fulfillment" (CT, 48) of all catechesis, but it should be the climax of all other forms which take place in a variety of circumstances according to a variety of need and opportunity.

The document points out also precise requirements in connection with catechetical books:

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 into 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." (CT, 49).

The relationship between catechesis and culture is dealt with in the middle of Chapter VII. Pope John Paul warns against two extremes: one, "the Gospel message cannot be purely and simply isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted, . . . nor, without serious loss, from the cultures in which it has already been expressed down the centuries" and, two, ". . . There would be no catechesis if it were the Gospel that had to change when it came into contact with cultures." (CT 53). Catechesis cannot be reduced to culture. For the Gospel does not spring spontaneously from any culture. While it "takes flesh" in culture, it is ever beyond it, rectifying many of its elements and challenging it with its power.

## 8. THE JOY OF FAITH IN A TROUBLED WORLD

Chapter VIII faces the handicap of the very widespread indifference to religion, a challenge which must be faced with a calm affirmation of Christian identity. This is the task of catechesis — to develop a Christian and Catholic identity which is serenely grounded in the hope of seeing "Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27).

Number 58 touches on the problem of reductionism. Just as the Gospel cannot be reduced to culture, neither can the pedagogy of faith be reduced to educational pedagogy. For the former is concerned with communicating God's Revelation. On the use of language, *Catechesi Tradendae* says: "For catechesis has a press-

ing obligation to speak a language suited to today's children and young people in general and to many other categories of people... 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." (CT, 59).

## 9. THE TASK CONCERNS ALL

This Chapter is a paternal exhortation and a lively encouragement to all those working in catechesis. But special emphasis is made to three particular points: the catechetical task of the bishops, the parish as the pre-eminent place for catechesis and the primacy of family catechesis.

To the bishops the Pope says: "... You are beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis yield to no other care whatever in any way." (CT, 63). This stems from the fact that the bishop is to take on "the chief management of catechesis" because "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." (CT, 63).

"The parish community must continue to be the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis." (CT, 67). While catechetics takes place in other situations like family, school, youth clubs, etc., all these channels ultimately converge in the parish. The parish should become the focus, the concrete image of the unity of the Church.

While the parish is the principle of unity of catechetical activity, the family is its foundation: "Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis" (CT, 68). Other agencies like the diocese, parish and school provide the much needed support to the family. A very strong statement is given to Catholic schools: "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 matters, 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, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils." (CT, 69).

### CONCLUSION

The role of the Holy Spirit in catechesis is defined here. The Holy Spirit is the "Teacher within", catechesis is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is because "catechesis, which is growth in faith and the maturing of the Christian life towards its fullness is... a work of the Holy Spirit, a work which he alone can initiate and sustain in the Church" (CT, 72).

Consequently the Holy Father urges catechists and those being catechized to look to the Holy Spirit as the source of evangelizing dynamism and the source of the life of the disciple. In this connection the catechist must be like Mary, "the Virgin of Pentecost" (CT, 73), the mother and model of the disciple. This living intimacy with the Holy Spirit will bring about a Catechetical awakening which is nothing else but "to know the mystery of Christ better, and and to bear witness to it." (CT, 72).

# BIBLICAL NOTES and HOMILIES

By

Fr. Herman Mueller, S.V.D.

## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (August 3, 1980)

Usually the first reading and the gospel have one and the same theme, since the readings have been selected accordingly. The second reading usually has a theme of its own; it is taken from one of the Letters of the New Testament. Today by chance the theme of the second reading fits in with the first reading and the gospel: **Natural possessions pass, heavenly glory lasts.**

### FIRST READING: ECCLESIASTES 1:2; 2:21-23

The Book of Ecclesiastes, or Qohelet asks the fundamental question: "What is the sense of our life?" To this fundamental question of everybody's life the author does not know an answer, so it seems. Man sees nature ruled by the same laws through the centuries, and men themselves do the same things in all generations. But where this consistency comes from and why this consistency exists, we cannot see because we do not understand God's plan. We cannot discover the divine purpose, why the just man sometimes suffers, because the doctrine that God rewards and punishes already everything here on earth finds no justification in actual life. We cannot be pleased by riches, because all these things are very inconsistent. Therefore: "Vanity of vanities. All

things are vanity!" What is the use of making any effort in life? What is the use of trying to be wise when death will end it all? What is the sense of our work and anxiety, when someone else will inherit it? Someone unknown to us, someone who may not care anything about us may waste what we have worked to achieve. About the life hereafter Qohelet did not know much yet. God revealed it clearer only later, with the latest Wisdom Books and in the New Testament.

## SECOND READING: COLOSSIANS 3:1-5.9-11

Paul had told the Colossians how important Christ is to them, how high his supreme dignity is as creator, redeemer and head of the Church, who possesses the fulness and reconciles all things (first part, 1:16-2:3). Then he refuted some errors against the dignity of Christ (second part, 2:4-23). And now in the third part (3:1-4:6) the Apostle tells the Colossians and us that life has a real meaning after all, in virtue of what one has become in baptism. We have died to our old self and our new life is hidden now with Christ in God. The deep reality of our life, the thing that can give it meaning, is no longer immediately perceptible. It is hidden in God. Beneath the world of appearances which we often call "real" we can in faith perceive another "hidden" reality which will be made manifest only when Christ, our life appears. We have to be constantly made anew. The Christian must put to death in himself the vices, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires, idolatry, not mentioned in today's reading, but found in vv. 5-8. He must be true in his speech (v. 9). This putting on of the new man is a life-long process of growing (v. 10).

Christ is our life. This thought was very dear to Paul. As music is life for a musician, sport for a sportsman, Christ is life for us. Consequently we set our mind and heart on the things which are above and not on the things of this world.

One of the great effects of Christianity is that it destroys the barriers which come from (1) birth and nationality, (2) from ceremonial and ritual differences, and (3) from the different classes, like slave and free man. The ancient world was full of barriers. The Greek looked down on the non-Greek and called him barbarian (literally a man who says "bar-bar"). The Jew, belonging to the chosen people, showed contempt for every non-Jew. The Scythian was notorious as the lowest of the barbarians. The slave was merely a living tool, with no rights of his own.

**READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 12:13-21**

This pericope belongs to the material proper to Luke. — It was not uncommon for people in Palestine to take their unsettled disputes to respected Rabbis. Here is a young man who hopes for a favorable decision against his (older?) brother on the problem of their inheritance (Deut 21:15ff; Num 27:1-11). But Jesus refuses to be involved in any dispute about money, for he penetrates to the attitude of greed behind the request. And thus he stresses with a parable the right attitude to and use of material possessions. We shall take heed and guard ourselves against all kinds of "pleonexia", a word often used by St. Paul, greed for more and more material possessions which tend to become one's God (Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:5).

A farmer had such an abundant harvest that his storehouses were too small. So he tells himself: "You have plenty for the years to come. Relax, eat heartily, drink well. Enjoy yourself!" He decides not what would have been the simplest thing to do, i.e. to add some parts to the already existing storehouses but to tear down everything and build new and greater storehouses.

In God's eyes he is a fool. He is not reproved for being rich, nor is it said that he oppressed the poor and thus became rich. Rather his possessions are of no use as he failed to take into account death that would come that very night. A fool is not the opposite of the intelligent man but the opposite of the wise man. This man here is the practical atheist who ignores God in his practical life and lacks any life-influencing belief in God. He thinks only of indulgence, not of others in need and thus he is implicitly condemned for his lack of concern for the poor.

**HOMILY****RICH IN THE LORD'S SIGHT — SEEK THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE**

1. Beware of attaching yourself to possessions which become your god! — Material possessions and riches as such are neutral. It depends on us what we are doing with them. In the Old Testament they are often pictured as reward for following God's commandments. Thus the patriarchs were wealthy: Abraham (Gen. 13:2). Isaac (Gen. 26:12), and Jacob (Gen. 30:43).

Entering the promised land the Hebrews were enjoined to keep all the laws of the Lord who in turn would bless them, with all spiritual and material blessings (Deut 8:8-9; 28:1-12). Especially the Wisdom Books show that abundance goes with uprighteousness of life: "The salvation of the just is from the Lord" (Ps. 37:19). "Happy the rich man found without fault, who turns not aside after gain. Who is he, that we may praise him? He, of all his kindred, has done wonders. For he has been tested by gold and come off safe, and this remains his glory. He could have sinned, but did not, could have done evil, but would not, so that his possessions are secure, and the assembly recounts his praises" (Sir. 31:8-11). "Wealth is good, when there is no sin" (Sir 13:23). As a matter of fact, the profession of a scribe, a wise man, such as the composers of the Wisdom Books, was possible only for those who had leisure and presumably they were men of comfortable means (Sir 38:24ff). Only a lazy man is poor: "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, then will poverty come upon you like a highwayman and want like an armed man" (Prov. 24:33f).

But there are more texts in the Wisdom Books speaking about the doubtful blessing of riches: "Keeping watch over riches wastes the flesh and the care of wealth drives away rest... The rich man labors to pile up wealth, and his only rest is wanton pleasure... The lover of gold will not be free from sin, for he who pursues wealth is led astray by it" (Sir. 31:1-5). "Gold has dazzled many and perverts the character of princes" (Sir. 8:2). "The rich man answers harshly" (Prov. 18:23). Riches are unprofitable: "They (the rich men) trust in their wealth... Yet in no way can a man redeem himself, or pay his own ransom to God" (Ps. 49:7-8). "This is a grievous evil... riches kept by their owner to his hurt" (Eccl. 5:12). His "abundance allows him not to sleep" (Eccl. 5:11). It is not easy to remain faithful in times of prosperity: "Out of their crassness comes iniquity; their fancies overflow their hearts... They set their mouths in place of heaven" (Ps. 73:4-9).

And to the observation of Proverbs that a diligent man becomes rich, Ecclesiastes would retort: "But what's the use of it. Somebody else may inherit it."

Isaiah 5:8 even curses riches: "Woe to you who joining house to house, who connect field to field." And so does Lk. 6:24: "Woe to you rich, for your consolation is now." Not much better is James' word: "You rich, weep and wail, over your impending miseries" (5:11).

It goes to show, wealth is a gift from God, but we must use it correctly and it is difficult to lead a life centered on the kingdom

of God as the Lord tells us in today's gospel with the parable of the rich fool.

2. St. Paul tells us in the second reading to seek the things that are above and thus overcome our wrong attachment to riches. What seems to be so real in life, is often enough, only appearance. We must believe in the "hidden life" we are living with Christ ever since baptism. Christ must become our life in our acts as he is our life in essence, in our being Christians. This needs strong faith and a continuous trying. If we experience the Lord as our life and our treasure, everything else will loose its attraction.

3. A second attitude and help in overcoming inordinate attachment to riches would be not to worry about our livelihood, but to trust in God's providence (Lk. 12:22-31 = Mt. 6:25-33), illustrated in the gospel of the 8th Sunday of the years, cycle A, which will be explained there.

4. The third way of freeing oneself from greed and covetousness is to become poor, to give away all possessions and follow the Lord in evangelical poverty: "If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor" (Mt. 19:21). So that the Lord can say: "Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours." (Cf. also Mt. 5:3). This evangelical counsel, however, will be only for those who can take it.

5. For the majority, there remains the other way, namely of using riches in the right way: Giving alms to the poor and thus becoming rich before God. Shrouds have no pockets. We cannot take anything along when we die. We can send it only ahead of us by giving alms to the poor: "Do not live in fear, little flock. It has pleased your Father, to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms. Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys. Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be" (Lk. 12:32-34). In opposition to that young man in Mt. 19:21 here the Lord does not speak of selling everything, but of giving alms.

That same truth the Lord in Lk. 16:1-13 (proper to Luke) explains with the parable of the astuteness of the Dishonest Steward; he formulates it thus: "Make friends for yourselves through your use of this world's goods, so that when they (the goods) fall you, a lasting reception will be yours" (Lk. 16:9).

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (August 10, 1980)

By chance again the second reading fits in with the other two and we could sum up the theme: "You are called to God's glory. Be ready to receive it!"

### FIRST READING: WISDOM 18:6-9

The Book of Wisdom is the last writing of the Old Testament, written probably in the first half of the first century B.C., for the Jews of Egypt, encouraging them in their trials and persecutions and putting them on their guard against the dangers of pagan philosophy by giving them a theology of history, especially in the third part (10:1-19:20). After describing the work of God's wisdom from the time of Adam till the entrance of Israel into the promised land (10:1-12:27) and the folly and sad results of idolatry (13:1-15:19) the author explains the wonderful work of wisdom, by comparing the lot of the Israelites with that of the Egyptians (16:1-19:20): (1) The Egyptians were punished by irrational animals, which, however, were a blessing to the Israelites (16:1-15). (2) The Egyptians were punished by fire and hail, but the Israelites were blessed with manna from heaven (16:16-29). (3) The Egyptians were afflicted by the plagues of darkness and the Israelites relieved by the pillar of fire which led them to the promised land (17:1-18:4). (4) The death of the Egyptians' firstborn is contrasted with the rescue of the firstborn of the Israelites (18:5-25). By using the Book of Exodus, the author of Wisdom compares Egypt with Israel, the one incurring the vengeance of God, the other God's protection. In the same act God punished the Egyptians and made Israel glorious. So especially when in the same night Yahweh's angel slew the firstborn of the Egyptians and saved the firstborn of the Israelites.

With the freedom of a poet the author of Wisdom brings some details which the Book of Exodus does not have. The Egyptians determined to put to death the infants of the holy ones (Israelites). Only Moses survived (18:5). As punishment, God killed the sons of the Egyptians in the mighty water (Red Sea) (18:5), whereas the Israelites were rescued. That night was foretold to the Fathers (18:6) so that they could await their liberation (18:7). The Jews had prepared themselves by the offering of sacrifices, the paschal lamb (18:9), which would forever commemorate the deliverance from slavery. The Israelites and we are called to glory.

**SECOND READING: HEBREWS 11:1-2. 8-19**

By a happy coincidence, today's second reading fits in with the theme of the other two: **We shall look for the city of God.**

The Letter to the Hebrews addresses Jewish Christians to find the change from the older order of things to the new psychologically difficult. These converts are more keenly aware of what they have lost in renouncing Judaism than in what they find in Christianity. They miss the Jewish liturgy. Some of them have been imprisoned (10:32-36), and most are considered renegades by their former fellow Jews. Had God abandoned them? Was their conversion a mistake?

Thus the letter wants to encourage these Jewish Christians. The author shows the superiority of the New- over the Old Covenant, Christ as creator is superior to the angels and as son superior to Moses who was only a servant in the house of God (3:1-19). Christ is the eternal highpriest superior to the Old Covenant and its highpriest (4:14-8:13), more than Melchizedek (7:1-28) and Aaron (5:4; 7-11). His sacrifice is more precious than all sacrifices of the Old Testament (9:1-10:18). Consequently, they must remain faithful in suffering according to the example of the men of faith of old (10:32-12:13). This elaboration of faith, from which today's second reading is taken, is what distinguishes the Letter to the Hebrews (besides the description of the superiority of the Old — over the New Covenant). Just as Romans is the Epistle of salvation, Galatians of liberty, 1 Corinthians of fraternal charity, Hebrews is the Epistle of confident and courageous faith, attachment of mind and of one's being to Christ.

Abraham is the father of all believers. Four stages of Abraham's faith are described: (1) By faith he left his homeland and went to an unknown destination, being sure only that something and some One lay ahead. (2) By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, from Palestine to Egypt, from Egypt to Palestine looking for the city, for the homeland, where he could settle. (3) By faith he expected the son of promise, Isaac. First incredulously, then with great joy and laughingly. (4) By faith he offered up Isaac, believing that God was able to raise him from the dead.

All believers realize that they are only pilgrims. On our journey we go toward our homeland, toward the Lord in faith. Faith is true knowledge since we realize that we already possess the beginning of eternal life, Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent (Jn. 17:3).



## READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 12:32-48

In four small passages Luke describes the attitude all disciples of all times should have: to be ready, to be prepared, to be alert for an impending crisis: (1) The little flock waits in the midst of the sameness of every day. It has pleased the Father to give it the kingdom (12:32-34). In some ways one could better take these three verses with the gospel of 1st Sunday: We shall provide ourselves purses in heaven. (2) With our loins girded (in the Orient long robes could make one fall or stumble and thus had to be tucked up into the girdle in readiness for immediate and energetic action), and our lamps burning we shall be like men who are waiting for their master who returns from a wedding, so that the master can find the door and be shown in any time. (3) We shall be like a householder who is alert that no thief can dig a hole through the clay walls of his house and steal. (4) Like faithful stewards we shall take care of the master's household.

What is the nature of this crisis? Matthew places the above third and fourth passage ((the second is proper of Luke) in the discourse about the parousia, the second coming of Christ. Luke 12:35-48 speaks about the imminent crisis for the disciples which is followed by a pericope of the imminent crisis for Israel (Lk. 12:54-13:9). The juxtaposition of these three themes indicates that in the mind of Luke they were intimately related. Jesus, he wanted us to understand, was expecting a single great crisis, which would mean death for himself, a searching test for his disciples, and judgment for Israel.

When the crucifixion had become a fact of the past, the parables of watchfulness were still preserved and Christians asked themselves whether these warnings were intended only for the apostles as they faced the crisis brought about by Christ's death, or whether they had a more general and permanent application. What Matthew combines with the parousia and Luke combines with more the immanent crises for the disciples when Christ died, for Christ when he was crucified and for Israel, when it rejected Jesus and Rome conquered Jerusalem, is valid for all of us at all times: We shall be ready for the Lord when he comes.

The Lord then (contrary to the reality of earthly life) will serve us at table.

## HOMILY

### BE READY FOR THE LORD!

1. Everything is well that ends well. We have to be ready when the Lord comes and knocks (Rev. 3:20); knocks, when he expects something extraordinary from us, when we shall do more for him than we did so far; knocks at our door for the last time here on earth. We have to be sensitive when he wants to talk to us and understand what he wants to tell us.

2. Hardships can make us more alert, tune in our ears to the Lord, but they also can harden our hearts so that we are not willing to listen nor to be ready. The Israelites in Egypt suffered from the Egyptians. They were forced to do slaves' work and their children were killed. They were tempted to think that God might have forgotten them. In reality he revealed himself as Yahweh, as God present to save and to redeem, especially when they marched through the Red Sea. The Egyptians, however, who suffered ten plagues, did not understand what God wanted to tell them. They only became more stubborn and hardened, fighting God and fighting the Israelites. Pharaoh always asked Moses to pray for them and take the plague in question away, only to become more stubborn when God obliged upon the prayer of Moses. No plague made them more fine feeling till finally the tenth and last plague killed their firstborn.

3. Riches too easily want to be enlarged, and there is often no time left to be ready for the Lord who expects us to do more than an average person does for him or to be ready for him when he wants to make his final call. Too many possessions can tie a person down to earth so that he is not ready to move. The more we have, the more we want to have, and we easily think, we cannot live without it. If we look back, we see with how little we could live some years ago; we were probably happier and more content than we are now with all the material improvements we have made. — A Western visitor in India was asked about his impressions after a stint of some weeks. 'I saw how poor many people are, living in substandard conditions,' he said. "But I must also admit, I saw most of them content in spite of it. Is it perhaps because they have nothing to fear that they could loose, that they do not have to worry about material possessions they do not have as we have them in the West, worrying that we could loose them because of inflation, crises and wars?"

4. We should live as if we were living only in a tent, not in comfortable buildings. Abraham was convinced that he as all the patriarchs was a wanderer, a stranger, who by "faith sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob... for he was looking forward to the city with foundations" (Hebr. 11:9-10). And that faith enkindled in Abraham that seeking for a homeland (11:14), made him open to God's call for something higher. All wanderers are always thankful for hospitality shown to them, as Abraham was thankful when Ephron the Hittite allowed him to bury his wife Sarah in a field in Machpelah (Gen. 23:17). And viceversa Abraham, the wanderer, was most hospitable when visitors came to him, as for instance the angel of the Lord going down to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:3). Yes, he even interceded for the people that God might spare them, had there been just ten just people (Gen. 19:16-33).

5. Whatever we have on earth is not ours; we are only stewards. But again, there are stewards and stewards. Some behave as if they were owners, maltreat their fellowmen, squander the property of their master, become proud and arrogant, they eat, drink, and get drunk (Lk. 12:45). They are not ready for their master, when he comes. Others are faithful, always aware that they only take the place of their master, are looking forward to his return. They can never be surprised, for they know: to be prepared is everything!

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (August 17, 1980)

Once again all three readings illustrate the same theme: **Signs, jobs, persons to be contradicted.**

### FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 38:4-6. 8-10

Every prophet is first and foremost a messenger of God, telling his contemporaries what God has to say concerning their daily life, concerning the situation they are in order to understand the signs of the time. In other words, they are the conscience of a nation.

A conscience, however, tells the truth, if a person likes it or not. Popularity is not the measure of a true prophet, but truth. The result is: Most prophets, if any, were not popular. After all, who likes to hear the truth, especially if this truth is unpleasant.

Jeremiah by nature finefeeling and withdrawn, melancholic and certainly in no way a fighter, was given the unpleasant task to tell the Israelites clearer and clearer the impending exile of Babylon. Since his fellowmen persisted in disobeying God's commandments, God would finally have to bring them into exile of Babylon (587-538).

Today's first reading stems from the time before the fall of Jerusalem in the time of king Zedekiah (597-87). The prophet foresaw the end of Jerusalem and under God's inspiration also saw the uselessness of making a revolt against king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (605/4-562). It would be without success and just make things worse. Prudent submission to Nebuchadnezzar could perhaps avert the worst. And thus by God's order submission to Babylon was what Jeremiah was preaching these years before the fall of Jerusalem.

This however was interpreted as high treason, as demoralizing the morale of the soldiers, and the prophet was thrown into a cistern full of mud. He would have soon died, had not a kind Ethiopian by the name of Ebedmelech taken pity on him and pulled him out of the cistern.

A prophet can cause discord, although he speaks in the name of the Lord because people want to hear what flatters them. But in the last analysis the truth will set us free (Jn. 8:32).

## SECOND READING: HEBREWS 12:1-4

By chance again, this second reading fits in with the theme of the other two readings. The pericope tells us something about the trials we have to submit to as Christ did. For "the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent takes it by force" Mt. 11:12).

The second reading of last Sunday showed us heroes of faith, especially Abraham, the father of all believers. In that same chapter 11 of Hebrews other heroes of faith of the Old Testament are presented to us, so that the author can continue today: "We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin . . . Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus" (Hebr. 12:1-2). Christ is the top witness and perfecter of our faith. Our life is something like a race in a stadium where all the witnesses from heaven, the saints who made the race already, watch and encourage us, especially the Lord himself, who endured the hardest test, crucifixion.

Seeing him we can never complain. After all, we have not yet resisted to the point of shedding our blood (Hebr. 12:4) as Christ did. His example must make us willing and empower us to endure also opposition of sinners (Hebr. 12:3). To follow Christ does not mean to have an easy life, but to embrace the cross.

### READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 12:49-53

That the imitation of Christ does not spare us hardships is even more explained by today's gospel. Christ, to be sure, is the prince and king of peace (Is. 9:5). But this is not an inactive and easy peace. Rather, Jesus is "destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel" (Lk. 1:34). His coming cannot be ignored and we cannot remain neutral. We have to take a stand: "The man who hears my word and has faith in him who sent me possesses eternal life . . . He who refuses to honor the Son refuses to honor the Father who sent me" (Jn. 5:24.23).

Christ himself was not spared hardships. The Father had selected the cross for him as means of redeeming mankind. And since it was Christ's food to do the will of his Father (Jn. 4:34) he was eager to be baptized with that baptism of suffering (Lk. 17:25; cf. Mk. 10:38: "baptized in the same bath of pain"), although at the same time he was also scared of it (cf. Lk. 22:42), to be glad, when it was all over: "When a woman is in labor she is sad that her time has come. When she has born a child, she no longer remembers her pain for the joy that a man has been born into the world" (Jn. 16:21). The Baptist had baptized only with water, Christ intended to baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire (Lk. 3:16).

Fire in the first place stands for judgment, where the impious will be destroyed (Is. 66:15-16; Ez. 38:22). But at the same time it purifies the elect (Is. 1:25; Jer. 6:29; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-4).

Jesus then is pointing out his role as inaugurating the eschatological time by passing through the fire of trouble and testing. Possibly Luke also thinks of the fire of Pentecost (Acts 2:3.19) and the gift of the Holy Spirit whom Christ would send us as fruit of his death and resurrection (Jn. 7:37-39; 19:34; 20:23).

Peace one will have only if one does God's will as Christ did. But since the world often enough has values different from those of Christians Christ will be the crisis of division between believers and those who refuse to accept Him. Mich 7:6 already foresaw

that family relationships would be disrupted. The good news which the Lord brings can be bad news to those who refuse to accept it. And the result will be: In one house of five, father and son will be divided, daughter and daughter against her mother (Lk. 12:53).

## HOMILY

### SIGNS AND PERSONS OF CONTRADICTION

1. Most of us would like to be appreciated and popular. But popularity is not necessarily a clear sign of greatness. It could be accomplished at the expense of truth. Whenever God puts us in charge of somebody as in a family as father or mother, in school as principal or teacher, in a parish as pastor, in a municipality as official, as mayor or governor, we are responsible for our subjects, not only for their material — but also for their spiritual well-being. A prophet, a man of God, anybody who takes God's place is a watchman as God told the prophet Ezekiel: "Thus the word of the Lord came to me: 'Son of man, I have appointed you as watchman for the house of Israel. When you hear a word my mouth, you shall warn them for me.' If I say to the wicked man: 'You shall surely die;' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his wicked conduct so that he may live: that wicked man shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, on the other hand, you have warned the wicked man, yet he has not turned away from his evil nor from his wicked conduct, then he shall die for his sin, but you shall save your live" (Ez. 3:17-19). To be conscience for somebody, however, can mean to be disliked, to be contradicted, and even insulted and persecuted.

2. The Lord had to tell the truth, no matter how little at times his hearers would like it. "I am the way, the life and the truth" (Jn. 14:6) he could say. And yet at the same time Simeon could already say to Mary at the presentation of Jesus in the Temple: "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed" (Lk. 2:34). Or as the psalmist long ago had put it: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it" (Ps. 118:23-24). Christ's message was not always easy to understand nor to accept. For some he was too radical, for others not radical enough. Even the Baptist for some time was not sure what to say concerning this Jesus who that he

sent a delegation to ask: "Are you He who is to come or do we look for another?" and Jesus could only answer: "Blest is the man who finds no stumbling block in me" (Mt. 11:6).

The Pharisees had their ideas about the Law of Moses, about the role of the Messiah. When Christ's ideas did not fit in with their concepts, they rejected him similarly as did some disciples: This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously" (Jn. 7:60)! Only thus could they remark to Jesus' demand: "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn. 7:52).

And when he foretold his death on the cross, even his disciples did not follow him but fled when he was taken captive (Mt. 26:56). Christianity is the religion of the cross and thus a scandal and a stumbling block.

3. Since Christ demands total commitment, people in any given community, smaller or bigger, may not always take the same stand, but rather there are gaps, generation gaps. Usually we combine with this idea of difference in age; they are psychological gaps. But there are perhaps even more theological gaps, not so much about theoretical distinctions and definitions, but about our stand to Christ, to the church, the going to church and the receiving of the sacraments. And this is not limited to a certain age. The break can be open, people leave the church, people say an open "no" to the Lord. This hurts, if it happens to a member of the family.

More hurting, however, than this open rebellion against Christ is this apathy, this lukewarm behavior, this indifference, when a husband is worried about his wife who does not care much to pray, when a wife is worried about her husband who hardly ever goes to church or is flirting around, a son or a daughter who has good parents but finds them old fashioned and the church too much institutionalized so that slowly he or she stays away from Mass, from the sacraments, from the church and goes with doubtful companions. Some try to console themselves saying: "One can remain faithful also without explicit long prayers, without going to Mass every Sunday." One can refer to "good people" who do not show much external piety. And yet, one cannot cut oneself off from the stream of living water without dying of thirst in the long run, depriving oneself of the bread of life in word and sacrament without slowly starving to death.

## TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (August 24, 1980)

The last Sundays by chance the theme of the second reading fitted in with the theme of the other two readings. Today it does not. Today one could meditate on the topic of the second reading: **To correct is a sign of love.**

The gospel, as it stands, speaks certainly about the narrow gate, the special, wholehearted effort we have to make if we want to enter heaven. And in that sense practically all commentaries explain the pericope of today. A second theme.

But the composers of the liturgy of today obviously concentrated on the last verses of the pericope: "Men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at the table in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13:29); and thus, together with Is. 66:18-21 (especially "I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory" (Is. 66-18) the theme of the universality of the Church presents itself as a third theme.

### FIRST READING: ISAIAH 66:18-21

Trito-Isaiah (Is. 58-66) was written by an unknown author for the Jews who had returned from exile ca. 538-510. The first enthusiasm was soon spent, the expected salvation did not come as fast as some had hoped for. Thus Trito-Isaiah stressed the importance of true piety and told the Israelites that salvation would come in spite of all obstacles. Sion-Jerusalem after a final judgment of God would become the religious center of the world (Is. 60:1-22; 66:18-24).

Moses had seen only a glimpse of God's glory (Ex. 33:18-23). Now all nations shall see his glory (Is. 66:18). The Lord will set up a sign among them. This could mean a signpost showing the way to those whom God sends. But the sign could also be the act of sending the messengers. From those who have been preserved from the judgment of the nations (the "survivors") God will send messengers to the nations as missionaries to the far islands in order to proclaim God's glory among the other nations. This is the first sure and certain mention of mission as we today use the term: the sending of individuals to distant peoples in order to proclaim



God's glory among them. Trito-Isaiah mentions the nations known at his time as representatives for all nations: Tarshish, a phoenician trading city in Spain, Put and Lud, peoples in Africa, Mesech and Tubal to the south-east of the Black Sea, Javan, standing for the Ionians of Asia Minor or Greece.

And ever more wonderful is that these messengers of the gospel taken from the Gentiles will bring as offering to the Lord all the Jews in the diaspora ("all your brethren" Is 66:20). This is a priestly service. But the author goes on: "And some of them (of these messengers from the Gentiles) also I take as priests and levites," says Yahweh (Is 66:21). This is a thing the orthodox never dreamed of: the admission of heathen to the innermost circles of the priesthood. The new Israel, the Church, will be really Catholic.

### SECOND READING: HEBREWS 12:5-7. 11-13

The second reading of the last two Sundays had spoken about the faith of Abraham, the other witnesses, and of Christ. It was all said to Christians in trials. So the pericope of today goes on and tells these Christians: persecutions, trials are signs of God's special love for us. **The Lord disciplines those he loves.** (Hebr. 12:6).

We all remember our father at home. A father disciplines his children, which at the time often looks as undeserved and exaggerated. But later on we understand that he meant well, after all. It is the same with God. His trials seem to be harsh and undeserved. Years later we understand a little more why he sent them.

We modern men may not all agree with this picture, since it seems too disciplinarian to us, too much of an expression of power and moodiness, not democratic enough. We find punishment more intimidating than helpful, destroying the finest confidence between parents and children. One should more talk things over and motivate. But is it really the last in psychology and education that discipline is out? Or is this picture of a patriarchal age, rightly understood, still valid, after all?

### READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 13:22-30

Here we have a pericope which partly also Matthew has, but in different places. It would seem that it belongs to the special sources of Luke which Luke formulated as it now stands.

When the Jews were under foreign rule, without the possibility of physical retaliation and of winning back their political

independence, many found compensation in the thought that in the world to come they would be honored guests at the Messianic banquet and the Gentiles would be excluded. Jesus reverses this popular imagination: The Jews who refuse the invitation of the gospel will stand outside of the banquet hall, excluded with doors locked and will see to their great dismay that the Gentiles are sitting at Messianic banquet. This is one of the intentions of today's pericope.

The question which someone raises: "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" was a point of discussion in apocalyptic literature at that time. Thus we read in 4 Ezra 8:13: "And he answered me and said: 'This age the Most High has made for many, but the age to come for few . . . Many have been created, but few shall be saved!'" Rabbinical discussion distinguished between the temporary Messianic kingdom which belongs to the present age to which only a few would be admitted and the final age of the Messianic kingdom into which all Israelites would enter. This is the background of the question: "Will those who are saved be few?" Christ does not answer directly, since he does not want to satisfy curiosity with idle speculations. One shall not waste time but shall leave the question up to the mercy of God. The kingdom is present and the door is open. Everybody shall try hard (the Greek expression used speaks of agony) to enter before it is too late.

Then it does not help to brag about the fact that one was a Jew. Mere physical descendancy does not make a man an Israelite. Nor is it enough to have seen Christ and eaten with him in mere physical contact without having done his or the Father's will. This physical contact alone is not enough to know Christ nor will he recognize us as his own.

In short, the Jews will be shut out, but the pagans, coming from all the nations, will eat at the banquet. And yet, there is hope that also the Israelites at the end will enter, after all: "Some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last" (Lk 13:30). According to time the Jews are first, in actual entering the kingdom, they will be last. But that last is actually an expression of hope, after all. The pagans are called last, but enter first.

## HOMILY

### THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE CHURCH

1. God is all perfect and universal. It took many different nations created after his image and likeness to express his fulness somehow. One nation alone could have never manifested God's

greatness to us. The many nations as the Priestly Source in Genesis 10 shows are sign of God's richness and fulness. He is so perfect that millions of people can never express fully his perfection.

2. From all these nations God elected Israel as his chosen people, starting with Abraham. He called him out of Ur and Haran to go to an unknown land: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you" (Gen 12:2-3). God did not call Abraham to make him just the father of the Jews; he did not choose the Jews as his own for their own sake, for their own glory. But in Abraham, in the Jews, all other people and nations should be blessed.

3. Israel should become the center, the holy mountain to which all nations would come as pilgrims. The prophets often use this picture. "In the days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it. Many people shall come and say: 'Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.' For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is 2:2-3; cf. Mic 4:1-2).

The first reading of today brings another such text: "I come to gather nations of every language: they shall come and see my glory" (Is. 66:18). And then, as we saw, mentioned the representatives of that time: nations from Spain, Greece, Africa, and Asia Minor.

4. All these different nations shall come with gifts: "Nations shall walk by our light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look around; they all gather and come to you. Your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses . . . Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedars from Midian and Ephah. All from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praise of the Lord" (Is. 60:3-6). Originally this text speaks about the return of the Jews from exile. Strangers will bring Zion's sons and daughters back to Jerusalem; and they will come with gifts. But ever since Epiphany in connection with the feast of the Magi and Ps 72:10, this text has been applied to the nations who all come to the Lord, each one with its gifts. All nations are necessary to make up the fulness of the new Zion, the Church, and unless each nations has brought its gifts, there is something missing. Only then the Church is Catholic, worldwide.

5. Considering themselves as better than the rest or relying on a mere physical desendency from Abraham as the sole requirements, many Jews rejected Christ. The Lord makes clear in today's gospel that such external titles are not enough. — Mere observance of our Christian customs will not suffice either. We must know the Lord in daily life.

The Jews were inclined to look down on pagan nations. And yet before God all nations are good. All different races have their place in the Church. The Church is not really Catholic unless all nations bring in their gifts, and some people have some talents others do not have in the same way.

6. Slowly a certain anti-Jewish feeling has developed among many people. But again, the climax of the Church will come only, when the Jews will become Catholic. In different places of the New Testament this return of the Israelites to Christ is indicated as a hope. So in today's gospel: The first will be last and the last, will be first (Lk. 13:30). The Jews will be temporarily the last to enter the kingdom, but they will enter, after all. In a similar way Jesus tells the Jews: "You will not see me any more till you say: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Mat. 23:39, which according to many also means: till the Jews will welcome him in the parousia.

St. Paul explains the final conversion of the Hebrews as a mystery he received from the Lord. And the high time of the Church will come, when the Jews enter it. This coming event makes Paul exclaim: "How deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has given him anything so as to deserve return? For from him and through him and for him all things are. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:35-36). — So we can only hope and pray that the chosen people may enter the Church.

## HOMILY

### ENTER THE NARROW GATE!

1. Many of us would like to know how many people will be saved. Will the majority of people be in heaven or in hell? That question probably will be answered differently by different people. Some will try to answer the question from Scripture. But probably the answer will more come from somebody's picture of God he has in his subconscious. The Lord tells us not to waste any time with idle questions. This is sure: the kingdom of heaven is here and the door is open. We shall try hard to enter.

2. There is no **predestination to hell**. And the Lord has nowhere said that the majority goes to hell either. "Many, I tell you, will try to enter and be unable" (Lk. 13:24) and "How often have I wanted to gather your children together as a mother bird collects her young under her wings, and you refused me" (Lk 13:34) brings out only the seriousness of the situation.

3. The Lord uses the expression: "Strive to enter!" This expression means we have to use our whole energy, we have to make a real effort, we have to use all our forces. "From John the Baptizer's time until now the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force" (Mt 11:13). The entry is not automatic and life as a Christian is not a *laissez-faire*.

4. Mere membership, merely a baptismal certificate does not suffice. "We ate and drank in your company. You taught in our streets" (Lk 13:26) many could change into: "We went to Mass quite regularly. heard your sermons." But the Lord will answer: "That is not enough. Did you put into practice what you heard? Did you live your Mass? I do not know you." We have to strive, to climb. Not to go forward means to go backward. There is no standstill. There are no mere privileges. Decisive is our active response to Christ's call, our daily response to his summons.

5. There is a time limit for all our efforts. Once the door will be shut, then it will be too late. Some people think: A good act of contrition before our death is all that is needed, and they put things off. So they take their time. We will die the way we lived. To make an act of contrition after a long life of sin without any real effort will not be easy, if not impossible. Thomas More, the chancellor of Henry VIII of England, warned one of his relatives not to go on with his bad life but to mend his ways, whereupon the relative answered: "All I have to do before I die is to say: 'My Jesus, mercy!'" One good day he was riding over a bridge when his horse was frightened and threw him, the rider, off into the river. After a while the relative a last time came up from the engulfing waves and shouted: "Go to hell!" to disappear forever.

6. Mere aesthetic is not enough. Somebody may know Christianity as art, may appreciate the beauty of our churches. The Lord must be a living reality for us. The story goes of an expert of Christian art how a priest tried to talk to him about the seriousness of life and to prepare him for his last hour. Finally the priest took a beautiful cross of ivory hanging over the bed of the dying to help him make an act of contrition. The dying opened his eyes and said: "Spanish masterpiece, seventeenth century." He put his head back on his pillow and died.

## TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (August 31, 1980)

As usual on most Sundays, the first reading and the gospel have one theme: "Humble yourself and you will be exalted." The second reading has a theme of its own: The old Covenant was a covenant of awe. In the New Covenant Christ is our mediator whom we can easily approach.

### FIRST READING: SIRACH 3:17-18. 20. 28-29

The Book of Ecclesiasticus or (Jesus) Sirach was written by Jesus Sirach, an inhabitant of Jerusalem somewhere in between 200 and 180 B.C. He was a member of the scribal class who had travelled abroad, settled in later years in Jerusalem and opened a school for the scriptural and moral instruction of his younger fellow countrymen. There he composed this book. The Book of Ecclesiasticus is similar to the Book of Proverbs. But the Book of Proverbs is more a collection of popular proverbs, wisdom and experience of a community, whereas Sirach is more a collection of sentences of personal experience. Reflecting on our life, Sirach states that it should be devoted to pursuit of wisdom because wisdom is close to God. A man should seek to give God due praise and honor. Such a man, however will always fear the Lord and lead a good moral life. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Sir 1:14). Reverence and obedience to God's word will make us grow in wisdom. From this "fear of the Lord" springs humility. And thus Sirach speaks in the second half of chapter 3 about humility.

Humility gives a true estimate on self. Through it a man performs duty, avoids what is beyond his understanding and strength. Pride, however, begets false greatness, misjudgment, stubbornness, sorrow, affliction, and perdition.

The attitude of a great and thus humble man is to listen humbly. The greater a man is, the more he must humble himself.

### SECOND READINGS: HEBREWS 12:18-19.22-24a

One of the main intentions of the Letter to the Hebrews is to show the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. Jesus is the eternal highpriest who redeems us with his own blood once

and for all. The highpriest of the Old Covenant could go into the sanctuary once a year and try to atone with the blood of an animal. The sacrifices had to be repeated again and again.

The superiority of the New over the Old Covenant shows itself also in this that the Covenant of Mt. Sinai was established in trembling and fear. God impressed the Israelites by his greatness and majesty shown in lightning and thunder. He told Moses: "Set limits for the people all around the mountain, and tell them: Take care not to go up the mountain or even to touch its base. If anyone touches the mountain he must be put to death" (Ex 19:12). And in Deut 5:2-27 Moses recalls the establishing of the covenant this way and says to his fellow Jews: "When you heard the voice from the midst of darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, you came to me in the person of all your tribal heads and elders, and said . . . 'Why should we die now? Surely this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord, our God, any more, we shall die . . . Go closer, you, and hear all that the Lord, our God will say, and then tell us what the Lord, our God, tells you; we will listen and obey.'"

The New Covenant is different. We have free access to Jesus, our mediator. People can go to the altar and take a close look at the great mystery of the Mass. The new Jerusalem awaits us after our life, God's angels are expecting us, God himself awaits us and all the saints who have reached their heavenly goal. All this is so since Jesus is the mediator between the Father and us, since He is God and man. Thus our predominant attitude is love, not fear.

### READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 14:1. 7-14

One Sabbath Jesus was invited to a dinner. Dinners were always the time for conversations. So we find it in Esther, Ecclesiasticus 32, The Epistle of Aristea and especially in the Symposium of Plato. (By the way, it is interesting to note that our scientific symposia originally took place at a meal and got the name from the meal.) Of course we have to leave open how much Jesus actually spoke at such a meal and how much a pericope is due to this particular literary form, composed here in this case by Luke. Would Jesus, for instance, have dared to tell his host bluntly: "When you give a meal, invite the poor" (Lk 14:13)?

Jesus is invited, but nobody gives him a particular place. The other guests, especially Pharisees, however look for the best places. Jesus observes this fact and gives an admonition in form of a parable. Thus it is not a mere piece of etiquette as we have it in Prov 25:6-7:

"Claim no honor in the king's presence, nor occupy the place of great men; for it is better that you be told, 'Come up closer!' than that you be humbled before the prince." Rather Jesus tells the Pharisees and us as well: (1) Nobody has a right to a particular place because of a certain position or job. The Pharisees and the Jews were inclined to think so but were put in the last place. The sinners and publicans, however received the places of honor. We rather humble ourselves; then God can use us and promote us. (2) Our doing good and doing favors should be disinterested. We should not invite people to a banquet who will invite us back in return: our friends, brothers, kinsmen, rich neighbors, but rather we should invite poor people who can never return the favor. Only then we are sincerely good, imitating God who will repay us at the resurrection.

## HOMILY

### HUMBLE YOURSELF AND YOU WILL BE EXALTED

1. The story goes of a Capuchin who started a sermon, saying: "Humility is a difficult virtue. But thanks be to God. I got it!" And everybody laughed, because everybody realized that we are really like this: we think, we are humble, but almost everybody else thinks the opposite. Did not the Pharisees say the same? But our idea of a Pharisee is different.

2. **Pride** is the idea that God owes us a reserved seat in heaven, just because we were baptized or because we are a Religious or a priest. If the scribe and Pharisees arrogated to themselves privileges and demanded preferential treatment they did so on the grounds of their observance of the law, on their standing as religious men. They took for granted that God would see things in this way also. But he was not and is no respecter of persons, neither then nor now.

Pride is the quest for power for its own sake, harsh domination of others and self-satisfaction unconcerned about other. By nature we are rather proud and looking for recognition. Humility is not innate in us. As a matter of fact humility is a typical Christian virtue; one does not find it in pagan philosophical book as recommended virtue. Christ told us: "Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). After all, "though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he did empty himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it



was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, on a cross. Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name, so that at Jesus' name every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:6-11).

3. **Humility** does not mean to be indifferent to one's own situation, work and progress. It is not to be equated with inability to accept responsibility. It does not mean an inferiority complex, indecisiveness, fearfulness. Rather, humility is the courage to accept our deepest reality, i.e. that we are creatures and that whatever we have is a gift of God. We have nothing from ourselves, but we owe our life to God. A humble man thanks God for what he is. He explores himself and develops himself. He does not refuse to know his talents, but rather uses the talents he has received.

4. There is a refined form of pride which looks disinterested, even heroic. It is the superiority of those who have something to say or do, a mission to carry out. Such people are virtuous, faithful to their principle, no matter what it costs, they do it for the Lord, but in reality it is for their own satisfaction, after all, no matter how subtle that self-satisfaction is.

5. "Humble yourself and you will be exalted! Look for the last place and you will get the first one!" That could be taken for a trick, a device, technique to get indirectly what one wanted in the first place. But this is not the intention of the Lord. Lk. 17:7-10 tells us: "If one of you had a servant plowing or herding sheep and he came in from the fields, would you say to him, 'Come and sit down at table?' Would you not rather say, 'Prepare my supper. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You can eat and drink afterwards?' Would he be grateful to the servant who was only carrying out his orders? It is quite the same with you who hear me. When you have done all you have done no more than our duty." It is probably one of the hardest parables, which we would like to overlook. The farmer of the parable is not a wealthy man. He has one slave only, who must do the farm work and also serve at table. As a slave there is no question of wages for his services. The master does not see why he should thank the slave for carrying out his order. Jesus draws the morale of the parable: the disciples, we, are God's slaves and have no claim for reward for doing what God expects of us. We must humbly acknowledge that we are poor servants. There is

no suggestion that our work is useless. But the reward of good works is a free gift; we have no right to it. This is perhaps the hardest lesson. We must not look for reward. To be allowed to work for God, for his kingdom is reward in itself. A life of a child of God is enough of reward.

Recognition eludes those who demand it and comes to those who think more highly of others than themselves. True dignity is always unconscious and honor (whether conferred by God or man) is always unexpected.

6. With this we come to the second point of today's parable. It is a common human characteristic to cultivate the society only with one's own kind. The Pharisees did not associate with those who did not live as they did, following the Law. In our being good and doing favors we should not calculate and be good only or mainly to people of our own kind. This is not real goodness but just an exchange. They will "retaliate" and invite us in return. Where is our merit? This is not real Christian yet. Pagans do that much. We should invite people who cannot do us favors in return: poor, crippled, unknown people. If we are disgusted and turn sour if thanks does not come, we prove to ourselves that we are still selfish. If we are sulking because our name was (perhaps only by oversight) omitted from a list of people who were working hard, people mentioned with distinction, we are proud.

What are our motives behind our generosity? We may give from a sense of duty which we cannot escape as we cannot escape paying income tax. People may admire us for that. But it is not disinterested charity yet. — We may help because of a certain self-interest, kind of investment which will go on our credit side on our ledger with God. — We may help in order to feel superior. But such help hurts more than it is beneficial — Finally we can give because we just cannot help but giving. God is good and we try to follow him.

Is gratuitous giving not inhuman and intolerable? Do we not feel frustrated? Do we not all expect thanks? We have only two ways out: Exalt ourselves or accept it and humble ourselves, placing ourselves in God's hands and live for him and his kingdom. The less we look for reward and thankfulness, the more we will get. We ourselves should always be thankful and appreciate everything, but demand nothing from others.

## TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (September 7, 1980)

As to be expected, the second reading has its own theme: Paul asks Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother, not as a slave any longer. The first reading would perhaps lead us to a different interpretation, if we would not read it with the gospel in mind. Then it tells us: Wisdom helps us to understand God's will which in this case is: **Renounce everything and follow Christ!**

### FIRST READING: WISDOM 9:13-18

The second part of the Book of Wisdom is an encomium on wisdom and speaks about its origin and value for rulers (Wisd. 6:1-9:19). Solomon was the wise man and especially the wise ruler. But he more than anybody else declares clearly that wisdom is not to be acquired by human efforts, but mainly by prayer, since it is a gift from God, not so much one's own achievement. Who can know God's plans? Our human intellect is not capable to understand what God intends. We can hardly guess at what is on earth. Even visible and tangible things are often a puzzle for us. How much less can we understand heavenly, divine realities. The soul would like to swing itself up, but the body weighs us down (9:15). Especially this verse 15 would be the link with the gospel: If we want to understand God's plans we have to deny ourselves. And lastly it is only God's spirit from on high who gives us wisdom, teaching us what pleases God, teaching us (in the context of the gospel) how to renounce everything and follow Christ.

### SECOND READING: PHILEMON 9b-10. 12-17

Philemon is the shortest Pauline Letter. Philemon was a Colossian who had been converted by Paul himself (Phm. v. 9). His slave Onesimus had run away — having stolen some of his master's goods (vv 15 18) — and had somehow reached Paul in prison (v.10). The Apostle converted and baptized him and sent him back to Philemon which he had to do according to law. But he gave him a short letter along, appealing to the charity of Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, the Apostle's spiritual son. Philemon had lost a slave only to gain a brother (vv 15 f) thus becoming really "profitable" as the name Onesimus mean. And as a brother, not as a slave any longer, should Philemon treat Onesimus.

This short letter puts before us the attitude of the primitive Church to slavery which for some might be a little disappointing because it is not radical enough for them. But Paul, as the early Church, was realistic. In the social structure of the age, the abolition of slavery was impossible. The Christian slave should be considered and treated as a brother, not as a chattel. Paul would welcome the freeing of Onesimus (Phm 14-16 21). Slowly and in time the leaven of the gospel of the equality of all and of brotherhood in Christ would slowly but surely make slavery obsolete.

### READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 14:25-33

Jesus had finished his table talks (Lk. 14:1-24) and how goes on to Jerusalem. People may think he is going to install his kingdom, but for him going to Jerusalem means, especially in the gospel of Luke, going to be crucified. People seem to have been enthusiastic. But the Lord must disillusion them. Whoever wants to follow him must (1) love him more than anybody else on earth, even father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters; yes even his own life. The expression "hate" is a typical Semitic formulation. Instead of saying "loving Christ more than father and mother" they would say "loving Christ and hating father and mother". (2) bear his own cross and come after Christ, i.e. be willing to make such sacrifices which could amount to the hardest sacrifice at that time: bearing the cross and being crucified as Christ was, for Christ's sake.

This resoluteness and the cost of discipleship Christ illustrates by two parables:

(1) No architect would build a tower before he has figured out exactly if he has enough money to build. Otherwise having to stop building with the building half-finished he would bring ridicule upon himself. — Whoever wants to follow Christ must think it over, if he is able to do so; otherwise he would better not follow Christ.

(2) A king who wants or has make war against another king will first calculate exactly how many soldiers he has to be sure if he can dare making war or how well equipped and trained his soldiers are if his opponent has twice as many soldiers; otherwise he will ask for peace before he starts the war to save himself from full destruction. — To follow Christ need equal serious deliberation. To follow him only half of the way would mean catastrophe.

In short, before one wants to follow Christ, one has to figure out the cost. Otherwise, one better does not follow him.

## HOMILY

## THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

1. The pericope of Lk 14:25-35 according to the introduction in Lk 14:25 seems to be addressed to "a great crowd", not just to the disciples. But since the first three verses (Lk 14:25-27) Matthew (Mat 10:37 f) places in the missionary mandate to the apostles and the last verses of the discourse (Lk 14:34f), missing in today's gospel, are to be found in Mt. 5:13, which is usually also understood as address to the disciples, Lk. 14:25-35 could be also understood as addressed to the disciples. In the first case then, today's pericope would speak about the resolutness of every Christian who wants to follow Christ; in the second, Luke would tell us what are the true qualities of a disciple. The difference is real. But we can combine both: What is true in the fullest sense of a disciple is in a relative way also true for every Christian: Even if he, for instance, would not have to renounce all his possessions materially, he would have to be detached from them at least spiritually.

2. To be a Christian, and even more to be a disciple, means to place Christ in the center of our life. We must love him above everything. Anything else can take only second place. Luke who usually is more radical with his demand for the imitation of Christ expresses this in typical Semitic fashion: Whoever wants to follow Christ must hate father and mother, instead of saying: he must love Christ more than his father and mother as Mt 10:37 has it.

For the first Christians faith in Christ not seldom meant exclusion from the family. For us this will be the exception, but there will be times when we will have to take a stand for Christ which can mean a stand against somebody dear to us or a superior. This happened to Thomas More, the chancellor of King Henry VIII of England. The king wanted him to declare his marriage with Catherine null and void. But More in conscience could not do it and was thrown in jail by his king. Even his wife and favored daughter Margaret, visiting him in jail, wanted to persuade him to acknowledge the king as highest religious authority to save his life. "How many years could we still live together?" More asked his wife. "About twenty," came the answer. "Twenty, if you would have said, thousand! But twenty. How could I desert my Lord Christ who has been so faithful to me for so many years, for living twenty years with you against Him!"

3. Christ does not want to frighten anybody, but wants to make sure that Christianity and even more Religious life is not something

easy, but something that demands all our efforts, something to be thought over before one starts. How do we advertise Christianity, the Religious life, the priesthood? Do we talk about the beautiful playgrounds, the different facilities of mass media, the good library, the possibility of visits of relatives and vacations at home? Or do we demand something of them? Christ spoke about the cross. Every Galilean had seen such crucifixions as the Roman way of squashing any upcoming political revolt, and knew the cruelty of the cross. For us the cross has become a decoration piece which does not frighten us. Jesus most likely did not want to say that Christianity would bring Christians in tension with the Roman government, but rather that every Christian has to be willing to make every sacrifice, even to be a martyr on the cross.

But the cross is not just the matter of one day, as it could look here in this context, but of daily life as well. Thus in Lk 9:23 we find the other version: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps!

4. The Lord does not look for big numbers but for quality. And actually, do we not know from experience that schools which demand something concerning admission and passing grades in the long run are more looked more than those which throw the grades or the diploma at somebody? Did the number of certain Religious societies not always go up, when they were strict? And is perhaps one reason for the growing number of Communists also that they demand total dedication from their members? Can Christ not require equally much or more from us?

5. Think it over before you become a Christian and even more before you become a Religious or a priest. Nobody shall take the step slightly. It must be a **total commitment**. Otherwise one would better not start. This lesson is demonstrated by two parables: Nobody would start building a tower (in Palestine often built in a vineyard to watch the vineyard and protect it against thieves and wild beasts) before he figures out the exact cost. Everybody would laugh at the builder, if the tower could not be finished. No king would dare making war or even less defend himself against an aggressing king who comes with a superior force numberwise unless he has sureness that his army is superior in expertise and weapons so that he can dare going to war. The risk to be smashed completely would be too great. It would be better to ask for an honorable peace treaty than to be forced to an unconditional surrender. — If we start our Christian life, our Religious or priestly life, without calculating the efforts and the cost, we may run the risk of becoming a fallen away Christian, Religious or priest. Then it

would be better to stay a good pagan or stay a good Christian and not become a Religious or a priest. Whatever we do we shall not do hastily but with deliberation.

6. For building one needs money; for waging a war, soldiers. But if one wants to follow Christ, not possession is needed, but renunciation. (1) We must be free from all external possessions, from "all possessions" (Lk 14:33) to have our hands free and not drag ballast along. (2) We must not be attached to any person but Christ. We must sacrifice human attachments: Father and mother, wife and child, brother and sister (Lk 14:26). (3) And what is even more, we must turn our back on our very self (Lk 14:26), we must give "our own life", abdicate our own free decisions and do only what God wants us to do. What we can keep is only the cross. We shall follow Christs crucified with total surrender. Rather not resolve upon exclusive service to Christ than go only half way. Half way is half renunciation. We shall not keep certain things to ourselves but demolish the bridges behind of us. Enthusiasm alone does not suffice. The sign of authentically is preparedness for complete denial in order to love only Christ. We give up everything for the sake of total surrender to Christ.

## SEPTEMBER 14: TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

In the Missal before Vatican II there were two feasts: on May 3 the Feast of the Discovery of the Cross. According to tradition empress Helena after the victory of her son Constantine (313 A.D.) found three crosses in Jerusalem in the year 320. In order to find out the true cross, all three were applied to a sick man who was then healed through the true cross. Helena built a basilica in Jerusalem and sent some particles of the true cross to Rome for the church in Rome named "Holy Cross in Jerusalem". — The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross on September 14 commemorated the triumphant return of the true cross through emperor Heraclius from the Persians in the year 628. The historical details of these events are not important. Thus the new liturgy celebrates just the exaltation of the cross, the **exaltation of Christ through the cross** and our own exaltation through the cross.

### FIRST READING: NUMBERS 21:4b-9

This is an unusual and seemingly a little superstitious story. 2 Kgs 18:4 tells us that King Hezekiah "removed the high places, shattered the pillars, and cut down the sacred poles. He smashed the bronze serpent called Nehushtan which Moses had made,

because up to that time the Israelites were burning incense to it." The serpent was a well-known feature of the fertility cults in Canaan. People, especially farmers, believed that fertility in nature, animals, and men comes from Baal and Baalaath; and to help along that fertility, people would have "sacred intercourse" with temple prostitutes in one of the sanctuaries of Baal or would have to worship him and his wife on high places and under pillars. It was the great danger for the monotheism against which all the prophets were fighting. And in the history of Israel there were ups and downs concerning the true worship of Yahweh. Bad kings would tolerate or even encourage such idolatrous worship, religious kings would abolish it. King Hezekiah was one of them who abolished it.

The narrative of Numbers 21:8-9 would seem to be formed and circulated in order to justify this cult-object of dubious nature. Jews would say: "What do you want, even Moses tolerated the use of such an object. So it cannot be all that bad."

As so often, the Hebrews complained against God in the desert. They preferred the security of slavery in Egypt to the insecurity of freedom in the desert and found a hundred and one reason for this. One was the monotony of food. As punishment God sent fiery serpents which bite the people so that many died. They are called "fiery", in Hebrew *sarah*, because of the burning effect of their poisonous bite. The Hebrews repented and asked Moses to put in a word for them with God to take the serpents away from them. The Lord ordered Moses to make a fiery serpent and mount it on a pole. Anybody who looked at it was healed from the bite of the snakes.

This could look like the superstitious belief that one could annul the power of dangerous creatures by making an image of them and offering some kind of worship to that image. So we find in I Samuel 8:4 how the Philistines try to avert the plaques of hemorrhoids and mice by offering five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice giving them as tribute to the God of Israel. But already Wisdom 18:5-7 explains very clearly that it was not image of the bronze serpent that healed but only the belief in Yahweh: "When the dire venom of beasts came upon them and they were dying from the bite of crooked serpents, your anger endured not to the end. . . For he who turned toward it (the sign of the bronze serpent) was saved, not by what he saw, but by you, the savior of all." Thus the faith in Yahweh healed the Israelites, not the bronze snake.



**SECOND READING: PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11**

This pericope is a pre-Pauline Christological hymn, used in the early Christian community before Paul adapted it. Proofs for this are the fact that the hymn is poetry (Paul usually writes in prose), the different expression unusual for Paul: "Form of God," "equality with God," "slave," "empty himself," "bestow," and the Christological theology of pre-existence humiliation and exaltation, whereas Paul usually speaks about Christ's death and resurrection. Thus it is a precious document of how the first Christians looked at the cross and at Christ. The division of the hymn is discussed among scholars, but preferably we can distinguish two strophes: (1) Verses 2:6-8 speak about Christ's pre-existence, Incarnation, and crucifixion, (2) Verses 2:9-11 picture Christ's exaltation.

Christ was in the form of God from all eternity, equal with God, that means God. ("Form" is the same as "image" and means here more than what the mere term would express; it means true God.) Yet Christ did not consider his equality with God as something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and became a man. "Form" of a slave of a man, means again true man.) As one can see, the old hymn describes more negative viewpoint of Incarnation, the humiliation of Christ. He became man, but even more, he became a slave, dying for us on the cross, as usually only slaves did. But this was not a sign of the Father's cruelty, but a sign of Christ's obedient love.

Because of this obedience to the Father God highly exalted Christ. This "highly exalted" (in Greek *hyperypsoun*) is a rare expression, usually reserved to God, as in Ps 96:9. Christ does not only receive again the position he had before Incarnation, but he receives a dignity which takes his humiliation and obedience into account. The exaltation is interpreted as receiving a new name (cf. Rom 1:4) which implies that all men will worship him and all power subjects to him. ("In the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth" probably refers to representatives of the whole cosmos as the picture of the cosmos at that time had it, as we see in the Letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.) All adore Christ and proclaim him as Lord, that is God. After all, Yahweh is always rendered with "Lord" in the Septuagint.

**READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: JOHN 3:13-17**

In his discourse with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21) Jesus speaks about the new life of the children of God. We have to be born again. We acquire salvation by regeneration (baptism). This regeneration is generation from above, is the work of the Holy Spirit (3:3-8), is

brought about by means of faith in Jesus Christ who died for us (3:9-15). Love of God is the ultimate cause of our salvation (3:16-21).

John uses an unusual expression to express Christ's crucifixion: *hypsoo* — to exalt. In non-biblical Greek the expression is late and rare; it means "to lift up," to "raise on high," "to exalt" both literally and transferredly. In the Septuagint it occurs some two hundred times, is used for instance for God's exaltation or His throne (Ps 96:9; Jer 17:12), God's manifestation of his loftiness by intervening in the course of events (Is 2:11 17; 5:16; 12:4 6; 30:16; 33:10). The righteous constantly ask God for his revelation of His loftiness and exalt, God in the liturgy. God alone is exalted and can exalt and elevate man. This motif of exalting the lowly and humbling the lofty occurs also in the New Testament (Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14). God alone exalts. — As we saw, in a pre-Pauline confession of Christ Phil 2:9 presents Christ's exaltation "cosmocrator" because of his obedient humiliation — in Act 2:33 and 5:31 exaltation stands alongside the common formula of the resurrection or awakening of Jesus: Christ is exalted by his resurrection and ascension.

Related but different and unique at the same time is the use of *hypsoo* in the fourth gospel: Christ is exalted by his crucifixion and his resurrection and ascension. There are three texts: (1) Jn. 3:14 (see above. (2) 8:28: "Jesus continued: 'When you lift up the Son of Man, you will come to realize that I am and that I do nothing by myself.'" (3) 12:32,24: "Jesus said: 'I — once I am lifted up from earth — will draw all men to myself.' This statement indicated the sort of death he had to die." What the Jews want to do with Christ is to bring him to the gallows, to pull him up unto the cross in the literal sense. In reality, however, they exalt him as the ruler and judge. Crucifixion is exaltation because it is the first part of resurrection and ascension, inseparably connected.

John applies the scene of Numbers 21:9 to Christ: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert (on a pole and all who looked at it with faith were healed) so must the Son of Man be lifted up that all who believe may have eternal life in him" (Jn 3:13-14). We are saved by faith in the crucified (and risen) Lord.

This crucifixion, however, was not a sign of God's demanding justice, even less of God's cruelty, but of God's love. Our salvation does not come from our efforts but from God. The Father sent

his Son into the world out of love, and the Son out of loving obedience died for us on the cross, thus not condemning the world but giving it eternal life. It all depends on our openness to accept it.

## HOMILY

### EXALTATION BY THE CROSS FOR CHRIST AND FOR US

1. The crucifixion was invented by the Persians, probably because the earth, dedicated to Ormuz, should not be profaned by the body of a sentenced person. Alexander the Great took it over, then the Diadochi, Punics, and Romans. In the Roman provinces crucifixion was one of the most important means to keep order and security. It was used against criminals, run-aways, and rebels. It was forbidden to use it for Roman citizens. It was the most cruel punishment. Cicero (*Pro Rabirio* 5,18) says: "The name of the cross should be absent not only from the body of Roman citizens but also from their thoughts, eyes, and ears."

The Jewish law did not know of crucifixion. It was prescribed in the Old Testament to suspend the bodies of sentenced, already dead idolaters and blasphemers. But that was no crucifixion but additional punishment after the lapidation of these persons and made them cursed men. Deut 21:23 says: "If anyone has committed a crime punishable by death, and has been put to death, and you have impaled him on a stake, his corpse must not remain all night on the stake; but you must be sure to bury him the same day; for an impaled man is a terrible disgrace, and you must not pollute the land which the Lord your God is giving as a heritage." Thus crucifixion was for pagans the most horrible punishment; for Jews, also a curse of God. Understandable therefore why the Jews wanted precisely this punishment for Jesus. They could stamp him as a failure and condemn him to these horrible pains of a crucifixion. The chest came in a position of inhalation, was extended abnormally much but could not breathe out. The system of breathing was disturbed and thus the blood circulation; cramps would spread over the whole body and the crucified person slowly would suffocate.

2. The normal reaction to such a horrible punishment we see in the garden of Gethsemani. The Lord has volunteered to die for us and take upon himself the sins of all mankind. But seeing that his death would be in vain for many, seeing the horror of sin, seeing vividly his suffering, he is sweating blood, because it

is just too much for him, and thus he prays: "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). And his "sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Lk. 22:43). And again that same fear and agony overcame him on the cross so that he could pray: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mt. 27:46)?

3. And yet, Jesus would call his crucifixion, as we see it in the gospel of John, an exaltation, a being lifted up. A crucified person was literally lifted up: After he had been nailed while on the ground to the patibulum (the vertical part of the cross) he was pulled up to the stipes (the upright part of the cross) which usually remained standing on the place of execution and was used many times, and then the vertical part was fixed on or in the upright part of the cross so that the feet of the crucified would be about three feet above the ground. A horrible being lifted up, physically and psychologically. And yet the Lord calls it exaltation in the theological sense. Only with eyes of faith could he do that.

4. And he could call it exaltation because crucifixion implies inseparably also resurrection and ascension to heaven by which he would be installed as Lord of heaven and earth so that all people, angels and saints would adore him as the "cosmocrator" to whom is given the same authority as to Yahweh, the "I am who I am".

5. Christ's crucifixion is exaltation also because he died not because of a cruel will of God who demanded strict justice for the mankind so that Christ had to placate the wrath of the Father. On the contrary, just in the hour of greatest pain and agony, Christ would call God his Abba, his Papa: "Abba (Papa), you have the power to do all things. Take this cup from me. But let it be as you would have it, not as I" (Mk 14:36) we read in the parallel text to Matthew which we saw above. Christ's Incarnation was the sign of how much God loves us and even more Christ's crucifixion proves the Father's and the Son's love for us and thus exalts them both.

6. If we speak about the exaltation of Christ crucified it could be that for us the pains of the cross are not real because we never witnessed a crucifixion. For us the cross has become a piece of decoration of silver and gold so that the expression becomes just a phrase for us. And before we try to talk to others and try to tell them that crucifixion and suffering can and should be exaltation for us, we better know what we are talking about and know suffering from own experience. Otherwise the consolation sounds so unreal, as it is often when a completely healthy person, who was never sick, tries to console an incurably sick person.

7. If suffering comes our way, our first reaction will probably be the same as it was for Christ in the garden of Gethsemany or on the cross: We will feel forsaken by God. We will ask ourselves, what we did wrong that we have to suffer that much, why God is so angry with us.

To see the cross and our suffering as an exaltation which brings out our real love for the Lord, which helps to draw people to Christ when they see us suffering patiently and even with joy, takes strong faith.

## TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (September 21, 1980)

The first reading and the gospel speak about the rich use of money and wealth and one could sum up both by saying: "Share your wealth!" — The second reading, as usual, has an independent theme: "Pray that all men may be saved!"

### FIRST READING: AMOS 8:4-7

Amos is the earliest of the Old Testament prophets whose words have been preserved for us in book form. He was a peasant from Tekoa (Am 1:1), about six miles south of Bethlehem and was active in the Northern Kingdom during the reign of the contemporary kings, Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel (786-46) somewhere between 780 and 750 B.C.

Amos is the great Champion of social justice. His time was a period of great material wealth of some few rich people who had become rich partly because they oppressed the poor. These few rich people tried to console themselves and calm their conscience by elaborate religious ceremonies of worship and great pomp of sacrifices. But Amos could only tell them that Yahweh did and could not like their sacrifices coming from the top of their purse, not from the bottom of their heart. One can worship God truly and sincerely only if one can walk in somebody else's shoes. If one feels with the poor and helps them. Wealth has to be shared.

Today's first reading brings examples of how these rich people were cheating the poor and how external their piety was: They observed the Sabbath, yes, and also the New Moon Day (equal to the Sabbath). But they were just waiting till everything was over to be able to

sell again and do business, cheating business, for in selling grain to the poor these cunning merchants would use a small "pack" (a dry measure to measure what they gave, and a heavy weight to determine what they got. But Deut 25:13-16 clearly forbade such use of different weights and measures. These unscrupulous merchants would also acquire a man as a slave or take over his property for his debts (8:8). Yes, they would even sell the "refuse of what", the mixture of chaff and trash left after winnowing. To such swindling God could only say: "Never will I forget a thing they have done" (8:7).

## SECOND READING: 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-8

### PRAY THAT ALL PEOPLE MAY BE SAVED!

The two letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus make up the Pastoral Letters, addressed to two of Paul's most faithful disciples, and are almost exclusively concerned with the organization and direction of the churches, founded by the Apostle. In style and vocabulary, too, they are quite different from the Pauline Letters.

In the First Letter Timothy is admonished to defend the faith against heresies (1:3-10 18-20; 4:1-11). He shall take care of worthy liturgical service (2:1-15), shall — after long examinations install bishop, presbyters and deacons (3:1-13; 5:17-25). He himself shall be a model (4:12-16) and take care of all states of life (5:1-6:2).

Speaking about public worship in 2:1-8 the Apostle singles out what we nowadays would call prayers of the faithful or general intercessions, and it is interesting to note, how old they are. St. Justin mentions them in chapter 87 of his First Apology to emperor Antoninus Pius (150 A.D.) as coming at the end of the celebration of the word. Christians shall pray for all men; that means in this contexts also for the pagans, not just for the fellow Christians, pray especially that all people shall be saved because this is the will of God (2:3).

We shall pray for kings and those in authority that we may live in peace. Such a request to Christians is interesting to note after some persecutions had already gone ahead (Nero 54-68; Domitian 81-96). Nobody could say that Christians are politically unreliable. The Church has always believed that one can live a good life better and easier in times of peace than in times of war and upheavals.

Our prayer is efficacious because Christ is our mediator (2:5). All people shall pray. But if men pray, it is even more impressive and contagious (2:8).

**READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 16:1-13**

Today's pericope is proper to Luke and in some way strange. For it could seem that the Lord would recommend fraud and dishonesty. But only apparently. Lk. 16:1-8 tells the parable of the wily manager, and 16:9-13 is a collection of disparate sayings, joined together by catchwords giving a secondary application to the parable.

In Palestine were many absentee landlords who leased their land to stewards. Here in the parable one such landlord has been deceived by his steward who abused his confidence, squandering the master's possessions, and has to give an account that everything could be handed over to the steward's successor.

The steward had to act fast. The two normal ways of making a new livelihood were out of question for him: He was not able or too soft to work with his hands and to live on charity he was too proud. Thus a brilliant idea crossed his mind: by falsifying the books of his master he would put his master's debtors under a lasting obligation to himself. The two examples mentioned in the parable are only mentioned as examples. The debtors could be tenant who owed rent to be paid in kind, or the huge amount of debt mentioned could suggest that the debtors were merchants who had bought the produce of the estate on a promisory note.

Some few commentators think that this steward did nothing irregular by falsifying the books, reasoning that the steward was not a paid factor or broker but that he fully represented his master to the extent that the latter must honor his agent's transactions. If the agent were to swindle his master, no legal action could be taken against him to recover the loss. He could be punished only by reproaches, loss of character and dismissal. After he had received notice of dismissal, the steward had to give an account of the state of the property. And until he had submitted it, the steward remained in office, legally authorized to act in his master's name.

But it is more likely he was a real rascal. V.8a is more likely the conclusion which Christ, the master, draws than the owner of the state. Only grudgingly or sarcastically a cheated owner could praise a deceiver of this kind. Also in Lk 18:6 we have such a change from the master of the parable to Christ who told the parable. Christ thus draws the conclusion from the parable. The steward was unjust before his being called to account. But what he did afterwards was prudent, shrewd: By ingratiating the debtors, he would make sure that they would take him into their houses

after his dismissal. It is too bad that worldly people are much more efficient and working harder to accomplish worldly goals than the other-worldly people are in trying to accomplish their heavenly goals. And it should be the other way around.

Vv. 9-13 bring another secondary conclusion or conclusions to the parable, however in line with it, originally being a collection of disparate sayings, connected by catchwords like "mammon", "faithful", "unrighteous". One conclusion is: As the steward with the possessions of his master made friends for himself by being generous to them, we shall share our possessions with the poor to make friends (16:9). — Money is called "little things", "unrighteous mammon" since it often has the connotation of having been acquired unjustly, "something which is another's"; whereas the care for the other-worldly things is called "much", "true riches", "our own". The truth is: If we are unfaithful in the administration (and here the steward is no model any more, but somebody not to be imitated) of money, God can entrust us even less the administration of that what is real (and that can in the context not be heaven, because we do not administer heaven) but preaching the word of God. — And the last conclusion of it all: Nobody can serve two masters: God and money. This is of course only true for a slave (and we are God's slaves) who has to serve his master the whole day. The search for money also-occupies the mind of a person so much that there is hardly any attention left for God.

## HOMILY

### SHARE YOUR WEALTH

1. Possessions we all have, few or many. Do we use them planfully, for a good purpose, for the honor of God and for the good of our neighbor? The steward of the parable today squandered the possessions of his master. In one way or the other most of us also squander our possession. How often do poorer people save money to spend it all in one day or in one night, or on one fiesta, for instance, instead of saving something for many occasions throughout the year. Is it really done for the honor of God or rather because of some social pressure or of fear to otherwise lose face because we would be considered too poor? How many a party is thrown not because we have the money but because we live beyond our means.

How much food do we waste? It starts already with small children. As mother often used to say: "Your eyes are bigger than your stomach." And she tried to insist that we should eat what



we put on our plate. Anything else would be waste. We cannot say: "It's our food with which we can do whatever pleases us." God has given us the food. And what we do not use somebody else would gladly use.

That list of waste is rather long and becomes more sophisticated, the higher the position of a person is. How much money is wasted with wrongly built bridges and highways, houses and schools, objects which we considered as indispensable but do not use much or not any more as soon as we have them, like portable radios, tape recorders, cameras.

2. Possessions can be acquired in a dishonest way. Amos had to blame his contemporaries for this again and again. The rich people would use all kinds of tricks to enrich themselves: Use different weights when buying (a big one) and when selling (a small one). Who has not heard about double bookkeeping, different prices for different customers, lengthening the drinks and the food with something cheaper, selling cars for more than they are worth;

3. What about the salaries we give to our employees? The contemporary masters of Amos could buy a poor man for a pair of sandals (Amos 8:6); since the poor man could not pay the pair of sandals, he sold himself into slavery. We are not that bad. But are our salaries at least the minimum wage? Or do we have a double bookkeeping making the employees sign a fair salary contract, whereas in reality they get less salary because they have no choice: They either take the sub-standard salary or they do not get anything.

4. The contemporaries of Amos by and large were pious, observing the Sabbath, offering sacrifices. But in many cases, it was a mere external observance and just a superstitious handle to force God (so they believed) to bless their dubious and immoral commercial enterprises. — what are our motives in going to Church? Is it just a good custom, something we cannot miss without losing face, something by which we can oblige God? External piety is not enough, going to Church is not just an exercise for the Sunday which we forget during the week and during the day.

5. The Lord was not pleased with the worship of the Israelites mainly because their horizontal relationship (with their neighbors) was not intact. They would oppress them, as we saw, and whatever they gave for God and their fellowmen did not come from the bottom of their hearts but from the top of their purse. It would not hurt them. We must give till it hurts. And God will not be satisfied earlier. We must give being willing to go and walk in somebody else's shoes to understand him.

6. Money, possessions are called mammon, a concept which somehow involves the idea of gotten in a certain unfair and unjust way; even if somebody acquired it in an honest way, all too often a certain dishonesty is not far away. This idea and the other that the acquisition of possessions, of wealth, requires the whole attention and energy of a person is the reason for the statements: "Nobody can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other or be attentive to the one and despise the other. You cannot give yourself to God and to money (Lk. 16:13). We nowadays would be tempted to say, "But of course, most of us serve two masters or even three, doing one job during the day in one and another job at night in another place." Some may even manage to be teacher in two different schools, or teacher in one and principal in another. But at the time of Jesus, slaves were in the services of their master totally, i.e. for twenty-four hours. They had no free time for another occupation or master. God is such a master for us. And the longing for money is such another master who requires our whole attention. Often enough we are fooling ourselves, thinking that we are different and that we can look after money without making it our idol. But idolatry it is just the same.

7. It is true, already early Christians must have thought that we can be stewards of possessions and money, and all we have to do is, not to give everything completely away (that will be only for a few who follow Christ in evangelical poverty), but to be faithful in "these small things" (what are millions of pesos in comparison to everlasting life), these "things which are not ours" but God's, in these "unreal things". And only then, when we are faithful in the administration of these small things, God can entrust us bigger things to administer, the word of God and all the other visible signs of God's grace, gaining us everlasting life.

8. The safer way, however, of being a faithful steward of our possessions, and probably in most or at least in many cases is to share our wealth. And this is a favorite idea of Luke. Whatever we spent, is gone, whatever we keep, we loose, and whatever we gave to the poor, goes ahead of us as good friend recommending us to the Lord. And yet we all know from experience how hard it is to do so. We have hundred and one reason why we think we need our possessions so badly for many projects.

9. Yes, the other-worldly people are often just so slow in moving ahead, slow in getting new ideas, have no zip and no pep, are not applying themselves hard enough. They could learn a lot from the worldly people: how inventive they are in finding new programs, do not hesitate in making sacrifices and work hard and are shrewd. After all, the kingdom of heaven suffers force and only those who use force will enter.

## TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (September 28, 1980)

In today's liturgy we are told: "Do not let riches lull you into false security (gospel and first reading). Rather be open to the word of God (gospel) and keep the commandments of the Lord till he returns (second reading)." By chance, therefore, the second reading can be linked with the other two readings.

### FIRST READING: AMOS 6:1a. 4-7

We saw already last Sunday how the prophet Amos talked about social justice, how the few rich people had become rich to a great extent by oppressing the poor and how they tried to appease their conscience by external worship and piety; whereas their heart was far from the Lord, since they did not care for the poor. Today's reading gives a vivid description of this affluent society in Israel at that time; They are very self-confident (6:1), blinded by their wealth. And thus they do not hear the predictions of a "day of disaster", the "day of Yahweh". These men are doing too well creating misfortune for others even to consider the possibility of digging their own grave. Thus they give themselves to licentiousness and rivalry. They have the most expensive furniture, succulent food, enjoy the sound of music. Every item represents a luxury that had been possible in earlier times only for the loyalty and remained a world apart from the life of the simple people in the villages. "Ivory beds" are couches whose frames are inlaid with ivory designs. Lambs and staled calves are choice animals fed and finished as delicacies in a culture where eating any meat at all was exceptional. The custom in Israel had been to sit on rugs or seats when eating. The practice of reclining for meals is mentioned here for the first time, a foreign innovation. The expression "improvise" in v. 3 is uncertain, but probably means "sing extemporaneously". They drink wine with great howls. And only the finest oil will do for their anointing.

All this is a picture of an upper class that is very self-centered and looking for its own pleasure. The guilt of this indolence lies in the fact that these rich people have not the slightest concern for the breakdown of Joseph (= Israel). The suffering of the oppressed and wronged in Israel do not touch them. They neither see nor hear their brothers, although Yahweh had made himself known to

the Hebrews in Egypt as one who heard their cry and knew their sufferings (Ex. 3:7). This same Yahweh cannot bear this rivalry. Therefore the leaders of today shall go into exile tomorrow (722 B.C.).

### SECOND READING: 1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16

The last part of the first letter to Timothy, starting with 6:3, contains different admonitions, which one can hardly arrange into a systematic order. I. Timothy 6:11-16 is an independent parenetical piece, not much connected with the preceding nor with the following context. And there is a doxology at the end. Thus it probably was already a separate unit before it was placed into the letter. It's a challenge to Timothy. He has been baptized, but even more, he has ordained. And in both cases there was a confession of faith. Especially during ordination he promised to be faithful and to fight the good fight of faith. Just as Jesus once was bearing witness before Pontius Pilate, telling the whole truth, even if this meant death for him, Timothy shall tell the whole truth and keep the faith pure and intact, even if heretics try to change parts of it. He shall keep the commandments without blame till the Lord returns for his parousia. Christ is the only Lord, the king of kings; not the Roman emperor, like Domitian, who tried to usurpe that title for himself. To Christ alone shall be honor and everlasting rule.

Virtues, which Timothy is asked to practice in particular, are: (1) integrity righteousness, characteristic of a man who does his duty to God and his fellow men; (2) piety (godliness), by which a man never ceases to live in the presence of God; (3) faith (fidelity), by which a man is loyal to God; (4) love, which helps a man never to forget what God has done for him; (5) steadfastness (patience), which is victorious endurance, and (6) gentle spirit (gentleness) which helps a man not to get angry.

### READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 16:19-31

Today's pericope is again proper to Luke, consisting of two parts: the parable which describes the lot of the rich and the poor, where the roles are changed, and the unexpected conclusions at the end where the man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to earth to warn his five brothers.

Jesus may have used a familiar Egyptian folk-tale which contrasted the fate in the nether world of two men, one wealthy and

one poor, which introduced into Palestine by an Alexandrian Jew became the story of the poor scribe and the wealthy tax collector Bar Majan. The picture of the people in Sheol after death is also drawn from traditional Jewish sources, e.g., Book of Enoch 22. But Jesus did not want to give a strict doctrine of the afterworld. In a picture story he wanted to talk to us about the danger of riches; they can give us a false security and may make us miss the challenge of the hour as it happened to the rich farmer (Lk 12:13-21). This parable here adds the thought: Tables will be turned: a poor man on earth will be rich in heaven, a rich man on earth will be poor in the afterlife.

Not much is said about the moral life of the two men. It is not said that the rich was maltreating Lazarus, or that he was cruel. And nothing is said explicitly that Lazarus was bearing his lot with great patience and resignation in God's will. But we certainly cannot take just a mere mechanical change of lots of the two either. Riches made the rich man insensitive to God's will and overlooking the needs of Lazarus, and vice-versa the material poverty and affliction made Lazarus poor in spirit, open to God. And thus the reversal of conditions in the life hereafter is for the rich a punishment, which he acknowledges, and for Lazarus a reward.

The rich man had everything he wanted: He was dressed in purple and linen, usually only robes for the priest. He feasted splendidly (the expression *euphrainomenos* used here usually signifies gluttony), every day. His sin was not that he maltreated Lazarus, that he chased him away from his door, that he kicked him. No, he just never noticed him, he accepted him as part of the Landscape. It never drew on him that there was somebody in need and he could have made him his friend so easily (cf. Lk 10:9) who would have remembered him in the life hereafter.

Lazarus on the other side was so sick, covered with sores that he could not move, could not even chase away the pestering dogs, licking his sores. Nobody gave him any food, and he could not get up to help himself to the hunks of bread with which the wealthy people would clean their hands after the meal and throw them away under the table.

After death, tables were turned. The rich man came to Sheol (the place for good and bad people alike till the doctrine of reward was more clearly defined shortly before Christ). The story here is taken from a time on the way to a clearer distinction, since there are already two departments in Sheol and nobody can go to the

other side; and furthermore, the fate of the rich man bears clearly the features of punishment and thus our real Lazarus, however, has the place of honor (this is what the expression "to the bosom of Abraham" (Lk 16:22) means (cf. Jn 13:23).

And now comes the unexpected twist of the parable. The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus down to earth to warn his five brothers that they will not be caught by surprise as he was and go to hell also. A seemingly unselfish request. But Abraham refuses it: They have Moses and the prophets, i.e. the word of God which tells them what to do. And to be tuned in to God's word is all somebody needs. A miracle, not even a resurrection from the death, would convince a man who does not listen to God's word. Christ also refused to give the Jews a sign. The only sign given, the resurrection would not have convinced them either. And this may reason why the Lord did not appear to those who did not believe in him.

## HOMILY

### DO NOT LET RICHES MAKE YOU INSENSITIVE — BUT LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD!

1. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) the famous European theologian and musician, turned his back on his very successful career and became a missionary doctor in Gabon. He had concluded that he was the rich man and Africa the poor man. So he wrote on the opening page of his *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*: "Just as Dives (the rich man) sinned because for want of heart he never put himself in his place and let his conscience tell him what to do, so we sin against the poor at our gate."

2. We meditated already several times on the use of material possessions. As such they are neutral and it depends on us what we do with them. And yet we have seen several times how hard it is to use them without being attached to them. The readings of today bring us pictures of such luxurious living which becomes scandalous because the poor people are bypassed and even abused, or at least just overlooked. And yet, how many rich people will admit that they are living a luxurious life. We have a hundred and one reason why we think we need this and that particular item for working better and more effectively, we have to have a certain kind of food and drink to be able to live longer. We easily rationalize: What was rich or luxurious yesterday has become normal standard

today and thus there is nothing wrong in having it. Or we tell ourselves: In my home country or place this is normal standard of an average person, why should I deprive myself of it here? People will have to adapt themselves to me, not I to them.

3. Wealth can give us a false security. We get the feeling that we can do things ourselves, that we lastly do not need God really. Slowly we get wrapped up in planning for bigger projects. We lose sight of upcoming crises as the contemporaries of Noah did, when Noah even warned the people, but they would just laugh at him. Amos was not so successful in warning the rich of his time. The rich man of the parable was equally surprised when death came and all his security was gone in one moment.

4. Great wealth can also easily close our eyes to the needs of others. The sin of the rich man was not so much a sin of commission, but a sin of omission. He was not really malicious, he did not maltreat Lazarus. For him Lazarus practically did not exist. He just did not see him. Probably he would have been mightily surprised if some body would have told him about the beggar lying at his door who would be in dire need of care and a little love. How many people in need do we overlook not with bad intention but just because we are too busy with ourselves, with our planning, with our work and feasting. Luke has the same thought when the priest and levite did not help the man fallen prey to the robbers: He did not help because he went on the other side and passed by. He acted as if he would not see (Lk 10:32-33). And Mt 25:31-46 shows that during the last judgment we are judged by our concern or unconcern for our brothers, if we say them and recognized them or not.

5. Wealth can also make us insensitive to God's word. And yet somebody is great only if he listens to the word of God and does it (Lk 11:28). Too late, the rich man realized this as his mistake, but wanted to warn his five brothers through Lazarus. Would he come back from the dead, the rich man's brothers certainly would repent and mend their ways. But Abraham would not agree with this idea, nor would Jesus. What we need here on earth are not signs, miracles, extraordinary events, private revelations, but the basic facts of salvation contained in Scripture and our openness to the word of God. And yet, how often do we look for sensational things, are disappointed and lame when the newness of something wears off. How many are disappointed with Vatican II that it did not bring the hoped for results.

To work for something for a short time is relatively easy. Jacob had to serve seven years for his wife Rebekah. And yet, "they seemed to him but a few days, because of his love for her" (Gen 29:20). The first Christians were looking forward to the parousia and this longing made them do their best. But when the Lord delayed his second coming, the first fervor disappeared, and Paul and Peter and the other Apostles could only warn them to be attentive to the word of God.

6. He who seeks the truth can find it. And slowly and steadily we make our decisions so that at the end our final decision becomes irrevocable, because we die in an irrevocable state of mind, being open to God or closed, thus going to heaven or hell. The way we lived, the way we know it, it may be our final decision.