

CBCP

**Catholic Bishops' Conference
of the Philippines**

Catechism for Filipino Catholics

**New Edition
with expanded Subject Index
and Primer**

**ECCCE
WORD & LIFE PUBLICATIONS
MANILA
PHILIPPINES**

**from the beginning of the Christianization
of the Philippines to the end of the 20th Century:**

Four Centuries of Catechesis in our Country.

*One uninterrupted effort to remain faithful
to God,
to Man,
to the Church.*

*One continuous endeavor
to make the Catholic Faith relevant
to the culture and the lives*

of our Filipino People.

Vatican City, 6 March 1997

Prot. N. 97000707

Your Excellency,

The Episcopal Conference of the Philippines, at the appropriate time, sent to this Dicastery the Catechism for Filipino Catholics developed by the same Episcopal Conference, requesting the approval of the Holy See.

The Congregation for the Clergy, after having examined the text and obtained on the first day of March, 1997 the positive opinion (Prot. N. 64/94-03884) rendered by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, does hereby grant the requested approbation, according to the requirements of canon 775 § 2.

This Dicastery wishes to congratulate the Bishops of the Philippines for providing an instrument that is truly suitable for transmitting the faith among Catholic Filipinos and hopes that the Catechism will have the widest possible circulation.

I take this opportunity to express to Your Excellency and to the entire Episcopal Conference my sentiments of esteem and with every best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

His Excellency
Most Reverend OSCAR V. CRUZ, D.D.
President of the CBCP
470 General Luna Street
Intramuros, Manila 1002
P.O. Box 3601 Manila, 1099
PHILIPPINES

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Preface

1. This is the official Vatican approved National Catholic Catechism for the Philippines, entitled **Catechism for Filipino Catholics [CFC]**. As a national catechism, one major function of the CFC has been to draw together *two major current sources* for our “renewed catechesis.” The first is the official Catholic teaching of the universal Church as proposed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, promulgated by the Holy Father in 1992. The second is the *Acts and Decrees of the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines [PCP II]*, with its supplement, the *National Pastoral Plan [NPP]*, which together present a comprehensive view of the national culture and specific catechetical situation of the Philippine Church.

2. This officially approved edition of the *CFC* is offered by the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines [*CBCP*] as a major effort in implementing PCP II’s urgent call for a triple renewal: a renewed “Catechesis” which in turn will contribute substantially to a renewed “Worship” and “Social Apostolate.”

Why a New Catechism?

3. The most basic reason for this new Catechism is simply the mission which the Risen Christ entrusted to His apostles. “Make disciples of all the nations Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you” (*Mt 28:19-20*). The practical goal of this Catechism, then, is to provide an effective instrument for creatively handing on the Catholic Faith to Filipinos. It thus aims to contribute effectively “Toward a Renewed Integral Evangelization,” developed in *PCP II’s National Pastoral Plan [NPP]*.

4. The *CFC* was actually developed according to the *NPP’s* flow chart. It was conceived in response to the call for catechetical renewal experienced in the *Church of the Poor*. It was formed by following *NCDP’s* orientational principles for Philippine catechesis. It presents the operational principles and content for an *integral renewed catechesis*. And it envisions the same goal of a *Community of Disciples of the Lord*.

5. Actually there are *many catechisms* in circulation throughout the Philippines today. In addition, various religion textbook series have been published for different levels of school religious instruction. Nevertheless, *PCP II’s* call for a renewed integral catechesis has intensified the widely-felt need for a new, up-to-date, officially approved, exposition of the Catholic Faith. We need a catechism that is specifically written for Filipinos, in our actual, concrete Philippine situation. In many parts of our country there are no easily available Catholic catechisms. Even where some do exist, they are frequently out-of-date, or partial, one-sided accounts, or foreign works, not written for Filipinos. Even the Vatican’s *Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, “a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine,” needs to be translated into our Filipino context for a truly inculturated catechesis.

6. Thus there is an urgent demand, *first* of all, for a catechism that addresses itself to our Philippine context, with its particular needs, characteristics and crises. The *NCDP* places great stress on a truly *inculturated catechesis* which responds to the concrete situation and culture of Filipino Catholics and families today, in terms of our own Filipino culture and values. At the same time, the local and regional contexts must be seen in terms of the whole Philippine Church, and its catechetical

content constantly related to the *CCC*'s authoritative presentation of the universal doctrine, morals, and worship of the Catholic Faith.

7. The nature and conditions of the Filipino family, and of Filipino value and belief systems, are undergoing radical changes, amidst our growing modernization with its economic and political upheavals. This radically affects the proclamation of Christ's Good News to today's Filipino. A ***national catechism***, therefore, prepared by the CBCP and officially approved by the proper Vatican Congregations, represents a significant advance over the many partial, regionally-limited expositions of the Faith.

8. A *second* demand arises from the situation of wide diversity and pluralism in the post-Vatican II era. Bible study, liturgical changes, value education, the thrust for justice — all have shaped this new "climate." The sheer number of different groups, often urging conflicting doctrines and actions, has confused many regarding even the *essentials* of the Faith. Some have retreated to a basically *fundamentalist* position, in fear of losing their Catholic Faith. Others have been enticed by new prayer or charismatic sects to abandon the Catholic Church for more "personable," warmer socio-religious groups. Many others are simply disturbed, seeking how they should react to these new challenges (*cf. PCP II 216-28*).

9. In such a situation, shared by Catholics all over the world, this new, up-to-date *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* responds to ***three basic needs***. The *first* is, that in the face of all the proselytizing and pressure propaganda, Filipino Catholics look for the ***reliable Catholic word***, especially in family and youth catechesis. *Second*, to reject today's common pursuit of self-centered freedom and ever richer life-styles, Catholics seek a clear sense of ***Christian moral values*** and responsibility. Today's morality must be inspired by the Gospel priority of *service*, especially to the poor. *Third*, amidst the anxious search for new prayer forms and novel faith-experiences, Catholics seek their roots in the ***Catholic tradition of community worship*** (*cf. NCDP 54*).

Characteristics of This Catechism

10. Given these three basic needs, the mission of the Church to proclaim Christ's Gospel calls today for a new type of catechism, adapted to our times. This new catechism stresses *four characteristics*.

Focus on the Essentials

11. The *first* is its focus on the ***Essentials of the Faith***. The Catechism can not possibly offer a complete, comprehensive account of all aspects and elements of the Faith. Rather, it aims at presenting the basics of the Church's faith in Christ by drawing directly on the Creed, the Commandments, and the Sacraments, not on any particular theological school or trend.

This Faith is proposed in the *CCC*. Filipino Catholics professed this Faith in proclaiming the Creed at Sunday Mass. They live out this Catholic commitment to Christ by obeying the Commandments in their Christian moral service. And they celebrate it in Catholic sacramental worship. Thus they express in daily life the greatest of the Christian virtues — Faith, Hope, and Love.

12. These essentials of Faith in Christ must be expressed in an *organic* and *systematic* manner, which is both concentrated yet attractive (*cf. PCP II 163; CCC 5*). This involves an *integrated* approach, which constitutes the *first methodological principle* of our catechesis (*cf. NCDP 75, 414-25*). Catholic Faith is a living integrated whole both in its *objective content* — *Doctrine, Morals, and Worship*, as well as in every *subject, every believer*. To respond to Christ's personal call to discipleship means to believe, act, and worship with all the energies of one's head, will, and heart, in Christ's own community, the Church.

Experiential/Filipino

13. *Second*, believing in Christ must be related directly to the daily Filipino human experience of living as Christ's disciple. Such human experience is found on every page of the Bible, in Church teaching, in the signs of the times. But it is especially the typical personal experience, culture, and values of today's Filipino Catholic that must be evident in the Catechism. This follows the *second catechetical principle* of stressing *experience* and *inculturation* (cf. NCDP 401-4; 426-33).

Catholic

14. *Third*, this is to be an explicitly Catholic catechism. This is meant not in any negative sense of questioning the sincerity or value of other faiths, but positively in terms of its sources, content and goal. Its *sources* are *Sacred Scripture, Catholic tradition*, especially as presented in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the *human experience of Filipinos* in their Catholic community. Its *content* for a Renewed Integral Evangelization includes the *doctrinal truths, moral principles and values, and liturgical life* of that community. Its *goal* is to *build up* the **Community** of Disciples of the Lord. This constitutes the *third basic methodological principle* of our catechetical ministry (cf. NPP; NCDP 434-50).

Practical

15. *Fourth*, this Catechism is a book to be used, a source to be consulted in practical questions about the Faith. Thus it consciously works at integrating *Doctrine* (orthodoxy) with *Catholic Moral conduct and attitudes*, as well as with *Catholic Worship* (orthopraxis). But beyond illuminating the Faith, this Catechism aims at inspiring and motivating its readers to actual personal commitment to Jesus Christ, within our Catholic community. It invites and challenges the reader to "come and see" (*Jn 1:39*), and experience the life of Faith, Love, and Hope to which Jesus calls every one who listens to his voice (cf. *Lk 11:28*).

For Whom the Catechism Is Intended

16. The *CFC* is expressly directed to all who are actively engaged in communicating or studying the Faith: *priests, religious, catechists, religion teachers*—and perhaps most of all, *parents*. It is an *adult catechism* in the sense that it provides a *source book* for those who address the typical Sunday Mass congregation of an ordinary Filipino parish. Therefore, this is not a parish or school religion textbook. It is intended to serve as a *proximate source* for parish catechesis, and for creating religion textbooks suited to the primary, secondary or college levels.

17. This Catechism is addressed primarily to *committed Filipino Catholics*, rather than to winning new converts to the Catholic Faith. Nevertheless, it can be very useful for anyone desiring to know more about the Catholic Faith. Because of its *Scripturally* based exposition of the Faith, and its *Creedal* structure, the Catechism can foster fruitful ecumenical dialogue with other Christians. Because of its stress on the living Tradition of the local Catholic Church, it highlights both the basics of the *CCC*, especially the teaching of Vatican II, and the pronouncements of the Catholic Philippine hierarchy [CBCP].

Thus the Catechism provides Filipino Catholics with a *sound apologetic* by giving "the reason for the hope" that Faith instills in them (cf. *1 Pt 3:15*). It encourages its readers to "hold fast to the authentic message, so that [they] will be able both to encourage men to follow sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it" (*Ti 1:9*).

Basic Structure of the Catechism

18. The *CFC* is structured according to a *Trinitarian* vision of the Faith that is at the same time truly *Christ-centered*. Moreover, the *Blessed Virgin Mary*, Mother of our Savior and his perfect disciple, has served as its inspirational model, just as she has done for countless Filipino Catholics through the ages. Most important, however, is the need to understand *CFC's* basic structure — both *WHAT* is its structure, and *WHY* this structure was chosen.

Like the Vatican's *CCC*, the *CFC* is based on "*four pillars*": the baptismal profession of Faith (the *Creed*), the Sacraments of faith, the life of Faith (the *commandments*), and the prayer of the believer (the *Lord's prayer*). (cf. *CCC 13*)

Unlike the *CCC*, however, which simply arranges the four pillars one after another [1) Creed, 2) Sacraments, 3) Commandments, and 4) Prayer], *the CFC structures the WHOLE Catechism on the Creed*. It inserts Christian Moral Life (Commandments) following the Creedal section on Jesus Christ, and combines Prayer with Sacraments immediately after the Creedal truths on the Holy Spirit and the Church. The *CFC's* exposition of the Lord's Prayer, then, serves as the Epilogue integrating the whole Catechism.

19. This arrangement offers *two advantages*:

- it directly links "keeping the Commandments" with the "following of Christ," and
- it integrates Sacraments with Prayer, and both as flowing from the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Thus this arrangement responds to the *NCDP's* call to strengthen moral catechesis by linking it directly with Catholic doctrine and worship. It also takes up *PCP II's* challenge for a renewed catechesis by pushing beyond mere "head knowledge" of doctrinal formulas on one side, or pious devotional ritualism on the other, to foster a truly integrated Faith of loving Christian service and worship.

20. The *CFC*, then, is structured in **three main Parts**, introduced by a **Preface** and **Foundations**, and concluding with an **Epilogue** that summarizes the whole Catechism.

Preface Foundations

1. The Filipino Catholic
2. God's Call: Revelation
3. Our Response: Faith
4. Our Unbelief

Part I Christ, Our Truth (Doctrine)

5. Catholic Doctrine
6. God, Father Almighty
7. Creator of All
8. The Fall from Glory
9. God Promises a Savior
10. Jesus Christ: Mission/Person
11. Christ Has Died
12. Christ Is Risen and Will Come Again

Part II
Christ, Our Way
(Moral Life)

- 13. Living as Disciples of Christ
- 14. Following Christ
- 15. Christian Law
- 16. Love the Lord Your God
- 17. Love One Another
- 18. Respect Life
- 19. Respect Human Sexuality
- 20. Building Justice
- 21. Respecting Truth

Part III
Christ, Our Life
(Worship)

- 22. The Holy Spirit
- 23. The Catholic Church
- 24. Catholic Prayer and Worship
- 25. Baptism/Confirmation
- 26. Eucharist
- 27. Healing Sacraments
- 28. Vocation Sacraments
- 29. Resurrection and Life Everlasting

30. **Epilogue:** The Lord's Prayer

21. The three parts of *Doctrine, Moral Life* and *Worship* thus present the **Trinity** — *Father, Son* and *Holy Spirit*, while at the same time focussing on **Christ** as our *Truth*, our *Way* and our *Life* (cf. *Jn 14:16*). They call for our Spirit-inspired response of *Faith, Love* and *Hope*, as members of Christ's Body, our Catholic community, the Church. Finally, the three Parts respond to the three most basic human questions: *Doctrine* answers "*What can I know?*", *Moral teaching* illumines "*What should I do?*", and the *Sacrament/Worship* celebrate "*What may I hope for?*"

Thus the *CFC*'s structure reproduces in an integrative manner the Catholic Faith's threefold *objective* structure of *Doctrine* (Creed), *Morals* (Commandments) and *Worship* (Sacraments), and its holistic *subjective* structure in all believers of *Head* (believing), *Hands* (acting/doing), and *Heart* (prayerful trusting).

Using This Catechism

22. To find any particular topic of the Catholic Faith in this Catechism, first consult the *Table of Contents* which outlines the whole book. For more precise location, an *Index* of all the topics treated in the Catechism is provided in the back.

23. In order to facilitate consultation and use of this Catechism, the *format* of each chapter follows the same pattern. Each chapter begins with some quote from the Scriptures or the Magisterium and a brief *Opening* which identifies the topic to be treated and relates it to other pertinent topics in the Catechism. This is followed immediately by the *Context* which focuses the topic within our specific

Filipino situation, with its particular problems, attitudes, values, and weaknesses. Thus contextualized, the topic is then developed in the **Exposition** which presents the essential content drawn from Scripture and Church teaching, and related directly to the concrete human experience of today's Filipino Catholic.

24. The Exposition is the main part of each chapter and is followed by a brief section entitled **Integration**. This offers *one* explicit example of interrelating the doctrinal, moral and worship dimensions of the chapter's topic. Thus, the *Integration* responds to a key directive of the *NCDP* which proposes the constant interrelating of Doctrine, Morals and Worship to bring out Faith's *experiential* reality more intensely and more vividly. But only *one* example is usually presented, precisely as an invitation to compose *many* other examples of basic interrelationships of the three dimensions.

25. Finally, each chapter concludes with a series of **Questions and Answers** summarizing the basic content of the chapter. The style of the Answers is simple, often arranging the context in schematic form, in order to facilitate its comprehension and retention.

26. The *Question-Answer* section of each chapter is intended to respond to a *double need*. *First*, the need to have clear answers to specific questions on points of the Faith that are under attack from non-Catholics, or are widely misunderstood even among the faithful. The Question-Answer section of this Catechism attempts to deal with such real, genuine questions of adult Filipino Catholics today. *Second*, the Question-Answer section aims at presenting what is most important and central to each chapter, summarizing its essential matter. Thus the Questions-Answers offer what is recommended for learning by heart through memorization.

27. Synthesis. This Catechism, then, can be described in summary terms as follows:

What? A *National Catechism* presenting the *essentials* of the Catholic Faith, prepared by the CBCP, following the guidelines of the *NCDP*, and drawing on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]* and the *2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines [PCP II]* with its *National Pastoral Plan [NPP]*;

Why? in order to present the *essentials* of the Catholic Faith, in an up-to-date, inculturated, organic, and systematic exposition;

How? by *grounding* its message firmly and consistently *on Scripture* and *Church Teaching*, in unceasing interplay with *Filipino experience* and culture, both personal and social;

For? *Filipino Catholics* engaged in communicating the Faith, and all who wish to know more about the Catholic Faith today;

In What Shape?

- structured according to the *Trinitarian* exposition of the Faith, that is *Christ-centered* by focusing directly on Jesus Christ, our Truth, our Way and our Life; and calling for a *life-response of Faith, Hope and Love*, animated by the *example of Mary*, the mother of our Savior and his perfect disciple.
- organized in 29 chapters, each with an *Opening*, a *Context*, a detailed *Exposition*, a specific example of *Integration*, and concluding with a synthesis in *Question-Answer* form.
- with a concluding chapter, the *Epilogue*, which synthesizes the whole work.

Chapter 1

Who is the Filipino Catholic?

The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of an only Son, coming from the Father, filled with enduring love.

(Jn 1:14)

We Filipinos are followers of Christ, his disciples. To trace his footsteps in our times means to utter his word to others, to love with his love, to live with his life; . . . To cease following him is to betray our very identity.

(PCP II 34)

OPENING

28. This is a book about life in Christ, life lived according to the Gospel. The “Good News” is that God has become man in Jesus Christ our Lord, who came to save us from sin and bring us to fullness of life. This is the Gospel which we Filipinos have accepted. As *PCP II* proudly declares: “For us Filipinos, the first century of the coming millennium will mark the 500th year since we as a people accepted the Faith” (*PCP II 3*). It makes us the only Christian nation among our Asian brethren. There are deep affinities between Christ’s message and the Filipino’s inmost ways of thinking and acting. “Much of the Gospel has become part of us – compassion, forgiveness, caring, piety – and makes of us a basically decent people (*PCP II 15*). Through the past centuries, right up to our present critical times, growing more mature in the following of Christ has meant becoming more truly and authentically *Filipino*.

29. Vatican II teaches that Catholics “must give expression to this newness of [Christian] life in their own society and culture and in a manner that is in keeping with the traditions of their own land.” As addressed to us Filipino Catholics, therefore, the Council declares that we

must be familiar with our culture, we must purify and guard it, develop it in accordance with present-day conditions. We must perfect it in Christ so that the faith of Christ and the life of the Church will not be something foreign to the society in which we live, but will begin to transform and permeate it. (*AG 21*)

30. *PCP II* insisted on the mutual interaction between Christian Faith and Filipino culture. “Hence we must take a closer look at how the values that we have from our Christian Faith can strengthen the good in our cultural values and correct what is excessive in them and supply for their deficiencies” (*PCP II 22*). Likewise,

for Faith to mature in love, it must be interiorized. Church teachings and practices must be personally appreciated and appropriated by us, as a people with our own particular culture, with our own ways of thinking and valuing. Faith must take root in the matrix of our Filipino being so that we may truly believe and love as Filipinos (*PCP II* 72).

CONTEXT

31. We Filipinos have had a long history of very sharp and colorful religious experiences: From our pre-Christian times, through the centuries of Spanish Christian evangelization, to the American Protestant influx in the Commonwealth era, and the Japanese occupation during World War II, right up past Vatican II's "Second Pentecost," to "People Power" and today's "Basic Christian Communities," and the 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines [*PCP II*]. Our understanding and love of Jesus Christ has been colored by our personal and national historical experiences of pain and struggle, of victory and celebration. Our faith in Jesus is marked by our deep devotion to *Mary*, his Mother, and our Mother and Model. All these experiences have somehow defined and clarified our unique identity as *persons*, as *Christians*, as *Filipinos*, as a *nation*.

32. *PCP II* was held "to take stock of where we are; to look where we are going; to reanimate our life in Christ; to unite all things in Him (*PCP II* 7). Our *Catholic* Faith, therefore, must be "inculturated" within our specific and unique Filipino character which has in part shaped our faith-experiences through the years. This Catechism represents a serious effort at just such an inculturated presentation of the essentials of the Faith to the Catholic Filipino of today.

EXPOSITION

33. To identify what it means to be a "Filipino Catholic" we ask: From whom do we naturally draw our *self-identity*? Where do we find the deepest *meaning* in our lives? How do we react to *suffering*? How do we *commit* ourselves to our ideals in life? What is our *view of the world* in all its depth and hidden reality? Brief answers to these questions can be sketched by selecting a series of *five* predominant Filipino *characteristics*, together with five essential traits of Jesus Christ, both assumed within the typical "Filipino way" to Jesus. This will at once define the Filipino Catholic as well as show that in our country, to become more deeply *Christian* is to become more truly and authentically *Filipino*.

A. Self-identity

34. *First*, we Filipinos are *family-oriented*. The *anak-magulang* relationship is of primary importance to us Filipinos. *Ama, ina*, and *anak* are culturally and emotionally significant to us Filipinos who cherish our filial attachment not only to our immediate family, but also to our extended family (*ninongs, ninangs*, etc.). This family-centeredness supplies a basic sense of belonging, stability and security. It is from our families that we Filipinos naturally draw our sense of self-identity.

35. *Jesus* as both the *Son of God (Anak ng Amang Diyos)* and the *Son of Man (Anak ng Tao)* endears himself naturally to us family-oriented Filipinos. As Son of Man, Jesus leads us to his Mother Mary (*Ina ng Diyos*) whom he shares with us (*cf. Jn 19:26-27*). He thus welcomes us into his own household, offers himself as our brother (*kapatid*), and draws us through the Sacrament of Baptism to a new identity and into the family life of his heavenly Father (*cf. Jn 3:5-7*).

36. What can better remind us Filipinos of our early childhood, or respond more directly to our traditional love for children, than *Jesus, the Sto. Niño*? At twelve, Jesus was a discerning and daring child, who nonetheless remained obedient to his parents (*cf. Lk 2:41-51*). In his public life, Jesus embraced little children and admonished his disciples to become child-like in openness and simplicity (*cf. Mt 18:2-4*). In our family-orientedness, then, we Filipinos are naturally attracted to Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Man. Thus, *PCP II* 46-48 stress the exceptional importance of our Filipino family as both subject and object of evangelization.

B. Meaning in Life

37. *Second*, we Filipinos are *meal-oriented (salu-salo, kainan)*. Because Filipinos consider almost everyone as part of their family (*parang pamilya*), we are known for being gracious hosts and grateful guests. Serving our guests with the best we have is an inborn value to Filipinos, rich and poor alike. We love to celebrate any and all events with a special meal. Even with unexpected guests, we Filipinos try our best to offer something, meager as it may be, with the traditional greeting: “Come and eat with us.” (*Tuloy po kayo at kumain muna tayo.*)

38. *Jesus* as *Eucharist* is not only the *host* of the new Paschal Meal (*cf. 1 Cor 11:23-26*), and the *food*, the bread of life (*cf. Jn 6:48-58*), but even the *guest* in every gathering (*cf. Mt 18:20; Rev 3:20*). The New Testament refers more than twenty-five times to eating (*kainan*). Eating together in table fellowship with the presence of the risen Christ (*cf. 1 Cor 10:17*), “*Communion*,” in other words, constitutes the core-witness of the early Church as a Eucharistic community. So we Filipinos feel naturally “at home” in breaking bread together with Jesus. *PCP II*’s “spirituality of social transformation finds in the Eucharist not only its full nourishment but also its total prayerful communion with the Lord of salvation and liberation” (*PCP II* 281).

C. Sufferings in Life

39. *Third*, we Filipinos are *kundiman-oriented*. The *kundiman* is a sad Filipino song about wounded love. Filipinos are naturally attracted to heroes sacrificing everything for love. We are patient and forgiving to a fault (“*magpapaka-alipin ako nang dahil sa iyo*”). This acceptance of suffering manifests a deep, positive spiritual value of Filipinos’ *kalooban*.

40. *Jesus*, the *Suffering Servant* of the prophet Isaiah, is portrayed through our favorite Filipino images of *Padre Hesus Nazareno*, the *Santo Entierro* or the Sacred Heart. Through these images, Jesus appears as one of “the least of our brethren”: the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the sick, the lonely stranger and the prisoner (*cf. Mt 25:31-46*). Jesus the Suffering Servant can thus reach out to us Filipinos as a healing and forgiving Savior who understands our weaknesses, our failures, our feelings of depression, fear and loneliness. He has been through it all himself! To us Filipinos who can even celebrate the sufferings and hardships of life in song, Jesus Christ calls: “Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you” (*Mt 11:28*).

D. Life-Commitment

41. *Fourth*, we Filipinos are *bayani-oriented*. A *bayani* is a hero. We Filipinos are natural hero-followers. For all our patience and tolerance, we will not accept ultimate failure and defeat. We tend instinctively to always personalize any good

cause in terms of a leader, especially when its object is to defend the weak and the oppressed. To protect this innate sense of human dignity, Filipinos are prepared to lay down even their lives.

42. *Jesus as Christ the King (Cristo Rey)* responds well to the *bayani*-oriented Filipino. As born social critics, organizers and martyrs, we Filipinos see Jesus Christ as the Conqueror of the world by his mission as *prophet, king and priest* (cf. *PCP II 57-61*). Jesus came as one sent by the Father, to do the Father's will (cf. *Jn 5:30*). He was "to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to prisoners" (*Lk 4:18*). Although a "sign of contradiction" himself (*Lk 2:34*), Jesus made the Kingdom of God present among his people by his teaching (cf. *Mt 7:29*) and signs. "The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them" (*Lk 7:22*). So as *bayani*-oriented, we Filipinos enthrone our image of *Cristo Rey*. He assures us that everything will be alright in the end. Christ the King has won the ultimate victory over evil.

E. World View

43. *Fifth*, we Filipinos are *spirit-oriented*. We are often said to be naturally psychic. We have a deep-seated belief in the supernatural and in all kinds of spirits dwelling in individual persons, places and things. Even in today's world of science and technology, Filipinos continue to invoke the spirits in various undertakings, especially in faith-healings and exorcisms.

44. *Jesus the "miracle-worker"* who promised to send his Spirit to his disciples to give them new life (cf. *Jn 15:26; 16:7; 13-14*), is thus very appealing to us Filipinos. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Risen Christ, draws us Filipinos into a community wherein superstition and enslaving magic are overcome by authentic worship of the Father "in spirit and truth" (cf. *Jn 4:23*). In Christ's community, the Church, "to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (*1 Cor 12:7*). This same Spirit, which empowered Jesus the miracle worker, is active in his disciples, uniting them in the teaching of the apostles, and in community fellowship of the breaking of bread and prayer through Christ their Lord (*LG 13*).

F. The Filipino Way

45. But accepting Jesus Christ as responding to these essential Filipino traits has historically come about and continued in a typical "Filipino" manner. The outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines is to be a "*pueblo amante de Maria*" – a people in love with Mary. Even before the coming of the Spanish missionaries, there was a small dark image of the Blessed Virgin, known only as coming "from the sea," venerated on the shores of Manila Bay. Thus originated the devotion to *Nuestra Señora de Guia*, Our Lady, Guide of the Way, the oldest extant image of Mary in the Philippines (*PCP II 153*).

46. The typically "Filipino" approach to Christ, therefore, is *with and through Mary*. Devotion to Mary has always been intimately intertwined with Christ. The two central mysteries of our Faith in Christ: the mystery of the Incarnation celebrated at Christmas, and of Redemption celebrated during Holy Week, are deeply marked by the veneration of Mary. This is portrayed graphically in the *Simbang Gabi (Misa de Gallo or de Aguinaldo)* and the *panunuluyan* at Christmas time, and the *Salubong* in Easter Sunday morning (*NCDP 242*).

47. Marian devotion and piety seem co-natural to us Filipinos. Mary is deeply involved in each of the five Filipino characteristics leading us to Christ. The "family altar" in so many Filipino homes witnesses to *Mary* as *mother of Jesus* and *our spiritual mother*. Thus she is at the center of our

family-orientedness. As *celebration* and *meal-oriented*, Mary's month of May is noted for the *fiestas* in her honor and pilgrimages to her shrines. For *suffering in life*, Mary is venerated as the **Mater Dolorosa**, the Sorrowful Mother, whose "**Perpetual Help**," compassion and love is sought through popular novenas and devotions.

As *bayani-oriented*, we have Mary as our **Queen**, the loving mother of Christ our King. Moreover, she is the young maiden whose *life commitment*: "Be it done to me according to your word," is repeated thrice everyday in the *Angelus*. Finally, as *spirit-oriented*, Mary is venerated precisely as the woman upon whom the Holy Spirit came, that her offspring would be called Son of God (cf. *Lk 1:35*). The many Lourdes "grottos" throughout our country testify to our Filipino attraction to her many apparitions.

48. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, **Ang Mahal na Birhen**, has greatly helped many simple Filipinos to remain Catholics. Their deep devotion to the Mother of God has been the strongest force keeping their faith alive (cf. *AMB 67*). Mary has been and remains the central inspiring force in bringing about a deeper evangelization of the masses of our people, "the safeguard for the preservation of our Catholic Faith, and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization" (*AMB 72-73*).

G. The Filipino Catholic

49. From this Marian approach to the series of five Filipino characteristics inter-related with essential traits of Jesus Christ, a rough sketch of us Filipino Catholics can be drawn. We are *first* of all family-centered Filipinos who can easily talk to God the Father through His only begotten Son-made-man, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our devotion to the **Sto. Niño** and the **Mahal na Birhen** reveals fundamental depths of our own self-identity. *Secondly*, we find meaning in our lives and learn to face the hunger and poverty around us in encountering Jesus as Eucharist in our parish community. "Around the table of the Lord," we Filipino Catholics are drawn by prayer to share our time, energy and very lives, for the service of our needy brethren and for the building-up of truly Christian communities of justice, love and healing.

50. *Third*, as Filipino Catholics, because we have met Christ the Suffering Servant in his Passion, we can pray about sin and forgiveness, about justice and reconciliation, about the suffering and Passion of our own Filipino people today. We have the strength to offer ourselves as "bread broken for the world," together with Jesus, because we believe with unshakeable hope that the Crucified One is Risen from the dead, victorious over sin, death and the world.

51. *Fourth*, we Catholic Filipinos, resilient as the bamboo (*kawayan*) and sturdy as the *narra*, commit ourselves to Christ, our hero-king, in deep gratitude for the gift of faith and for being Filipino. *Lastly*, our world vision as Catholic Filipinos is gradually transformed by Christ's Spirit-in-the-world in our Church community.

In the depths of the Filipino spirit is a longing for *kaayusan*, for order out of chaos, a longing for the life that the creative Spirit of Jesus gives as a gift, a gift which is likewise a challenge (cf. *PCP II 257*). Through sacramental encounters with the Risen Lord, we experience his Spirit's healing and strengthening power. In Christ's Spirit, we Catholic Filipinos, inspired by *Mary*, the Holy Virgin, our Mother, are confirmed in our witness to Jesus by our service of our brethren, and our persevering prayer for our beloved dead.

52. Who, then, are Filipino Catholics? We are a people who have experienced in one way or another that our Filipino *identity, meaning, suffering, commitment* and *world-view* are all *tied to Jesus Christ*. Like a diamond with a thousand facets, Christ is able to reveal to every person and nation, their very own unity, truth and value. Thus we Filipino Catholics are people who:

- as baptized into discipleship of Jesus Christ, discover our *identity* as adopted children of our Father and as members of Christ’s Body, the Church, inspired by Mary our Mother;
- in the breaking of bread around the table of the Lord, find *meaning* in sharing ecclesial fellowship with one another and with Christ, their Priest and Eucharist;
- in meeting the Crucified Savior are sustained in the *sufferings* and hardships of life, and receive forgiveness for their sins through his Sacraments;
- *commit* ourselves to our Risen Lord and his mission through the gift of *Faith*, celebrated in great *Hope* in the Sacraments, and lived out in *Love* and service of their fellowmen;
- form our *world-vision* led by the *Spirit of the Risen Christ*, experienced in the *Christian community, the Church*, which sustains us in our pilgrimage of life-in-Christ; and
- approach and live out this Christian life within the powerful inspiring presence of *Mary*, our Mother and Model.

INTEGRATION

53. This “*doctrine*” about the *identity, meaning, suffering, commitment* and *world view* of Filipino Catholics is lived out according to Christian **morality**, especially Christ’s basic commandment of love. We Filipinos are by nature person-centered, spontaneously giving priority to personal feelings, emotions, relationships, beyond any legal demands or impersonal tasks. Christ’s message and Spirit continue to purify this natural personalism of undue family-centeredness and elitist tendencies. For while our natural environment as Filipinos is always the family, the *barkada*, relatives and friends, Christian social morality leads us beyond these limited groups to the larger community’s common good.

54. Even more striking is our *love for celebrating*. Our Christian identity as Filipinos is naturally bound up with **Christian worship** in our celebration of *Christmas, Holy Week, fiestas* and *Marian Feasts* – each in a very special Filipino manner. Again, Christ’s Spirit works from within to purify the warm piety of Catholic Filipino devotions from all superstitious practices and magical faith-healers. Authentic Spirit-inspired Christian prayer helps direct these simple expressions of heartfelt love through Christ to the Father. Of particular importance are the traditional Filipino *Marian devotions* which draw on and express the deep yearnings of the Catholic Filipino.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

55. *Who are Christians?_*

Christians are men and women who are baptized in the faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man to be Savior of all. United in the Church as Christ’s “people of God,” they live out this faith in personal conviction, committed witness, and Spirit-inspired worship of God their Father.

- 56.** *How can we become more truly Filipino by becoming more truly Christian?*
By discovering and proclaiming Jesus Christ in our personal and national Filipino culture, we Filipino Catholics invite Christ to purify and heal us, and enrich us with fuller life in his Spirit in the Church.
- 57.** *How does the Church relate “being Christian” with our Filipino culture?*
There is a mutual relationship:
- “being Christian” is part of our Filipino identity,
 - maturing in Christian Faith comes only from personally interiorizing Jesus’ message in our Filipino ways of thinking, loving and valuing.
- The Church teaches that we Filipino Christians must know our own culture, and by our Christian Faith in Christ, purify, guard, develop, and perfect it.
Likewise, we must “inculturate” our Catholic Faith into our Filipino ways. (*Cf. AG 21; PCP II 202-11.*)
- 58.** *What are some of the basic characteristics of the Filipino?*
Filipinos are family-oriented, meal-oriented, patient and long-suffering, hero-followers, and firm believers in the spiritual world.
- 59.** *How does Jesus Christ as presented in Catholic teaching correspond to Filipino character traits?*
Jesus Christ as Son of God and Son of Man:
- brings us into the family of God our Father;
 - nourishes us as Eucharist;
 - redeems us as Suffering Servant;
 - calls us to personal commitment to Him as our Risen Hero-King;
 - is experienced in his community, the Church;
 - gives us his Mother Mary to be our Mother in grace.
- 60.** *What is our vocation as Catholic Filipinos in Asia?*
We are called both personally, as individual believers, and ecclesially, as members of the Church, to share Jesus Christ with our Asian brethren by word and witness, through active commitment to truth, justice, freedom and universal Christian love.
This means “going forth in-spirited to renew the face of the world – the wider world of Asia and beyond, giving of ourselves unto the renewal and unity of God’s whole creation” (*PCP II 7*).
Our vocation is to move from being truly “Church of the Poor,” through “Renewed Integral Evangelization,” toward becoming a real “Community of Disciples of Christ” before the world (*cf. NPP*).

Chapter 2

God's Call: Revelation

Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.

(Jn 17:3)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens! God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fullness of time: namely, to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship. In Him you too were chosen.

(Eph 1:3,9-10,13)

OPENING

61. “It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom to reveal Himself . . . By this revelation, then, the invisible God, from the fullness of His love, addresses men as His friends, and moves among them in order to invite and receive them in His own company” (*DV 2*). Christian life is based on the conviction that God has spoken to us and that the central truths of our Faith are given in this revelation. The Christian Scriptures attest that “in times past God spoke in varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, He has spoken to us through His Son” (*Heb 1:1-2*).

CONTEXT

62. But how does this idea of “revelation” relate to ordinary Filipino life? The answer is in our personal relationships. One of the best things you can say about a Filipino is: “*Marami siyang kakilala*” (He knows many people), or “*Maraming nakakakilala sa kanya*” (Many people know him). On the other hand, one of the worst things to say about a Filipino is “*Wala siyang kakilala*” (Nobody knows him), or “*Walang kumikilala sa kanya*” (No one gives him recognition). So in our family relationships and friendships we reveal our personal selves to others, and openly receive their self-giving to us. This is what uplifts the Filipino.

63. Now the first one to know us, the first one to show us recognition and reach out to establish a personal relationship with us – to become our *kakilala* – is God. Only in relation to God do we become our full selves. Only in coming to know God do we grow to the full stature of our true selves. But how do we come to know the one true God?

64. Perhaps few countries in the world can compare to the Philippines when it comes to trying to make God known. Newspapers, radio, TV and movies are filled with new preachers, religious celebrations, public devotions, and never-ending appeals for new chapels and churches. Faith healers abound in every community. Self-proclaimed *mediums* claim to lead their gullible devotees in mysterious ways to supposedly closer contact with God, or the Sto. Niño, or the Blessed Virgin Mary. With so many different people claiming to reveal God, who can we believe? How does the one true God actually reveal Himself to us today?

EXPOSITION

I. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

A. In Creation

65. The *first* way God reveals Himself to us is through *creation*. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork” (*Ps 19:1*). In creation, man holds a special place. God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (*Gn 1:26*). God even gives us a share in His own creativity: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (*Gn 1:28*). God creates the whole world for us, to support us in life and reveals Himself to us through His handiwork. “Since the creation of the world. . . God’s eternal power and divinity have become visible, recognized through the things He has made” (*Rom 1:20*).

66. Our *Fourth Eucharistic Prayer* clearly expresses this recognition of God’s Self-revelation through creation:

Father in heaven, You are the one God, living and true . . .
Source of life and goodness,
You have created all things
To fill Your creatures with every blessing
And lead all men to the joyful vision of Your light . . .
Father, we acknowledge Your greatness:
All Your actions show Your wisdom and love,
You formed man in Your own likeness,
and set him over the whole world
To serve You, his Creator, and to rule over all creatures.

Natural Signs

67. For us Filipinos, then, the world and everything in it are natural signs of God – the initial way God makes Himself known to us. Yet in our everyday experience, we meet not only love, friendship, the good and the beautiful, but also suffering, temptation and evil. All creation has become affected by sin – “sin entered the world, and with sin death” (*Rom 5:12*). The “natural signs” of the Creator have

thus become disfigured by pollution, exploitation, injustice, oppression and suffering. So God chose to reveal Himself in a second, more intimate way, by entering into the history of the human race He had created.

B. In Scripture, through Salvation History

68. The *Bible* records God's entering into a special *covenant* relationship with His chosen people, the race of Abraham, the people of Israel. "I will dwell in the midst of the Israelites and will be their God" (*Ex 29:45*). Again, we pray in the Eucharistic Prayer IV:

Even when man disobeyed you and lost your friendship,
You did not abandon him to the power of death,
But helped all men to seek and find you.
Again and again you offered a covenant to man,
and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation.

Biblical Signs

69. God revealed Himself in stages. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself through *biblical signs* made up of both *deeds* and *words*. He made covenants with *Noah*, with *Abraham*, and with *Moses*. He performed great *works* for His Chosen People, and proclaimed their saving power and truth through the *prophets' words* (*cf. DV 2; CCC 56-64*). Through chosen men and women – kings, judges, prophets, priests and wisemen, God led, liberated, and corrected His people. He forgave their sins. He thus revealed Himself as Yahweh, He-who-is-with His people. He is "the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity" (*Ex 34:6*). Today, through His inspired word in the Old Testament, God still reveals Himself to us, and inspires us to respond to His covenant.

70. Yet, even God's revelation in history was weakened by the infidelities and hardness of heart of His Chosen People. But God so loved the world, that in the fullness of time, He sent His only Son to be our Savior, like us in all things except sin (*cf. Jn 3:16; Gal 4:4; Heb 4:15; CCC 65*). Jesus Christ "completed and perfected God's revelation by words and works, signs and miracles, but above all by his death and glorious resurrection from the dead" (*DV 4*). Thus the Risen Christ, prefigured in the Old Testament and proclaimed by the apostles, is the unique, irrevocable and definitive revelation of God.

C. In the Church

71. But God's definitive revelation in Jesus Christ did not stop with Christ's ascension to his Father. Jesus himself had gathered around him a group of disciples who would form the nucleus of his *Church*. In this Church, the "Good News" of Jesus Christ would be proclaimed and spread to the ends of the earth by the power of the *Holy Spirit*, sent down upon the apostles at Pentecost (*cf. Acts 1:8*). "What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church in her doctrine, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes" (*DV 8; cf. CCC 77-79*). *PCP II* summarizes this by stating that Sacred Scripture and the living tradition of the Church transmit to us the teachings of Jesus" (*PCP II 65*).

Liturgical/Ecclesial Signs

72. God continues to manifest Himself today through the Holy Spirit in the Church. He is present in the Church's preaching the *truth* of Scripture, in its witness of loving *service*, and through *the celebration* of its Christ-given Sacraments. Christ's revelation in the Church is "the new and definitive covenant [which] will never pass away. No new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ (*1 Tim 6:14; Ti 2:13*)" (*DV 4*).

73. In summary, then, Filipino Catholics experience God's Self-revelation today. *First*, God shows Himself in the *natural signs* of the beauty and abundance of our natural resources and our rich Filipino culture. *Second*, the *biblical signs* in God's inspired Word in Scripture, the book of the Church, reveal Him. *Third*, through the Church's *liturgical signs*, we encounter the Risen Christ in the Sacraments. *Finally*, God makes Himself known to us through the *ecclesial signs* of the Church's proclamation of the *Creed* and in her *moral teachings* and *commitment to service*.

D. In Other Religions

74. But many Filipino Catholics ask if non-Christians receive God's revelation. The Church, in her prophetic mission of "reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (*GS 4*), discerns the *seeds of the Word* in the history and culture of *all* men of good will. Thus, even non-Christians "who do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience, may achieve eternal salvation" (*LG 16*).

75. For whatever is true and holy in non-Christian cultures and religions is accepted by the Catholic Church since it "often reflect[s] a ray of that truth which enlightens all men." Filipino Catholics, therefore, should "acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture" (*NA 2*).

PCP II provides guidelines for this inter-religious dialogue. It must be based firmly on the fact that salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to all, and that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation since she possesses the fullness of the means to salvation (*cf. UR 3*). This makes possible "openness in understanding the religious convictions of others. [For] 'dialogue based on hope and love will bear fruit in the Spirit' (*RMi 56*)" [*PCP II 112-13*].

II. JESUS CHRIST: AGENT, CONTENT AND GOAL OF REVELATION

76. Nevertheless we Catholics must "witness to [our] own faith and way of life" in the *Catholic Church* which "proclaims, and is duty-bound to proclaim, without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life" (*NA 2*). Jesus Christ is "himself both the mediator and the fullness of all Revelation" (*DV 2; cf. CCC 65*).

PCP II puts it sharply: "We are followers of Christ, his disciples. We trace his footsteps in our times, to utter his word to others. To love with his love. To live with his life . . . To cease following him is to betray our very identity" (*PCP II 34*). Filipino Catholics, therefore, recognize in Jesus Christ the *goal*, the *content*, and the *agent* of God's Self-revelation.

A. Goal

77. As *goal*, Jesus is “the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of man’s history” (GS 10), in whose image we all are to be conformed (cf. Rom 8:29). For it is through the Risen Christ that we shall share the Trinitarian divine life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore our present earthly life is a challenge to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” as St. Paul admonishes us (cf. Rm 13:14).

B. Content

78. But Christ is not only the goal of God’s revelation, He is also its *content*, the *Revealed One*. In himself, Jesus reveals both God and ourselves. “Christ, the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of His love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling” (GS 22). Our Faith centers on Christ precisely because we believe we “are called to union with him, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and towards whom our whole life is directed” (LG 3).

C. Agent

79. Finally, besides being the goal and content of Revelation, Christ is also its *agent*, the mediator (cf. DV 2). “God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5-6). Christ is revealer through his part in creation, through his becoming man, through his hidden and public life, and especially through his passion, death and resurrection. After his resurrection, the Risen Christ continues his revelation by sending us his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (cf. DV 4).

80. But how does the revealing Christ touch the Filipino Catholic today? Clearly, *through his Church*, the people of God, united in his name. “The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men” (LG 8). The Church herself receives Christ’s revelation. She regards “the Scriptures, taken together with sacred Tradition, as the supreme rule of her faith.” For they present “God’s own Word in an unalterable form, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit sound again and again in the words of the prophets and apostles” (DV 21).

III. WHERE WE FIND GOD’S REVELATION

A. Scripture and Tradition

81. The Sacred Scriptures, collected in the Bible, are the inspired record of how God dealt with His people, and how they responded to, remembered, and interpreted that experience. The Scriptures arose, then, as the expression of the people’s experience of God, and as a response to their needs. Collectively, the Scriptures form “The Book of the People of God” – the book of the Church. The Bible was written by persons *from* the people of God, *for* the people of God, about the God-experience *of* the people of God” (NCDP 131).

82. The Scriptures, then, are never to be separated from the people of God whose life and history (Tradition) formed the context of their writing and development. This is best shown in the *three stages of how the Gospels were formed*.

First stage, the life and teaching of Jesus — what Jesus, while he lived among us, really did and taught for our eternal salvation, until the day he was taken up. *Second stage, oral tradition*. After Jesus’ Ascension, the apostles handed on to their hearers what Jesus had said and done. *Third stage, the written Gospels*. “The sacred authors, in writing the four Gospels, selected certain elements that

had been handed on orally or already in written form, others they synthesized or explained in view of the situation of their churches, while preserving the form of proclamation. But always in such a way that they have told us the honest truth about Jesus” (DV 19; cf. CCC 126).

This shows how the written Gospels grew out of oral tradition, and were composed in view of the concrete “people of God” of the early Christian communities. Through His inspired Word in Scripture, God continues to reveal Himself to us today.

83. Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together. . . flowing out from the same divine well spring, moving towards the same goal and making up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God (cf. DV 9, 10). *Tradition* can be taken either as the *process* by which divine revelation, coming from Jesus Christ through the apostles, is communicated and unfolded in the community of the Church, or as the *content* of the revelation so communicated. Thus the living Tradition of the Church, which includes the inspired word of God in Sacred Scripture, is the channel through which God’s self-revelation comes to us.

84. As Sacred Scripture grew *from* Tradition, so it is interpreted *by* Tradition – the life, worship, and teaching of the Church. Tradition depends on Scripture as its normative record of Christian origins and identity, while Scripture requires the living Tradition of the Church to bring its Scriptural message to the fresh challenges and changing contexts confronting Christians in every age.

Biblical Inspiration

85. The Sacred Scriptures are said to be “*inspired*” in a special sense – *not* just as some artist or author may be “inspired” to paint or compose. Rather, *biblical inspiration* means that the sacred and canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, whole and entire, were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that we can call God their “author” and the Bible “the Word of God” (cf. DV 11; CCC 105-6). God chose certain human authors, who as true authors made full use of their human powers and faculties, yet were so guided by the Holy Spirit who so enlightened their minds and moved their wills, that they put down in writing what God wanted written.

86. Biblical inspiration, then, is a charism referring to the *special divine activity, communicated to individual authors, editors, and compilers belonging to the community, for the sake of the community*. It produced the sacred texts both of the Old Testament and the New. These texts ground the apostolic Church which remains uniquely authoritative for us and for all generations of Christians.

87. But the Holy Spirit’s work in Scripture touches more than its human authors: in some fashion it also touches both the *proclaimers* and the *hearers* of the word. “In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet His children, and talks with them” (DV 21). Scripture thus supports and invigorates the Church (cf. CCC 131-33). It strengthens our faith, offers food for our souls, and remains a pure and lasting fount for our spiritual lives. Through the Spirit “God’s word is living and effective” (Heb 4:12). But we realize that what was written in the Spirit must be proclaimed and heard *in the Spirit*.

The Canon of Scripture

88. Because of disputes, the Church found it necessary to make a definitive list, a “*canon*” of the books which have been truly inspired by God and thus have God for their author (cf. CCC 120). The Canon of Scripture is divided into the books written before Jesus’ life (the Old Testament) and those written after (the New Testament). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church determined the inspired and normative NT books in terms of their apostolic origin, coherence with the essential Gospel message, and constant use in the Church’s liturgy. After a long development, the Church finally accepted as

inspired, sacred, and canonical, the 46 books of the Old Testament and the 27 *books of the New Testament* that we find in our Catholic Bible.

Inerrant Saving Truth

89. Since all of Scripture was written, compiled and edited under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and *without error*, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures” (*DV 11; cf. CCC 107*). In recognizing the Bible as normative, the Church confesses that when properly used, Scripture imparts saving truth that can be relied upon to bring us into deeper communion with God.

90. But we must recognize that the Bible is a collection of historical accounts, doctrinal teachings, poems, parables, ethical exhortations, apocalyptic visions and many other forms. It was written over a period of more than a thousand years, separated from us by almost twenty centuries. Therefore, it is not easy to determine precisely what is the “saving truth” which God wills to impart to us through a particular book or text of Scripture.

In addition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that

the Christian Faith is *not* a ‘religion of the Book.’ Christianity is the religion of the Word of God, ‘not a written word unable to speak, but the incarnate and living Word.’ So that the Scriptures do not remain a dead letter, it is necessary that Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, by the Holy Spirit, opens our minds to understand them (*CCC 108*).

B. Interpreting Scripture

91. St. Paul tells us that “all Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching – for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work” (*2 Tim 3:16-17*). But the problem, of course, is *how* to faithfully and accurately interpret Scripture. For the Filipino Catholic, the answer is clear. “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone” (*DV 10*).

Four Factors

92. At least *four factors* play a significant part in interpreting Scripture: (1) the inspired *human author’s intention*; (2) the *text* itself; (3) the *reader* of the text; and (4) the *common horizon* connecting the original community context of the text with our Christian community reading it today.

93. *First, the human author.* Common sense tells us to find out what the inspired human author had in mind when interpreting a text. This involves some basic idea of the social, economic, and religious conditions of the authors in their particular historical situations (*cf. DV 12; CCC 110*).

94. *Second, the text itself.* We have to look at its *literary form* (e.g., historical narratives, prophetic oracles, poems or parables) which the author is using (*cf. DV 12*.)

In addition, the text must be viewed within the *unity* of the whole Bible (*cf. CCC 112*). Both Old and New Testaments are read by Christians in the light of the Risen Crucified Christ. The New Testament’s own use of Old Testament events, persons and things as “types” foreshadowing its own, exemplifies this *dynamic unity* of the two Testaments. For example, Adam and Melchisedek are types of Christ (*cf. Heb 6:20-28*); the flood foreshadows Baptism (*cf. 1 Pt 3:20-21*); manna in the desert is the “type” of the Eucharist (*cf. Jn 6:48-51, CCC 128-30*).

Something of the history of the text’s interpretations, especially its use in the Church’s liturgy, can be very helpful.*

95. *Third, the readers/hearers.* We are constantly asking Scripture new questions and problems, drawn from our own experience. Every Filipino Catholic wants to know what the Scripture means “to me/us.” At the same time we recognize that the Bible brings its own culture of meanings and framework of attitudes that help form, reform and transform us, the readers, into the image of Christ. We must let the Bible “form” us, even while conscious that we are reading it in the light of our own contemporary experience.

In seeking what the Scripture text means “for me/us,” we need to consider the witness offered in the lives of holy men and women in the Church through the centuries. Any authentic interpretation of the text for the Christian community today must be in continuity and harmonize with this tradition of meaning that has grown out of the text’s impact on Christian communities through the ages (*cf. DV 21; CCC 131-33*).

96. *Fourth, is the common horizon* which first unites all the books of the Bible into a basic unity, and second, links together the context of the Scriptural text and its tradition with our present reading context today. This horizon is the *new and eternal covenant God has established* with us in *His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ*. In interpreting Scripture, we seek the truth that God wishes to communicate to us today, through Scripture. In this we are guided by the living teaching office of the Church which “exercises its authority in the name of Jesus Christ, not as superior to the Word of God, but as its servant” (*DV 10*).

97. Thus we see that “in the supremely wise arrangement of God, Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching office (Magisterium) of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to our salvation” (*DV 10*).

INTEGRATION

98. The *danger* is that all this “doctrine” about Revelation and its sources in Scripture and Tradition will remain only as “*head knowledge*,” left behind in our daily living. But God is touching us, calling us to relate to Him in thought, word and deed. It is in and through our *daily life-experiences* – our everyday dealings in family, work and recreation – as well as in *prayer* and *the Sacraments*, that God is close to us. Scripture and Tradition illumine our experiences in two ways: 1) by showing us *how to act* as disciples of Jesus Christ, and 2) by helping us *discern* God’s action in our daily lives.

99. “Showing us how to *act* as believers in Jesus Christ” is the goal of Catholic *moral teaching*. The Filipino Catholic’s *conscience* is gradually formed through Scripture and the Church’s living tradition. We are drawn to the lifestyle of a son/daughter of the heavenly *Father*, following Jesus Christ, the Incarnate *Son*, strengthened and inspired by the indwelling *Spirit*, and living in *the Church*, Christ’s own community. The Commandments of God and Christ’s Beatitudes do not impose burdensome obligations that restrict our genuine freedom. Rather, they reveal and protect our inalienable dignity as human persons by specifying the moral duties of each and everyone. God’s call to justice and honesty creates our authentic freedom.

100. “To *discern* God’s action in our daily lives” demands a spiritual sensitivity that comes only from authentic Christian *prayer* and *worship*. This means that our personal prayer is grounded in God’s revelation in Scripture and the Church’s living tradition. Only then are we sure to worship “in Spirit and in truth” (*Jn 4:24*). All the typical Filipino devotions and forms of religiosity must ultimately be

viewed in the light of the Gospel. For Jesus Christ taught us to pray “Our Father” (*cf. Mt 6:9-13*) and gave us the sacrament of his love to be our sacrificial worship of his Father in the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

101. *What is “Revelation”?*

Revelation is God’s personal loving communication to us of *who He* is and *His plan to save us all* in His love. It is God’s reaching out to us in friendship, so we get to know and love Him.

102. *How does God reveal Himself?*

God reveals Himself in:

- *Creating us and everything we see, hear and touch – from the beginning till now [natural signs];*
- His words and deeds in *Sacred Scripture’s* record of salvation history, completed and perfected in His Son-made-man, *Jesus Christ [Biblical signs];*
- His continuing *presence* by the *Holy Spirit* in His people, the *Church; [ecclesial signs];*
- The prayer and sacramental worship, doctrine, and moral service of the Church; [*liturgical signs*];
- His interior presence (*Grace*) in our *conscience* and in all the events of our daily lives, world events, recognized in the “signs of the times.”

103. *How can the Infinite, Pure Spirit, God, communicate Himself to us in this life?*

God reveals Himself to us through the *deeds* He performed in history and the *words* which proclaim the deeds and clarify their true meaning (*cf. DV 2.*). These words and deeds show God’s presence among us and His saving purpose for us.

104. *How important is Jesus Christ in God’s Revelation?*

For Christians, it is Jesus who is:

- the Revealer of God our Father,
- himself the Image and Word of God; and
- the Final Goal of God’s revelation, our ultimate destiny.

105. *How does Christ reveal God to us today?*

Christ reveals God to us primarily through the *Church*, its *Sacred Scripture* and living *Tradition*, through which the *Holy Spirit* comes to us.

106. *To whom does God reveal Himself?*

God “wants *all* men to be saved and come to know the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*), and in ways both hidden and clear, calls *all* to Christ, who is the goal, the object, and the agent of God’s Self-revelation, and “the real light which enlightens every man” (*Jn 1:9*).

107. *How are we to understand God’s inspired Word in Scripture?*

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Scripture grew from the life, worship and teaching of the early Church. So the Church is its authentic interpreter, under the active help of the same Holy Spirit.

- 108.** *What do we mean by the Bible's inerrant saving truth?*
Through the Holy Spirit's charism of *inspiration*, the human authors of the Bible set down faithfully and without error the truth God wished to convey for our salvation (*cf. DV 11; 2 Tim 3:16-17*).
- 109.** *How do we Catholics get to know Sacred Scripture/the Bible?*
Catholics hear the Bible proclaimed at every Mass. Readings from both Old and New Testaments are carefully selected and arranged according to the Church's liturgical year. In addition, parishes sponsor Bible study groups and encourage a Catholic Bible in every home for family reading and prayer.
- 110.** *How were the Gospels formed?*
The Gospels were formed in *three stages*: *first*, Jesus' own teaching in his earthly lifetime; *second*, the oral tradition in which the apostles passed on what Jesus had said and done; and *third*, the putting into writing of the Gospels that we have till this day.
- 111.** *How do we Catholics interpret Scripture?*
In interpreting Sacred Scripture, we search out: (1) the human *author's* meaning; (2) the *context* of the text in relation to the whole Bible; 3) within our own search for meaning; (4) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the authentic interpretation of the Magisterium, the teaching Church.
- 112.** *How important is Sacred Scripture in our daily lives?*
God continues to speak to us personally through His inspired Word in Scripture, thereby
- helping us to understand the *true meaning* of the daily happenings in our lives,
 - guiding our *moral behavior* toward authentic freedom and loving service of others, and
 - drawing us into *prayerful union* with Christ, our Way, our Truth and our Life, in his Church.
- 113.** *How has the Bible come to us?*
"Bible" comes from the Greek word "*Biblia*", meaning "books." So the Bible is really a *collection of "books."* The content was first passed on by *oral tradition* over a long period of time before it was put in written form.
The Old Testament was composed in Hebrew and translated into Greek around the *2nd* and *3rd* centuries before Christ. The New Testament was composed in Greek during the 2nd half of the *1st* century A.D.

* Traditionally four '*senses*' of Scripture have been distinguished: *literal*: the meaning intended by the original author, providing the basis for all other senses; *allegorical*: a point by point interpretation of the text's series of actions as symbolic of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated; *moral*: the meaning for our instruction, "as a lesson to us" (*1 Cor 10:11*); *anagogic*: the mystical meaning, interpreted in the light of its eternal significance. The four senses were summarized: the *literal*, teaches what happened; the *allegorical*, what is to be believed; the *moral*, what is to be done, the *anagogic*, towards what we must strain (*cf. CCC 115-19*).

Chapter 3

Our Response: We Believe

Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.

(Heb 11:1)

Faith is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and through him, with the Father, through the Holy Spirit, a decision to commit oneself to Christ, follow him, strive to know and accept the truths he continues to teach through his Church.

(Cf. PCP II 64-65)

OPENING

114. For most people, *faith* simply means “believing in God.” *Christian Faith* is believing in the God revealed by Jesus Christ. *Catholic Christian Faith* means believing that Christ reveals God to us in and through the Catholic Church, the body of Christ, united in the Holy Spirit. “Believing” here means realizing that God is calling us to share His divine life – that is His *pagpapakilala* to us. Faith is our personal response as “disciples of Christ” of accepting him “as Lord and Savior.” “It is our ‘Please come in!’ to Christ who stands at the door and knocks (*Rv 3:20*)” (*PCP II 64*). But how do we come to know the way to respond to Him? What is this response we call “faith”?

115. We use “faith” today to mean different things. Sometimes it means our *total response* to God’s revelation. “It is to know, to love, to follow Christ in the Church he founded” (*PCP II 36*). Or we can use “faith” to mean the *virtue* (believing) as distinct from hoping and loving. *Faith* in this sense means our *personal knowledge* of God in Christ, expressed in particular *beliefs* in specific *truths* by which we adhere to Christ. In this chapter we take *faith* to mean ***our whole life in Christ***, but with primary focus on *personally knowing* Christ as our **Truth**. The moral activity of *love* will be the focus of Part II of this Catechism, Christ our **Way**, while our Christian *hope* will be developed especially in Part III, Christ our **Life**.

CONTEXT

116. The Philippines is noted for being the only Christian country in Asia. Christian Faith is one of the distinguishing characteristics of our people. Yet today it is common to hear Filipino Catholics acknowledging how little they know of their

Christian Faith. Many admit they take their Christian Faith for granted. It enters their lives mostly through religious ceremonies attached to *family celebrations* such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, and house blessings. It is a faith of *traditional pious practices*, and sometimes even of *superstitions*, drawn from our Filipino social, religious, and cultural environment. Such a faith is dangerously open to proselytizing by other religious sects of all kinds, or corrupted by the attractions of worldly secularism (*cf. Mt 13:4-9, 18-23*).

117. *PCP II* describes this situation:

For most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship (beyond baptism and matrimony). Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom. And we say it is because the ‘unchurched,’ the vast majority of our people, greatly lack knowledge of and formation in the faith (*PCP II 13*).

Often this is called “*Folk Catholicism*.”

118. Today many Filipino Catholics yearn for a more mature Catholic faith and prayer life. But certain divisive trends and attitudes are also widespread. Some preach Christian doctrine in such a *fundamentalist* way that they ignore the wider demands of Christian charity and service. Others so stress active *ideological commitment* to “justice and the poor” as to practically deny all value to prayer and worship. Finally, still others’ faith is marked by an *individualistic piety*, often accompanied by an exaggerated *bahala na* fatalism. These excesses or distortions give a false picture of authentic Catholic Faith. They also show how important it is to understand what Catholic Faith really is, and how it should operate in our daily lives.

EXPOSITION

I. FAITH IN HUMAN RELATIONS

119. Faith in its broadest sense is a central reality in Filipino life. It is an everyday “natural” factor in all our human relationships and daily actions. For example, in accepting the word of others, we already show our faith (*paniniwala*) in them. We readily obey the directions of those over us, at home, at work, in our communities (*pagsunod*). We even entrust ourselves and our welfare to others: doctors, teachers, judges, civic leaders, not to mention cooks, jeepney drivers, etc. Without such basic *human* faith which includes believing acceptance, obedient action and personal entrusting, human life would be impossible. *Faith* as a human reality, therefore, *is central to our daily lives*.

120. For Filipinos, this can be seen most clearly in our *family life* and *friendships*. We grow up, nurtured and supported by the trust, love and fidelity of our family. We mature through a process of forming personal friendships, first as children, then as teenagers, finally as adults. But in each case, there is a gradual revelation of our own inner self to our friend, and a free acceptance of our friend’s self-revelation. If this friendship is to grow and mature, it must include a “turning toward” the other, a conversion. We acknowledge our need and trust in the other’s friendship by listening to and identifying with our friend.

121. Filipinos do all this spontaneously, naturally, but not without difficulty. Sometimes we turn away, or refuse to listen, or are rejected by the other. But genuine friendships create *mutual loving knowledge* of each other. In them we experience something that liberates us from our own

narrowness, and opens us to fuller life and love. We realize that friendship *freely offered* us by another, also demands our *free response*. It is a response that is never just one act, but a long *process* of growing intimacy with our friend. Inevitably, others among our families and associates are eventually involved. Especially God.

II. FAITH IN GOD

122. Faith in God is grounded in God's own revelation through his words and deeds in salvation history. It is confirmed by the many reasons for believing that have been worked out throughout the centuries, responding to the biblical challenge: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Pt 3:15).

A. Characteristics of Christian Faith

Total and Absolute

123. Already the Old Testament contrasted faith "in man in whom there is no salvation" with faith in "the Lord who made heaven and earth . . . who shall reign forever" (cf. Ps 146:3,5-6,10; Jer 17:5-8). Only Faith in God calls for a *total* and *absolute* adherence (cf. CCC 150). Christ himself provides, especially in his Passion, Death and Resurrection, the best example of this total and absolute commitment to God.

Trinitarian

124. For us Christians, *Faith is our adherence to the Triune God revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord*. It is our *friendship with Christ and through Christ with the Father, in their Holy Spirit*. Through Christ's witness to his Father in his teaching, preaching, miracles, and especially in his Passion, Death and Resurrection, we come to believe in Christ our Savior, in the Father, and in the Holy Spirit sent into our hearts. Our Faith as Catholics, then, consists in our personal *conviction and belief* in God our Father, revealed by Jesus Christ, His own divine Son-made-man, and their presence to us through the Holy Spirit, in the Church (cf. PCP II 64; CCC 151-52).

Loving, Maturing and Missionary

125. Our Christian Faith is truly life-giving and mature only through love, for "the man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). And to be Christian, *this love must be inseparably love of God and love of neighbor, like Christ's*. It thus impels us to mission, to evangelize, by bringing others the Good News (cf. 1 Cor 9:16). Such a *missionary spirit* is the *test of authentic Faith* because it is unthinkable that a person should believe in Christ's Word and Kingdom without bearing witness and proclaiming it in his turn (cf. EN 24; PCP II 67-71, 402). This means we are all called to share in Christ's own three-fold mission as priest, prophet and king (cf. PCP II 116-21; LG 10-13).

Informed and Communitarian

126. PCP II insists that Catholic Faith must be "*informed,*" that is "believing Jesus' words, and accepting his teachings, trusting that he has "the words of eternal life" (cf. Jn 6:68; NCDP 147). It must be "*communitarian*" since it is the Church that transmits to us Christ's revelation through Sacred Scripture and its living Tradition, and alone makes possible for us an adequate faith-response (cf. PCP II 65).

Inculturated

127. This Catholic faith in God and in Jesus Christ *is never separated from the typical Filipino faith in family and friends*. On the one hand, we live out our faith in God precisely in our daily relationships with family, friends, fellow workers, etc. On the other hand, each of these is radically affected by our Catholic Faith in God our Father, in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Savior, and in their Holy Spirit dwelling within us in grace. “This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another” (*Jn 13:35; cf. PCP II 72-73, 162, 202-11*).

B. The Three Essential Dimensions of Faith

128. Vatican II explains this faith-response as follows: “By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals,’ and willingly assenting to the Revelation given by Him” (*DV 5*). Christian Faith, then, touches every part of us: our minds (*believing*), our wills (*doing*), and our hearts (*trusting*). Let us briefly examine each aspect in turn.

Believing

129. Faith involves our *basic convictions* as Christians. “For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead; you will be saved” (*Rom 10:9*). John sums up his Gospel with: “These things have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name” (*Jn 20: 31*).

Faith, then, is *knowing*, but not mere “head knowledge” of some abstract truths. It is like the deep knowledge we have of our parents, or of anyone we love dearly. *Christian Faith*, then, is *personal knowledge* of Jesus Christ as “my Lord and my God” (*Jn 20:28*). Christ solemnly assures each of us: “Here I stand knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house, and have supper with him, and he with me” (*Rv 3:20*).

Doing

130. But besides believing, faith is also *doing*. As St. James writes: “My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without *practicing* it?” (*Jas 2:14*). Christ himself taught: “None of those who cry out ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who *does* the will of my Father in heaven” (*Mt 7:21*). Faith, then, is a *commitment* to follow (obey) God’s will for us. This we see exemplified in Mary’s “I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say” (*Lk 1:38*).

PCP II brings out this “doing” dimension of faith as “witnessing” through “loving service” of our needy neighbors. In our concrete situation, particularly urgent is the call for: 1) deeds of justice and love; and 2) for protecting and caring for our endangered earth’s environment (*cf. PCP II 78-80*).

131. Of course, we realize that we often do *not* do what we affirm in faith. But this awareness of our failures emphasizes all the more the essential place of behavior in authentic Christian Faith. It also makes us more conscious of our need for Christ’s Spirit to live out our faith in our actions. “For apart from me you can do nothing” (*Jn 15:5*). “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God” (*DV 5*).

Entrusting/Worshipping

132. Beyond believing and doing, faith is also *entrusting* oneself into God's hands. *Abraham*, our father in faith, at God's command left everything to set out for a foreign land. Against all human odds *Moses* trusted Yahweh to free the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt. In the New Testament, *Jesus* worked signs and cures only with those who trusted in him. He promised the possessed boy's father: "Everything is possible to a man who trusts" (*Mk 9:23*).

133. *Faith*, then, is *from the heart* – the loving, trusting, and hoping in the Lord that comes from God's own love flooding our hearts. This trusting Faith "lives and grows through prayer and worship" – personal heartfelt conversation with God that is the opposite of mindless, mechanical repetition of memorized formulas. *Genuine personal prayer* and *group prayer* find both their *inspirational source* and *summit* of perfection in the **Liturgy**, the Catholic community's official public Trinitarian worship of the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the Holy Spirit (*cf. PCP II 74-77*).

C. Faith and Three Classic Questions

134. These *three aspects* of our Christian Faith – *believing, doing, prayerful trusting* – respond to the three classical questions posed to every person in life, and to St. Augustine's famous triple definition of faith. To the question "**What can I know?**" Christian faith responds that *we can know God as Our Father and Christ as Our Lord (credere Deum/Christum)*. "Know that we belong to God . . . that the Son of God has come and has given us discernment to recognize the One who is true" (*1 Jn 5:19-20*). *Pagkilala sa Ama, sa Anak at sa Espiritu Santo*.

135. "**What should I do?**" is answered curtly by "Keep His commandments" (*1 Jn 2:3*), which means to "love in deed and truth and not merely talk about it" (*1 Jn 3:18*). This demands acting on the credibility of God's teachings in Christ as true and dependable (*credere Deo/Christo*).

136. Finally, to the question "**What may we hope for?**" Christian Faith celebrates in prayer and sacrament the unshakeable hope that "neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers; neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*Rom 8:38-39*). In brief, this hope means to believe in God "with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind" (*Mt 22:37*), entrusting ourselves to Him in love (*credere in Deum/Christum*).

D. Faith and Salvation

137. But faith is not some "answer box" – it is not some "thing" we have, keep, and own. Rather, real **faith is a force within us that by the power of Christ's Holy Spirit gradually works a transformation in our daily thoughts, hopes, attitudes and values**.

In *religious* terms, we know that *faith is necessary for salvation* – it is the "beginning of our salvation" (*cf. Trent, ND 1935; CCC 161*). For "without faith it is impossible to please God" (*Heb 11:6*). From *experience* we realize that faith brings us *fuller life* which can be described by *three basic values*: genuine personal *maturity, freedom* and *happiness*.

Maturity

138. Faith is a growth in *personal maturity* because it helps us "put childish ways aside" (*1 Cor 13:11*). It develops a basic honesty in us before God and man by making us aware of the sacrifices

demanded by authentic human love. It grounds our own self-identity in the fact that we are sons and daughters of the Father, redeemed by the Blood of Christ our Savior, and inspired by their indwelling Holy Spirit.

Freedom

139. Faith in Christ *frees us* from preferring “darkness rather than light” (*Jn 3:19*), “the praise of men to the glory of God” (*Jn 12:43*). Without faith in God, we are at the mercy of “carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show” so that “the Father’s love has no place in us” (*1 Jn 2:15-16*). As Scripture warns us: “the world with its seductions is passing away, but the man who does God’s will endures forever” (*1 Jn 2:17*).

Spiritual Joy

140. In so liberating us, faith in Christ fosters the value of *spiritual joy*. So Mary proclaimed: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit *rejoices* in God my Savior” (*Lk 1:46-47*). John the Baptist was “overjoyed” to hear Christ’s voice – “that is my joy, and it is complete” (*Jn 3:29*). Christ himself taught his disciples “so that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be complete” (*Jn 15:11*), a “joy no one can take from you” (*Jn 16:22*). For Christian Faith is our response to Christ’s “Good News,” lived in the Spirit whose fruits are “love, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity” (*Gal 5:22*).

III. PARADOXICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

141. Christian Faith presents us with a number of paradoxes that help us grasp its complex reality.

A. Certain, Yet Obscure

142. The *first* is that ***Faith is both most certain yet obscure*** (*cf. CCC 157-58, 164*). In common usage we speak of “taking things on faith” when we are *not* sure. We live in a secular age where “to be sure” means being able to prove it by experiment and “scientific” means. But this is a rationalistic illusion. We have been “brainwashed” by our own creation of today’s scientific technology.

143. As Filipinos, we realize that none of our major personal decisions, nor our basic ideals and attitudes towards life, freedom, love, etc. could ever be “proven” by scientific experiment. Our family, our friends, our community, our vocation in life – all depend on the vision, inspiration and strength we call “faith”. It is the most “certain” of all we know because it is the foundation upon which we build our lives. But how are we sure of this “faith-foundation”?

144. Such a sure foundation could never come from ourselves, or from other limited men or women. It could never arise from some self-evident truth, or some logical deduction that compels assent (*CCC 156*). All these need to be, themselves, grounded on some unshakeable foundation. Only the very Word of God could possibly offer such a foundation. Faith is certain because it rests on God who reveals Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, present to us in His Spirit. We are certain of our Faith because it is our *personally committed loving knowledge* based on the *convincing signs* of God revealing Himself in Jesus Christ, and present to us in His Church through word, service, fellowship, and sacrament.

145. But this *certainty* of Faith *does not mean everything is clear and obvious*. On the contrary, we believe God is “*Mystery*”, that is, He is always *more* than we can ever fully comprehend. St. Paul

teaches us: “Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror” (1 Cor 13:12). “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). But this obscurity which we experience even in our deepest human relations does not destroy faith’s firmness. We instinctively recognize that persons, and especially the all-personal God, can never be reduced to being “proven” by scientific experiment.

B. Free, Yet Morally Obliging

146. Faith’s *second paradox* is that it is both *free* and *morally obliging* (cf. CCC 160). Our Christian Faith is a *free* response. No one, not even God, forces us to believe.

God calls men to serve Him in Spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to Him in conscience but not coerced. God has regard for the dignity of the human person which He himself created: the human person is to be guided by his own judgment and to enjoy freedom (DH 11).

We Filipinos experience this paradoxical combination of freedom and obligation in our family relationships and friendships. Persons who love us the most have the most claim on us, yet force us the least. We naturally respond to them in love. God, who by loving us the most has the greatest claim on us, leaves and keeps us most free.

C. Reasonable, Yet Beyond Natural Reason

147. A *third paradox* is that Christian Faith is both *reasonable*, yet *more than natural reason* (cf. CCC 155-56). Christian Faith is in no conflict with our reason. On the contrary, only rational creatures can believe. Yet faith itself is a grace that enlightens our minds. “Unless you believe, you will not understand” (Augustine’s quote of Is 7:9). Our faith in Christ illumines our reason because we believe him who claims “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life” (Jn 8:12; cf. Vatican I, ND 135).

D. An Act, Yet a Process

148. A *fourth paradox* highlights Faith as both *a particular act*, yet perseverance in *a life-long process* that is the beginning of eternal life (cf. CCC 162-63). John’s Gospel declares: “Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ.” (Jn 17:3). But this faith in Christ is much more than a single, personal *decision* for Christ. It is an enduring *way of life* within the Christian community, the Church. In fact it is the *principle* of our new life in Christ, which gives us a foretaste of life-with-him in heaven. St. Paul wrote: “The life that I now live is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Faith as “following Christ” must be gradually and perseveringly developed so that it comes to touch every aspect of our lives, throughout our whole lives.

E. A Gift, Yet Our Doing

149. Faith’s *fifth paradox* is that it is both *a gift*, a grace from God, yet *something we do* (cf. PCP II 68; CCC 153-55). It is a gift because “No one can come to me,” Jesus said, “unless the Father who sent me draws him” (Jn 6:44). St. Paul confirms this: “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Our Christian Faith, then, is not merely of our own doing. It depends upon God for two things: first, God’s free gift of *revealing* Himself throughout salvation history; second, for the *grace* of the Holy Spirit’s interior illumination and inspiration which “gives to all joy in assenting to the truth and believing in it” (Vat. I, DS 3010; ND 120).

150. But God's "gift" of faith demands our *free cooperation* with others. St. Paul explains this: "Faith, then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ" (*Rom 10:17*). Our hearing of Christ's word today depends on the preaching and teaching just as it did in the time of the Apostles (*cf. Mt 28:20; Acts 2:42; 4:25*). This "hearing" means not only *listening* to the Word of God in Scripture and to Church teaching. It also involves *discerning* God's presence to us through events in our lives, our companions, our inner thoughts, yearnings and fears, etc. In brief, faith is also our active response to the witness to Christ and the Gospel given us by others. This active response is motivated and inspired by the prayer and worship we share with our fellow members of Christ's Church.

F. Personal, Yet Ecclesial

151. Faith's *sixth* paradox is its *personal* yet *ecclesial* nature. It is first of all the Church who believes and thus supports and nourishes our faith (*cf. CCC 168-69*). We received the grace of faith when we were baptized and received into the Christian community, the Church. Within our Christian families and our parish community, the faith implanted in Baptism grows and matures. Through catechesis, through the Sacrament of Confirmation, through the Word of God preached and explained, and especially through the Eucharistic celebration of Christ's Paschal sacrifice, we grow in faith.

Our personal faith in Christ is supported and intensified by our fellow members in the parish or BCC, according to God's own plan. For "He has willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people" (*LG 9*).

152. Christian faith has many different adherents and forms, even in our country. But a central feature of *Catholic* Faith is its *ecclesial structure*. God always revealed Himself in the Old and New Testaments in terms of a community. Moreover, this revelation has been handed down through the Church's tradition to us today. It is in the Church that we Catholics experience the power of the Risen Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is in the Church, the body of Christ, that the Catholic Filipino meets Christ in God's Word in Scripture, in Church teaching, in the liturgical, sacramental praise and worship of God, and in the ministry of service of one another.

153. Christ is personal Savior to Filipino Catholics not as private individuals, but as *members* of a *community* of salvation wherein we meet Jesus and experience his saving power. *Faith is never just something private or individualistic, but a sharing in the Christian community's faith*. This faith is in living continuity with the Apostolic Church, as well as being united to all the Catholic communities today the world over. Vatican II well describes the origins of this ecclesial dimension of faith:

154. "As the firstborn of many brethren, and by the gift of his Spirit, Christ established, after his Death and Resurrection, a new brotherly communion among all who received him in faith and love; this is the communion of his own body, the Church, in which everyone as members would render mutual service in the measure of the different gifts bestowed on each" (*GS 32*).

IV. MARY: MODEL OF FAITH

155. Many Filipino Catholics probably learn more about Faith from their devotion to the Virgin Mary than any other way. This is perfectly grounded in Scripture which portrays Mary as *the* exemplar of faith. Through her "Yes" at the Annunciation, Mary "becomes the model of faith" (*AMB 35; cf. CCC 148*). Luke stresses the contrast between Mary's faith and the disbelief of Zachary by Elizabeth's greeting. "Blest is she who trusted that Lord's words to her would be fulfilled" (*Lk 1:20, 45*). John Paul II writes that "in the expression 'Blest are you who believed' we can rightly find a *kind*

of 'key' which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as 'full of grace' ” (cf. *RMa 19*).

156. Mary perfectly exemplified the common definitions of faith as “full submission of intellect and will” and the “obedience of faith” (*Rom 16:26; 1:5; cf. DV 5*). But she did it *personally*,

with all her human and feminine ‘I’, and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with the “grace of God that precedes and assists,” and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts (*DV 5; cf. LG 56*).

Luke carries this theme of Mary’s faith into his second inspired book where he describes her presence among “those who believed” in the apostolic community after the Resurrection (cf. *Acts 1:14*).

157. Mary is truly an effective inspiration to us because she constantly exercised faith in all the realities of ordinary, daily living, even in family crises. Luke’s account of the “finding in the Temple” offers a perfect example (cf. *Lk 2:41-52*). There is the *first* stage of *astonishment* at seeing Jesus in the temple, in the midst of the teachers. Astonishment is often the beginning of faith, the sign and condition to break beyond our “mind-set” and learn something new. Mary and Joseph learned something from Jesus that day.

158. *Second*, there is *distress* and worry, real anguish and suffering. As with the prophets, God’s Word brings good and bad fortune. Mary was already “taking up the Cross” of the disciple of Christ. *Third*, there is often a *lack of understanding*. Both Mary and Joseph, and later “the Twelve,” could not understand what Jesus meant. Faith is not “clear insight” but “seeing indistinctly, as in a mirror” (*1 Cor 13:12*).

Finally, there is the *fourth* stage of *search* wherein Mary did not drop the incident from her mind, but rather “kept all these things in her heart.” Faith is a continual search for meaning, for making sense of what is happening by uncovering what links them together. Like the “scribe who is learned in the reign of God” Mary acted like “the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old” (*Mt 13:52*).

159. Since faith is the key to Mary’s whole life, from her divine motherhood to her “falling asleep in the Lord,” her life is a real “*pilgrimage of faith*” (*LG 58*). That makes her our model and support in faith. But beyond our individual ‘faith lives,’ John Paul II has brought out its wider significance.

I wish to draw on the ‘pilgrimage of faith’ on which the Blessed Virgin advanced . . . This is not just a question of the Virgin Mother’s life-story, of her personal journey of faith . . . It is also a question of the history of the whole people of God, of all who take part in the same ‘pilgrimage of faith’ (*RMa 5; cf. 14-18*).

INTEGRATION

160. Faith is a reality touching our *whole selves* – our *minds* (convictions), our *hands* and *will* (committed action) and our *hearts* (trust). The *objective* aspects of Christian faith, exemplified in doctrine (the Creed), morals (the Commandments) and worship (the Sacraments), also manifest faith as an *integral* whole. *Christian Faith*, then, is *not something fragmented*. It is a living way of life that

integrates our minds, wills, and hearts with its doctrine, morals, and worship, within a sustaining community of fellow disciples of Christ.

161. To understand the “*doctrine*” or truth of what faith is, then, demands recognizing its *moral* and *worship dimensions* (doing and praying). Scripture constantly insists on this. “The way we can be sure of our knowledge of Christ is to keep his commandments” (1 Jn 2:3). And the way to pray is “through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever. Amen.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

162. *What does “faith” mean in daily life?*

Faith in general means the way we know, accept, and relate positively to others, especially the mutual trust, love, and fidelity we experience in family and friendships.

163. *What is meant by “Catholic faith”?*

Catholic Faith is “to know, love, and follow Jesus Christ in his Body, the Church” (PCP II 36). It is that attitude, activity, and process by which we, empowered by God’s grace:

- freely commit our entire selves to God,
- offer our liberty, our understanding and our whole will to God who reveals Himself and His plan, and
- willingly assent to His Revelation (cf. DV 5).

164. *What does faith as “committing our entire selves to God” entail?*

Faith as a living response to God includes:

- our *minds, believing* in God who calls us to salvation in Jesus;
- our *will and hands, doing* God’s will, and
- our *hearts, entrusting* ourselves to God in prayer and worship.

165. *What are some basic characteristics of Christian Faith?*

Christian Faith is:

- *total, absolute* commitment,
- to the *Blessed Trinity*: our heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, his own divine Son-made-man, and their Holy Spirit,
- in a “*loving knowledge*”
- that *helps us grow* and mature as Filipinos,
- within our *Filipino culture and values*, and
- “*sends*” us *forth* to spread the Gospel.

166. *How important is Faith?*

Faith is necessary to become our true selves and thus gain our salvation, that is, union with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To the three human classic questions Faith responds

- What can I know? God our Father and Christ our Lord.
- What should I do? Love others as Christ does.
- What may I hope for? Christ’s presence and life everlasting.

167. *What does faith in Christ do for us?*

Faith in Jesus Christ:

- helps us to grow into adult persons who can relate to others responsibly and maturely;
- liberates us from being enslaved by sin; and
- opens us to deep joy and happiness in the Lord.

168. *What are the paradoxical characteristics of Faith?*

Our Christian Faith is at once both:

- *certain* enough to die for, yet a “*mystery*” because like love, there is always more to understand;
- a *free* personal response to God, yet *morally binding* in conscience;
- *reasonable*, yet *beyond our natural ways of knowing*;
- an *individual act* of our graced reason, yet also a life-long *process*;
- a *gift* of God through both Revelation and interior inspiration, yet *something we do* nobody can “believe” for us;
- a *personal individual response*, yet only possible as a member of the *Christian community*, the Church.

169. *How can we be sure of our faith?*

Faith is something like the loving knowledge we have of our family and friends. We are “sure” of their love and we try to respond to them. Likewise, through God’s Revelation in Christ, we are absolutely sure of His love for us, and try to respond through the gift of faith.

Chapter 4

Our Unbelief

“What an unbelieving lot you are! . . . how long can I endure you? . . . Everything is possible to a man who trusts.” Then the father cried out: “I do believe, help my lack of trust!”

(Mk 9:19, 23-24)

“Stop murmuring,” Jesus told them. “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; I will raise him up on the last day. . . You will surely die in your sins unless you come to believe that I Am.”

(Jn 6:43f; 8:24)

OPENING

170. Christ, throughout the Gospels, constantly called for *faith*. Jesus praised the Roman centurion for his great faith (*cf. Mt 8:8-10*). He chided those who worried too much about food and clothing for their weak faith (*cf. Mt 6:30*). He could not work miracles among the Nazareans because of their lack of faith (*cf. Mk 6:5*). On the stormy lake, Jesus asked his terrified apostles: “Why are you lacking in faith?” (*Mk 4:40*). And at his Last Supper, Jesus said to Peter: “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail” (*Lk 22:32*).

171. We know from experience that Christian Faith meets all kinds of different receptions among us, and within us, throughout our lives. Sometimes in our *thinking* we put conditions to believing, like the doubting Thomas: “I will never believe it without probing the nailprints in his hands . . .” (*Jn 20: 25*). At other times, our *actions* belie our faith, like St. Peter’s triple “I do not know the man” (*Mt 26:72*). Or perhaps in our *trusting* and *hoping*, we begin to doubt, like the disciples of John the Baptist: “Are you ‘he who is to come,’ or are we to look for someone else?” (*Lk 7:20*).

CONTEXT

172. The faith of the Filipino Catholic today is exposed to many pressures and temptations toward unbelief. Our whole social context of Christian faith and the Church has changed. Before, Filipinos lived in a more stable society in which the Church held a dominant position. Unbelief was generally restricted to certain non-practicing individuals who were pursued pastorally by the Church to return to the sacraments. Today we Filipinos live in a society in transition, in which many religious and anti-religious voices are raised throughout the land. Whole sub-groups are drawn away from the Catholic Faith. The Church's pastoral response is focused on creating new parish and Church structures, such as "Basic Christian Communities," to communicate the Gospel more effectively.

173. Vatican II described this very situation:

greater numbers are falling away from the practice of religion. In the past, it was the exception to repudiate God and religion to the point of abandoning them, and then only in individual cases; but nowadays it seems a matter of course to reject them as incompatible with scientific progress and a new kind of humanism (*GS 7*).

174. In the Philippines, our problems of unbelief often result from overstressing one essential dimension of the faith, while neglecting another equally basic dimension. *Fundamentalists* are strong on Jesus as their personal Savior, on love of the Bible and care for their members, but are frequently closed to Catholic tradition, development of doctrine, sacramental life and the wider social concerns (*cf. PCP II 219, 223-28*). *Activists* take up the thrust for justice and identification with the poor with such zeal that they find little time for prayer or sacramental worship. Some *Charismatics* are so dedicated to Spirit-filled celebrations that the service of neighbor is neglected. All three groups frequently lack the balance and proportion that is one mark of authentic Catholic Faith.

EXPOSITION

175. What, then, are the principal obstacles to authentic Christian Faith in the Philippines today? The paradoxes of Faith described in Chapter 3 indicate some of them. Faith's certitude and reasonableness can lead some to rationalistic *dogmatism*, while its obscurity opens others to *superstition*. Faith as a gift sometimes induces a "*bahala na*" *fideism*. Stressing the freedom of faith has led some to a self-centered, *subjectivistic* faith. Even the personal character of faith can be misunderstood to mean "*private*," rejecting any communitarian dimension.

The obstacles to authentic faith today among Filipinos can be grouped according to how they touch each of the three basic dimensions of faith itself: believing, doing, and worshipping.

I. OBSTACLES TO BELIEVING, DOING, WORSHIPPING

A. Unbelief vs. Believing

176. In Scripture, the problem of unbelief among the people of God, as distinct from the idolatry of the pagans, is a constant scandal. Three principal types of "not believing" can be picked out which remain relevant today. *First* is the simple *denial* that God exists, or that Jesus Christ is Lord, the only begotten Son. "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God' " (*Ps 14:1*). "Who is the liar? He who denies that Jesus is the Christ" (*1 Jn 2:22*). Usually such denials are caused by erroneous ideas about

both *human beings* and *God* (cf. CCC 2126). “Their exaggerated idea of being human causes their faith to languish. . . . Others have such a faulty notion of God that . . . their denial has no reference to the God of the Gospels” (GS 19).

177. *Second*, the opposite type of unbelieving is seeking “*special knowledge*” into one’s fate and future. Divination, sorcery and magic have always been condemned. “Let there not be found among you . . . a fortuneteller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead” (Dt 18:10-11; cf. CCC 2115-17). Today we still have faith healers, private visionaries and the like, who play upon the credulity of simple Christians and draw them into such “abominations to the Lord” (Dt 18:12; cf. NCDP 136).

178. A *third* obstacle to Christian believing is the “natural” self-centeredness or pride that tempts everyone to see any dependence on God as against human freedom and self-fulfillment. From this attitude arises current skepticism, doubts and incredulity. “They” say: “what ‘modern’ person could possibly accept such old-fashioned beliefs!” (cf. CCC 2088-89).

This mind-set is based on a false image: 1) of God as some authoritarian Judge, arbitrarily imposing His will on us; and 2) of our freedom as totally independent of God.

Response

179. *PCP II* has proposed that the basic help we need to face these challenges is clearly a “Renewed Catechesis” that grounds renewal in social apostolate and worship. Basically this involves a catechesis that is Christ-centered, rooted in the living Word of Scripture, and authentically Filipino and systematic (cf. *PCP II* 156-64). The aim is to communicate the “true teaching” of the Gospel message presented in a fitting manner (cf. GS 21). The basic “truth” presented in Scripture is that God created us free with relative autonomy. God wills our own good. But this in no way denies our complete dependence on God. Without the Creator there can be no created world (cf. GS 36).

180. Only in seeing every person in relation to God who is the author and final goal of all, is true human dignity preserved. Our true dignity rests on the fact that we are called to communion with God. As Vatican II stated:

If we exist, it is because God has created us through love, and through love continues to hold us in existence. We cannot live fully according to truth unless we freely acknowledge that love and entrust ourselves to our Creator (GS 19).

181. The Risen Christ shows us how to carry on a “renewed catechesis” in a fitting manner in his encounter with the two disciples on the way to *Emmaus*. Christ first walked along with the two doubting disciples, listening to their story. *Second* he “interpreted for them every passage of Scripture which referred to him” (Lk 24:27). *Finally*, in breaking bread with them, he offered them the choice of believing.

So Christ today leaves to his followers his word and “food for the journey in the sacrament of faith in which natural elements, the fruits of our cultivation, are changed into his glorified Body and Blood, as a supper of human fellowship and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet” (GS 38).

182. In summary, then, Christian doctrine or teaching is a living and life-giving reality that develops through the ages under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, believing in Christ can never be reduced to mere acceptance of “true teaching.” For in Christ the believer sees salvation: “Although you have never seen him, you love him, and without seeing, you now believe in him, and rejoice with

inexpressible joy touched with glory, because you are achieving faith's goal, your salvation" (*1 Pt 1:8-9*).

This salvation is a *present* reality, affecting everything we think, and do, and hope for, every day of our lives.

B. Unbelief vs. Doing

183. But there is a "*practical atheism*" that has always been more common than any theoretical unbelief: Filipinos who live their lives as if God did not exist. Like the Hebrews of old, they do not ask the speculative question: "Does God exist?" Rather they are concerned with the practical: "Is the Lord in our midst or not?" (*Ex 17:7*) "Do we have to worry about Him?" "Will God hurt us in any way?"

These "practical" atheists are indifferent to God's love. This shows in their *ingratitude, tepidity* and spiritual *sloth* (*cf. CCC 2094*). They fail to recognize the signs of God's presence. "How long will they refuse to believe in Me, despite all the signs I have performed among them?" (*Nm 14:11*). Today this blindness can often be traced to *two general causes*.

184. *First*, there is the pragmatic, secularistic mentality that measures all human success in terms of "economic and social emancipation" (*GS 20*). *PCP II* speaks of a "prevailing *consumerism* in our society" (*PCP II 634*). St. John describes the basic abiding causes within each of us — our "concupiscence"— of this "worldly view": "Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show — all these are from the world" (*1 Jn 2:16*).

185. *Second*, even more pertinent to our Philippine context as causing unbelief in behavior is the *poverty* and *injustice* among us. *PCP II* has strong words to say about these national causes for our sinfulness: "In the poverty and underdevelopment of our nation, in its conflicts and divisions, we see the hand of human sinfulness, particularly the grasping paws of greed for profit and power" (*PCP II 266*).

186. "Great numbers of people are acutely conscious of being deprived of the world's goods through injustice and unfair distribution" (*GS 9*). "In the midst of huge numbers deprived of the absolute necessities of life there are some who live in riches and squander their wealth. . . . Luxury and misery exist side by side" (*GS 63*). *PCP II* speaks of how

the Christian conscience must recoil at the sins committed against the poor: so many workers denied just wages to maintain living standards of the few. . . . so many poor farmers tilling lands they will never own . . . so much economic and political power used selfishly to serve the few . . . (*PCP II 267*).

187. Such injustice is a major cause of unbelief not only in the exploited and oppressed, but also in those who commit the injustices. These exploiters deny God in practice by rejecting the God-given rights of their victims. The oppressed, for their part, come to deny God because they cannot see the truth of the Christian vision and promise in their daily lives. Unbelief in doing, then, gradually becomes a *cultural reality* for people suffering widespread injustices.

188. This culture of unbelief can take on systematic form in political or economic structures which deny basic human rights. *Filipino Marxists* blame religious faith together with feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism for the problems of Philippine society (*cf. PCP II 265*). They claim that religion is a social pacifier, promising the poor and oppressed a heavenly reward if they only remain subservient now.

Response

189. The help prescribed by *PCP II* to face this unbelief in “doing” our faith is a “*Renewed Social Apostolate*” towards “*Social Transformation*” (cf. *PCP II Decree Arts. 15; 20-27; and PCP II Document 165-66; 256-329*). To the Marxists we reply that Christ never promised a heavenly reward to “do-nothing” followers, (those who cry out “Lord, Lord”). Reward is only for those who *do* the will of the Father (cf. *Mt 7:21*).

Genuine Christian Faith, in its ethical-prophetic role, fosters basic human personal and social values. It shapes the lifestyle of Christians according to Gospel priorities and authentic human responsibility and justice. Outside of such faith, there is little that can check the “sin of the world” which remains the perduring, universal source of man’s exploitation of man.

190. *PCP II* not only presents the current social teachings of the Church in a manner relevant to our concrete Philippine situation. It also stresses the actual *witness* and concrete contributions already being offered by so many individuals, BCCs, NGOs, etc (cf. *PCP II Decrees Art. 42, 4; and PCP II Document 390*).

Besides the material help thus offered, the deeper, more lasting contribution may well be in showing “*good example*” by putting the faith into *practice*. Such “good example” is especially effective when joined with reliable guidance and direction in essential Christian attitudes and responses to today’s challenges. The Catholic Church in the Philippines can rightfully claim to be especially blessed on both accounts.

C. Unbelief vs. Trusting/Worshipping

191. In this third area of faith — worship — one common attack comes from some contemporary psychologies which charge that religion is an illusion, an infantile projection of the lost father feature. They claim that we invent a father-god to provide security against our fears in this hostile world. Consequently they attack the ground for Christian Hope, thus leading some to discouragement and even *despair*. Others are tempted to *presumption*: either presuming on human capacities alone, or on divine mercy without repentance and conversion of heart (cf. *CCC 2091-92*).

192. *PCP II* presents an opposite form of unbelief relative to worship.

In the Philippines worship has, unfortunately, been often separated from the totality of life. The liturgy is not seen as the source and apex of the Church’s life. Rather it is seen as one department of life, without an intimate connection with social, economic and political life (*PCP II 167*).

It is also true that too often certain popular pious practices and customs may appear more like superstition and self-centered, privatized attitudes than authentic Christian prayer.

Response

193. The way to respond to unbelief attacks against faith as worship is obviously “*A Renewed Worship*” (cf. *PCP II 167-81*). The Plenary Council prescribed one aspect of the needed remedy:

There is an urgent need to stress to Filipino Catholics that the whole of life must be an act of worship, as St. Paul points out (cf. *Rom 12:1*). We cannot worship God in our churches and shrines, and then disregard Him in the daily business of life (*PCP II 168*).

194. Renewing the worship of our people requires renewing their prayer life and popular religious practices. Regarding the latter, *PCP II* counsels that

our attitude has to be one of critical respect, encouragement and renewal. These practices must lead to the liturgy. They have to be vitally related to Filipino life, and serve the cause of full human development, justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We must have the courage to correct whatever leads to fanaticism or maintains people infantile in their faith.

Yet, it adds, “at the same time, seeing how many of our people cherish these religious practices, we must use them as vehicles of evangelization toward worship in Spirit and truth” (*PCP II 175*).

Now the basis for renewing our prayer life and religious practices is surely the Church’s Trinitarian prayer.

195. Trinitarian Prayer/Worship. “The function of the Church is to render God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and as it were visible, while ceaselessly renewing and purifying herself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (*GS 21*). It is the Catholic worship of Father, Son and Spirit in the Christian community that can most effectively purify and heal our prayer of “illusion” and individualistic self-centeredness. For Trinitarian prayer calls us away from inauthentic “faith” seeking private security, to outgoing self-giving in sharing Christ’s and the Church’s saving mission of loving service.

“This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another” (*Jn 13:35*) shown in the service of each “one of my least brothers” (*Mt 25:40*).

196. Christian prayer, then, is no childish projection of a “father-idol” or a “Baby Jesus” serving as escape images from the pain of growth and love in the real world. Secular psychology’s objection actually touches the *abuse* of religious faith rather than its authentic reality. Genuine Christian prayer and hope are based, rather, on mature personal realization of God’s PRESENCE, and our consequent gratitude, thanksgiving, adoration and love of Him.

197. *Trinitarian prayer* draws the Catholic Filipino, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, into sharing Christ’s own experience of *Abba*, Father, whose “will be done on earth as in heaven” (*Lord’s Prayer*). Being rooted in the Church’s worship of Father, Son and Spirit, the Catholic Filipino is motivated to the greatest social responsibility, inspired by the Trinity’s infinite interpersonal, creative, and redeeming love. Filled with this Love, Catholics together in the liturgy respond with a resounding “Amen!” to the finale of all the Eucharistic Prayers:

Through him [Risen Incarnate *Son*], with him and in him,
in the unity of the *Holy Spirit*,
all glory and honor is yours, Almighty *Father*,
for ever and ever.

198. Trinitarian prayer can also help Filipino Catholics in the “inter-religious dialogue” discussed in *PCP II*. While the Plenary Council focused on the principles for the evangelizing mission to Filipino Muslims, Buddhists, Taoists, etc, (*cf. PCP II 110-15*), it implied the larger mission extending to all our fellow Asians who follow the great traditional religious cultures of the East.

Commitment to Christ, the Incarnate *Word* of God, grounds the Christian dialogue with both *Muslim* and *Jew* who also revere God’s Word. The *Buddhist* goal is release from all human desires into the silent stillness of Nirvana. This relates to the Christian worship of the *Father*, whom “no one has ever seen” (*Jn 1:18*) and whom Christian mystics have experienced as “nothing, nothing, nothing. . .” of our worldly consciousness. Finally, Advaitan *Hinduism* can be approached through the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit, the source of oneness between the self and God who draws all men to greater communion in love.

II. OBSTACLES TO BELIEF IN SELF-BECOMING

199. Besides the obstacles to authentic faith's three basic *objective* dimensions (*what* we believe, do and worship), others touch the *subjective* factors (*how* we believe, do and worship) in our natural process of maturing in the Faith. Worthy of note is the common misconception among many Filipino youth that "questioning in matters of faith" is sinful. This arises from a false view, commonly instilled by good-intentioned but erroneous religious instruction, that faith is something to be simply "accepted" from higher authorities. In actual practice, since this view is most often imbibed in childhood, it later becomes an easy excuse for not taking personal responsibility for one's own religious convictions.

Response

200. What helps the most here is our on-going *initiation* into the Christian Faith involving the active participation of family, friends, BCCs, parish, Catholic community, etc. Christ and the Church call us to intelligent discipleship, in which we use all our faculties of mind, will, imagination and affections.

We must clearly distinguish between two different mind-sets. The *first* is honest *questioning* that seeks through personal study, reflection and dialogue, to know our Lord better so we can love Him more ardently and follow Him more closely. The *second* is a self-centered attitude of real *doubting*, when, like doubting Thomas, we put prior conditions to believing in God ("I will not believe it unless . . . [Jn 20:25]).

201. Our life of faith challenges us to constant *growth* in religious understanding, moral vision and practice, and authentic prayer. This is made possible for us when we are strengthened and confirmed by our fellow Catholics united in the local Church, Christ's own community of disciples.

INTEGRATION

202. The Exposition has shown that challenges to authentic faith can arise from any of its three basic objective dimensions of doctrine, morals and worship. The obstacles touch Faith precisely as lived out in our particular personal and social environment. We are Filipinos of the 20th century, living in a specific economic, political, social, cultural, and religious context. The challenges to authentic faith for us take on very definite "faces." It is in courageously confronting these together in our Christian communities that we respond to the loving call of Christ our Lord.

203. If we do not "*believe*" basic Catholic *doctrine* we certainly will not be motivated to *obey* fundamental Catholic *moral principles*, nor participate meaningfully in Catholic *worship*. Whether because of pride, distrust, or indifferent negligence, we will not commit ourselves to the service of others for Christ's sake, nor be concerned for authentic worship of the living God revealed by Jesus Christ. Thus, rejecting belief in God, Christ and the Church involves many evil consequences for individuals, families, and the community at large.

204. So we ask God to "help for our lack of faith" as the only means of coming gradually to the "truth" of ourselves, of others, and of God, in our thoughts, our moral acts, and our prayer. Only in Christ and the Spirit can we perseveringly respond to the challenges of "life in Christ" today.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

205. *Does everybody have faith?*

Everyone has *natural faith*, believing in something or someone.

Believing in God is God's gift which He offers to everyone in different ways. God "wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

But experience shows we can misuse our human freedom and reject God's offer, or turn away from God through sin.

206. *What challenges confront our life of faith in Christ?*

Our life of faith in Christ is challenged by

- our own pride and sinful self-centeredness;
- the poverty, suffering and injustice of so many, contrasted with the indifference and bad example of others;
- religious ignorance, misrepresentation of the Gospel, one-sided practices, and
- atheistic doctrines and consumerist attitudes and values pervading our environment.

207. *How is faith hindered by one-sided practices?*

Exaggerated stress on one dimension of the Faith tends to misrepresent that very dimension and ignore the others.

If Faith is reduced to *only*:

- *doctrine*, an insensitive prayerless dogmatism, out of touch with real life, often results;
- an activist *thrust for justice*, faith can become an ideological, unjust pursuit of one's own ends;
- *prayers, devotions, and church-going*, faith becomes a substitute for real practical Christian charity.

208. *Who are today's "unbelievers"?*

"Unbelievers" today are:

- either "*practical atheists*" so intent on acquiring riches, reputation or power that they have no time for God;
- or *others who claim special knowledge and power* from God, beyond the ordinary.

Neither represent authentic Christian Faith in Jesus Christ.

209. *How can we respond to doctrinal unbelief?*

We need a *renewed catechesis* in the truth of the Christ-centered Gospel, calling us to respond in Christian service of our neighbor and authentic worship of our loving Father in Spirit and truth, in the Christian community.

210. *How can we respond to the unbelief of "NOT doing"?*

A "*renewed social apostolate*" shows the essential human value of following Christ today in concrete service of the poor and oppressed that leads toward social transformation.

211. *How can we respond to the unbelief of "NO worship"?*

PCP II's call for a "*renewed worship*" means helping all Filipino Catholics to truly understand Christian worship of God our Father, through Christ His Son-made-man, in their Holy Spirit.

It means learning to integrate our personal "popular religiosity" with the Church's liturgical worship. This is achieved only if we worship God in *faith*, by relating personally to Jesus Christ as members of His Body, the Church, and not merely going through some external rituals.

212. *What helps us respond to the challenges of faith?*

We can respond adequately to the challenges of faith only through the *Holy Spirit*, working within us; through our family and friends, and through the Church's teaching and its sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

213. *How do we grow in faith?*

We grow in our Catholic faith by *deepening our understanding of Christ's saving message* (believing), by "*doing*" the truth in Christian service, and by "*celebrating*" in authentic prayer and sacramental worship through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

214. *How can we help those who sincerely doubt and question Christian faith?*

We can help those who doubt about faith by:

- clarifying the very act of believing, through common examples drawn from their own interpersonal relations in family life and friendships;
- explaining the chief truths of our faith (the Creed) and how they are lived in Christian moral values and sacramental worship; and
- showing them how the Christian Faith grounds and develops basic Filipino cultural values, both personal and social.

215. *Does Christian Faith change?*

The basic truths of Christian Faith remain but as *living* and *vital*, not static and dead. As living, authentic Faith is constantly led by the Spirit to respond to the new challenges in the world, with new expressions and new emphases, precisely in order to remain faithful to the abiding truth of the Gospel.

Part One

Christ, Our Truth

**Christian Faith is centered on Jesus Christ, who is himself
“the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”**

(cf. Jn 14:6)

INTRODUCTION

Part One presents *Christ our Truth, or Doctrine*. This serves as the foundation for what follows: Part Two, *Christ our Way, or Moral Life*, and Part Three, *Christ our Life, or Worship/Sacraments*.

As our “*truth*,” Christ is the source of our life as *Filipino Catholics*, our search for self-identity, for basic meaning in life. He gives meaning even to our suffering, and focuses our personal commitments within a world view open to the spiritual. He touches us familiarly through his Mother Mary.

Christ thus stands as the center of God’s own self *Revelation*, which comes to us through nature around us, the Bible, the Church, and our own personal experiences in daily life. He is center of our *faith* response, in thinking, acting and praying. Proud of our Christian Faith, we wrestle daily with temptations and the downward drag of *unbelief*. Christ in the *Creed* leads to the Truth of God our *Father* who is NOW *creating* us and the whole world in his indwelling Spirit.

Christ, promised through the prophets of old, comes to us through the inspired pages of the *Gospels* and the New Testament letters. They teach us *who Jesus is*, and how he was born into our world through *Ang Mahal na Birhen*, “*missioned*” by the Father to be our *Savior/Redeemer*. Through his *Cross and Resurrection*, Christ liberated us *from* the slavery of sin and opened us to the promise of eternal life. *Risen* and *ascended* to his Father, Christ is with us till the end of time by sending us his Spirit.

Chapter 5

Catholic Doctrine: Christ Our Truth

“If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

(Jn 8:31-32)

“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)

OPENING

216. Christian Faith is centered on Jesus Christ, who is himself “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (*Jn 14:6*). As the Truth, Christ is the “real light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (*Jn 1:9*). He reveals the Father (*cf. Jn 14:6*) and sends the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (*cf. Jn 14:17*) who guides us to all truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*). Through Christ we become “consecrated in truth” (*cf. Jn 17:19*), walk in the path of truth (*cf. 2 Jn 4*), act in truth (*cf. Jn 3:21*), share in the work of truth (*cf. 3 Jn 8*) and worship in Spirit and truth (*cf. Jn 4:24*).

217. Catholic doctrine expresses the *truth* that Christ our Lord brings us. This truth does not resolve all the problems and riddles of our daily lives. It does not take the place of our planning what we should do, or sharing our experiences with others, and learning from them. But, as Christians who are open to Christ’s truth in faith, we have a direction and a basic insight into life. We are better able to work out our own personal response to the basic human questions: “Who am I?”, “Why am I here?”, “How am I to relate to others?”. . . Christ’s truth gives each person “the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny” (*GS 10*).

CONTEXT

218. There is a real challenge today for the Catholic Filipino. From all sides questions are being asked about the Catholic Faith that up to fairly recently was accepted by most Filipinos. “*Why do you*

worship the Blessed Virgin Mary?” Catholics are asked. “Why do you collect statues of Sto. Niño?” “Why confess to a priest?” “Is Jesus really divine?” “Why interfere in politics and take part in demonstrations and strikes in business affairs?” . . .

219. The need to *understand* the practice of the Catholic Faith, then, has become suddenly urgent. In the First Letter of Peter we are admonished: “Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully” (1 Pt 3:15-16a). No longer is it enough for a Catholic to say: “I don’t know why, but that’s just the way we do it here.” Moreover, knowing “why” we Catholics practice our Catholic Faith in this way obviously does not come from memorizing prepared formulas. Rather, it means growing and maturing in our personal faith in Christ our Lord, within his Body, the Catholic community.

EXPOSITION

220. The truth that Christ brings us is both a *gift* of God and a *task*. As *gift*, Christ’s truth is both life-giving and liberating. “If the Son frees you, you will really be free” (Jn 8:36). At the same time, it is an ongoing *task* of 1) *discerning* the truth, and 2) *professing* it with courage. Moreover we have to gradually learn to “*distinguish* the spirit of truth from the spirit of deception” (1 Jn 4:6). “The natural man does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God. . . . The spiritual man, on the other hand, can appraise everything” (1 Cor 2:14-15). Once recognized, we must “*profess* the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head” (Eph 4:15).

221. Catholic doctrine brings us the truth of Christ. It is this truth which grounds our *moral behavior* and our *prayer/worship*. *First*, regarding morality, we know we are committed to the truth when we keep God’s commandments. “His commandment is this: we are to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ and are to love one another as He commanded us” (1 Jn 3:23). “Faith that does nothing in practice is thoroughly lifeless” (Jas 2:17). *Second*, as Catholics we “must worship in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4:24). True worship is offered only through Christ, for “no one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed Him” (Jn 1:18).

222. For the Filipino Catholic, therefore, to believe in Christ means acting, feeling, hoping, trusting, loving, praying – all supported and inspired by one basic conviction: “God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tm 2:5-6). Or more simply: “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor 12:3). “And no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Faith in Christ, then, is essentially *Trinitarian*. Thus *PCP II* concludes:

We must return to Christ, center our life of discipleship wholly in Him, become a community after the image of the Divine Trinity itself – that we may become truly His people (*PCP II* 660).

I. HISTORY OF THE CREEDS

223. It is at our *Baptism* that we first received the rule of Faith, the *Creed*. “Creed,” from the Latin “Credo” which means “I believe,” presents the essential truths of the Christian Faith. The two principal Catholic Creeds, presented side-by-side in the Vatican’s *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, are: 1) the *Apostles’ Creed*, recited at Sunday Mass in the Philippines, which is an elaboration of the early “Roman Creed” of the third century; and 2) the *Nicene Creed*, which was promulgated by the

First Council of Constantinople in 381. It “confirmed the faith of Nicea,” the first Ecumenical Council held in 325 (cf. CCC 185,194-96). These Creeds were created and handed down through Catholic Tradition by the Magisterium, the teaching Church. Through them we touch the living core of the Christian proclamation.

A. Biblical Creeds

224. Most Filipino Catholics receive the Creed in infant baptism through our parents. In adult baptism we can receive it personally. The Catholic Creeds have had a long history in Scripture and Tradition. First there are the *Biblical Creeds* or professions of faith from the *Old Testament* times. “Indeed the Lord will be there with us, majestic; yes, the Lord our judge, the Lord our lawgiver, the Lord our king, He it is who will save us” (Is 33:22). “The Lord is God and there is no other” (Dt 4: 35).

In the *New Testament*, the early proclamations of faith centered on the Risen Christ: “The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him on a tree. He whom God has exalted at His right hand as ruler and savior is to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:30-31).

B. Liturgical and Catechetical Creeds

225. Out of the early preaching of the Good News of Christ’s resurrection developed the *liturgical acclamations* of the early Christian communities: “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all” (Eph 4:5-6). As the early churches developed, so did the creeds. For they were needed in *catechetical instruction* to prepare converts for baptism. These creeds quickly took on a fixed form as St. Paul explicitly states:

Brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and in which you stand firm. You are being saved by it at this very moment if you hold fast to it as I preached it to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain. I handed on to you first of all what I myself received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried and, in accordance with the Scriptures, rose on the third day; that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve (1 Cor 15:1-5).

226. The early creeds were “professions of faith” used in Baptisms that narrated the *saving events which grounded the faith of the Christian communities* (cf. CCC 187-89). Three events dominated the Christian story: God’s *creating* act, His *redeeming* act in Jesus Christ, and His *sanctifying* presence in all in the Holy Spirit. From these narrative elements grew the *Trinitarian pattern of the classic Creeds*. First the *Father* as Creator, then the *Son*, who became man, died and rose from the dead for our redemption, and *third*, the *Holy Spirit* uniting us in Christ’s Church (cf. CCC 190-91). But this Trinity is seen through a *Christocentric focus*, for it is *through, with, and in Christ* that we learn and experience the Father and Holy Spirit.

C. The Creed Today

227. But for most Filipino Catholics, the *Creed* is usually just something memorized as children in school or with the local parish catechist. It is recited – more or less attentively, together at Sunday Mass. Rarely perhaps have Filipinos been taught how the *twelve articles* of the Creed form an *organic unity*. That is, how they fit together in wonderful harmony and coherence. Nor have ordinary Filipino Catholics been catechized in how the creedal statements are not dead propositions but *living truths* which have *developed through the history of Christian communities, the Church*. Unfortunately, few Filipino Catholics have been taught how *relevant* the Creedal truths are today for us because they are *saving, liberating truths* (cf. NCDP 172-79).

II. OBJECTIONS TO THE CREED

228. One basic objection today is that for many Filipino Catholics the Creed remains too often merely an impersonal, abstract, and irrelevant dead formula. Through a renewed catechesis that *PCP II* is calling for, we must be able to show how the *Creed is an irreplaceable means for renewing our Faith*. It proclaims a personal and communitarian faith-narrative of the mighty acts of God, in striking images and story, drawn from God's own inspired biblical word.

229. Others object that the Creed and Catholic doctrine in general impede Christian unity. "Doctrine divides, service unites," they claim. But to neglect the truths proclaimed in the Creed can soon lead to mindless activism that cannot sustain itself because it lacks a solid foundation. *The Creedal truths provide the basic ground for the Christian moral criteria* needed for judging what is morally right and justified and what is not. Creed, in Latin: *Credo*, has been likened to the Latin *cardo*, meaning "hinge", that upon which everything in the Christian Faith turns.

230. A more serious objection against the Creed is that it makes Catholic Faith seem like a list of doctrines rather than a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. But this mistakenly separates "personal" from truth, pious enthusiasm from God's own self-revelation in Christ Jesus. What *is* true, however, is that many who recite the Creed in public together do not seem to relate it to the Bible. They do not see the connection between the Gospel and the personal/communitarian Creedal proclamation of God in Christ. In this they fail to follow St. Paul:

We proclaim the truth openly. . .the splendor of the gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God. . . For God. . . has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:2,4,6).

231. The Creed, then, brings us to Jesus by situating him in the great acts of God, and so liberating us from misguided piety and possible superstitions. The Creed is like a *skeleton*, a framework of truths that undergirds our relation to Jesus, to God, to our fellowmen, and to our whole life. A human skeleton is not the whole living person, but gives a framework and rigidity without which no one could live or move. Likewise the Creed is not the whole of our living faith. But its twelve articles or "joints" give the structural support necessary for the authentic growth and vitality of our personal commitment to Christ (*cf. CCC 191*).

III. FUNCTIONS OF THE CREED

232. Through the centuries the Creed has served the Church and individual Catholic believers in many different ways. *Three functions* have been especially valuable: 1) as a *summary* of Catholic beliefs; 2) as a *pledge of loyalty* to God and Church; and 3) as a *proclamation of self-identity*. Each of these main functions covers a number of particular roles which the Creed has played in Christian tradition.

A. Summary of Beliefs

233. As a *summary* of basic *Catholic beliefs*, the Creed has been an indispensable means of Faith for both the Church and the individual Catholics. For the *Church*, the Creed was created: 1) for *communicating* the Christian message to the world; 2) for *grounding* its own ever deepening insight into Christ's truth; 3) for *uniting Catholics* in their common commitment to Christ; and 4) for inter-religious *dialogue* with non-Christians (*cf. NCDP 169*).

234. The history of the Creeds actually manifests *three basic aspects* of Catholic doctrine. *First*, the Creeds bring out in a unique way the *inner unity* and *coherence* of the doctrines of the Faith. *Second*, they show the *doctrinal development*. As the early Church moved from proclaiming Christ as the Risen Savior to a more developed teaching, so credal statements developed from the *kerygmatic* to the *catechetical*. *Third*, the Creeds have proven their “*relevance*” to every age. The Creeds of the early Church councils became accepted as the standard or “*rule of faith*,” flowing from the New Testament’s insistence on “*sound doctrine*” (*cf. 1 Tim 4:6; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13f; 4:3*). They have consistently fulfilled this function up to the present day (*cf. NCDP 172-76*).

B. Pledge of Loyalty

235. The Creed functions as a *pledge of loyalty* to God and the Church. The Creeds are public confessions of Christian faith in the *Triune God*. “For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*Rom 10:9*). Thus the Creed offers praise and thanksgiving since it proclaims the truth of Christ “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 2:10-11*)

236. Besides praising God, the Creed also professes loyalty to the “*Church* of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of truth” (*1 Tim 3:15*). In this sense the Creed becomes an *apologetic* for the Church’s faith, giving “*reason for this hope*” (*1 Pt 3:15*) and defending the faith against all who would “*oppose the truth, and with perverted minds falsify the faith*” (*2 Tim 3:8*).

The Creed thus responds to *PCP II’s* insistence on an “*apologetic catechesis*”: Since its birth, Christianity has been the subject of attacks from which it has had to defend itself. Jesus had to answer to objections to his teachings, as the Gospel testifies. St. Paul had to answer early Christian errors, and charged his disciples to protect the faithful from them while keeping pure the deposit of faith. Apologetics has always been part of the pastoral and theological tradition of the Church. We must today be willing and able to defend our teaching in public fora. (*PCP II 222*)

C. Proclamation of Identity

237. The Creed helps ground the Catholic believer’s self-identity. In proclaiming the Creed, we Filipino Catholics acknowledge that our basic personal identity is drawn from God’s initiative in recreating us through Christ and the Holy Spirit into one community. Each of us, as baptized Catholics, can declare with St. Paul: “The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*). To each of his disciples Christ says: “It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit” (*Jn 15:16*).

238. For individual Filipino Catholics, the Creed, then, identifies who we Catholics are and what we stand for as disciples of Christ, united in his Church. In this function, the public recitation of the Creed at Sunday Mass helps us in a number of ways. *First*, it unites us into one worshipping Catholic community which offers each of us strength and support. *Second*, it supplies the basis for guiding our affective religiosity and devotional piety, and for judging the numerous religious groups and sects that have multiplied so quickly in our country in recent years. *Third*, it helps especially in interpreting our daily life-experiences in a truly Catholic manner. *Fourth*, it grounds an open and free dialogue with non-Christian Filipino groups and individuals (*cf. NCDP 170*).

239. Proclaiming together our common heritage as Catholics in the Creed can unite us as few other things could. We have the assurance in standing before others of enjoying a common ground that is deeper and more lasting than anything we could possibly create ourselves. The Creed can be an

effective means by which we gradually develop a real personal “sense of belonging” in the Catholic Church, a feeling of “being at home.”

INTEGRATION

240. Catholic *doctrine* presenting the truth of Christ, as summarized in the Creed, has already been shown, by its very nature, to be linked to public *worship* and thanksgiving to God. Without solid grounding in Christ’s truth, prayer and worship inevitably slide into pious sentimentalism, ritualism, and even superstitious idolatry. On the other hand, without sincere, authentic prayer and worship, many are led “to give credence to falsehood, because they have not opened their hearts to the truth in order to be saved” (2 Thes 2:11, 10).

241. The inner link between the *doctrinal truth* of Christ and Christian *moral* behavior is well stressed by St. Paul. He contrasts how pagans live with empty minds and darkened understanding with the Ephesians who have been taught the truth that is in Jesus, namely:

that you must lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth. (Eph 4:21-24).

242. A Scriptural example of this integration can be easily composed: to “*believe* in the Lord Jesus” (Acts 16:31) means to “*keep his commandments*” (1 Jn 2:3), and to *pray* “through him, with him, and in him” (Eucharistic Prayer), repeating the ancient Christian plea “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rv 22:20).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

243. *Where do Catholics find the basic truths of their lives?*

Catholic doctrine expresses how we Catholics find in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit, both sent to us by our heavenly Father in the Church, the basis of *who* we are, *why* and *how* we are to live, and *where* our final destiny is.

244. *Is it not enough to love one another, without knowing Catholic doctrine?*

No, we need to know Catholic doctrine to be able to:

- determine *how to love authentically* as Christians;
- *give reason* for our service and worship as Catholics;
- *grow* in our relation to Christ and one another, and so build up the Christian community.

[“By obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a genuine love of your brothers” (1 Pt 1:22).]

245. *What is Catholic doctrine?*

Catholic doctrine is the *expression of the truth* which Christ brings us, addressed to our *minds* (what really *is*), our *wills* (how to *do* the truth, act in truth) and our *hearts* (true love and worship).

[“Let us love in deed and in truth, and not merely talk about it” (1 Jn 3:18).]

246. *What are the basic Catholic doctrines?*

The basic Catholic doctrines are summarized in the *Creed* which, grounded in Sacred Scripture, presents *God as Father Creator*, who sent *His Son Jesus Christ to redeem us*, and the *Holy Spirit in the Church* to draw us to life everlasting.

247. *Why is the Creed important?*

Creeds have had an important role in evangelizing “all nations” in the Christian Faith, as the New Testament and Church liturgy and catechesis clearly testify. All Creeds manifest the same *Trinitarian pattern*, and *Christocentric focus*.

248. *How are Catholics initiated into Catholic truths?*

At *Baptism*, the *Creed* is used to express the new life of commitment to Christ in the Holy Spirit, within the Christian community, the Church.

The Creed proclaims the truths upon which our lives as sons and daughters of the Father depend.

249. *How does the Creed relate us to Christ?*

The Creed presents the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, from a Christocentric perspective. It highlights Christ’s saving Paschal Mystery as the key to understand God’s total relationship with us, from creation to our final destiny.

250. *Why do some raise objections against the Creed?*

Some reject the Creed as a collection of impersonal, abstract and irrelevant dead formulas that make Christian Faith into a list of “things to believe”.

These objections completely misunderstand the true nature of the Creed. Yet, unfortunately, they represent how the Creed appears to many of the faithful.

251. *How do we respond to these objections?*

Our response is simply to show how the Christian communities from the New Testament times used the Creeds to evangelize, proclaim their Faith in Christ, and discern between Gospel truth and error.

252. *What does the Creed do for our life of faith?*

The Creed acts like a *skeleton* supplying the framework and support needed for living and growing (maturing) in our Catholic Faith.

253. *What are the principal functions of the Creed?*

The Creed functions in three principal ways:

- as a *summary of Catholic truths* needed to communicate and instruct in the Gospel;
- as *profession of loyalty* to God and to the Church; and
- as a *declaration of our own self-identity* as disciples of Christ, reborn in his Spirit within his body, the Church.

254. *How does the Creed foster Christian living?*

The Creed provides the basic *doctrinal ground* for authentic *Christian living*. This includes:

- our loving *service* of one another in building up the local Christian community, and
- our sacramental *worship* of God in Spirit and truth.

Chapter 6

God, the Father Almighty

“I am God the Almighty. Walk in my presence . . . ”

(Gen 17:1)

“For us there is one God: the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we live; and one Lord, Jesus Christ. . . ”

(1 Cor 8:6)

OPENING

255. The central focus of religious Faith is God, “the first and the last” (*Is 44:6*). All important, then, is how we perceive and “picture” God. From the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai, Christians inherit a very positive image of God. “The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity” (*Ex 34:6*). The Psalmist sings “Praise the Lord, for he is good. . . Great is our Lord and mighty in power” (*Ps 147:1,5; cf. Rv 15:3-4*). Today more than ever an accurate personal understanding of God is urgently needed.

256. The Christian Creed, of course, presents a Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three Divine Persons structure the Creed and this whole Catechism: the Father in this Part. 1 with the Son, whose moral teaching is taken up in Part 2, and the Holy Spirit in Part 3. Like the Creed, we begin immediately with God the Father, to whom Christ our Lord taught us to pray (*cf. Lk 11:2*).

CONTEXT

257. One thing noticeable about Filipinos is how spontaneously they relate to God. A typical example of this is the following excerpt from the Tagalog *Pasion*.*

*O Dios sa Kalangitan,
Hari ng Sangkalupaan,
Dios na walang kapantay,
Mabait, lubhang maalam*

O God in heaven
King of the universe,
God without equal,
Kind, wise

At puno ng karunungan.

And full of knowledge.

*Ikaw ang Amang tibobos
Na nangungulilang lubos,
Amang di matapus-tapos,
Maawai't mapagkukop
Sa taong lupa't alabok.*

Thou art the Absolute Father
[Who art] completely alone
Father eternal,
Merciful and adoptive
Towards earthen men.

258. Nor is this God-relatedness only a thing of the past. Even now, wherever you see a new housing development going up, a chapel is sure to rise. There seems to be no limit to the number of different religious groups throughout the land. Among Filipinos, it is taken for granted that God is central to their community life and welfare, as well as family and individual interests.

259. But *who* is this God so central to life? *How* is He served and worshipped? Some who contribute to building a church or chapel are rarely seen afterwards in Church worship or activities. The old phrase “*Kasal, Binyag, Libing Christians*” describes not only these generally absentee believers. It also points out the common fact that so many Fili-pinos have never been properly catechized in their Christian Faith. Many complain “I never understood what we were doing.” For such Christians, who is this God that is so taken for granted that He is often seemingly ignored?

260. The Creed is *presumed* to be the official source for clarifying *who* God is, and *how* we are related to Him. But the reality is often quite different. When Filipinos are catechized in the authentic Christian image of God and of His worship, they are usually *surprised* to discover so many of their Filipino cultural values within the basic Christian catechesis. For example, children’s respect and “*utang na loob*” to their parents exemplify our common human gratitude to our heavenly Father. “*Bahala na*,” understood positively, relates the Filipino to God’s providential care. “*Malasakit*” pictures well God’s unrelenting care for man, his creature. Even our value of “*kagandahang-loob*” expresses God’s perfect interior goodness that ever seeks to bring out the best in us.

261. The opening line of the Creed presents us with *three descriptions of God*: God is the *Father*, the *Almighty*, and the *Creator* of heaven and earth. In this chapter we shall focus on the first two, Father and Almighty, leaving the detailed treatment of “Creator” for Chapter 7. But three preliminary points must first be made.

EXPOSITION

I. PRELIMINARY POINTS

262. The first point is the power of these descriptions to *lift us out of ourselves* and *focus* our eyes on *God*, and what He has done for us through history. There is no false religious sentiment about what *we* do for God, or on *our* obligations. The Creed liberates us from such self-centeredness by directing all our attention to the **ONE GOD who is Love**. As a prayer, the Creed teaches us to believe, to trust, to ground ourselves not in what *we* feel, we do, we want, or we are, but rather in what *God* is, God does, God wills, and God offers in us and for us.

263. The second preliminary observation concerns the *proper identity of God* described by these terms. It is true that the Creed responds to the general, universal human need for God. “As the deer longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God. Athirst is my soul for God, the living

God” (*Ps 42:2-3*). Throughout history, men and women have related to God as they have experienced Him in the beauty and goodness of nature and in their own history (*cf. Rom 1:20*).

264. Old Testament. Moreover God has specially revealed Himself in salvation history to the Israelites as recorded in the Old Testament. There is but *One God* who is to be loved (*Dt 6:4-5*), who reveals His Name — “*I Am*” — (*cf. Ex 3:14*), who is *Truth* (*2 Sm 7:28*) and *Love* (*cf. Hos 11:1; CCC 200-21*). To believe in such a God affects our whole life tremendously. It means realizing the majestic grandeur of God (*cf. Jb 36:26*), living within the action of His grace (*cf. Ps 116:12*), with complete confidence in His Providence, *recognizing* the unity and dignity of every person (*cf. Gn 1:26*), and the task of caring for all creation (*cf. CCC 222-27*).

265. But the God of the Creed, while firmly based on this Old Testament revelation, is specifically the God revealed in the concrete experiences of Easter and Pentecost, the God revealed by Jesus Christ. He is the God experienced by the disciples of the Risen Christ, in the Spirit. “Father” in the Creed means first and foremost “*Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*,” and only in view of that, Father of *all men*.

266. Identifying the Creed’s “Father” thus expresses the biblical portrayal of Jesus’ *unique* relation to the Father. When Philip asked Jesus: “Show us the Father and that will be enough for us,” Jesus replied: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. . . . Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? . . . it is the Father who lives in me accomplishing His works” (*Jn 14:9-10*). This brings us to the *third* preliminary point, namely, the Trinity as the specific “Christian” image of God.

267. Blessed Trinity/Grace. The God revealed by Jesus Christ is, of course, the Blessed Trinity, the central Mystery of the Christian Faith and of our Christian life. “No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed Him” (*Jn 1:18*). Jesus, the Incarnate Son, reveals to us the Eternal Father, and his own unity with the Father (*cf. Jn 10:30*). Together with the Father, the Risen Christ sends their Holy Spirit, “a spirit of adoption through which we cry, *Abba*, ‘Father!’ The Spirit itself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God . . . heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ” (*Rom 8:15-17; cf. CCC 232-67*).

268. This Trinitarian image of God is present to us from the very inception of our Christian life. We were *baptized* in the name of Father, Son, and Spirit (*cf. CCC 249*). Baptism is a continuing reality in our lives through which we are called to share their divine life of love even now on earth through *Grace*, in the obscurity of faith, and after death in the eternal light of heaven (*cf. CCC 265*). Meanwhile our every prayer as Catholics is begun with the Sign of the Cross: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (*CCC 232*). And our community Eucharistic celebrations begin with a greeting such as: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (*2 Cor 13:13*). In brief, our whole Christian life is marked by the Trinity.

269. With this general background on God in Old Testament and Christian perspectives, we can now begin to study the meaning of the Creed’s “Father” and “Almighty.”

II. GOD AS OUR FATHER

270. How is it possible, proper, and true to call God *our* “Father?” Five basic reasons can be given why God is our Father.

Our Creator

271. *First*, the most obvious reason is because He *created* us. “Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, . . . Who gives breath to its people and spirit to those who walk on it: I, the Lord, have called you . . . I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you” (*Is 42:5-6*).

As Christians, we know further that “we are truly [God’s] handiwork, created in Christ Jesus” (*Eph 2:10*).

Our Provider

272. *Second*, God is our Father because He *provides* for our needs. The Psalmist acclaims: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (*Ps 23:1*). He sent us Jesus, “the Good Shepherd,” who taught: “If God clothes in such splendor the grass of the field . . . how much more will he provide for you, O weak in faith!” (*Lk 12:28*)

Our Redeemer

273. *Third*, God is our Father because He has *redeemed* us. “You, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer you are named forever” (*Is 63:16*). This redemption is a further sign of our Father’s love. “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die, but may have eternal life” (*Jn 3:16*).

God’s Indwelling Spirit

274. *Fourth*, as our Father, God *sends His Spirit* to share His divine life with us. “If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us. The way we know we remain in Him and He in us is that He has given us of His Spirit” (*1 Jn 4:12-13*).

Our Self-Identity/Destiny

275. *Lastly*, as with Jesus himself, God as our Father grounds our own self-identity. For we are all essentially children of God, destined for life eternal with Him. “*Abba*, Father” captures in a word that unique relationship to God enjoyed by Jesus Christ. In this relationship Jesus invites all of us to share. To be a Christian, then, means to acknowledge that *all persons* are called to be adopted sons/daughters of the Father, in Christ Jesus. Thus filial love of God our Father calls for loving service of our fellowmen.

Our Motherly Father

276. These reasons why God is “Father” are certainly not affirming that God is sexual, that is, masculine rather than feminine. God’s fullness of life embraces both the *paternal* and *maternal* dimensions of love, and infinitely more! Isaiah describes how God promises “as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you” (*Is 66:13*). Christ described his desire to gather Jerusalem’s children together as “a mother bird gathers her young under her wings” (*Mt 23:37*).

But to really appreciate that God is *truly our Father*, we have to go back to the biblical narrative of the great events of salvation history.

III. GOD REVEALED AS “FATHER” IN SCRIPTURE

A. Yahweh in the Old Testament

277. The *Old Testament* presents the inspired story of God forming His own people by establishing a *special relationship* with them. This *covenant* was a call to fuller life and salvation. *First* God called *Abraham* out of his homeland and promised him: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you” (*Gn 12:1-2*). Through *Abraham*, God promised: “all the nations of the earth shall find blessing – all this because you obeyed my command” (*Gn 22:18*). Thus God showed Himself to be a *personal* God, eager to endow his people with land, material possessions and countless descendants.

278. The call of *Moses* gives an even sharper picture of *God as liberating His people*. Out of the burning bush the Lord said: “I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers. . . . Come now, I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt” (*Ex 3:7,10*). God showed Himself “Father” to the Israelites by choosing them “to be a people peculiarly His own.” This was not because they were the largest of all nations, but solely because He “set His heart” on them and loved them (*cf. Dt 7:6-8*). For their part, the Israelites were to observe God’s commandments, the “Ten Words,” to guide them toward fuller freedom as His children (*cf. Ex 20:1-17*).

279. The subsequent history of the Israelites showed the same infidelities which we ourselves experience today in our relationship with God. Yet, despite their stubborn unfaithfulness, God remained faithful. He established a covenant with *David* and promised him: “I will raise up your heir after you. . . I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me” (*2 Sm 7:12,14*). After the Exile, God promised through the *prophets* a *New and Eternal Covenant*: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (*cf. Jer 31:31-34*).

This is the image of God given us in the Old Testament and described in the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer:

Father, we acknowledge your greatness.
All your actions show your wisdom and love . . .
Even when we disobeyed you and lost your friendship
You did not abandon us to the power of death,
 but helped us all to seek and find you.
Again and again you offered a covenant to us,
And through the prophets taught us to hope for salvation.

This is the image of God that Jesus came to bring to fulfillment.

B. Jesus’ “Abba” Relationship

280. *Jesus’ relation to the Father is unique.* The Old Testament commonly referred to “the God of our Fathers.” It names God as “Father” only in *eleven places*, and never in direct address. But Jesus constantly speaks of God as Father (*over 170 times* in the New Testament). This is especially true at crucial points in our Lord’s life – his Baptism, his Transfiguration, his Last Supper with his apostles, and especially in his Passion and Death. In each of these critical moments, Jesus experienced this special relation to God, his “*Abba*.” He lived as Son of his Father by his filial love, obedience, and complete dedication to his Father’s will. Jesus also realized that this experience was unique to him: “No one knows the Father but the Son – and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him” (*Mt 11:27*).

281. *Jesus taught that God is the Father of all*, and instructed his disciples to pray to God as “Our Father” (*Mt 6:9*). In this he *revolutionized* the idea and image of God. For Jesus, the Father was not an

authoritarian paternalistic God, but a God incredibly committed to us, His adopted children. He rains down the Just One, Immanuel, God-with-us. He is a forgiving Father who runs out to greet His prodigal repentant son (*cf. Lk 15:20*). He is a Father who cannot be bribed, or cajoled, or fooled in any way. But his love for us goes beyond all bounds. He even sends His only begotten Son to die on the Cross to bring salvation and new life to us all.

282. Proclaiming God as Father, as *Ama, Tatay*, is to realize God's place in *our* own self-identity. *Our deepest self is to be His adopted son or daughter.* We recognize the tremendous *utang na loob* we owe God our Father who sustains us every moment of our lives. But we also come to realize our *responsibility* to order our lives according to God's loving will. His Fatherly love desires only our utmost good. God's will is that we grow into the fullness of our capacities, unto our perfect happiness. Thus we are most our true selves, most creative, when we obey His will. Trusting completely in His Fatherly Providence frees us from all depressing fear, through an authentic, positive "*bahala na*" attitude.

IV. ALMIGHTY

283. God the Father is described as "*Almighty*," the only divine attribute cited in the Creed. Its importance can be explained under *three specific qualities*. We believe God's power is: 1) *universal*; 2) *loving*; and 3) a *mystery* (*cf. CCC 268*).

284. Universal. God the Father's power is *universal* because He is *PANTOKRATOR*, the Creator and ruler of all things, infinitely beyond any human father we experience on earth (*cf. CCC 268*). This stops us from falling into any false sentimentalism regarding God our loving Father. We believe: "He rules and compasses all things, for the heights of the heavens and the depths of the abysses and the limits of the world are in His Hand" (*St. Theophilus of Antioch*).

285. So in the Old Testament we read of *Yahweh Sabaoth*, "Lord of Hosts," and *El Shaddai*, "Lord of the mountain," who showed His power particularly in the Exodus liberation. "With strong hand and outstretched arm you brought your people Israel out of Egypt amid signs and wonders and great terror" (*Jer 32:21*). In the New Testament God's power is revealed in Christ's "signs" or miracles, and especially in his Resurrection (*cf. CCC 269*).

286. God's almighty power is manifested as *universal* in that He is both utterly beyond us (*transcendent*), and yet more intimately within us (*immanent*) than we are to ourselves. His utter *transcendence* is expressed by Isaiah the prophet: "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts" (*Is 55:8-9*). But the same prophet sees this transcendence in God's *holiness*: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" (*Is 6:3*) This we repeat in the *Sanctus* of every Mass.

This same quality of holiness brings out God's *universal immanent presence*. So the *Sanctus* continues Isaiah's text: "All the earth is filled with his glory!" (*Is 6:3*).

287. Loving. Now since we all expect God to be all-powerful, almighty, we might miss what is most striking about the divine power in the Bible. For as with the idea of "Father," the Bible actually *revolutionizes* the notion of God as '*almighty*.' The biblical '*almighty*' is not some impersonal, arbitrary, self-seeking force, imposing terror on all creatures. Rather, the Father's almighty power is the *re-creating personal energy of non-violent Love*.

288. This "loving power" of the Father, His "*kagandahang-loob*," is revealed especially in Christ our Lord, present among us in the Spirit. God keeps us as His "*segullah*" – the apple of His eye. His

almighty love is forever yearning to do more for us, in the spirit of “*malasakit*,” as Christ pictured for all in his parable of the Good Shepherd (cf. *Jn 10:11*; CCC 270).

289. A Mystery. Yet proclaiming God as Father *Almighty* does not blind the Christian to all the *evil* in the world. Sin and the suffering of countless people are much too real to make light of, or explain away by some flimsy excuse. Thus the ever-persistent question: If God is really all-powerful, why can't He wipe out all evil? Our Christian Faith does not give us any easy “answer” to this mystery. But it does offer us some basic truths to fortify us against meaningless, despairing suffering (cf. CCC 309).

290. Mystery of God's Powerlessness. God's power is “mystery” because it so often appears as *powerlessness*. This is most sharply manifested in the Passion and Death of Christ. With St. Paul we “proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called. . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (*1 Cor 1:23-25*). Thus, God's “powerlessness” calls forth the exclamation:

May you know. . . the immeasurable scope of his power in us who believe. It is like the strength he showed in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand in heaven, high above every principality, power virtue, and domination, and every name that can be given in this age or in the age to come. He has put all things under Christ's feet and has made him, thus exalted, head of the Church” (*Eph 1:19-22*; cf. CCC 272).

Moreover, we firmly believe that “God, who raised up the Lord, will raise us also by His power” (*1 Cor 6:14*).

291. Mystery of Evil. In approaching this mystery of evil, we *first* affirm our unshakeable belief that God our Father *is* concerned precisely with each and every one of us, here and now, in all our troubles and sufferings. *Second*, our Faith tells us that evil originated in the Fall of the first persons, and not from any defect in God or his creative power. *Third*, by picturing the Fall of Adam as a dramatic event, the Bible situates moral evil in the mystery of *freedom*, not in the limitations of all creatures. Sin is the result not of our being “*tao lamang*” — only a limited human person! — but of our free choice of evil (cf. CCC 311).

292. The broader mystery of *all* suffering and evil in the world, *physical* as well as *moral*, has to be viewed in terms of our interrelated “world-in-process.” We realize the world is developing through an evolutionary process which involves our own free self-development in society. The only power that prevents the evils of the world from becoming intolerable and totally devastating, is God's.

God the Father has entered into this process by sending His Son on His redemptive mission, and sending the Holy Spirit to continue Christ's work on earth. He continues to take upon himself the sin and suffering of the world, and thus transforms what would be the cause of ultimate despair into a source of hope, now and for eternal life.

293. Our Christian faith thus offers us spiritual strength to face “the human condition” rather than any intellectual “solution.” The evil in the world is not some “*problem*” to be solved, but a “*mystery*” to be faced. Three “*faces*” of evil — *fate*, *sin* and *death* — can never be answered by any rationalistic “head knowledge.” What alone is effective is a vibrant spiritual life of believing, hoping and loving God, our Father Almighty, through Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, in their indwelling Holy Spirit.

So we can point to the Old Testament narration of *Joseph* (cf. *Gn 45:8*; *50:20*), and Christ's Paschal Mystery in the New Testament, to show how God can draw good from evil. Since we rely on His infinite loving power and mercy. “we know that God makes all things work for good, for those who love God” (*Rom 8:28*; cf. CCC 312-14).

INTEGRATION

294. When we proclaim in the Creed the truth that God is Father and Almighty, we commit ourselves to a certain vision and style of life. The conviction that God is our Almighty Father provides the basis not only for all *meaning* in life, but also for our *moral action* and behavior, and our total *prayer life*. God is proclaimed as the ground for all our most precious values: how we want to think and act, be and pray.

295. Moral Life. The first Commandment gives us a perfect example of this connection between believing in God our almighty Father, and acting accordingly. *First, the truth:* “I, the Lord am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (*Ex 20:2; Dt 5:6*). Then the *action:* “You shall not have other gods besides me” (*Ex 20:3*).

Our *utang na loob* before God our Father means rejecting all other “gods” – whether they be wealth and possessions, reputation before men, or worldly power and success (*cf. Mt 4:1-11*). It means rejecting the split-level type of life of the Christian who gives lip service to the Lord one day a week (or less!) and acts no better than a pagan the rest of the time. Believing in God our almighty Father demands a real *conversion of heart* which alone can motivate the radical change in life-style that constitutes authentic Christian life.

296. The *social dimension* of this authentic life-style rejects all *exclusivism* – caring *only* for our own family, *barkada*, group or region. For this denies that we are all brothers and sisters under God, our heavenly Father. Christian Faith calls for *social* maturity that recognizes our responsibilities in the community. *Pakikisama* must be balanced by *bayanihan*.

297. Prayer Life. The place of God as Father almighty is central to all Christian prayer. In the Eucharistic Celebration we begin with confessing our sins to “almighty God.” In the *Gloria* we worship, give thanks and praise the “almighty God and Father.” This is the worship “in Spirit and in truth” (*Jn 4:24*) that Christ proclaimed. This is the way our *utang* before God is expressed in prayer and worship.

PCP II has challenged Filipino Catholics to root out all superstitious practices and belief in occult powers and spirits. Christ came to liberate us from such fears and idolatries. They not only enslave us, but open our faith to ridicule before others.

298. Our private devotions must be grounded in the authentic liturgical prayer of the Church, for there is only ONE GOD and “Him alone shall you adore” (*Mt 4:10; Dt 6:13*). The Church’s prayer insures that our private devotions are not completely taken up with constant petitions, but include the essential dimensions of adoration, thanksgiving and praise. Finally, sincere personal conviction that God is truly our almighty Father may be the best safeguard against “empty ritualism.” Instead of focusing on the external rituals, or on superficial emotional sentimentalism, strong attachment to our almighty Father inspires authentic spiritual movements of the heart (*cf. NCDP 103, 167, 327, 430*).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

299. *How do most Filipinos relate to God?*

In general, most Christian Filipinos think of God as their all-powerful Father who is the Lord of all.

This image conforms well with many traditional Filipino cultural values.

300. *How does the Creed describe God?*

The Creed affirms God as *Almighty Father*, Creator of all things, with the *divine Son-made-man* Jesus Christ, and the *Holy Spirit*, thus presenting the Holy Trinity.

301. *What is the special value of the Creed's first assertion?*

By proclaiming belief in "God, the Father Almighty," the Creed lifts us out of ourselves and centers us on the ONE GOD who is LOVE, and not on our meager selves.

302. *How does God enter into our lives?*

God enters our lives in our experiencing:

- our own inner search for meaning and happiness;
- the beauty and goodness of nature and our family, friends and neighbors around us;
- our Filipino history and culture; and especially,
- God's public Revelation in salvation history as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and climaxed in Jesus Christ.

"From the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen" (*Wis 13:5*).

"Since the creation of the world, invisible realities: God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made" (*Rom 1:20*).

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork" (*Ps 19:2*).

303. *What are some of the Bible's most basic faith affirmations about God?*

Scripture affirms: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone!" (*Dt 6:4*), and "I am the Lord your God. . . you shall have no other gods besides me" (*Ex 20:2-3; Dt 5: 6-7*). The one God is a saving God. "This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (*Jn 17:3*).

Church teaching summarizes a description of God as follows:

There is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immeasurable, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will and in every perfection . . . one unique spiritual substance, entirely simple and unchangeable . . . really and essentially distinct from the world, most blessed in and of Himself, and inexpressibly exalted above all things that exist or can be conceived other than Himself (*Vat. I, DS 3001, ND 327*).

304. *How did God reveal Himself in salvation history?*

First, through the Covenant He made with the Israelites through Moses, Yahweh revealed Himself as the One God who is Truth and Love.

Second, through his personal knowledge and intimacy, Jesus, the only begotten Son, taught us that God is our Father.

Moreover, the Father and Christ are present to us by sending their Spirit into our hearts.

305. *How do we exercise this "Trinitarian" relationship?*

Our constant and continual relation to the Blessed Trinity:

- *started* with our *Baptism* in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- *continues* in every Christian prayer begun with the "Sign of the Cross," marked by our "Glory be. . ." and

- *is strengthened* in our Eucharist/thanksgiving to the Father, through memory of His Son's Passion, Death and Resurrection, made present through the power of the Holy Spirit.

306. *Why do Christians affirm that God is "Father"?*

The Creed affirms God is Father because Jesus taught us to relate to God as "Our Father" (*Mt 6:9*). Jesus' own experience of God as "*Abba*" (Father), was the basis for his teaching. "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, ever at the Father's side, who has revealed Him" (*Jn 1:18*).

307. *What does the name "Father" tell us of God?*

"Father" tells us that God is *personal*, close to us, not an impersonal force, distant and far off. He cares for us even with motherly love (*cf. Is 66:13; 49:15; Hos 11*). God the Father therefore is not a patriarchal or paternalistic authoritarian God. Rather He is a God who welcomes and celebrates the return of every son or daughter who was dead and has come back to life, who was lost and is found (*cf. Lk 15:24, 32*).

308. *What does "almighty" tell us of God?*

"Almighty" affirms God as all-powerful, first as *Creator*, able "to do all things" (*cf. Jb 42:2*) and *Ruler* of all things (*Pantokrator*), secondly as *Love* shown in Christ's Cross and Resurrection, subjecting all other powers to the ultimate sustaining presence of His love.

"Ah Lord God, you have made heaven and earth by your great might, with your outstretched arm; nothing is impossible to you" (*Jer 32:17*).

"As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts" (*Is 55:9*).

309. *If God is "Father" and "Almighty", why does He allow so much evil and suffering?*

First, much evil in the world, especially *physical* evil, results from the kind of *limited* universe in which we live.

Second, moral evil and much of human suffering come from man's abuse of his freedom in sin.

Third, much courage, generosity, forgiveness, hope and sacrifice arise from the world's sufferings and evils.

Finally, Christ's Paschal Mystery shows how God draws out of the depths of evil the victory of the Risen Christ and his transforming love.

"Through Christ and in Christ, light is thrown on the riddle of suffering and death, which apart from his gospel, overwhelms us" (*GS 22*).

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him" (*Rom 8:28*).

Chapter 7

Creator of Heaven and Earth

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth . . . The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.

(Gn 1:1; Ps 19:2)

He [Christ] is the firstborn of all creation. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created . . . all were created through him and for him, . . . In Him everything continues in being.

(Col 1:15-17)

OPENING

310. We all ask, at one time or another, “*Where does everything come from?*” The Psalmist replies: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made; by the breath of His mouth all their host. . . He spoke, and it was made; He commanded, and it stood forth” (*Ps 33:6,9*).

We ask: “*What is the purpose of it all? What is the meaning of our life and of death?*” (*Cf. CCC 282.*) Christian doctrine affirms that “the most perfect answer to these questionings is to be found in God alone, who created us in His own image . . . and this answer is given in the revelation of Christ His Son who became one of us” (*GS 41*).

CONTEXT

311. The most spontaneous Filipino image of God is that of *Creator* (*cf. NCDP 199*). Many Filipino folk legends describe God’s creativity. One tale narrates how, after God had molded all the other parts of the world, He shook his hands free of clay, and so formed the 7,141 islands of the Philippines. Another tale humorously describes how after “baking” the black and white races, God produced the perfect human person, the Filipino “*kayumanggi*.” These and other Filipino creation myths indicate how *indigenous to Filipino culture is God the Creator*.

312. But today the Filipino Catholic’s belief in God as Creator of heaven and earth faces new challenges. For example, how can the Genesis account of creation in six days be reconciled with the modern scientific theory of evolution? Or, if God creates and sustains everything, then *bahala na*, all

is decided already. Or again, even if God created the world at the beginning of time, what has that got to do with our opportunities and problems today?

313. Such difficulties indicate the urgent need for a better understanding of what the Creed means: 1) in proclaiming God as *Creator* and stressing His creative action; 2) in describing what He created as “heaven and earth”; and 3) in proposing this not as something proven by scientific reason, but as basic convictions in our personal *act of faith* as Christians.

EXPOSITION

314. The Catholic doctrine of creation basically affirms that: 1) the world and everything in it comes from the loving power of *God* who is its ultimate *Origin, Ruler, and Goal*; 2) all created things and human history have a meaning, purpose, and destiny; and 3) the life of every person is not a “private” possession, but is created, sustained and guided *now* by the creative, saving will and love of Almighty God.

Creation is the foundation of God’s saving plan and the beginning of salvation history which culminates in Christ (*cf. CCC 280*). The revelation of God’s creating everything is inseparable from the revelation and realization of His covenant with His people (*cf. CCC 288*).

I. CREATOR

315. “**Creator**” is perhaps the most fundamental image we can have of God. It sets God apart from all created things as *the only Uncreated Reality*. At the same time, it relates Him to every person, place or thing as their *Primary Cause* for existing. Thus God the Creator is both *transcendent* (beyond) all He made, yet *immanent* (remaining) in it, constantly sustaining it in existence (*cf. CCC 300*).

316. But the Creator we proclaim by faith in the Creed is not simply some philosophical First Cause. He is rather the saving God of the Covenant. Thus the Psalmist sings: “How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have wrought them all – the earth is full of your creatures” (*Ps 104:24*). And “May the Lord bless you from Zion, the maker of heaven and earth” (*Ps 134:3; cf. CCC 287*).

317. Likewise the prophet Isaiah presents the oracle of the Lord: “Thus says the Lord, your redeemer, who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord who made all things” (*Is 44:24*). Again, even more forcefully, the prophet declares:

For thus says the Lord, the Creator of the heavens, who is God, the designer and maker of the earth, who established it . . . I am the Lord, and there is no other . . . There is no just and saving God but me. Turn to me and be safe, all you ends of the earth, for I am God; there is no other! (*Is 45:18,22*).

The Blessed Trinity Is the Creator

318. The Creed links “Creator” directly with “Father Almighty”. This has led to the *over-simplified, mistaken idea* that the Father alone creates (and the Son alone redeems, and the Holy Spirit alone sanctifies). Actually, Christian Faith teaches that *all three Divine Persons act together as ONE GOD in creating, redeeming and sanctifying*. Here we affirm *God the Father creates through His Son,*

Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul wrote: “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come, and for whom we live; and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom everything was made and through whom we live,” and the Holy Spirit who “gives life” (*1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 3:6; cf. Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17*).

319. St. Irenaeus explained how God is Father, Creator, Author, who made all things through His Word (Son) and Wisdom (Spirit), who are like His “two hands” (*CCC 292*).

For with Him (Father) were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, saying “Let us make man after our image and likeness” (*Adv. Her., Bk. 3, Chap. 20, sec. 1*).

320. Church teaching confirms that “the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the Creator of all things” (*Council of Florence, ND 408*). “The works of the Trinity, in fact,” states Leo XIII, “are undivided just as undivided is the essence of the Trinity, because as the three Divine Person cannot be separated, they likewise operate inseparably.” (*Encyclical Divinum illud, May 9, 1897. Cf. DS 3326*). Therefore, “though the work of creation is attributed to the Father in particular, it is equally a truth of faith that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are the one, individual principle of creation (*CCC 3166*).

II. GOD’S CREATIVE ACTION

321. God commits Himself to us by His free creative activity. Genesis describes creation in two accounts. In the first (*Gen 1:1-2:4a*) God appears as the sovereign Lord who establishes creation in a formal six-day pattern. The second account (*Gen 2:4b-25*) presents God in a closer relationship with human beings. He creates and settles them in the Garden of Eden, and puts them over all other creatures. Both accounts are obviously not modern scientific descriptions of *how* everything came to be. Rather, they present the religious faith insight into *why* all things exist, and what is their ultimate meaning and significance.

322. Another picturesque biblical image of the Creator, close to the Filipino creation myths, is that of the potter forming clay into whatever kind of object he desires. “ ‘Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done?’ says the Lord. ‘Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, house of Israel’ ” (*Jer 18:6*).

A. Biblical and Scientific Accounts

323. The difference between these biblical accounts and a scientific explanation of creation can be compared to two ways of describing a work of art, for example, a beautiful portrait painting. The “*how*” (scientific) explanation focuses on the materials used, the size, weight, age, colors and the whole mechanics of portrait painting. A different type of explanation is the “*why*” which interprets both the artist’s motivations and intentions, and the “meaning and truth” of the portrait itself. The portrait “reveals” the character and personality of the person portrayed.

Both types of “explanation” are valid and necessary. They complement each other and together give a fuller understanding of the painting.

324. The Genesis accounts of creation focus on the “*why*,” the meaning and purpose of everything. The Bible does not teach how heaven was constructed but how to get there, as John Paul II once remarked. The Genesis accounts neither teach nor oppose the scientific theory of evolution. The six “days” do not mean 24 hour solar days (the sun was not made till the “4th day”). They are simply the

inspired author's way of presenting in a Biblical poem the religious truths which Genesis proclaims. Today we could do no better.

325. The Bible presents God's creative activity as *a simple act of speech*. "God said 'Let there be light' " (*Gn 1:3*). "For He spoke, and it was made; He commanded, and it stood forth" (*Ps 33:9*). This clearly rejects the pagan myths about the gods' mortal combat with evil forces and powers, or of some blind, aimless cosmic generation of everything by chance. Instead, the Bible proclaims one Creator, source of all that exists, by a free loving act of His divine will and wisdom. "How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom You have wrought them all!" (*Ps 104:24*)

"O Lord our God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor . . . for You have created all things; by Your will they came to be and were made!" (*Rv 4:11; cf. CCC 295*).

B. Church Teaching

326. The Church's teaching on creation is clearly set forth by the First Vatican Council:

This one and only true God, of His own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase of His own happiness, nor for the acquirement of His perfection, but in order to manifest His perfection . . . with absolute freedom of counsel, from the beginning of time *made* at once out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, . . . and then the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body (*ND 412*).

327. This teaches, *first*, that God creates out of His *divine goodness*, to share His goodness with others, *not* because of any need or imperfection. *Second*, He creates by a *free*, intentional, purposeful act, *not* by any sort of natural emanation such as the pantheists propose, or by any "natural" evolution that would deny God's freedom. *Third*, He creates "*out of nothing*," that is, not from any matter or any gods already existing (*cf. CCC 296-98*). All so-called "dualistic" views (matter as evil vs. spirit as good) are rejected. Both spiritual and corporeal creatures are good.

But what precisely has God created? What is the object of his creative act?

III. CREATED REALITY

328. Contrary to some Asian religious views, our Christian faith proclaims all creation as *real* (not an illusion), *intelligible* (not meaningless and purposeless) and *good* (nothing created is intrinsically evil) (*cf. CCC 299*).

This Christian vision can be summarized as follows:

- 1) as a product of divine wisdom, creation is *intelligible* and *meaningful*; therefore
- 2) *evil is not an essential or necessary dimension of our existence*; and thus
- 3) creation is *open to God's saving activity*, and
- 4) *our present lives have an inner divine purpose* which we can discern in faith.

A. Two Consequences

329. All creation, then, is both utterly *dependent upon God* (contingent), and at the same time, precisely because of that dependence, *real and good in itself*. This means that there is nothing in the world that must be *feared*, but also there is nothing that should be *worshipped*! We can explain this briefly as follows.

330. *First*, since everything depends on God, there is no power in creation that can rival God. “For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, nor powers; neither height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (*Rom 8:38-39*). Therefore Christians are *liberated from* the anxious *dread* of any power or force in the world, visible or invisible, or any magical snare.

331. But *second*, neither is there in all creation anything to be worshipped. Idolatry has been the mark of our infidelity before God since the beginning. Today in our increasingly secularistic environment, the temptation to idolize worldly success is greater than ever. Yet rejecting such temptations must not lead us to denying the rightful autonomy of created things, as proposed by Church teaching.

332. Vatican II expresses it this way:

Created things and societies have their own laws and values which we must gradually come to know, use and organize; this is in accordance with the will of the Creator. It is by virtue of their very creation that all things are provided with a stability, truth and goodness of their own, with their own laws and order. We must respect all this . . . (*GS 36; cf. CCC 339-40*).

333. This does not, of course, deny the essential dependence of all things on God, and more importantly, of our conscious reference to the Creator in our use of them. For without God, creatures vanish into nothingness (*cf. CCC 338*).

B. Man as Crown of Creation

334. Christian faith teaches that *man* is the *crown* and *key to God’s creation*. “According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to human persons as their center and crown” (*cf. GS 12; cf. CCC 343, 356ff*). The Psalmist expresses this vividly:

“Truly you have formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother’s womb.
I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made.”
(*Ps 139:13-14*)

And again:

What is man that you should be mindful of him,
or the son of man that you should care for him?
You have made him little less than the angels,
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him rule over the works of your hands,
putting all things under his feet (*Ps 8:5-7*).

C. Visible and Invisible: Angels

335. To the phrase “heaven and earth” the Nicene Creed adds “all things visible and invisible.” This implies that “earth” refers not only to our planet, but to all reality “visible” to us. In contrast, “heaven” signifies the invisible spiritual world of God, such as the *angels*. Angels are said to be pure spirits, centered on Christ (*cf. Mt 25:31; Heb 1:6*). St. Augustine explains that the term “angel” does not designate their nature, but rather their function as “ministering spirits sent to serve those who are to inherit salvation” (*Heb 1:14*). The Gospels speak of the care of angels (*Mt 4:11; 18:10; 26:53*). “As

purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness” (CCC 330).

Angels had a *vital role* in the **history of salvation**. The Old Testament gives these powerful spiritual creatures different names which reveal both their *function* and their different *degree of perfection*. They are called: angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim. They play important roles both in the life of **individuals** like Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Tobiah (cf. the book of Genesis and of Tobit). . . and in the life of the **People of God**, especially by protecting them during the Exodus (cf., for instance, *Ex 14:19-20*). Indeed, angels and archangels, throughout the Old testament, are not only members of God’s court in heaven, but also *signs and instruments of God’s love and care for His people*.

336. Angels were also ***closely associated with the earthly existence and mission of our Lord***. “From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word Incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. . . They protect the child Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the Garden” (CCC 333). Jesus is their Lord who could call legions of them in his defense (cf. *Mt 26:53*). When he rose from death, it was some angels who announced to the women the great event (cf. *Lk 24:4-6 and parallels*). They will escort the glorious **Son of Man** at the end of time when he will come to judge all human beings (cf. *Mt 25:31*).

The infant **Church experienced the protection of God’s angels especially in time of persecution or difficulties**, like in the case of Peter saved from jail and Paul strengthened against forthcoming trials (cf. *Acts 12:6-11, and 27:23-25*). All through the centuries the Church has enjoyed the protection and guidance of angels, whether as *God’s People*, or as *communities and individuals* in difficulty. In response that ***the Church honors the angels in the liturgy*** and encourages all believers to trust in their help and live in their presence.

337. God’s absolutely “individualized” and “personal” love for every human being is manifested also in his assigning to each of us *an angel to be our guardian and mentor* “Beside each believer,” wrote St. Basil, “stands an angel as protector and sheperd, leading him to life” (cf. CCC 336). The reality of the **guardian angels** is one of the most consoling and inspiring truths of our faith. “From infancy to death human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession” (CCC 336).

Love, obedience and gratitude to the guardian angel is by no means something “for children only.” It is for all those who care for their own good, and how to appreciate the signs of God’s love. In our spontaneous openness to the supernatural and the world of spirits, we Filipinos have no difficulty in accepting the existence of the angels and revering them. Many of us, at Baptism, are given the names Angelo, Angela, Gabriel, Raphael, and especially Miguel. We trust in the *protection and guidance of our guardian angels*, particularly in moments of need.

D. New Creation

338. From a Christian perspective, all creation is seen as ordered to, and perfected in, the New Creation brought about by the Passion-Death-Resurrection of Christ our Lord, “the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” (*Rv 21:6; cf. 2 Pt 3:13*). “This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new. All this has been done by God who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ . . .” (*2 Cor 5:17*).

IV. MEANING OF CREATION FOR HUMAN PERSONS

339. We Filipinos naturally tend to take everything personally. Creation therefore becomes more meaningful for us when seen from a *personal perspective*. From this view, three personal aspects of creation are particularly helpful in leading us to a more dynamic understanding of creation.

First, most striking is the sense of God's **continuing creativity**, as going on *now* (cf. CCC 301). Our Creator "calls into being those things which had not been" (Rom 4:17). He is the God "who gives to all life and breath and everything else In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). The *first personal aspect* of the doctrine of creation, then, is that *God is creating, sustaining each of us in existence, now!* "How could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?" (Wis 11:25).

A *second* personal dimension is the **responsibility** with which all human persons are invested: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air . . . all the creatures that crawl on the ground" (Gn 1:26). God puts purpose into creation, and human persons constitute its organizing force.

340. *PCP II* lays great stress on the "*Universal Purpose of Earthly Goods*" and the "*Integrity of Creation.*" With both it details our responsibilities as Filipino Catholics regarding private property and ecological care of the earth (cf. *PCP II* 297-303; 321-24). Vatican II has proposed the basic grounds given us by our Creator for this *responsibility*:

Created in God's image, we were commanded to conquer the earth with all it contains, and to rule the world in justice and holiness; we were to acknowledge God as Creator of all things and relate ourselves and the totality of creation to Him, so that through our dominion over all things, the name of God would be majestic in all the earth (GS 34).

341. This "responsibility", then, also involves our human "*solidarity*", that "firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, i.e., the good of all and of each individual, because we are really responsible for all" (*PCP II* 295; cf. *SRS* 38). We are called to exercise responsible STEWARDSHIP over all creation. Such a stewardship is exercised in our daily activities which we can rightfully consider as a prolongation of God's continuing work of creating, and a service to our fellow men and women. One sign of "living Faith" is that we realize God's graceful, supporting presence in all our good thoughts, words, and deeds. Far from being "in competition with God," we recognize in the depths of our hearts and minds, the truth of Christ's simple assertion: "apart from me you can do nothing" (*Jn* 15:5).

342. A *third* personal characteristic of the Christian doctrine of creation is **the Creator's promise to be with His creatures**. "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God" (*Is* 41:10). So the Psalmist can confidently sing: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (*Ps* 124:8). Against all the deep-set fears and anxieties besetting us all, our loving Creator offers us: 1) a **hope of ultimate fulfillment** of all our yearnings; 2) a **basic vision** or pattern **of the relative importance of things**, so we can order our lives accordingly, and 3) a **promise of inner strength and peace** of soul unifying our lives.

V. DIVINE PROVIDENCE

343. We Filipino Christians have deep trust in **God's all-knowing and loving Providence**. For He is the Creator, who "covers the heavens with clouds, who provides rain for the earth; who makes the grass sprout on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men" (*Ps* 147:8). By His providence God protects and governs all things which He has made. He "reaches from end to end mightily and governs all things well" (*Wis* 8:1; cf. CCC 302). For "nothing is concealed from Him; all lies bare and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must render an account" (*Heb* 4:13). This includes even "those things which are yet to come to existence through the free action of creatures" (*Vatican I, ND* 413).

344. The *special Providence* of God concerns man, the crown of His creation (*cf. CCC 307*). Some have explained how we are the “image of God” by reason of our rationality, or because of our spiritual soul, or in view of our capacity to make moral judgments. Vatican II put the stress on man’s interrelationships, man-in-community, starting with the most basic human community described in Genesis: “male and female He created them” (*Gen 1:27*). “For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential” (*GS 12*).

345. God’s special Providence relative to man’s social nature is especially evident today in the common thrust toward unity – despite all the tragic obstacles impeding its accomplishment. So Vatican II stresses this basic unity of the human family under God:

All peoples form a single community; their origin is one, for God made the whole human race to dwell over the entire face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, the manifestations of His goodness, His plan of salvation, extend to all men (*cf. 1 Tim 2:4*) until the moment when the elect will be gathered in the Holy City whose light shall be the glory of God, when the nations will walk in His light (*cf. Rv 21:23f; NA 1*).

346. We know that God’s providence does not abolish all evil and suffering from the world. But it does offer the believing Christian the spiritual strength and hope needed to face these evils and refuse to be overcome by them (*cf. CCC 309-14*). And so we pray: “But deliver us from evil. Amen” (*Mt 6:13*).

INTEGRATION

347. Moral Dimensions. PCP II gives “*being created in the image and likeness of God*” as sure Christian basis for our inalienable dignity and our social responsibilities (*cf. PCP II 296; PP*). We are called to “imitate God our Creator both in working and also in resting, since God Himself wished to present His own creative activity under the form of *work and rest*” (*LE 25*).

Thus the conviction that God is creating every human person continually in His own image and likeness is the immediate source for the second of the “great commandments”: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (*Mt 22:37-38*).

348. The *ecology* crisis today highlights further our moral obligation, flowing from our God-given stewardship over the earth, not only to use its goods responsibly, but to treat them with real respect as gifts from our Creator. The tremendous advances in modern science and technology have heightened this moral responsibility immeasurably, since now, for the first time in history, we have the physical capacity to improve or completely destroy our earthly home. PCP II has called for a “comprehensive theology of STEWARDSHIP [which] makes ecology a special concern of the social action apostolate. . . in view of making everyone a true steward of God’s creation” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 31,1*).

349. Worship Dimensions. Vatican II declares: “The faithful must learn the deepest meaning and value of all creation, and its orientation to the praise of God” (*LG 36*). This is expressed in the liturgy where the doctrine of God, Maker of heaven and earth, is repeated constantly. Two examples will suffice. In the Offertory of the Mass the celebrant prays: “Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made.” Again at the *Sanctus*, the whole congregation prays: “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.” Clearly God as Creator is central to the liturgy.

350. The specifically *Christian* insight into the worship dimension of creation is expressed in the *Paschal Mystery*. Thus “we are truly His handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance” (*Eph 2:10*). The “good works” of this new worship for all those who are re-created in Christ are nowhere summarized more simply and sharply than in the ancient prayer: *soli Deo gloria* – to God alone be the glory!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

351. *What does “God is Creator of heaven and earth” mean?*

To “create” means to put and keep something in existence. God is Creator because He puts and sustains everything in existence. He is the *maker* and *final goal* of everything that exists, all things visible and invisible.

352. *Why is the doctrine of creation important for us today?*

The truth of creation means that God’s loving creativity builds into each of us a *meaning*, *purpose* and *destiny* which nothing can take away from us.

353. *What does the term “Creator” tell us about God?*

“Creator” means God is *absolutely unique and different* from everything else as the only *Uncreated Reality*, but also *related intimately* to everything that exists by His sustaining creative power.

354. *Who is God the Creator?*

The Triune God: Father, Son and Spirit, is the Creator. The Father creates through his Word (Son) in their Holy Spirit.

355. *Do Christians hold a special idea of creation?*

Yes, for Christians “everything in heaven and on earth was created in Christ, . . . all were created through him, and for him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being” (*Col 1:16-17*).

356. *Is God creating now?*

Yes, God continues to create and to sustain in existence the whole world and everything in it. At every moment of their existence, God is the ultimate origin and source, unifying center, and final goal of all things.

357. *Does the Genesis account of creation contradict the scientific theory of evolution?*

No. In affirming that God is the ultimate cause of all that exists, Genesis gives its ultimate meaning and purpose — “*Why*” the world exists. It does not treat “*how*” the physical world came to be in its present condition, which is what the theory of evolution tries to explain.

358. *Why does God create?*

God freely creates *out of sheer love, to share His own divine life and goodness*. Creation is the first step in God’s plan of salvation for all through Jesus Christ.

359. *How does God create?*

God the Father creates through a simple act of His divine Word, the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Each divine Person in the Blessed Trinity is active in the one divine creative act. "Through Him [the Word] all things came into being, and apart from Him nothing came to be" (*Jn 1:3*).

360. *What effect does "being created" have on everything?*

Being created means all things are equal in being *totally dependent on God* for their very existence, and therefore

- not to be feared or worshipped, but
- respected for their own God-given, built-in stability, truth and goodness, with their own laws and values.

361. *Who is at the top of all creatures?*

Christian Faith teaches that *human persons are the center and crown* of all things on earth.

This is confirmed by Christ's coming to save us all from sin and raise all to a "New Creation" through his Passion-Death-Resurrection.

362. *How is creation a "personal truth" for us?*

God is *personally present and sustaining each of us now* in our daily lives. Moreover He calls each of us to *personal responsibility in solidarity* with others for the common good of all and of the earth itself.

363. *Are there invisible, spiritual realities?*

Scripture affirms that God's creation includes pure spirits, angels, who serve God as instruments of His Divine Providence for us.

Angels played an active role in the Old Testament, in the life of Jesus and of the Church. God entrusts each human being to the guidance and protection of a guardian angel.

364. *What is "Divine Providence"?*

God continues to sustain and care for everything He created (*general Providence*), with *special Providence* in drawing sinful mankind back to Himself through the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

"We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to His decree. . . For I am certain that neither life nor death . . . nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (*Rom 8:28, 38-39*).

Chapter 8

The Fall from Glory

They certainly had knowledge of God, yet they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks; . . . their senseless hearts were darkened . . . they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images representing mortal man, birds, beasts, and snakes.

(Rom 1:21-23)

The secret force of lawlessness is already at work. . . We are bound to thank God for you always, beloved brothers in the Lord, because you are the first fruits of those whom God has chosen for salvation, in holiness of spirit and fidelity to truth. He called you through our preaching of the good news so that you might achieve the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Thes 2:7,13-14)

OPENING

365. The preceding chapter described the goodness of all creation, and especially of human persons created in God's own image, "crowned with glory" (*Ps 8:6*). God is infinitely good, and all His works are good. Yet our daily experience manifests so much in us that is not good — *our sinfulness* (*cf. CCC 385*). Our happiness in goodness and virtue is countered by the misery of evil and sin (*cf. GS 13*).

Moreover, the evil we experience is *not just our own individual sins*. *PCP II* alerts us to "*sinful social structures* — habitual patterns of human interaction are infected by sin" (*PCP II 82*). We become aware of a whole network that oppresses and enslaves: the structures of violence and brutality, prostitution and adultery, poverty and injustice. These are some of the devastating consequences of what Catholic doctrine calls "original sin."

366. Vatican II briefly recounted the Genesis narrative of the origin of this situation. Although set by God in a state of rectitude, the first human beings, enticed by the Evil One, abused their freedom at the very start of history. *They lifted themselves against God, and sought to attain their goal apart from Him*. Although they had known God, they did not glorify Him as God, but their senseless hearts were darkened, and they served the creature rather than the Creator (*cf. GS 13*).

CONTEXT

367. Usually we Filipinos are ever ready to excuse our own and others' faults: "*Sapagkat tayo'y tao lamang.*" While this is admirable for patience and forbearance, it too easily avoids honestly facing evil and sin. It makes light of the real personal harm caused by sins to persons, families and whole communities. We often interpret our misfortunes as punishment from God for our sins (*tadhana*), or as a test from God (*pagsubok*). But this can lead us to concentrate on the punishment rather than the real evil of sin itself.

368. What really bothers most of us is not so much the moral evil of sin as the feeling of shame (*hiya*), of losing face before others. The exclamation "Sorry!" is used so frequently in common speech to mean something like "*pasensiya*" that it no longer expresses any genuine sorrow or contrition, with firm intention of changing one's ways.

369. But perhaps the more common obstacle to living as outgoing, charitable, forgiving Christians in daily life is the intense concern we normally feel for family, friends and relatives — "*kamag-anak*". Unfortunately, this often is combined with complete *unconcern* for others. Another common problem arises when, with the familiar *bayanihan spirit*, some socially oriented project is begun. Too often it fails because of the "*ningas-kugon*" defect of not following through when the initial enthusiasm wanes.

EXPOSITION

370. *The most fundamental aspect of the Church's doctrine of original sin* is not so much "universal sinfulness" as "*universal salvation.*" The sinfulness is the tragic background needed to understand God's loving plan to save all men. Only in the light of this Revelation of God's incredible love for us can we clearly see the reality of sin (*cf.* CCC 387). This focus on God's redeeming love flows from the earliest tradition handed on by St. Paul: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (*1 Cor 15:3*). The "Good News" is not about original sin but of God's redeeming love through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

371. Thus the Church chants on the most solemn vigil of the Liturgical Year, the Vigil of Easter:

Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.
O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

I. SCRIPTURE ON OUR HUMAN "FALL"

A. Genesis

372. What the book of Genesis presents to us, then, is the story of the Fall of the human race *within* God's plan of creation and redemption. Genesis describes how, at the origin of our race, man and woman turned away from God their Creator in disobedience and pride, thus rejecting God's friendship. They wanted to be "like God" (*Gn 3:5*), but "without God, ahead of God, and not according to God" (*CCC 398*).

Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents, Scripture and Church Tradition see imaged in “the serpent” (*Gn 3:1-5*), an evil force called “Satan” or the “devil.” Jesus himself was tempted by the devil (*Mt 4:1-11*) whom he called “murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies” (*Jn 8:44*). “The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing” (CCC 391). Scripture gives witness to the disastrous influence, of these created personal beings called also “fallen angels.” Their power is limited by the providence of God who “makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his purpose” (*Rom 8:28*). (CCC 391-95)

373. In rebelling against God, man and woman destroyed their original harmony with:

- each other (“they realized they were naked”),
- others (Cain’s murder of his brother Abel),
- the community (Tower of Babel),
- nature (“cursed be the ground . . .”) (*cf. CCC 400f*)

Finally, since man and his wife were now excluded from partaking of the fruit of the tree of life (*cf. Gn 3:22-24*), death will be theirs, “For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return” (*Gn 3:19*).

374. The Genesis narrative presents three moments with which we are all very familiar: *temptation*, *sin*, and *judgment*. But we must not imagine that the author of Genesis was somehow present in the Garden of Eden. Rather, his account is a divinely inspired interpretation of the situation of sin in the world of his own day. Where did all this evil come from? What is the *origin* of this condition of *universal sinfulness*? (*cf. CCC 401*)

The Genesis narrative of “The Fall” is the inspired Scriptural response to this fundamental human question of every age. *Not God, but the original man and woman, are the source of moral evil.* And not just “Everyman” like the Medieval plays, but the first members, the origin, of our human race. This alone can explain the universality of evil in our race, and the moral evil which we experience in our world today. Yet the final biblical word is not that “human beings are evil” but that **“God is Savior.”**

B. St. Paul

375. In addition to the Genesis account of the Fall, St. Paul insists strongly on the fact that “All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” (*Rom 3:23; cf. 5:12*). But he is equally insistent that “Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again” (*1 Cor 15: 22*). “For if by the offense of the one person all died, much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ abound for all” (*Rom 5:15; cf. CCC 399-401*).

II. CHURCH TEACHING ON ORIGINAL SIN

376. From such biblical sources the Church teaches that “Adam, the first man, by transgressing God’s commandment in paradise, at once lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted; and drew upon himself . . . death.” The holiness and justice received from God was lost not only for him but also for his descendents (*Trent, cf. ND 508-9; CCC 404*). We Filipinos today, as members of the race of Adam, do not inherit his *personal sin*, but rather the ***sinful condition*** started by his “*originating sin*.” It is a condition in which each of us is personally involved. What we inherit, the “*kasalanang mana*,” is the ***state of sinfulness in which we all are born***.

This universal sinfulness is confirmed by the clear Gospel proclamation that ***all are redeemed by Christ***. Put briefly, it is a dogma of our Christian Faith that we ***all need to be redeemed***.

377. First of all, in describing original sin today we speak of the “*sin of the world*” (*Jn 1:29; CCC 408*). This means the “polluted atmosphere” into which we all are born. It is the *social dimension* of original sin: the “sinful structures” of injustice, oppression and exploitation that *PCP II* so emphasizes today in its thrust for social renewal and transformation (*cf. PCP II 261-71*).

378. Second, there is the *personal interior dimension* of original sin, the “heart of darkness within us” which is “in all men, proper to each” (*Trent, ND 510*). We experience this aspect of original sin especially in one of its effects that remains even after Baptism, called *concupiscence*. Concupiscence itself is not sin, but is rather the “inclination which comes from sin and inclines to sin” (*ND 512; cf. CCC 405-6*).

This indicates that the sacred history narrated in the Bible is re-enacted in some way in each of us. Through the grace of the redeeming Christ received in Baptism, we are called to “wrestle with, manfully resist” this situation and interior inclination to sin (*ND 512*).

379. This Church doctrine merely echoes the Biblical exhortation: “Let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith” (*Heb 12:1-2*).

380. Third, there is the “ratification” of original sin by our personal sinful thoughts, words and deeds. Our sins constitute a real part of the “sin of the world” for others, just as their personal sins are part of the “sin of the world” for us (*cf. NCDP 221*).

381. For ourselves, our concupiscence manifests itself in certain sources or roots of sins traditionally called the “*seven capital sins*” from which many sins spring. These sins plague not only individual sinners, but also have a *corporate* dimension. They thrive in various ways among social groups, institutions and various social structures.

The sins usually identified as “capital” include: *pride*: exalting oneself beyond what is due and true; *lust*: disordered desire for, or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure; *anger*: destructive aggressiveness; *gluttony*: excessive indulgence in food or drink; *envy*: begrudging others their talents, success and wishing them evil; *covetousness*: desiring what belongs to others, leading to dishonesty, stealing, and injustice; and *sloth*: laziness and escape from exerting due effort.

382. These “capital sins” can be compared to the “works of the flesh” which St. Paul enumerates: “lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (*Gal 5:19-21*).

Descriptive Definition of Original Sin

383. Original sin can be described as *the state in which we are born as members of the human race*. We are thus situated in a sinful history that affects our capacity to love God above all, to become our true full selves, and achieve our destiny.

- It is called “*original*” since it dates from the origin of our human race. This means it is *universal*: all need to be redeemed.
- It is called “*sin*” not because it is a personal sinful thought, word, or action on our part, but because it is *a state contrary to God’s will*. It is an obstacle to that positive loving relation to Him and His whole creation for which we are created.

384. This Catholic doctrine should not be difficult to understand since we all experience this inclination to evil and a lack of harmony within ourselves, with others and with all created things.

Genesis describes these consequences of the Fall as the direct result of the refusal to acknowledge God as the creative source of all and final destiny for every human person. The Bible frequently highlights this experience of disharmony by describing life as a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness (*Ecclesiastes; Isaiah; Romans.*)

385. Our experience of this personal disharmony within us is strikingly described by St. Paul's cry of anguish: "What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend. . . What a wretched man I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death?" Yet Paul's answer comes immediately: "All praise to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (*Rom 7:19-20, 24-25*).

386. More emphasized today are the *social consequences* of original sin. Yet in many current efforts to bring peace, justice, and economic betterment to all, the obstacle of sin tends to be passed over. Sin is not an active category in current *social sciences*, which even some well-meaning Christians seem to think will bring salvation.

But to so ignore the fact of our wounded human nature, our inclination to self-centeredness and pride has led to "grave errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals" (*CCC 407-9; cf. CA 25*).

387. As *Filipinos* with a deep cultural Catholic tradition, we should be able to recognize the very fruitful contributions of the social sciences without idolizing them. We will not ultimately be "saved" by any new five-year economic plan, or novel political stratagem. Only by responding as best we can to the grace of Christ our Lord, will all our economic, social and political activities be salvific.

388. Vatican II gives us a glimpse of the depth and extent of this response:

For a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades our whole human history. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day (*cf. Mt 24:13; 13:24-30*). Caught in this conflict, we are obliged to wrestle constantly if we are to cling to what is good. Nor can we achieve our own integrity without valiant efforts and the help of grace (*GS 37*).

389. Finally, we all must face the ultimate test of our lives: death. Our natural deep fear and dread of total annihilation and extinction can make death a traumatic test. Bodily death as we now experience it is due to the Fall:

Because God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living. For He fashioned all things that they might have being . . . It was the wicked who with hands and words invited death, and considered it a friend, and pined for it, and made a covenant with it, because they deserve to be in its possession (*Wis 1:13-14, 16*).

390. St. Paul also brings out clearly the relation of death to sin: "Just as through one man sin entered the world, and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned" (*Rom 5:12*). But he does this to show "that as sin reigned through death, grace also may reign by way of justice leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Rom 5:21*). Vatican II repeats this message:

"God has called us, and still calls us, to cleave with all our being to Him in sharing forever a life that is divine and free from all decay. Christ won this victory when he rose to life, for by his death he freed us from death" (*GS 18*).

III. ORIGINAL SIN AND FILIPINO CATHOLIC LIFE

391. The reality of original sin is brought home to most Filipinos by two prominent aspects of our Catholic life. The *first* is our practice of *infant Baptism*. Infants "who of themselves cannot have yet committed any sin are truly baptized for the remission of sins" (*Trent, ND 511*). This is because as

members of the race of Adam they are affected by its sinfulness. They are influenced both interiorly as they grow up, and exteriorly through the whole sinful situational environment.

In the sacrament of Baptism, the child is blessed in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. This binds the infant through the Risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the “people of God,” the Church, represented by the parents, the sponsors, the whole family and friends, and the local Christian community.

392. Baptism “wipes away original sin” in the sense that the baptized receives the Holy Spirit who makes present the salvific love of the Risen Christ and the Father. This grace enables the baptized to grow up in a Christian way of life: *Christ* is Head, the *Spirit* is inner force, the heavenly *Father* is creative source and final destiny, and the local *Church* is the place of redemption.

393. Vatican II describes the Christian perspective into which the baptized is introduced.

All human activity, constantly imperiled by our pride and deranged self-love, must be purified and perfected by the power of Christ’s cross and resurrection. For, redeemed by Christ and made new creatures in the Holy Spirit, we are able, and indeed ought, to love the things created by God . . . receive them from God, and respect and reverence them as flowing constantly from the hand of God (*GS 37*).

394. The *second* aspect of Filipino Catholic life that brings out the reality of original sin is devotion to *Mary*, the *Immaculate Conception*. Despite many common misunderstandings of this Catholic doctrine, Filipino Catholics are taught to pray to Mary “conceived without original sin.” Mary was, from the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, “graced” by God in view of her mission to become the mother of God’s only begotten Son according to the flesh. At no moment was she under the power of sin. This “singular grace and privilege” of Mary was accomplished by “almighty God in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior of the human race” (*ND 709*).

395. Mary’s Immaculate Conception, therefore, shows Christ’s power in overcoming sin, and holds out the promise to us all. For if we try to imitate Mary’s perfect loving fidelity to God by struggling valiantly in the power of the Spirit to avoid sin and follow Christ faithfully in our daily lives, we too may one day be freed from sin and live fully in God’s love. Catholics the world over, through the centuries, have found that sincere devotion to and veneration of Mary is an extraordinarily efficacious means toward that goal.

INTEGRATION

396. The Catholic *doctrine* on original sin naturally goes with *creation*, since it modifies the believers’ view of all reality. As with creation, it is Christ our Lord who offers the real insight into this reality. For not only do we see Christ in sharper light as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*) – our Savior. We also see ourselves and our sinful world, with all its tragedies, trials and frustrations, as immediately touched by God our Father, through His only begotten Son-made-man, Risen from the dead, and in Their Holy Spirit. God our Savior is with us precisely in our experience of combatting this universal sinfulness.

397. This doctrine of original sin radically affects our *moral perspective* and vision. We begin to understand the depth of the “power of evil” ranged against our attempts to follow Christ faithfully through thought, word and deed. The personal and social demands of responsible Christian living would be overwhelming if it were not for Christ’s promise to be with us always in his Spirit. And this presence of Christ and his Spirit is felt only through an active prayer and sacramental life.

398. In *worship*, a more accurate understanding of original sin would help the Filipino Catholic toward a far deeper appreciation of *Baptism*. Instead of a “social” ceremonial ritual which by some magic supposedly “washes away” sin from an apparently innocent child, Baptism would be seen as a real force throughout our Christian lives. Baptism calls for our persevering effort to follow Christ in everything we do. Our *Baptismal vows*, repeated every Easter, must be taken seriously as a realistic commitment to Christ. Only through the power and inspiration of the *Spirit*, sent by the Risen *Christ* and the *Father*, can we be faithful to them. We make them as members of the local *Church*, the Christian community whose strength and support are absolutely essential for our active Catholic life.

399. A better grasp of the reality of original sin would also both inspire a more intense *prayer life* as well as help purify it from self-centeredness. A “pure and open heart,” “child-like simplicity,” and “intense sorrow for sin and firm purpose of amendment,” are not qualities that “come naturally.” When present, we recognize them as gifts of the Spirit. Thus, the *worship* dimension of our Catholic Faith is also intrinsically influenced by the condition described by the doctrine of original sin.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

400. *Why is there sin and evil in the world?*

The Bible teaches that sin and evil come not from God who created everything good, but from the willful disobedience of man who abused his God-given freedom at the dawn of history.

401. *What does “original sin” mean?*

“Original sin” can refer to two things:

- the first “*originating sin*” which brought evil and brokenness into the world; or
- “*originated sin*,” or the actual sinful state into which we are born, the essence of which is the privation of sanctifying grace, and some of whose consequences are evident in the outside sinful situation (*sin of the world*), and the inner effect of disordered desires (*concupiscence*) we all experience within us.

402. *Why does the Bible treat of original sin?*

The Bible’s “Good News” narrates the history of sin in the world to bring out our need for God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

403. *What does Genesis teach about original sin?*

Genesis narrates the primordial account of the “*originating sin*” of Adam and Eve and its consequences for them as well as in the spread of evil in order to account for the evil which we all experience today.

404. *What does St. Paul teach about original sin?*

St. Paul teaches that “just as through one man’s [Adam’s] disobedience all became sinners, so through one man’s [Christ’s] obedience all shall become just” (*Rom 5:19*).

405. *How does Church teaching explain original sin?*

The Church clarifies that we do not inherit Adam’s personal sin, but its consequences, *that is* that as members of the human race, we are born deprived of sanctifying grace, into the sinful condition in the world with our weakened human nature resulting from his sin.

406. *In what does original sin consist and what is related to it?*

Original sin essentially consists in the privation of sanctifying grace, the condition in which all human beings are born.

Related to it are:

- “the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*) describing the sinful environment into which we are born;
- the “heart of darkness” in us which we experience in concupiscence; and
- the connection between original sin and personal sins.

407. *Why is it called “original sin”?*

It is called

- “original” because its roots in the *origins* of the human race alone explain its *universality*;
- “sin” not because it is a personal sinful thought, word or deed, but because it is a *state contrary to God’s will*. It affects our capacity to love God, become our true selves, and achieve our destiny with our fellow men and women.

408. *How do we experience this “heart of darkness” within us due to original sin?*

St. Paul aptly describes this experience: “I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend” (*Rom 7:19*). “The desire to do right is there but not the power” (*Rom 7:18*).

409. *What is meant by “concupiscence”?*

Concupiscence is that deep-seated disorder in our appetites and drives that is the root-cause of many of our personal sins; through God’s redeeming grace we are strengthened to overcome this disorder within us.

410. *What is meant by “capital sins”?*

Capital or “root sins” are basic evil inclinations or disvalues (pride, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, covetousness, sloth) which are the origin of many sinful thoughts, words or deeds. They manifest the evil tendencies within each of us which are the effect of original sin.

411. *How does Baptism “take away original sin”?*

Baptism “takes away original sin” by bringing to the baptized the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s saving, sanctifying presence.

The indwelling Holy Spirit in the baptized makes them adopted sons/daughters of the Father, coheirs with Jesus Christ, and incorporates them into his Body the Church.

412. *Why do we baptize innocent babies?*

Infant baptism is not to take away any personal sins – the baby obviously cannot have committed sin.

Rather, Baptism is to *grace* the child with the gift of the Holy Spirit, within the Christian community of parents, sponsors and neighbors, to effectively symbolize the Christian atmosphere needed for growing up as a disciple of Christ in faith, hope and love.

Chapter 9

God Promises a Savior

You will know that I, the Lord, am your God when I free you from the labor of the Egyptians and bring you to the land which I swore to give.

(Ex 6:7-8)

With the Lord is kindness and plenteous redemption. He will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.

(Ps 130:7-8)

OPENING

413. “Promise” is one of the key words of love. The Old Testament story of God’s love for His people centers on His promise of salvation. “I have witnessed the affliction of my people . . . I have heard their cry . . . so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I will come down to rescue them” (*Ex 3:7-8*). That God *knows* the suffering of His people shows Him as one who loves and cares for the oppressed, the afflicted, the poor and the hungry.

414. Immediately after narrating the Fall of man and woman, and the spread of wickedness throughout the world, with the covenant of Noah after the Flood, the book of Genesis shows God’s concern for all mankind (*cf. Gn 9:9-11.1*). His love encompasses all nations in spite of their sinfulness and divisions. His plan is to gather them all in one holy people. And he begins to actualize his plan with the call of Abraham and the threefold promise of *land*, of *descendants*, and of a *mission*. These three elements show that God is not limited by place or time, but *acts on a universal scale*, covering all peoples on the face of the earth. The God who saves is to be found where suffering and brokenness are most severe, and where the need for His grace is greatest.

CONTEXT

415. Most Filipinos have a natural attraction for the Word of God in the Old Testament. In their early years they love to hear the Bible stories of the great figures like Moses, Jonah, David, Samson, Solomon and the like. At Sunday Mass they hear readings from the Old Testament. Today, Bible

study groups (*Bibliarasal*) are quite popular, and Bible preachers of all kinds are heard constantly throughout the land. *PCP II* boasts of “Lay Ministers of the Word” in many Basic Ecclesial Communities, particularly those who have been commissioned after appropriate training in Regional Bible Centers (*cf. PCP II 605*).

416. But how well prepared are most Filipino Catholics to respond to the aggressive proselytizing of many “Born Again” and biblical fundamentalists? These active evangelists often disturb the typical Filipino Catholic with a flood of biblical texts quoted from memory, often taken out of context and interpreted according to a pre-set anti-Catholic bias. Thus they charge Catholics with not observing the *Sabbath* as the day of worship, or with violating the Biblical prohibition against making images of God and any other creature, or of eating blood (*cf. PCP II 218-19*).

417. Many Catholic Filipinos find difficulty in responding to these challenges since their familiarity with the Old Testament is often dominated by literal acceptance of “what the Bible says.” The biblical dramas are taken as simple stories, without discerning the underlying deeper meaning. Thus, distorted ideas arise about God as being a fearful Judge exacting dire punishment for every sin. Or about Old Testament morality erroneously conceived in terms of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (*Ex 21: 24*).

418. *Some* react by rejecting the validity of the whole Old Testament for us today. *Others* want to know which parts remain binding on us. For *many*, the Old Testament is simply *obsolete* since we already have the fulfillment of God’s Promise of a Redeemer in Jesus Christ. Besides, they see little relevance for themselves in the ancient history of a far off people who have little in common with Filipinos of the 20th century, fast approaching the 21st!

PCP II, in recognizing the problem, spoke of “the challenge to read and study, pray over and live the written Word of God.” It expressed the strong desire that “the Bible, read in the Church, occupy the place of honor it deserves in every Catholic heart, home and parish” (*PCP II 224:1*).

EXPOSITION

I. VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

419. The truth is that the Old Testament is the living Word of God, “sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart” (*Heb 4:12*). The “Promise” of salvation is as important for us today as it was for the Israelites because salvation is not a thing, a material gift, but the living, transforming presence of God within us. We are pilgrims, journeying in the light and by the strength of God’s abiding promise: “I will be with you” (*Ex 3:12*).

420. Thus God’s Old Testament Word is necessary for us today, and throughout our lives to understand Christ our Savior more fully. *PCP II* insisted that

nothing and no one speaks better of the Incarnate Word of God than the Scripture as Word of God. When the Bible is read in the Church, it is Christ himself who speaks to us (*cf. SC 7*). The Bible must once again become the primary catechetical book. Familiarity with the Bible through prayerful use and study of it should characterize the Catholic faithful, for “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (*DV 5; PCP II 159*).

421. Jesus himself thus taught the Emmaus disciples, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, interpreting every passage of Scripture that referred to him” (*Lk 24:27*). The basic reason for this insistence on the Scriptures is not the Fundamentalists’ attack, but the fact that “the plan of salvation is found as the true Word of God in the Old Testament books which, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable” (*DV 14*).

II. CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

422. The biblical Promise of Salvation in the Old Testament is not primarily a question of an individual text or even a series of texts. Rather, the whole Old Testament is a three-part presentation of the saving acts of God. *First*, there is the **Torah**, the historical books revealing God in the history of His Covenant Promises to Israel. *Second*, the **prophets**’ “Word of the Lord” promises deliverance from slavery and exile. *Third*, the **writings** of the sages, the poets and the visionaries offer inspired means for discerning God’s saving presence in daily life (*cf. CCC 702*).

This Old Testament “canon” is summarized in Jeremiah:

“It will not mean the loss
of instruction [Torah] from the priests,
nor of messages [word] from the prophets,
nor of counsel from the wise” (*Jer 18:18*).

A. Torah/Historical Books

423. The first five books of the OT, called the *Pentateuch*, constitute the core of the *Torah*, or Law. But unlike our laws today, the Old Testament Torah was formed gradually as a *narrative memory* of God’s covenant with His people. It is the authoritative response to questioning: “Later on, when your son asks you what these ordinances, statutes and decrees mean which the Lord has enjoined on you, you shall say to your son:

We were once slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand, and wrought before our eyes signs and wonders . . . to lead us into the land He promised on oath to our fathers. Therefore the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes in fear of the Lord, our God, that we may always have as prosperous and happy a life as we have today. . . (*Dt 6:20-24*).

424. *Vocation*. Torah or “Law” here signifies a “moral binding” that is at once a *vocation*, a *gift* and a *way of life*. The Old Testament Torah is an open-ended, imaginative narrative of Israel’s historical public experience of their Covenant God. To anyone today who thinks life is made up only of one’s own immediate private experiences, the Torah insists on the essential place of the *community’s heritage* and the “handing down” of a living tradition.

425. At the center of Israel’s memory is the *Covenant Maker*, God who is *with* His people and *for* His people.

“Hear, O Israel! . . . Be not weakhearted or afraid; be neither alarmed nor frightened . . . For it is the Lord, your God who goes *with* you to fight *for* you against your enemies” (*Dt 20:3-4*).

The decisive event in Israel’s history was the *Exodus* from Egypt and the *Sinai Covenant*. The Israelites were commanded by God to relive this great covenant moment of liberation each year by celebrating the *Feast of the Passover*.

“You shall observe this as a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and your descendants. . . .When your children ask you, ‘What does this rite of yours mean?’ you shall reply: ‘This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt’ ” (Ex 12:24-27).

426. Commandments. For their part of the Covenant, the Israelites were called to keep the “*Ten Words*” given to Moses at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex 20; Dt 5:6-21). These Commandments were to *liberate* them, as their preface declares: “I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (Ex 20:2). But they also demanded of the people a fateful decision: a persevering commitment to the liberating Covenant God:

“Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . . you will live. If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen . . . you will certainly perish” (Dt 30:15-18).

427. In brief, the God of the Covenant brought salvation to His people by His active presence. When infidelities weakened this presence, God promised a *New Presence* in a *New Covenant*, fashioned by a Promised Savior. As Christians we enter this New Paschal Covenant made in Christ through our Baptism. But unfortunately, like the Israelites of old, the Covenant God’s Promise of life is often forgotten or taken for granted, and our Covenant response in our *Baptismal Promises* only rarely recalled.

B. The Word of the Prophets

428. We often confuse “prophet” with a fortune teller (*manghuhula*) who predicts what the future holds in store for us. But the Old Testament prophets were not like that. They were men called by God to speak His word to the people, interpreting their present situation in the sight of God and telling them what He would do with them. Most of all, *the prophets called the people back to the Covenant*. For despite God’s constant fidelity, Israel’s history is a series of infidelities. After the *first stage* of God’s saving acts in liberating His people from their slavery in Egypt, a *second stage* concerns their deliverance proclaimed by the prophets, both before and after the Exile, if only they would turn back to the Lord.

429. Conversion. This prophetic “word” comes as a surprise; it is a word of passion, bringing new hope at the very time when things were completely hopeless. It is the “word of the Lord,” free and unaccommodating, breaking all conventional expectations. It is a word of *conversion*: turn back to God. *Amos* admonishes:

“Seek the Lord, that you may live . . .
Seek good and not evil;
Then truly will the Lord, the God of hosts,
be with you as you claim!” (Am 5:6, 14)

Isaiah echoes the same call to conversion:

“Wash yourselves clean!
Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes;
Cease doing evil; learn to do good.
Make justice your aim: redress the wronged,
Hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow” (Is 1:16-17).

430. The *people’s “conversion”* is not just self-made. Rather, it is also the work of their saving God: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine” (Is 43:1). Within this grace of conversion is the promise of *forgiveness*. *Isaiah* gives God’s side:

“Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord. Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool” (Is 1:18).

The prophet *Joel* highlights the need for genuine interior repentance to gain God's mercy:

“Return to me with your whole heart, with fasting,
and weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the Lord your God.
For gracious and merciful is He, slow to anger,
rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment” (*Jl 2:12-13*).

431. God's call through the prophets to repentance ends with an incredible promise. *Ezekiel* describes Yahweh's promise thus:

“I will give you a *new heart*
and place a *new spirit* within you,
taking from your bodies your stony hearts
and giving you natural hearts.
I will put my spirit within you
and make you live by my statutes” (*Ez 36:26-27*).

Moreover, this deep interior renewal activated by God's grace is worked not just within the individual alone, but especially among the whole people. “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel” (*Jer 31:31*).

432. The messianic prophecies foretell in greater detail the Savior who will bring about the promised new Covenant. This Savior will show a *special love for the poor* and *justice* will be his concern. “He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted” (*Is 11:4*). “This is the name they give him: ‘The Lord our justice’ ” (*Jer 23:6*). “See, your king shall come to you; a just Savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass” (*Zech 9:9*).

433. *Servant Songs.* Isaiah presents *four* “Servant songs” which provide a startling new image of how God will realize His promise of salvation. The *mission* of this suffering Servant is *to establish justice*:

“Here is my servant whom I uphold,
My chosen one with whom I am pleased,
Upon whom I have put my spirit;
He shall bring forth justice to the nations” (*Is 42:1*).

The *scope* of his saving work is *universal*:

“I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (*Is 49:6*).

434. Most striking of all is the characteristic *life-style* of this Servant: his *willingness to suffer*.

“I gave my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who plucked my beard.
My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting” (*Is 50:6*).

The Servant's suffering was not for his personal sin, but for the sins of others.

He was pierced for our offenses,
crushed for our sins;

Upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole,
by his stripes we were healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep,
each following his own way;
But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all (*Is 53:5f*).

435. But the prophets did more than prophesy a Messiah King and Suffering Servant.” Their call to conversion was a *radical upheaval*. The Lord touched Jeremiah’s mouth and told him: “This day I set you over nations and kingdoms, to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant” (*Jer 1:10*). The old world is coming to an end: rooted up and torn down, destroyed and demolished. *God is bringing a new world into existence: building and planting it.* “This is the plan proposed for the whole earth. . . The Lord of hosts has planned, who can thwart him?” (*Is 14:26-27*)

436. Prophetic Hope. There are always those who, overcome by the tragedies of life, claim such a new world is impossible even for God. To them the Lord replied through the prophet: “I am the Lord, the God of all mankind! Is anything impossible to Me?” (*Jer 32:26-27*). Thus God makes Himself the firm foundation for the hope held out to the people by the prophets.

437. This *prophetic hope* is, *first* of all, grounded on the *memory of God’s great saving acts in the past*. “Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the pit from which you were quarried. Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (*Is 51:1-2*). Thus grounded, hope works against the *rootlessness* with which modern secularism plagues us all. *Second*, prophetic hope looks essentially also to the *future* and to *posterity*. It thus helps us to overcome our excessive individualism. “My salvation shall remain forever, and my justice shall never be dismayed” (*Is 51:6*). *Third*, in freeing us from the guilt of sin, the prophets’ promise of *God’s forgiveness brings comfort*. “Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem . . . her guilt is expiated” (*Is 40: 1-2*).

438. *Fourth*, the prophetic hope sketches a *new life* that drives out resignation and despair.

“They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength,
they will soar as with eagles’ wings;
They will run and not grow weary,
walk and not grow faint” (*Is 40:31*).

439. *Lastly*, the prophetic hope bursts out of all narrow pragmatic, utilitarian views by offering a *vision of the future that only God can create*.

“Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;
The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind.
Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create” (*Is 65:17-18*).

440. *God is speaking to us today through the Old Testament prophets* as much as in the days of old. The prophetic message is inspiring an extraordinarily active ministry of the Catholic Church in the Philippines in its *thrust for justice through a preferential option for the poor*. The prophetic message of *conversion, of hope in the Lord, of fidelity to the Covenant* with God our Savior, remains ever new and ever relevant.

Recognizing this, *PCP II* decreed that
a syllabus of biblical catechesis for social involvement must be under-taken. This biblical catechesis should be promoted and given prominence in evangelization work and in the Church’s programs of formation and action for social awareness” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 21, 3-4*).

C. The Counsel of the Wise

441. The third part of the Old Testament, called the “*Writings*,” presents the discernment needed for ordinary day-to-day living. The *Psalms* and the *Wisdom literature* present how the faithful can discern the presence of God in their daily lives. “How are things inter-connected?” the wise man asks. Can God, through His Covenant Torah and His prophetic Word, bring salvation to ordinary daily life? “Whence can wisdom be obtained, and where is the place of understanding?” (*Jb 28:12*).

442. In the *Wisdom Literature*, *Job* responds by looking not only back to the confident experience of God’s saving presence in the past. He also looks forward to the divine inscrutability: “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away” (*Jb 1:21*). There is much to learn from the counsels of the wise. “Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and turn away from evil” (*Prv 3:7*). On work and leisure: “He who tills his own land has food in plenty, but he who follows idle pursuits is a fool” (*Prv 12:11*). On relating to people: “A mild answer calms wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (*Prv 15:1*).

443. Some advice “liberates” by exposing evils that enslave. “There are six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet that run swiftly to evil, the false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers” (*Prv 6:16-19*). Others provide something like today’s “value clarification.” “It is bet-ter to harken to the wise person’s rebuke than to harken to the song of fools” (*Eccl 7:5*).

444. *Job*’s question, then, is answered by the vital interaction of *life-experience* and *Lord-experience*. Both come together in: “Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and avoiding evil is understanding” (*Jb 28:28*). The best human knowledge of salvation is discerning obedience to the Lord.

445. The *Psalms* present *another dimension of salvation*. Characteristic of the *Psalms* is their *direct personal address to God*, expressing deep faith and *trust* in the Lord. In the *Psalms all aspects of daily life* are encountered:

- all *places* like houses, fields, roads, workshops and sickbeds;
- all *occupations* like eating, drinking, sleeping, getting up, working, recreating;
- all *ages* of life, from childhood to old age, with all forms of *personal relations*: man and woman, parents and children, brothers and friends.

The *Psalms* repeat Israel’s unique history, and even include the whole of creation: the stars of heaven and earth, winds and clouds, trees and flowers.

446. *Psalms of praise* express thanksgiving for the saving acts of God, with a plea for His continued care. *Psalms of lament* speak of the deliverance God works for His people. Both manifest the sharp conviction that we exist and live only as participating in a community and in direct relationship with God. Salvation comes from God to us as community members, not as self-made liberators. Filipinos are naturally drawn to the psalms to express their “*utang na loob*” for God’s tremendous “*kagandahang-loob*” with them.

447. *Deep trust in God and His power to save* is the basic theme of these *Psalms*. On one hand there is bold, unreserved oneness with God.

“Though my flesh and my heart waste away,

God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps 73:26).

On the other hand, a tough quality is present: the making of a decision, the choosing of sides and standing firm against others.

“Help us, O God our Savior, because of the glory of your name;
Deliver us and pardon our sins for your name’s sake;
Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”
Let it be known among the nations in our sight
that you avenge the shedding of your servants’ blood” (Ps 79:9-10).

448. The final salvific message of the Psalms, then, can be summed up by two notions: *total commitment* to the mystery of God’s nearness, and concrete *daily obedience* to His Torah, His Commandments. This repeats the distinctive marks of Israel in Deuteronomy:

“For what great nation is there that has gods *so close* to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon Him? Or what great nation has *statutes* and *decrees* that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?” (Dt 4:7-8).

449. A *God so near* and a *Torah so righteous* – these are the grounds for the promised salvation. “You, O Lord, are near, and all Your commandments are permanent” (Ps 119:151). The promise of salvation means this:

“Let Your kindness come to me, O Lord,
Your salvation according to Your promise. . .
And I will keep Your law continually forever and ever.
And I will walk at liberty because I seek Your precepts” (Ps 119:41-45).

450. In the New Testament, we meet Christ our Lord responding in similar fashion to the same question about salvation. When the rich young man asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied: “Keep the commandments” [a Torah so righteous]. . . “If you wish to be perfect, . . . come, follow me!” [a God so near] (Mk 10:17-22). In Jesus Christ our Savior, God is *with us, for us*. Therefore obey Him!

INTEGRATION

451. The Old Testament obviously serves with the New as the major source of all three basic dimensions of the Catholic Faith: *doctrine, morals, and worship*. It is tempting to link the three-part Old Testament canon (the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings) to doctrine, morals and worship respectively. But this will not do: *each major part of the Old Testament contains elements of all three dimensions of our Faith*.

452. Moreover, there is good reason for *not* trying to keep the three parts of the Old Testament canon too clearly apart. For all three parts are so intimately related that in the complex editing process of creating the Old Testament in its final written form, much overlapping resulted. For example, the claims of the Torah moved into the Prophetic books, while the prophetic word became important for interpreting both the Torah and the Writings. Finally, the Wisdom books and the Psalms help to appreciate both the Torah and the Prophets.

453. Doctrinal Dimension. Nevertheless, the Old Testament's inspired narrative grounds most of the basic *doctrines* of our Catholic Faith. For example, regarding God, He is the Father and Creator, who will send a Savior to redeem us from sin, and create within a new heart and among us a new people, through His Spirit.

Therefore we recognize today how one-sided and unbalanced it was to picture the Old Testament God as the great avenging, vindictive Jehovah. Rather we find

- Yahweh the shepherd who “seeks out the lost, brings back the strayed” (*Ez 34:16*),
- a vinekeeper caring for his vineyard (*cf. Is 5: 1-7*),
- the savior who loved Israel as a father loves his son (*cf. Hos 11:1*), and with the tenderness of a mother for the child of her womb (*cf. Is 49:15*).

Yet all this prepares for a greater revelation, for ultimately only Jesus Christ, “the Son, ever at the Father's side” (*Jn 1:18*) can reveal the full mystery of the living God.

454. Moral Dimension. The *moral* code of the “Ten Words” at Sinai still grounds the New Covenant's moral stance, as Jesus himself presented it. Moreover, the mystery of moral evil, sin, is dramatically presented in Genesis and throughout the Old Testament. Perhaps even more important is how *sin's social nature*, and the corresponding call to liberating action are most powerfully described by the prophets, as today's liberation theology clearly manifests. In addition, the book of Proverbs provides ample examples of common sense advice for “training in wise conduct, in what is right, just and honest” (*Prv 1:3*).

455. Worship Dimension. The Church's liturgical *worship* in the Eucharist celebration draws directly on the Jewish synagogue service of God's Word in Sacred Scripture, and especially on Israel's great feast of the Passover. This practice simply builds on Christ's own example at the Last Supper. Moreover, especially in Israel's songs, the Psalms, the Catholic Church finds the inspired expression of her deepest spiritual longings.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

456. *What is the value of the Old Testament for Christians today?*

The Old Testament gives us the living Word of God that brings God's promise of salvation to us. Salvation is not a material thing, but a spiritual reality only gradually understood through its *promise*.

The OT provides the background for interpreting our own experience as well as the words, example, and presence of Christ our Savior.

“When the holy Scriptures are read in the Church, it is Christ himself who speaks to us” (*SC 7*).

457. *Where is God's Promise of salvation found in the OT?*

God's Promise of salvation is found in all three parts of the OT: the *Law* (Torah), the *Prophets*, and the *Writings* (the Wisdom books and Psalms).

458. *What does the Law teach us today about God's Promise?*

The OT Covenant Law was God's great *gift* to His people, offering them a special vocation and way of life as a community heritage.

The Law reveals a God *for* and *with* His people, whose commandments are meant to *liberate* His people, despite their infidelities toward Him.

459. *What do the Prophets say of God's Promise?*

The prophets interpret the present situation as viewed by God. They constantly call for *conversion of heart* worked within His people by God Himself.

460. *How, according to the Prophets, would God accomplish this?*

The messianic prophecies foretell a Messiah King who brings salvation to his people precisely as a "*Suffering Servant*."

They call the people to radical conversion, to *turn back* to Yahweh's Covenant by renouncing evil and doing justice.

461. *What is meant by "prophetic hope"?*

The prophets grounded the hope of salvation on God Himself, based on the memory of Yahweh's saving acts in the past, but always looking toward a future new life that, through God's creative power, drives out all resignation and despair.

462. *What promise of salvation do the "Writings" give?*

The Wisdom books remind us how to be faithful to God in daily actions and events.

- *Proverbs* take up the practical moral wisdom in ordinary daily life.
- *Job* wrestles with the deepest mysteries of evil and death.

463. *What is the special value of the Psalms for the Christian?*

The Church has adopted the Psalms, the prayers Christ used, to express the New Covenant created by the Triune God.

The Psalms are song-poems of praise, lament, thanksgiving, repentance – arising from the deepest longings of the human heart and drawing on God's saving acts among His people.

They express total personal commitment to God, the Savior of His people, in daily obedience to His Law.

Chapter 10

Jesus Christ: Mission and Person

**“And you,” he said to them, “who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of
the living God!”**

(Mt 16:15-16)

Thomas said, “My Lord and my God!”

(Jn 20:28)

OPENING

464. *The center of our Christian Faith is Jesus Christ.* Hence he is the heart and center of catechesis (cf. *PCP II 157-9; CCC 426-29*). Thus the chief aim of this Catechism is to put Filipinos “not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (*CT 5*). Like *PCP II*, this Catechism intends to be a venue for “*meeting with Christ*.” It is directed “toward a New Evangelization based on the preaching of Christ Crucified to today’s Filipinos and Asians. . . . To proclaim the wonderful redemptive acts of Christ our Lord, from Aparri to Jolo. To re-animate our life in Christ Jesus; to unite all things in him” (cf. *Message of the Council; PCP II 7*).

This is the first of three chapters focusing directly on Jesus as he is presented to us today through the teaching, witness and prayer life of the Catholic “People of God,” the Church.

465. At a critical point in his public ministry, Jesus asked his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (*Mt 16:15*) This same question is posed to each and every Christian Filipino today. Its unique importance is that our own self-identity and life-meaning as persons, Filipinos and Catholics, rests on our personal response. To truly know ourselves and the ultimate meaning of our lives “we need to contemplate the face and the heart of Christ” (*PCP II 36*).

This chapter takes up the *mission* and *identity* of Jesus Christ. The two following chapters develop the central *truths of his Paschal Mystery* as proclaimed in the Eucharistic acclamation: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

CONTEXT

466. As the only “Christian nation” of Southeast Asia, we Filipinos can be proud of our faith in Jesus Christ. Chapter 1 pictured the Catholic Filipino in terms of five images of Christ: as Son of God and Son of Man, as Eucharist, as Suffering Servant, as King, and as “Miracle worker,” within a Mary-inspired approach. Here we wish to focus on how to come to a deeper, truer understanding of *what Jesus Christ does* and *who he is*. This tells us something of both the real Jesus Christ living today, and of our deep-felt values and needs as Filipinos, our *kalooban*, as redeemed “disciples of Christ” (*PCP II 34*).

467. Three popular Filipino images of Christ are particularly expressive. *First* is the *Santo Niño* (the Holy Child) imaging the innocence, simplicity, child-like wonder of Christ. While responding to the Filipino’s natural love for children, the child image of Christ can sometimes foster a one-sided focus which neglects the mature, adult Christ and the demands of responsible discipleship.

A *second* common image is *Hesus Nazareno*, picturing the suffering Jesus and inspiring many folk devotional *panata*. This image of Jesus’ suffering love is very consoling to numberless Filipinos in dire poverty and hardships. Yet, unless it is balanced by the image of the Risen Christ, the Victor over sin and death itself, it can foster a certain self-centered, passive fatalistic attitude that impedes free, creative response to everyday challenges.

468. A *third* popular image of Christ, common in jeepneys and tricycles, is the *Sacred Heart*, whose meek and mild countenance invites like attitudes in his followers. Traditional Filipino courtesy and patience in the face of suffering are thus religiously grounded. But this serene image needs to be related to Christ the *Liberator*, inspired by his mission to “light a fire on the earth” (*Lk 12:49*). It is this image of Christ, liberating us both within our personal lives and social structures, that has captured the special attention of many Filipinos today.

469. Two realities dominate the present Philippine context of preaching Christ. On the one hand, the startling growth of “*Born Again*” and *Fundamentalist groups* indicates a widespread yearning among Filipinos for a closer, more personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. *PCP II* does not hesitate to admit that “the Church has failed in many ways to satisfy the spiritual hunger of many of the faithful. This we must correct” (*PCP II 223*).

On the other hand, the continuing violence in armed conflicts and kidnapping manifests the deep-set cry of so many Filipinos today for social liberation. They are seeking a way to break out of the injustices and oppressive structures that exploit them. It is in this concrete Philippine context that Jesus Christ must be approached today. As “Church of the Poor,” we Filipino Catholics must be “willing to follow Jesus Christ through poverty and oppression in order to carry out the work of salvation” (*PCP II 135*).

EXPOSITION

I. PRESUPPOSITIONS

470. *First*, we must recognize that *to really know Jesus Christ is a life-long task*. This is the experience of all who believe in him. It is life-long because to know Jesus is to know the only one whom “God has raised up” (*Acts 2:32*), who “takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*), who is the “only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth” (*Jn 1:14*). It is life-long, too, because only in Jesus Christ do we come to know our own true selves, and the deepest meaning and destiny of our lives (*cf. GS 22; PCP II 34*).

471. *Second*, knowing Jesus is a living, changing, *growing* and *deepening experience*. It is not like knowing some fact of information, or knowing how to do something, some skill. Rather, *knowing Jesus means entering into a personal relationship with him*. As *PCP II* declares, “the believer lives in Jesus and Jesus lives in him” (*PCP II 66*). “*Knowing him*” animates and liberates us in a way like no other relationship could possibly do.

Concretely, most Filipino Catholics learn of Jesus when taught their prayers as young children. We learn about Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, his mother, and recite the Hail Mary. Our parents take us to Sunday Mass where we learn to listen to Christ’s teaching and his works of power by hearing the proclamation of the Gospel’s Good News. We pray the Creed together with the whole congregation.

472. *Third*, the Jesus we come to know is both the *historical earthly Jesus* and the *Risen Christ of faith*. One cannot be separated from the other. St. Paul exemplifies this in his description of the Gospel:

the gospel concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh but was made Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord
(*Rom 1:3-4*).

473. *Fourth*, to know Jesus means being committed to following him, being his *disciple* (*cf. PCP II 34, 44*). As expressed in a popular song a few years ago, “to see” Christ more clearly involves “loving him more dearly” and “following him more nearly.” *There is no authentic “knowing Jesus Christ” outside of personal commitment* to his teaching and way of life. Knowing Jesus must make a difference in our lives. It must accompany loving service of others in living faith (*cf. Jas 2:17*). Otherwise it is knowledge that “puffs up,” rather than “builds up” (*1 Cor 8:1*). *PCP II* declares: “expressing our faith through deeds of justice and love is particularly urgent in the Philippines” (*PCP II 80*).

474. From this practical necessity of following Jesus in order to know him adequately flows a *fifth* basic principle: that *we come to know who Jesus is from what he did*, his salvific mission. This is exemplified by one Eucharistic acclamation which proclaims: “Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free. You are the Savior of the world!” John’s Gospel was written according to the same principle: “Jesus performed many other signs as well. . . . But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name” (*Jn 20:30-31*). So we turn to the Gospels, which “faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among us, really did and taught for our eternal salvation” (*DV 19*).

II. MINISTRY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

475. *The irreplaceable starting point for knowing Christ is the historical Jesus*. So it was with the first disciples of Christ, whose Easter proclamation asserted that “the God of our fathers has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you handed over and disowned in Pilate’s presence” (*Acts 3:13*). So it is with us Filipino Catholics today: we come to personal faith through the Christian community’s witness to Jesus’ historical life, interpreted with the help of the inspired Scriptures and of the continued inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the living Tradition of the Church. The life and work of the historical Jesus alone provides the basic ground for confessing Jesus as Christ the Lord.

476. *Why the Historical Jesus?* We proclaim in the Creed that the Son of God came down from heaven “for us and our salvation.” Scripture likewise declares: “The Father sent His Son as Savior of the world” (*1 Jn 4:14*). This means *first*, that God sent His Son as an offering for our sins (*cf. 1 Jn 4:10*). *Second*, he came to reveal to us God’s love, that we might have life through him

(cf. *Jn 3:16*). *Third*, he came to be our model for sanctity, so that, *fourth*, we could share in his divine sonship (cf. *2 Pt 1:4*; CCC 456-60).

At Christmas St. Augustine preached: “He who was the Son of God, for you has become the Son of man, so that you who were children of men, might become the children of God. That he might give us of his good things, he shared with us our infirmities.”

477. After situating its work in the “Lights and Shadows” of the Philippines, *PCP II* chose to present its Message with “The Way of Jesus,” followed by “The Call of Jesus Today,” to ground our Christian life of “Discipleship in Community – The Church” (*PCP II 37-144*). The actual work or ministry of Jesus was summed up by Vatican II in the following description:

Jesus Christ speaks the words of God (cf. *Jn 3:34*), and accomplishes the saving work which the Father gave him to do. . . . He did this by the total fact of his presence and self-manifestation – by words and works, signs and miracles, but above all by this death and resurrection from the dead, and finally by sending the Spirit of truth (*DV 4*).

478. Following Vatican II, *PCP II* described Christ as *prophet, priest* and *king* (cf. *LG 10-13*; *PCP II 57-61*). In this chapter we shall sketch the ministry of the historical Jesus under two main headings: *prophet* and *Savior*. The exposition of Jesus as *King* will be developed in terms of Christ our Moral Norm in Chap. 15. Jesus as *Priest* is explained in the section of Chapter 28 entitled “Jesus Christ, the One Mediator/Priest.”

A. Jesus as Prophet

479. The vocation of a biblical prophet often embraces *three typical tasks*: 1) to *proclaim the word* of God with authority; 2) to *accompany this word with signs and wonders (deeds)*; and 3) to *suffer a martyr’s fate, death*. This is the pattern of Jesus’ ministry that we find in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is “a prophet equal to any of the prophets” (*Mk 6:15*). His ministry incited the Pharisees to ask for signs (cf. *Mk 8:11*), and he was put to death for being a false prophet (cf. *Mk 14:65*).

480. Jesus himself spoke of his own experience in terms of a prophet’s rejection by his own people (cf. *Mk 6:4*) and compared his own fate to a prophet’s death in Jerusalem (cf. *Lk 13:33*). But most of all, Jesus lived a prophetic mission by reason of *his possession of the Spirit*. In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus calmly appropriates to himself the text of Isaiah: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore He has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good tidings to the poor . . .” (*Lk 4:18*). When asked by John the Baptist’s disciples “Are you ‘He who is to come’?” Jesus responds by citing his works of the Spirit:

“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (*Mt 11:4-5*).

We shall briefly develop each of the three dimensions of the prophet’s task – *word, deeds, and fate* – as Jesus gives them their fullest meaning in his own ministry.

Word

481. *The teaching and preaching of Jesus centered on the “Kingdom of God,”* a dynamic symbol of God’s active presence among His people. For Christ, this Kingdom, was grounded in the Old Testament *hope* for Yahweh’s presence (cf. *Ps 91:1, 96:10; 97:1; 99:1 etc*). This hope was

eschatological, that is, something *already* present but *not yet* fully (cf. *Mk 1:14f; Mt 4:17*). Without ever defining precisely *what* the Kingdom of God is, Jesus uses it to embrace all the blessings of salvation, a salvation of God's active presence within people's daily life, liberating them *from* the enslaving power of evil, *for* loving service of their fellowmen.

For Filipino Christians today, *PCP II* sketches the essentials of the Kingdom as a "gift of God," made present in Jesus, as a "Task" and as a "Promise" (cf. *PCP II 39-43*).

482. Christ's typical method of communicating his word about the Kingdom was by telling stories, *parables*. In them he focused on the common life of his listeners, and drew them into recognizing God's presence therein. Jesus taught the people that God was their Father, not in competition with them. That He was not calling them out of their own humanity, but rather making their own creative human efforts possible by His divine presence.

483. Another characteristic of Jesus' preaching was his peculiar use of "Amen." While "Amen" was customary in responding to another's assertion, Jesus used it rather to introduce his own message. Jesus' *Amen* expressed a unique blend of *certainty*, *authority* and *power*.

Certainty, because Jesus claimed to be expressing only what he hears from the Father. "I do nothing by myself. I say only what the Father has taught me" (*Jn 8:26-28*).

Authority, because unlike the prophets of old, Jesus spoke in his own name: "I solemnly assure you . . ." (cf. *Jn 3:3,11; 5:19,24, etc.*) Jesus puts his word above Moses and the Law. "You have heard the commandment imposed on your forefathers . . . What I say to you is. . ." (*Mt 5:21-48*).

Power, because Jesus claimed a unique filial relationship with God his "Abba," Father. And he claimed the power to share this relationship with others:

"Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him" (*Mt 11:27*).

Deeds

484. Peter's Pentecost discourse began with: "Men of Israel, listen to me! Jesus the Nazorean was a man whom God sent to you with miracles, wonders, and signs as his credentials. These God worked through him in your midst, as you well know" (*Acts 2:22*). But Jesus was not the typical "wonder-worker" creating a big show to draw crowds of followers. Rather he worked a *healing* ministry which constantly called to personal *faith* and *discipleship* (cf. *PCP II 84*).

485. The direct connection between *faith* and *healing* works is clearly affirmed by Christ in many of his signs. For instance:

- when he cured the paralytic (cf. *Mk 2:1-12*), and the woman with the issue of blood (cf. *Mk 5:25-34*);
- when he gave sight to the blind Bartimaeus (cf. *Mk 10:46-52*), and restored to life Jairus' daughter (cf. *Mk 5:21-24,35-43*);
- when he cured the centurion's servant boy at Capernaum (cf. *Mt 8:5-13*), and the daughter of the persistent Canaanite woman (cf. *Mt 15:21-28*);
- when he cleansed the ten lepers, of whom only the one Samaritan returned to give thanks (cf. *Lk 17:11-19*).

In all these cases, Christ's message was the same: "Your faith has been your salvation. Go in peace" (*Lk 7:50*). In contrast, in his own home town of Nazareth, Jesus could work no miracle, "so much did their lack of faith distress him" (*Mk 6:5-6*).

486. The faith which Jesus praised throughout his ministry was not the self-righteous, legalistic faith of the Scribes and Pharisees. Rather, for those who knew their own helplessness, it was the *open acceptance of God's free gift of loving, healing presence among them in Christ*. "Believing" meant reaching out beyond themselves and their need to embrace the free gift of Christ's life-giving and healing love. This is the faith that "saves" because it shares in the very power of God, active within our daily lives.

487. But beyond open acceptance, this faith which Jesus praises also involves *discipleship*: an implicit *commitment*. Each is called to live out the gift of life freely given, in all the concrete circumstances of one's daily life, by following Jesus' way. This is what coming to know Jesus Christ demands of every believer. Each has a *mission* as Christ himself had, from the Father. To personally know Christ, then, is to understand the meaning of one's own concrete life in view of the larger perspective of the Kingdom of God: of our graced union with God (*cf. PCP II 62,67,79,85*).

488. Besides his healing, Christ's ministry was noted for his celebration of the Kingdom in *table-fellowship*. He not only forgave sinners and associated with tax collectors and outcasts (*cf. Mk 2:15-17*); he even scandalized his pious contemporaries by dining with them. Such table-fellowship symbolized Christ's whole mission and message of drawing all into his Father's Kingdom. "I have come to call sinners, not the self-righteous" (*Mk 2:17*). It prefigures the eternal banquet in the Kingdom of God in which "many will come from the east and the west and will find a place, while the natural heirs will be driven out into the dark" (*Mt 8:11-12*).

489. The importance of this table-fellowship in Jesus' ministry is confirmed by two things. The first is the special importance among the early disciples of the "breaking of bread" (*Lk 24:35; Acts 2:46*). This must have come from Jesus' own mannerism. The *second* is the Lord's prayer which Christ taught his disciples. It summarizes the ministry of Christ in terms of "Abba" (Father), the Kingdom, bread, forgiveness and the final test. All of these refer in one way or another to table-fellowship and more. Not just voluntary "coming together" but the *koinonia*, the transforming communion we have in the Eucharistic celebration as members of Christ's Body.

Fate

490. Finally we come to the *third dimension* of the prophet, to suffer a *martyr's death*. Jesus referred to such a fate (*cf. Lk 13:33-34*). Moreover, he had the example of John the Baptist before him. Jesus himself was accused of blasphemy because he proclaimed the forgiveness of sins, and of casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub (*cf. Mk 3:22*).

Jesus was constantly under attack by the Jewish religious authorities. This was because he overturned the priorities of their religious practice, especially in regard to the Sabbath Law and the Temple. He claimed authority over the Sabbath Law (*cf. Mk 2:28; Lk 6:5*), and challenged the legalistic approach to its observance (*cf. Lk 13:10-17; 14:1-6*). Likewise, by his symbolic cleansing of the Temple, he exercised a similar command over it (*cf. Jn 2:13-22*).

B. Jesus as Savior/Redeemer

491. More than being a "prophet," Jesus was proclaimed *Savior/Redeemer* even before his birth. "You are to name him "Jesus" because he will save his people from their sins" (*Mt 1:21*). The very name "Jesus" means "God is salvation." Today many Filipinos are strongly attracted to Jesus as their personal Savior "who gave himself up for me" (*Gal 2:20*). In one Eucharistic acclamation we proclaim: "Lord, by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free. You are the Savior of the

world!” Thus both Scripture and the liturgy invite us to see Christ our Lord in terms of his *saving work*.

492. But with all the injustice, violence and senseless suffering rampant throughout the world today, how can we honestly acclaim Jesus as Savior? *What does Christ save us from?* To reply effectively, two basic insights are essential. First, *Christ “saves” by touching the spiritual root of all these evils experienced today*, namely, *SIN* – people’s proud, self-seeking moral attitudes and acts before God and with one another. Selfishness enslaves. “Everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin. . . . That is why, if the Son frees you, you will really be free” (*Jn 8:34-36*).

493. Second, *the salvation which Christ has already won for all is not yet complete*. It must be accepted, embraced and acted out in the free lives of believers today.

For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. . . . For you were called for freedom – but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh; rather, serve one another through love (*Gal 5:1,13; cf. 1 Pt 5:6-10*).

494. Christ’s saving work in his *Paschal Mystery* is taken up in detail in the two following chapters. Here we only sketch briefly the work of Jesus as Savior by indicating *three basic dimensions of Christian salvation* as presented in Scripture. As throughout salvation history, Filipinos today seek salvation: 1) from the *cosmic demonic powers of evil*; 2) from enslaving, oppressive *forces in the economic, socio-political areas*; and 3) from the absurdity and *meaninglessness* of personal life. In each area Christ has worked his unique salvation.

Saving from Cosmic Evil

495. In his public ministry Jesus was noted for casting out evil spirits. “What do you want of us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!” (*Mk 1:24*) “To be saved” here means to be a “new creation” in Christ. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (*2 Cor 5:17*).

God gave you new life in company with Christ. He cancelled the bond that stood against us with all its claims, snatching it up and nailing it to the cross. Thus did God disarm the principalities and powers. He made a public show of them, and leading them off captive, triumphed in the person of Christ (*Col 2:14-15*).

Yet the fight versus evil spirits continues as St. Peter warns us:

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith . . . The God of all grace who called you to his everlasting glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish those who have suffered for a little while (*1 Pt 5:8-10*).

Saving from Socio-Political Oppression

496. The Exodus liberation of the Old Testament is the background for Jesus’ saving work as the new Moses. He teaches a new hierarchy of values that undermined the oppressive social structures of his day (*cf. Lk 16:14-15*). But how did Jesus actually liberate? *First*, he exposed the enslaving, corrupting power of *riches*. Jesus showed that giving was better than taking, sharing more liberating than hoarding (*cf. Lk 6:29-30; 14:13-14; Acts 20:35*).

For Jesus, the *key* to economic liberation was *twofold*: 1) *to free* human hearts from their greed and self-seeking; and 2) *to inspire* them with respect for others, sensitivity and compassion for the needy, and a generous, outgoing love for those in want.

497. *Second*, Jesus taught that any *power* not rooted in mutual service was enslaving and oppressive. “Whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all” (*Mk 10:42-45*). *Love* is ultimately ***the only power that sets people free***.

Third, Jesus liberated his followers from the common social prejudices that bound them. These were the customary ways of honoring the wise and the rich while discriminating against foreigners, women, public sinners and outcasts. He taught concern for “the little ones” of the Kingdom (*cf. Mt 18:10*).

498. *Finally*, Jesus freed his contemporaries from mere external, legalistic religious obedience to the Law by interiorizing and prioritizing its obligations.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You pay tithes on mint and herbs and seeds, while neglecting the weight, matters of the law: justice and mercy and good faith. It is these you should have practiced, without neglecting the others. Blind guides, you strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! (*Mt 23:23f*)

Saving from Life’s Meaninglessness

499. *Christ saved by being the revelation of the Father.* To his followers Jesus promised: “If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (*Jn 8:31f*). *His teachings set us free because they offer meaning and purpose in life*, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and despair. Jesus taught: “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life” (*Jn 8:12*). “I have come into the world as its light, to keep anyone who believes in me from remaining in the dark” (*Jn 12:46*).

III. THE PERSON OF JESUS

500. From this biblical sketch of Jesus as Prophet and Savior, what can we answer to Jesus’ own question: “Who do *you* say that I am?” (*Mk 8:29*). We could begin by answering with Peter: ***“You are the Christ.”*** We thus affirm that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, foretold by the prophets (*cf. Acts 2:29-32*), anointed by the Holy Spirit as prophet, priest and king. (*cf. Acts 10:38*). He was sent by God to bring salvation to the world and fulfill all history (*cf. CCC 436-40*).

But to fulfill that mission, who must Jesus BE? From what he has *done*, can we discover who he IS? The Scriptures ground *three fundamental truths* about the Person of Jesus: Jesus is ***true man, true God***, and ***one***. (*cf. CCC 480; NCDP 189*).

A. Jesus Our Brother: True Man

501. *The Scriptures and constant teaching of the Church* are one in asserting ***that Jesus is truly a man***. So the Creed proclaims: “He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary” (*cf. CCC 484-87*). To be our Savior, Jesus “had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God on their behalf, to expiate the sins of the people” (*Heb 2:17*). “Born of a woman, born under the law” (*Gal 4:4*). Jesus “progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (*Lk 2:52*). He experienced hunger (*cf. Lk 4:2*), thirst (*cf. Jn 4:7*), temptation (*cf. Mt 4:1-11*),

deep emotions (*cf. Jn 11:33*), and great pity for the people (*cf. Mt 15:32*). In brief, Scripture presents Jesus as fully human.

502. In a memorable passage, Vatican II has stressed Christ's humanity:

He who is 'the image of the invisible God' is himself the perfect man . . . For by his incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things, except sin (*GS 22*).

503. There can be no doubt, therefore, about the Catholic Faith's insistence on Jesus' true humanity. But for many Filipinos, Jesus as truly human is not a familiar image (*cf. NCDP 182*). The actual problem is not with the truth of Jesus as man, but with translating this truth into an ever-deepening personal relation with Jesus, in our thinking, doing and praying.

B. "One Lord, Jesus, the Only Son of God"

504. The Christian Faith stands or falls on the confession of Jesus as the only Son of God, our Lord (*cf. CCC 441-50*). Scripture grounds this confession in two ways. *First*, Jesus as God's Eternal Word coming down to take on human nature in the *Incarnation*. "The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love" (*Jn 1:14; cf. CCC 461-63*).

Second, Jesus as "lifted up" at the Resurrection. "This is the Jesus God has raised up, and we are his witnesses. Exalted at God's right hand, . . . know beyond any doubt that God has made both Lord and Messiah this Jesus whom you crucified" (*Acts 2:32f,36*).

But both approaches lead to Jesus Christ, *one person* who is *truly man* and *truly God*.

505. Two great hymns of the New Testament proclaim Christ's divinity for all time. The *first* is in Paul's Letter to the *Philippians*, where he quotes a Baptismal hymn already in use in the early Church. The hymn covers three states of Jesus. *First*, his *prior heavenly existence*: "Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at" (*Phil 2:6*).

Second, his *earthly status*: "He emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men, . . . he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!" (*Phil 2: 7-8*)

And *third*, his *exaltation*: "Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father, that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!" (*Phil 2:9-11*).

506. The *second* hymn (*Col 1:15-20*) synthesizes the growing awareness in New Testament times of the Person of Christ. *First*, He is the "new Adam", "the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures" (*Col 1:15*). *Second*, he is divine, "For in him everything in heaven and on earth was created . . . all were created *through* him and *for* him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being" (*Col 1:16-17*). *Third*, Christ possesses the *primacy and fullness*: "It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens" (*Col 1:19-20*).

507. This New Testament assertion of Christ's divinity underwent a turbulent history in post-apostolic times. Through the centuries the Church gradually came to greater clarity and precision in proclaiming the divinity of Christ, and created the Creeds which we use to the present day. The Council of *Nicea* (325) rejected the heresy of Arius and proclaimed faith in "one Lord Jesus Christ,

the Son of God, the only begotten generated from the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father” (ND 7).

508. St. Augustine comments on the Nicene Creed’s “Light from Light”:

Just as the Father is ageless, so the Son does not grow; the Father has not grown old, nor has the Son increased. Rather Equal begot Equal; the Eternal begot the Eternal. Like a temporal flame generates temporal light: the flame which generates the light is coterminous with the light which it generates. From the moment the flame begins, there is light. Show me a flame without light, and I will show you the Father without the Son (*Tracts on the Gospel of John*, 20:8).

509. But controversies continued through the following century as various heresies regarding Christ appeared. An orthodox consensus was finally reached at the Council of *Chalcedon* (451) which defined the *person* of Christ as:

One and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . the same truly God and truly man, . . . the same one in being with the Father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity, like us in all things but sin. The same begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity, and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to his humanity from Mary, the Virgin Mother of God (ND 614).

C. Jesus Is One Person

510. The Scriptures clearly affirm “there is only one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:5). Easter shows how Jesus is both God’s own Self-gift to us, and the perfect human response to God. For it is precisely Jesus the Crucified one who is risen (cf. Mt 28:5-6). Paul writes of the wonderful *exchange*: “You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ: how for your sake he made himself poor, though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty” (2 Cor 8:9).

511. The basic reasoning here is straightforward:

- Unless Jesus was truly man, he could not save us. “He had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might. . . expiate the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17).
- Unless he was God, he could not redeem us, for only an all holy, immortal God can:
 - 1) free the whole human race from sin and death, and
 - 2) give us a share in the fullness of divine life.

512. Jesus, then, cannot be divided. ***He is one Person***, for this man Jesus is ***the Eternal Son of God made man***. This is the “Good News” which the Catholic Faith proclaims. This man Jesus is the Son of God who knows us and loves us. We can adore the man Jesus, and promote devotion to his Sacred Heart, precisely because he is not separated from God. Before him with Thomas we pray: “My Lord and my God!” (Jn 20:28).

IV. MARY, MOTHER OF THE SON OF GOD

513. For many Filipino Catholics, Jesus Christ has become a real Person in their lives through their devotion to ***Mary*** his mother, who knows him best. Chapter 1 described how we Filipinos approach Christ with and through our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*. Recently, our Catholic devotion to Mary has come under increasing attack. We are therefore called upon to deepen our understanding of the solid biblical, doctrinal and liturgical foundations which ground our traditional Marian piety (cf. AMB 78). Here we shall briefly take up Mary as presented: in Scripture, and in the doctrinal teaching of the Church, regarding her relation to Christ.

A. Mary in Scripture

514. Both Matthew and Luke present Mary with many allusions to great figures in the Old Testament. *Matthew* recounts Mary's virginal conception of Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy (cf. *Mt 1:23; Is 7:14*). *Luke* describes God's call to the Virgin Mary to become, through the Holy Spirit, the power of the Most High, the mother of Jesus, Son of God (cf. *Lk 1:26-38; CCC 487, 495*). The angel's greeting to Mary relates her to the "**Daughter of Zion**" (*Zep 3:14-17*). The coming of the Holy Spirit upon her, and her carrying the Child in her womb, pictures Mary as the **living Ark of the New Covenant** in Christ her Son.

515. Luke's account inspired the Fathers to compare Mary with *Eve*. As Eve accepted the word of the serpent and gave birth to *disobedience* and death, the Virgin Mary, the New Eve, *obediently* received the word of the angel, and through the power of the Holy Spirit gave birth to the living salvation of all through the Son of God (cf. *LG 56; CCC 411,726; AMB 55*). Mary's faith in accepting her virginal conception of Jesus relates her to **Abraham**, our father in faith, and the birth of his son Isaac, the child of the promise (cf. *CCC 165*). Luke confirms this by relating Mary to the perfect disciple who hears the word of God and keeps it (cf. *Lk 8:21; 11:27-28*).

516. Early in *John's* Gospel, Mary is described as "**the Mother of Jesus.**" Her request prompted the first of the 'Signs' of Jesus and the "manifestation of his glory" so that his disciples "believed in him" (cf. *Jn 2:1-11*). Jesus replied, addressing her as '**Woman**', that his "*Hour*" had not yet come. But Mary, in great faith, already assumed her future role as sharing in her Son's saving mission. She asked for a sign of the messianic benefits, at that "wedding feast." Jesus complied.

Late in *John's* Gospel, Jesus' "*Hour*" had come. Mary, standing at the foot of the Cross, is again addressed as '**Woman**,' and given as "*Mother to the beloved disciple*" by the crucified Jesus (cf. *Jn 19:25-27*).

517. Thus Mary, the physical mother of Jesus our Savior, becomes the spiritual mother in the order of grace of all, particularly of the disciples of Christ (*LG 54, 61*). "She is clearly the mother of the members of Christ . . . since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful who are members of Christ their Head" (*LG 53, quoting St. Augustine; cf. CCC 963*).

The conclusion of this brief Scriptural overview of Mary is that there is *solid biblical foundation* for our traditional Catholic Marian piety.

B. Mary in Catholic Doctrine

518. Our Filipino Marian piety is also solidly grounded on the *doctrinal teaching* of the Church. Vatican II presents the Blessed Virgin Mary in the final chapter of its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). The Church's teaching on Mary is presented in four sections:

- the Role of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation;
- the Blessed Virgin and the Church;
- Devotion to the Blessed Virgin in the Church; and
- Mary, a Sign of Sure Hope and Solace for the Pilgrim People of God.

Here we shall briefly develop only Mary's role with Christ in God's Plan of Salvation. Chapter 23 will take up her role in the Church, and chapter 24, devotion to Mary and source of hope for the pilgrim Church.

Mother of God

519. The title of Vatican II's exposition of Mary is: "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church" (*LG Chap. 8*). It begins with perhaps the oldest Biblical testimony: "when the designated time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman . . . that we might receive our status as adopted sons" (*Gal 4:4-5; LG 52*). The most basic truth and the essential core of Mary's unique dignity and role in God's salvific plan is sharply etched:

The Virgin Mary is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer. Redeemed in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit (*LG 53*).

520. Everything we know and revere about Mary, then, depends upon her unique, God-given vocation to be the "**Mother of God and of the Redeemer.**" This doctrine is expressed everytime we pray the Hail Mary: "Holy Mary, Mother of God" (*cf. CCC 495*). This asserts not that Mary is a "goddess," but that her Son is truly God. Mary gives Jesus what any human mother gives her baby. Through her, Jesus is truly man. "The Son of Mary and the Son of God IS one and the same person, Emmanuel" (*AMB 52*).

What is unique here is God's action: the Eternal Son of God united to His Person the baby conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. The baby born of Mary was the God-man, Jesus. "Thus the holy Fathers have unhesitatingly called the holy Virgin 'Mother of God' (*Theotokos*, 'God-bearer')" (*Council of Ephesus; ND 605*).

Blessed Virgin

521. Mary, *Virgin* and *Mother*, manifests God's perfectly free initiative in the *Incarnation* (*God's Word/Son becoming enfleshed, Jn 1:14*). **Mary's perpetual virginity** is not simply abstention from sexual intercourse, but the positive value of perfect *personal integrity in her total gift of self to God*. Mary's virginity flowered into maternity not only for Jesus, the first-born of all creation (*cf. Rom 8:29; Col 1:15,18*), but also for all who would be born again to new life in him (*cf. Jn 3:3; 1 Jn 5:11; LG 57; CCC 499-501*).

The *Virgin Birth*, then, is not a privilege affecting only Jesus and Mary, but a positive sign of the Father's gracious saving love which adopts us all in sending His Son, and the Spirit's building a new People of God, the Body of Christ, the Church.

522. Against current attacks and doubts both within and without the Church, about Mary's virginal conception and motherhood, a Catholic profession of faith could calmly respond that Mary's virginal conception is not just a symbolic description or literary device of Matthew and Luke to describe God's intervention, nor is it merely a human construct to insist on Jesus "divinity." Rather, it is *simply the way God in fact chose to send His Son into the world when the fullness of time had come* (*Gal 4:4*). We Filipino Catholics believe this both from Scripture and from the constant and consistent teaching of the Church.

The Immaculate Conception

523. Mary, therefore, had the unique mission from God to be Mother of His Son-made-man, the Redeemer. She thus shares in a special way Jesus' salvific mission. From this mission flows her singular grace and privilege of the *Immaculate Conception* (*cf. CCC 490*). This signifies that Mary was, "from the first moment of her conception, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin" (*ND 709*).

The “Immaculate Conception” as God’s gift to Mary, therefore, is *doubly Christ-centered*: first, as given because she would be Mother of Christ; second, as showing that no one is saved apart from Christ, even those who lived centuries before him. “In view of the merits of Christ” means Mary was made holy by her immediate relationship to Christ, the source of grace, for whom and towards whom all things are created (*cf. Col 1:15-17*).

The Assumption

524. Moreover, thus “preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory [*Assumption*] upon the completion of her earthly sojourn” (*LG 59; cf. ND 715; CCC 966*). With her Assumption to join her Son, the Risen Christ, in the fullness of her personality, Mary reveals *the fullness of God’s redeeming work for all of us*, “a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God” (*LG 68*).

525. Both privileges of Mary, her *Immaculate Conception* and her *Assumption*, are *not exceptions that separate Mary from us*. They are rather *privileges of fullness and completion*. Mary’s *grace is universally shared*; her *privilege* is that of *fullness*. Both privileges are constituted by the Spirit’s presence, in whom we are all called to share. Thus they put Mary at the inmost core of all human persons and of the Church.

Practically speaking, this meant that, sinless like Christ himself, Mary was not blinded or confused by pride or false self-centeredness. More fully and truly “human” than we are, Mary then can truly appreciate our human trials and failures.

These graces were *given to Mary precisely in view of her unique role in God’s plan* to save all through Christ’s redemptive mission.

Mediatrix

526. Authentic Catholic doctrine teaches that Mary’s intercession does not in any way detract from, or add to, the *unique mediation of Christ* (*cf. 1 Tim 2:5-6*). Two analogies help us to understand this. *First*, in God’s continuing act of *Creating*, the one goodness of God is communicated diversely to all creatures. *Second*, the *priesthood* of Christ is shared in various ways both by sacred ministers and by all the baptized. Hence, in like manner, the unique mediation of Christ is shared by all, since God calls all to cooperate, in manifold human ways, in Christ’s redemptive mission (*cf. LG 62*). Catholics see in Mary a special cooperation due to her God-given role within His saving work through Christ and the Spirit.

INTEGRATION

527. Every Sunday during the Eucharistic celebration, Filipino Catholics proclaim their faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son, our Lord. The *doctrine* of the mission and identity of Jesus Christ is the core of every Christian Creed. To affirm “*Jesus is Lord*” is the central conviction of the Christian community. On the truth of Christ as Son and Savior depend all the basic Catholic doctrines: of God as Triune Creator, of the Church as Christ’s Mystical Body, of redemption from sin by Christ’s Paschal Mystery, of our life of grace in the Holy Spirit, and of our final destiny with God in eternal life.

528. The *moral* dimensions of Christ's mission and identity are innumerable. Christ as Son and Savior becomes in person the fundamental *moral norm* for Christian action. At his Transfiguration, the link between doctrinal truth and moral action is explicitly made. The truth, "This is my beloved Son," is followed immediately by the moral command, "Listen to him!" (*Mk 9:7*). Christ as prophet and Savior not only left us with moral teachings, especially in his great Sermon on the Mount (*cf. Mt 5-7*). More importantly, he inspired a unique moral vision of loving service, and offered the interior power of his Holy Spirit to pursue that vision. "The way we can be sure of our knowledge of Jesus is to keep his commandments. The man who claims, 'I have known him,' without keeping his commandments, is a liar; in such a one there is no truth" (*1 Jn 2:3-4*).

529. The basic *worship* dimension of Christ's mission and person is felt in two areas. There is *first* the place of Christ in all Christian worship. The center of the Church's liturgy is the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, the sacramental representation and application of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross (*cf. LG 28; SC 7,47; PCP II 77, 180*). Christ himself, as Son and Savior, is in Person the Primordial Sacrament of God's presence among us. *Second*, there is the yearning prayer to Christ himself, expressed in the ancient liturgical refrain: "*Marana tha! O Lord come!*" (*1 Cor 16:22; cf. Rv 22:20*). Many of us Catholic Filipinos find devotion to Mary, Mother of Christ and our Mother in grace, a natural way to Christ.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

530. *What conditions indicate a special yearning for Christ in the Philippines today?*

The thirst for a personal relationship with Christ our Savior (e.g., in the "*Born Again*"), and for Christ the Liberator among the oppressed and exploited, indicates a strong yearning for Christ among many Filipinos today.

531. *What does "knowing" Jesus Christ entail?*

Getting to know Christ is a gradual, life-long, ever-deepening personal relationship with the Jesus of the Gospels, present to us now in multiple ways as the Risen Christ. Moreover, "knowing Christ" means being committed to him, being his disciple.

532. *How do we come to know WHO Jesus is?*

We come to know who Jesus IS, from what he DID and continues to DO. Therefore, it is important to know the historical life and work of Jesus through constant contact with the Gospels, in order to know in faith that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (*Phil 2:11*).

533. *Why did God become one of us in Jesus Christ?*

God the Son became one of us:

- for our salvation, that is: to save us from the slavery of sin;
- to reveal to us God's unending love for us;
- to be our model, as the Way, Truth and the Life;
- to actually share His divine sonship with us.

534. *How was Jesus a prophet?*

Jesus, the “Beloved Son” of the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit, perfectly fulfilled the task of a prophet:

- to *proclaim* the Word of God;
- support it by *signs* and *wonders*, and
- *seal* it with *his own blood*.

535. *What did Jesus proclaim?*

Jesus proclaimed the “Kingdom of God,” *already* present and “at hand” through him, but *not yet* realized fully, as it will be at the end of time.

This “Kingdom” summarized all the blessings of God’s presence among His people, liberating them *from sin, for* loving service of one another.

536. *How did Jesus preach and teach the “Kingdom”?*

Jesus preached and taught with:

- *certainty*, because he taught only what he heard from his Father;
- *authority*, because he spoke in his own name, of what he knew personally;
- *power* because he claimed a unique filial relationship with God, his “*Abba*,” Father.

537. *What signs and wonders did Jesus perform?*

Jesus worked many miracles, wonders and signs, healing the sick, freeing the possessed, raising the dead to life.

Through these signs he called all to *faith in him* and to *discipleship* which consists in following him in building the Kingdom through loving service of others.

538. *What was Jesus’ fate as a prophet?*

Jesus suffered a martyr’s death at the hands of his own, “who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets” (1 *Thes* 2:15).

“The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him on a tree” (*Acts* 5:30; 10:39).

539. *Why is Jesus called “Savior”?*

As announced even before his birth, the Child is to be named Jesus because “he will save his people from their sins” (*Mt* 1:21).

“Lord by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free. You are the Savior of the world.”

540. *How does Jesus “save”?*

Jesus saves by making it possible for us to work throughout our lives *against SIN*, the spiritual root of all the evils which we experience. He calls us to embrace and exercise his liberating grace in all our moral actions, especially by working for justice and peace.

541. *How does Jesus liberate from socio-economic oppression?*

Jesus liberates in this area by exposing the corrupting force of:

- riches that enslave;
- self-seeking ambition that knows no bounds;
- social prejudices that oppress and exploit others;
- a legalistic attitude toward law that makes even God’s commandments oppressive and exploitative.

Positively, through word and example, Christ saved by inspiring men and women with the ideal of loving service.

542. *How did Jesus save from the “meaninglessness” of life?*

Jesus saved by dissipating the darkness of ignorance and prejudice through the light of his Truth, and by giving meaning and purpose to human life, even its sufferings.

543. *From all Jesus did, what can we say of who he IS?*

Sacred Scripture grounds three fundamental truths about the person of Jesus. He is:

- *truly human*, like us in all things but sin (*cf. Heb 2:17; 4:15*);
- *truly divine*, God’s eternal Word, the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, ever at the Father’s side, who has revealed Him to us (*cf. Jn 1:14,18*);
- *one*, the “one mediator between God and men” (*1 Tim 2:5*). He cannot be divided.

“When the designated time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it that we might receive our status as adopted sons” (*Gal 4:4-5*).

“Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God’” (*Mt 16:16*).

544. *Was the truth that Jesus is true God and true man easily understood?*

The early Church only gradually came to an accurate expression of the divinity of Jesus, culminating in the Nicene Creed’s profession of:

“One Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in being with the Father.”

The Council of Chalcedon further defined Jesus as:

“begotten from the Father before the ages as to the divinity, and in the latter days for us and our salvation was born as to his humanity from Mary, the Virgin Mother of God” (*ND 614*).

545. *Why do Catholics venerate Mary as “Mother of God”?*

The Gospels clearly teach that Mary was chosen by God to conceive and bear a son, Jesus, who will be called Son of the Most High. (*Cf. Lk 1:31*.) Mary is the mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus, the God-man.

“Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice, ‘. . . blessed is the fruit of your womb. But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’ ” (*Lk 1:41-43*)

546. *Why is Mary exalted as “the Blessed Virgin Mary”?*

Mary’s virginity manifests both God’s free initiative in effecting the Incarnation of His Son, and Mary’s complete gift of self to God.

547. *How is Mary “our Mother”?*

Besides being the virgin mother of Jesus, Mary was given by Christ on the Cross to be the spiritual mother in grace of all his disciples. (*Cf. Jn 19:25-27*.)

548. *What is the meaning and significance of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption?*

Chosen to be the Mother of Jesus our Savior, Mary was conceived in her mother’s womb “preserved free from all stain of original sin” (*Immaculate Conception*). At her death, she was taken up body and soul into heaven (*Assumption*).

Both graces are not exceptions separating Mary from us, but *privileges of perfection and completion* that enable Mary to fulfill her unique role in God's plan to save all through Christ, the one Mediator.

549. *How is Mary "Advocate" and "Mediatix"?*

St. Paul clearly affirms "there is ONE mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus" (*1 Tim 2:5*). But just as Jesus calls all to follow him and share in his mission as Prophet, Priest, and King, so he gave Mary, his Mother, the unique mission of being mother to all his disciples (*cf. Jn 19:26*). Thus Jesus makes Mary share in his own saving mediatorship, neither adding nor detracting from it in any way.

Chapter 11

Christ Has Died

The Son of Man has come not to be served but to serve – to give his life in ransom for the many.

(Mk 10:45)

I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.

(Jn 12:24)

OPENING

550. Having seen the mission and Person of Christ in Chap. 10, we now focus on his *Passion* and *Death*, and their meaning for Filipino Christian life. For suffering and death are two inescapable realities which every human person has to face. Does Jesus Christ help us accept these realities and even find meaning in them?

551. *The whole earthly life of Christ came to its climax in his Paschal Mystery*, his suffering, Death and Resurrection (cf. CCC 571f; PCP II 55, 85, 413). This chapter focuses on his suffering and Death, while his Resurrection and glorification are treated in the next. Both chapters are *positive*, presenting the saving love of God in Jesus Christ.

For even the Cross is uplifting. In a secular sense, it was the means of the most painful and degrading death. But for us Christians, *the Cross of Christ is the symbol of salvation*. At Baptism we are marked with the sign of the Cross. Throughout life we are blessed with this sign, and sign ourselves with it in prayer. St. Paul wrote the Corinthians that he “would speak of nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).

552. Nevertheless, *the Cross* has always been, and remains for many today, *a scandal*. Paul wrote: “We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and an absurdity to Gentiles.” Yet he continued: “but to those who are called, Jews, and Gentiles alike, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23f).

The Cross is the symbol not only of Christ’s saving power, but also of our true selves. For it is the exemplar for all time of Jesus’ great “*Paradox*,” recorded in all four Gospels: “Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it” (Mk 8:35; cf. Mt 10:39; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25; PCP II 86).

CONTEXT

553. Devotion to the suffering Jesus (*Padre Jesus Nazareno*) and the dead Jesus, taken down from the Cross (*Santo Entierro*) is very popular among us Filipinos. This can be seen in many different Lenten and Holy Week practices, especially those focusing on Good Friday. There are the Stations of the Cross, the *flagellantes*, the *Pasyon* chanted throughout Holy Week, and the *Senakulo* dramatizations of Christ's final week. Lent and Holy Week are also favorite times for Filipinos to make spiritual retreats and days of recollections.

The suffering and dead Jesus obviously strikes a very responsive chord in the heart of us Filipinos. We see in this Jesus one who can identify with us in our poverty, sufferings, and oppression; one who can reach out to us as a forgiving and healing Savior in our weaknesses and failings.

554. But the very intensity of these devotions to the suffering Christ unfortunately leads at times to exaggerations, and even superstitions. "We must have the courage to correct what leads to fanaticism or maintains people infantile in their faith" (*PCP II 175; cf. 12*). These pious practices can give a very one-sided image of Christ which tends to enslave the devotees rather than heal and liberate them.

555. What, then, is the true meaning of Christ's suffering and death for us, Filipino Christians of today? Two contradictory but widely shared attitudes seem most common. One "piously" makes suffering something to be sought in itself. The other, in worldly fashion, sees it as something to be avoided at all costs. Both gravely misunderstand the authentic Christian approach to suffering and death.

In the face of such misleading views, it is all the more important for us to develop an accurate and ever-deepening personal understanding of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

EXPOSITION

556. The Creed puts great stress on Christ's passion and death. Immediately following "born of the Virgin Mary," it proclaims five actions undergone by Jesus: *suffered*, *was crucified*, *died*, *was buried*, and *descended* to the dead.

This chapter takes up these five actions of Christ our Lord under five general themes. *First*, an introductory section on the Cross, symbol of saving Love; *second*, Christ's view of his suffering and death; *third*, its characteristics; *fourth*, its profound effects of salvation and radical conversion; and *finally*, Christ's descent to the Dead.

I. THE CROSS: SYMBOL OF SAVING LOVE

557. St. Paul expressed the core of the "Good News" given him as follows: "For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (*1 Cor 15:3; cf. CCC 601*). Far from being a negative, depressing reality, the suffering and death of Christ help us "to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge" (*Eph 3:18-19*). The innocent Christ's personal pain and suffering brings home to us, in a way nothing else possibly could, the evil and ugliness of sin and its power in creating poverty, disease, hunger, ignorance, corruption and death. A truly "Christian" sense of sin is a grace received at the foot of the Cross, within the felt-experience of God's overwhelming forgiving Love in Christ Jesus.

558. Clearly it is *not* the very sufferings and death of Christ that save us, for this would make his torturers and executioners our saviors. Rather, *we are saved by Jesus' perfect self-giving love for his*

Father and for us, a love lived out to the death. In John's Gospel Jesus declares: "The Father loves me for this: that I lay down my life to take it up again. No one takes it from me: I lay it down freely" (*Jn 10:17-18*). Paul quotes an early liturgical hymn: "He humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross!" (*Phil 2:8*)

Today's liturgy expresses how Christ, in fulfillment of his Father's will, "gave himself up to death . . . a death he freely accepted . . . For our sake he opened his arms on the Cross" (*EP IV and II*).

559. The Cross, then, *does not exalt passive suffering or weakness*, as some have exploited it in order to dominate others. It *is*, rather, **the transformation of suffering and weakness through active, total self-giving love**. "For God's folly is wiser than men, and his weakness more powerful than men" (*1 Cor 1:25*). Gregory the Great describes this wondrous exchange:

He was made flesh that we might possess the Spirit.
He was brought low that we might be raised up.
He endured blows that we might be healed.
He was mocked to free us from eternal damnation.
He died to give us life. (*Homilies on Ezekiel, II:4,20*)

II. CHRIST'S VIEW OF HIS SUFFERING AND DEATH

560. In our present times, some have tried to explain Christ's suffering and death merely as the political execution of a non-conformist revolutionary by the Roman colonial powers. Doubtless there was a political aspect to the Cross, but it surely was *not* its essential meaning as interpreted in the inspired writings of the New Testament.

The Apostolic Faith expressed in the New Testament sees in *Jesus' passion and death* not just some incidental historical event of Jews and Romans, but **the saving act of God in Jesus' free self-sacrifice**. Thus Peter preached on the first Pentecost: "This man [Jesus] . . . was delivered up by the set purpose and plan of God; you even made use of pagans to crucify and kill him. . ." (*Acts 2:23; cf. 4:27f; CCC 599*). Jesus himself clearly understood his Passion and Death as his mission from the Father, interpreted in the light of the Old Testament prophets.

561. As His Mission. The Synoptic Gospels 'record Jesus' triple *pre-diction* of his suffering and death (*cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f*). "He began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer much, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, be put to death, and rise three days later" (*Mk 8:31*). These predictions correspond with other sayings of Jesus. "Can you drink the cup I shall drink or be baptized in the same bath of pain as I?" (*Mk 10:38*) "I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over" (*Lk 12:50*). And in his parable of the tenants Jesus portrays the death of the Son at the hands of the vineyard's wicked tenants (*cf. Mt 21:33-46*).

562. Following the OT Prophets. Jesus interpreted his coming death in line with the Old Testament prophets. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you slay the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!" (*Lk 13:34; cf. 11:47, 49*). His death was "*necessary*" to fulfill the Scripture: "How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (*Lk 24:25b-26*) He saw his suffering and death as part of the coming of the *Kingdom*, the "*test*" he taught his followers to pray about: "Subject us not to the test" (*Lk 11:4*).

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND DEATH

A. Redemptive

563. *Jesus saw his Passion and Death as redemptive*, his *ultimate service in the Kingdom*. “The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve — to give his life in *ransom* for the many” (*Mk 10:45*). The center of the ‘Good News’ focused sharply on “the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus. Through his blood, God made him the means of expiation for all who believe” (*Rom 3:24-25a*). “It was he who sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us from all unrighteousness and to cleanse for himself a people of his own, eager to do what is right” (*Ti 2:14*).

564. That his Passion and Death are “*redemptive*” is shown by Christ most clearly in his Last Supper. John introduces his account with Jesus washing his disciples’ feet. “Jesus realized that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end” (*Jn 13:1*). And for John, “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (*Jn 15:13*). Matthew’s account of Christ’s institution of the Eucharist explicitly asserts its *redemptive value*: “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt 26:28*). Christ is the New Paschal Lamb, sacrificed to redeem the people (*cf. Jn 19:36; 1:29,36*).

565. *Church tradition* has stressed this *redemptive* and *sacrificial character* of Christ’s Passion and Death. “Our Lord Jesus was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish an everlasting redemption” (*Trent; ND 1546*). And again, “At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again” (*SC 47*).

566. Thus, in her liturgy the Church prays in the 5th Easter Preface:

Father, we praise you with greater joy than ever in this Easter Season
When Christ became our Paschal Sacrifice.
As he offered his body on the Cross,
His perfect sacrifice fulfilled all others.
As he gave himself into your hands for our salvation.
He showed himself to be the priest, the altar, and the lamb of sacrifice.

B. From Sin

567. Christ’s coming, then, was “to expiate the sins of the people” (*Heb 2:17; cf. CCC 601, 606*). Paul summarizes Jesus’ saving work in four steps. *First*, Jesus offered a sacrifice as both *priest* and *victim*. “Christ our Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed” (*1 Cor 5:7*). *Second*, he “gave himself *for our sins*, to rescue us from the present evil age” (*Gal 1:4*). *Third*, he thus created *a new Covenant with God*. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (*1 Cor 11:25*). *Fourth*, all this *for us and our salvation*. “When we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless men” (*Rom 5:6; cf. Eph 5:2; 1 Thes 5:10*).

568. Jesus *redeems sinners in two ways*. *First, he removes their subjective guilt* by bringing them *God’s pardon and forgiveness*. Thus he restores their relationship of friendship to God which sin had destroyed. *Second, Jesus repairs the objective moral harm* and contamination *caused by sin*, through his own act of reparation and expiation which makes possible the sinners’ own acts of expiation.

Both these dimensions are clearly indicated in Christ’s encounter with Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector. In visiting the house of Zacchaeus, Jesus liberated him from his guilt of sin: “Today

salvation has come to this house. . . The Son of Man has come to search out and save what was lost.” This inspired Zacchaeus to make up for the objective harm he had caused: “I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor. If I have defrauded anyone in the least, I pay him back fourfold” (cf. *Lk 19:1-10*).

569. Clarification. Some have gravely misunderstood Christ’s expiation as picturing the Father punishing him cruelly for our sins, even though he is completely innocent. This is a monstrous view of God the Father, and badly misinterprets the New Testament. ***The Father hates sin, not Jesus.*** Jesus is the Father’s “beloved” (*Mk 1:11 et passim*). His whole life was a perfect offering to the Father (cf. *Jn 4:34; 6:38; CCC 606*).

The truth is that ***Jesus shares the Father’s love for us sinners***, and freely accepted the “cup” the Father has given him (cf. *Jn 18:11; CCC 609*). Jesus suffered *with* sinners, as a victim *for* sin and sinners, and as a victim *of* the Law and sin (cf. *2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Rom 8:3; PCP II 84*).

C. For Us

570. But how can Christ’s Sufferings and Death affect us sinners? The key to the answer lies in the biblical notion of ***corporate solidarity***. Isaiah’s four ‘Servant Songs’ (cf. *Is 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12*) present a mysterious figure chosen by God to “give his life as an offering for sin, . . . through his suffering my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear” (*Is 53:10-11*). Christ, one of us, could take upon himself “the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*) and offer him-self as a “Lamb of expiation” (cf. *Lv 14*).

Today the notion of “solidarity” has come into new prominence relative to social transformation, and humanity’s relation to the Blessed Trinity (cf. *SRS 38-40; PCP II 32, 139, 294-96, 306f, 313, 320, 353*).

571. The Good Friday liturgy stresses Christ’s corporate solidarity with us sinners and his suffering for us, quoting Isaiah:

It was *our* infirmities that he bore,
our sufferings that he endured, . . .
He was pierced for *our* offenses, crushed for *our* sins;
Upon him was the chastisement that makes *us* whole,
by his stripes *we* were healed.
We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way;
But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of *us* all (*Is 53:4-6*).

572. St. Paul used this *principle of solidarity* to explain both our human sinfulness and our salvation in Christ (cf. *Chap. 8 on Original Sin*).

Just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned . . . much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound for all (*Rom 5:12,15*).

573. “Christ died for *our* sins” (*1 Cor 15:3*), then, *means two things*. First, Jesus died ***because of our human sinfulness***. Second, he died to show us, and empower us, ***to overcome sin and its effects*** in our broken world. Christ is the Way we are enabled to bear the sins of many, not returning evil for evil, nor violence for violence in a vicious cycle of revenge (cf. *Mt 5:38-42*). Christ’s love gives us a chance to love even our enemies (cf. *Mt 5:44*), for he has sent us his Spirit of love.

574. But Christ’s redemption in no way makes us passive recipients. Scripture clearly affirms:

Christ suffered for you. . . and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps. . . He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live in accord with God's will. By his wounds you have been healed (*1 Pt 2:21, 24*).

And again: "You have been purchased, and at a price. So glorify God in your body" (*1 Cor 6:20*).

575. It is true that *Jesus acted on our behalf*: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (*Rom 5:8*). But *his great Sacrifice does not make our own sacrifices unnecessary*. Rather, *it makes them possible as saving realities*. We are called by Christ to share in his sacrifice (*cf. CCC 618*). *PCP II* explains how in the Paschal Mystery

Jesus brought us into his passover from suffering to glory, from death to life, from our human sinfulness to his grace. In this mystery we as his disciples need to share, finding in it the rhythm and pattern of our own life. . . By losing our life this way, we save it and grow in our discipleship of Jesus (*PCP II 85-86*).

576. To *know* Jesus as *our Redeemer*, for St. Paul, meant sharing in his sufferings. To the Philippians he wrote: "I wish to *know* Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection; likewise to *know* how to share in his *sufferings* by being formed into the pattern of his death" (*Phil 3:10*). Thus Paul could boast: "Even now I find joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church" (*Col 1:24*).

IV. PROFOUND EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH

A. Universal, Eschatological, Empowering Salvation

577. But *what makes Christ's saving love unique*? How is Christ different from all other martyrs through the ages? The answer lies in *three fundamental qualities of Christ's saving love*. It is: 1) *universal*, 2) *eschatological*, and 3) *empowering*.

First, Jesus died "not for our sins alone, but for those of the whole world" (*1 Jn 2:2; cf. CCC 604*). St. Paul explains: "He indeed *died for all*, so that those who live, might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up" (*2 Cor 5:14-15*). So it is Christ's love that transforms us so we can really lead a new way of life. "If God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (*1 Jn 4:11*).

578. Christ's *Cross* on Calvary stands as a symbol of his *universal redeeming love*. The *horizontal* bar stretches Christ's arms to embrace the whole world of human suffering, while the *vertical* column points him toward his heavenly Father, beyond the bounds of time and space. The "two others crucified with him, one on either side" (*Jn 19:18*) show Jesus' solidarity with the whole history of human suffering. The crucified body of Jesus Christ speaks a *universal* language to all men and women for all time.

579. *Second*, this saving love of Christ is "*eschatological*." Jesus did not die simply to raise our standard of living, or make life easier. He died that those who follow him will receive "eternal life in the age to come" (*Mk 10:30*). Moreover, *third*, this dimension is "already" present in us in *grace, empowering us* so that all our actions can have "saving" power. "The Father sent His Son as savior of the world. When anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. . . The way we know that we remain in him and he in us is that he has given us of his Spirit" (*1 Jn 4:14,13*). Put briefly, "God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever possesses the Son has life. Whoever does not possess the Son of God, does not possess life" (*1 Jn 5:11-12*).

580. The essence of the New Testament theology of salvation in Christ can be sketched in *four truths*. *First, Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world*; there is no salvation apart from Jesus. *Second*, through his sufferings and death *he has won for us sinners “objective redemption,”* that is, reconciled all with the Father. *Third*, he did this in *loving obedience to his Father’s will and love for us*. *Finally*, he calls us to *personal interior repentance for our sins and a life of loving service of others*, that is, *“subjective redemption.”*

581. Vatican II provides a similar description of Christ’s redemptive work and its effects:

As an innocent lamb he merited life for us by his blood which he freely shed. In him God reconciled us to himself and to one another, freeing us from the bondage of the devil and of sin, so that each of us could say with the apostle: “the Son of God loved . . . me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*). By suffering for us he not only gave us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps, but he also opened up a way. If we follow this path, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning.

Conformed to the image of the Son, Christians receive the “first fruits of the Spirit” (*Rom 8:23*) by which they are able to follow the new law of love (*GS 22*).

582. *Two ways of summarizing Christ as Savior* also help in relating to the wider perspectives of our Faith. The *first* is focusing on *“the blood of Jesus.”* Throughout Old Testament salvation history, blood was highly symbolic. It could refer to deliverance from death (*cf. Ex 12:7, 13, 22f*) and life itself (*cf. Lv 17:11-14*). Or it could mean sin-offering, cleansing from sin (*cf. Lv. 16*). Or blood could mean the seal of the Covenant at Sinai (*cf. Ex 24:6-8*).

These three meanings were supremely realized in Christ, the Paschal Lamb, whose blood a) brings life (*cf. Jn 6:53-56*), b) cleansing us from all sin (*cf. 1 Jn 1:7*) and c) creating a new Covenant (*cf. Mk 14:24*).

The hymn to Christ in the Letters to the Colossians summarizes these dimensions neatly:

It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him [a], and by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens [b], making peace [c] through the blood of his cross (*Col 1:19f*)

583. A *second* way of summarizing Christ’s redemptive work is to *relate our basic human yearnings* for life, for meaning, and for loving fellowship *to the Triune God*. For our drive for *life* is fulfilled by God the *Father*, “the living and true God” (*1 Thes 1:9*). By sending His *Son*, the wisdom of God, He gives *meaning and purpose* to our lives (*Jn 14:6*). And this inspires “*fellowship*” by pouring out His “love in our hearts through the *Holy Spirit*” (*Rom 5:5; cf. 2 Cor 13:13*).

B. Radical Conversion

584. But what is the *experience* of this salvation that Christ calls us to? The answer lies in a *radical conversion of heart*. We can illustrate what this means in *four common Filipino types*. *First*, some Filipinos don’t really believe that God loves them, accepts them and cares for them. They cannot “trust” God. To them Christ reveals that *God really is their “loving Father”* who is truly compassionate (*cf. Lk 6:36*). His “love was revealed in our midst in this way: He sent His only Son to the world that we might have life through Him” (*1 Jn 4:9*).

585. *Second*, others lack all self-confidence. Their poor self-image makes them hesitant to reach out and share with others. They are always afraid of what others might say. *Christ “saves” them by revealing their inner goodness*. His life and death prove how much they mean to God. In bringing them God’s forgiveness and acceptance, Christ radically grounds their *new positive self-image*.

586. *Third*, some Filipinos find it hard to get along with others. They tend to hold grudges against anyone who hurt them. Christ “*liberates*” them by calling them to turn toward being a “*man/woman-for-others*” in *self-giving service*. Through word and example, Christ taught that true happiness and self-fulfillment come from forgiving others, and helping the poor and needy. Moreover, *he empowers them for this service* by sending them his own loving Spirit. It is Christ’s Spirit that brings deep “love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity” (*Gal 5:22-23*).

587. *Lastly*, to those who seek happiness in riches, reputation and power, Christ gave the example of *rejecting these temptations* (cf. *Mt 4:1-11*) and *urging simplicity of life* (cf. *Mt 6*). He called the poor “blessed” because they could more easily recognize their dependence on God. He warned the rich against being tied down by concern for their wealth. He asks: “what profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process?” (*Mk 8:36*) His answer was to picture the poor Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man suffered the torments of the damned (cf. *Lk 16:19-31*).

588. In brief, then, we experience our sinfulness in our *inability* to 1) trust God, 2) accept ourselves, 3) relate positively to others, and 4) control our basic drives toward riches, reputation and power. Christ “saves” us by:

- re-imagining God as our loving Father,
- grounding our own inalienable self-worth in God, as well as
- the dignity of every other person; and
- clarifying the authentic hierarchy of values in life.

Jesus could do this because he lived totally for his heavenly Father, in complete self-giving service for others. He was the “**Sacrament**” of God’s loving presence and power. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” he told Philip (*Jn 14:9*). Christ showed us what it means to be: 1) *free* from servile fear of God, 2) *free* from self-doubt, 3) *free* from negative relationships with others, and 4) *free* from our own greed for riches, reputation and power.

589. But how does this saving power of the “free” Jesus touch ordinary Filipino Catholics today? The answer is multiplex. Christ comes to us: 1) in his inspired Word of the Bible, 2) in his saving symbolic acts, the Sacraments, 3) in the community of his disciples, the “People of God,” the Church; and most of all, 4) in his Holy Spirit, indwelling within us in grace.

V. CHRIST’S DESCENT TO THE DEAD

590. The last action of Christ’s Passion and Death proclaimed in the Creed is: “He descended to the dead.” The *first* meaning of this expression may simply be a confirmation of “died and was buried.” Christ truly and fully underwent the final test of all humans, death (cf. *CCC 632*). But the scriptural basis implies a *second* meaning, namely, *Christ’s salvific work on behalf of the just who had died before his coming* (cf. *CCC 633*). In *1 Peter* we read that Christ “went to preach to the spirits in prison.” “The reason the Gospel was preached even to the dead was that, although condemned in the flesh in the eyes of men, they might live in the spirit in the eyes of God” (*1 Pt 3:19; 4:6*).

591. A reading from the liturgy of the Hours on Holy Saturday beautifully expresses this second meaning of Christ’s salvific work among the dead:

There is a great silence on the earth today. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, he who is both God and the son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. . . . I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven.

592. A *third* implication of Christ's descent to the dead is the fundamental Christian truth that *all who are saved are redeemed by Christ's Passion and Death*, whose effects are not limited by time or space (cf. CCC 634-35). This *universal scope of Christ's redemptive work* grounds the possibility of salvation even for those who have never heard of the "Good News" nor known Jesus Christ (cf. LG 16; NA 2).

593. Finally, we know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God-made-man, is "the first-born of the dead" (Col 1:18). For St. Paul explains how Christ, raised from the dead, is "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming, all those who belong to him" (1 Cor 15:20, 23).

INTEGRATION

594. The Creedal *doctrine* on the Sufferings and Death of Christ proclaims central truths of our Christian Faith: God as redeeming Love, and Christ our Savior, responding to our sinful human condition. Christ, the Word-made-flesh, whose glory is that of the Father's only Son (Jn 1:14), never reveals the Father more intensely than when dying on the Cross, loving to the end, crying out "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). The glory of God shines through the Crucified Christ as nowhere else! "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM. . . . The One who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone." "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (Jn 8:28; 12:32).

595. Christ's redemptive Death is, of course, the ground for the center of Christian *worship*, the Eucharist. The Easter Prefaces proclaim that Christ, our Paschal sacrifice, is "the true Lamb who took away the sins of the world. By dying he destroyed our death; by rising he restored our life." The Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) even dares to proclaim:

Father, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave you gave away your Son.
O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam,
Which gained for us so great a Redeemer!

596. By his Passion and Death Christ reached down into the deepest roots of human alienation — our separation from God, from ourselves, and from one another. The love of the crucified Christ becomes the *norm*, the *source*, the *means*, and the *final goal* of all *Christian morality*. Christ tells us: "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps" (Mk 8:34). For "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

597. *What is characteristic of the Christian “Good News” of salvation?*

Central to the Gospel is Christ’s Cross of salvation. The Cross is the symbol of Christ’s Paschal Mystery (dying to rise to new life) and Christian discipleship:

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross each day and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (*Lk 9:23-24*).

598. *How did St. Paul summarize the Gospel?*

St. Paul summed up the Gospel he preached and had received by stating:

“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, . . . he was buried; . . . he rose on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (*1 Cor 15:1-5*).

“We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and an absurdity to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Gentiles alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (*1 Cor 1:23-24*).

599. *How do the sufferings of Christ save us?*

Christ saved us not by the physical sufferings taken separately, but by his perfect love for his Father and for us which was expressed in his sufferings and death for us.

600. *Why did Christ suffer and die?*

Jesus freely and consciously went to his death to fulfill the mission he had from his Father. He saw himself fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies by “giving his life in ransom for the many” (*Mk 10:45*).

“Our Savior Christ Jesus. . . sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us from all unrighteousness and to cleanse for himself a people of his own, eager to do what is right” (*Ti 2:14*).

601. *How does the Creed describe Christ’s redemptive sacrifice?*

The Creed describes five acts of Jesus’ redeeming sacrifice: he *suffered*, was *crucified*, *died*, was *buried*, and *descended* to the dead.

602. *How did St. Paul summarize Jesus’ saving work?*

St. Paul described “the redemption wrought in Christ Jesus” in four steps:

- Jesus offered a sacrifice as both priest and victim;
- to expiate for our sins (*cf. 1 Cor 5:7; Gal 1:4*);
- creating a new Covenant with God in his blood;
- for us and for our salvation (*cf. 1 Cor 11:25; Rom 5:6*).

603. *How does Christ’s saving love redeem us?*

Christ redeems us in two basic acts:

- He *removes our subjective guilt* by bringing us God’s pardon and forgiveness, and
- He *restores the objective moral order* broken by our sins through his loving act of reparation.

604. *How can Jesus’ Suffering and Death save us?*

Because of his *corporate solidarity* with us sinners, Jesus could take away “the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:29*) as the “suffering Servant” foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

605. *What is the meaning of the sentence “Christ died for our sins”?*

It means Christ died *because of* our sins, and to *overcome* our sinfulness and its effects in the world. Thus he made possible our own repentance and sacrifices, to share in his redemptive work.

606. *What special qualities mark Christ’s Redemption?*

Christ’s redemptive Death is different from all others in that its effect is: a) *universal*, touching all; b) *eschatological*, reaching to eternal life; and c) *empowering* us to share in his redemptive work.

607. *What is the significance of “universal” in describing Christ’s Redemption?*

Christ died “not for our sins alone, but for those of the *whole world*” (*1 Jn 2:2*). Thus,

- there is *no* salvation apart from Jesus Christ,
- who won *objective* redemption for *all* sinners,
- by his loving obedience to his Father’s will and his love for *all* mankind;
- calling all to true *subjective* repentance for sin and loving service of their neighbor.

608. *Why does Scripture emphasize redemption through the “blood of Christ”?*

In the Old Testament blood symbolizes life, cleansing from sin, and seal of the Covenant with God.

In the New Testament, Christ’s blood brings new life, taking away the sin of the world, and establishing the New Covenant (*cf. Mk 14:24*).

609. *Is it Jesus alone who saves us?*

No, it is the *Father* who sends His only begotten *Son* to redeem us from our sins, and to give meaning and purpose to our lives through the fellowship inspired by the *Holy Spirit*.

Thus our redemption, like our creation and sanctification, is a work of the *Triune God*: Father, Son and Spirit.

610. *What does Jesus’ redemption demand of us?*

We are called to *radical conversion* of heart:

- trusting in God, our loving Father,
- who grounds our own innate dignity and worth,
- as well as that of all persons, and
- calls us to follow Christ His Son in self-giving service and simplicity of life.

611. *How does Jesus help us toward this radical conversion?*

Jesus leads us to:

- basic trust in God as our heavenly Father,
- deeper, more authentic self-respect,
- acceptance of others as His beloved children, and
- authentic hierarchy of values in everyday life.

612. *How does this help of Jesus reach us today?*

Jesus “frees” us *today* by touching us

- through his inspired Word in Scripture;
- in his saving symbolic acts, the Sacraments;

- through the service and witness of his disciples in the Christian community; and
- especially through his Holy Spirit, indwelling in each of us.

613. *What is the meaning of “Christ descended to the dead?”*

This means that Christ really and fully entered into the human experience of death, that his salvific ministry is universal, extending to all who had died before him, and that he is truly the Savior of all, including even those who have never heard of his “Good News.”

Chapter 12

Christ Is Risen and Will Come Again

This is the Jesus God has raised up, and we are his witnesses. Exalted at God's right hand, he first received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, then poured this Spirit out on us. This is what you now see and hear.

(Acts 2:32-33)

If Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins. . . If our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable people.

(1 Cor 15:17,19)

OPENING

614. *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the primordial Christian proclamation.* The early Christian *kerygma* stands or falls with the resurrection and exaltation of the crucified Jesus as LORD (*cf. CCC 638*). Even today, when we read the Gospel accounts of Christ raised from the dead, we experience the incredible joy and excitement of that unique, world-shaking event. “The Lord has been raised! It is true! He has appeared to Simon” (*Lk 24:34*).

This chapter presents the Resurrection and Ascension, the climax of our Lord’s Paschal Mystery, together with the creedal truth of Christ’s Second Coming at the Parousia.

615. Christ’s Resurrection is far from being merely the personal miraculous return from the dead which one might expect of the crucified God-man. The actual event of Christ rising from the dead was the *real starting point and foundation for the beginnings of the Christian Faith*:

- for the Christian community, the Church;
- for adequate understanding of Christ, his Passion and Death;
- for how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies;
- for the apostolic commission to preach Christ to the whole world.

Simply put, *without Christ risen from the dead, there would be no Christian Faith.*

CONTEXT

616. We have seen how many Filipino Catholics focus almost uniquely on the crucified Jesus. This is understandable, given our own situation of poverty and suffering. Nevertheless it can obscure the full, adequate understanding of Christ, our Risen Savior. We have developed some beautiful religious celebrations at Easter. There is the *Salubong*, which dramatizes the meeting of the Risen Christ with the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother. In it, we can see how Mary's deep sorrow is turned to inexpressible joy. Or the custom of depicting the sleeping Roman soldiers, awakened by the chanting of the Easter "Glory" and the great noise of the ringing Church bells announcing: "Jesus has Risen!" The soldiers run out of the Church in great fright and consternation.

617. But these Easter celebrations lack the sharp, personally-felt dimension so prominent in Good Friday celebrations, and Christmas devotions. We Filipinos can instinctively "compassionate" with a suffering Savior, and a young Mother with her new-born Babe. But the once-and-for-all event of Christ rising from the dead and appearing to his disciples is different. It is not something "familiar" to our ordinary experience. So a special effort is needed by us Filipino Catholics of today if we are to become more aware of the full truth and reality of Christ's Resurrection. For this is the unique key to deeper personal understanding of the *living Christ*, and of our authentic living out the Catholic Faith.

618. Another aspect of our present Philippine context is the strident teaching and preaching of various Fundamentalist groups. They seem particularly fascinated by the Second Coming of Christ, and create imaginative scenarios concocted from various biblical texts about Armageddon and the end of the world. An accurate Catholic understanding of the Creed's "He will come again to judge the living and the dead" will greatly help to dissipate the nervous anxiety and unrest such teaching can cause.

EXPOSITION

619. The following pages shall *first* take up the importance and nature of Christ's Resurrection; *second*, investigate its New Testament witness; *third*, study Christ's Ascension; and *finally*, look at Christ's promised Second Coming.

I. IMPORTANCE AND NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION

A. Salvific Importance

620. St. Paul clearly affirmed the singular importance of the Resurrection in declaring: "If Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless" (*1 Cor 15:17*). This means that if Christ is not risen, Paul and all Christians would "then be exposed as false witnesses of God, for we have borne witness before Him that He raised up Christ" (*1 Cor 15:15*). In brief, if Christ be not risen, we are all idolaters!

But the truth is: **Christ IS risen**, and his resurrection has revolutionized both the very notion and image of God, and the ultimate meaning and goal of our very own lives.

621. We can sketch the meaning and salvific importance of Christ's Resurrection in *five points* (*cf. CCC 651-55*). *First, his Resurrection confirmed everything Christ had done and taught.* It fulfilled both Jesus' triple prediction of his Passion, Death and Resurrection in the Synoptics (*cf. Mk 8:31*;

9:30; 10:32), and his triple prediction of being “*lifted up*” in John’s Gospel (cf. *Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32*). Christ’s exaltation vindicated all he claimed to be, as he himself asserted in his trial before the high priest (cf. *Mk 14:61f*).

622. *Second, through his Resurrection, Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies promising a Savior for all the world* (cf. *Ps 110; Dn 7:13*). The history of God’s Self-revelation, begun with Abraham and continuing through Moses, the Exodus, and the whole Old Testament, reached its climax in Christ’s Resurrection, something unprecedented, totally new.

623. *Third, the Resurrection confirmed Jesus’ divinity.* St. Paul preached that Jesus was “designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (*Rom 1:4; cf. Phil 2:7-8*). Upon seeing the Risen Jesus, Thomas cried out, “My Lord and my God!” (*Jn 20:28*).

624. *Fourth, Christ’s death freed us from sin, and his Resurrection brought us a share in the new life* of adopted sons/daughters of the Father in the Holy Spirit. “If then we have died with Christ [freed from sin], we believe that we shall also live with him” (*Rom 6:8*).

625. *Finally, the Risen Christ is the principle and source of our future resurrection.* This means Jesus rose not only to a “glorious” higher state of life himself, but also to become the source of this new life for all. “He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself” (*Phil 3:21*). “In Christ all will come to life again” (*1 Cor 15:22; cf. CCC 651-55*).

626. *This importance of the Resurrection is often missed.* Two practical problems indicate this. Many Filipino Catholics today seem to feel uneasy if asked to explain the meaning and implications of Christ’s Resurrection. This may indicate that, many merely accept the fact that Christ has risen from the dead. But they have no idea of what this means nor do they know how to “live out” its implication in their lives. No one has helped them see how *Jesus’ Resurrection can be the basic principle and animating force for a truly Christian way of life*. We are saved only if we not only “confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord” but also “believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead” (*Rom 10:9*).

627. The importance of the Resurrection also calls for the clarification of some common misleading conceptions. Some Christians treat the Resurrection simply as a factual “proof” of the Gospel message, with no particular meaning in itself. But in the New Testament, *Jesus’ Resurrection* is not only a *proof* of the Gospel message – it *IS also the message!*

Neither can the Resurrection be reduced to “making-up” for the crucifixion, as if Easter were like some recompense for Good Friday! On the contrary, *Christ’s Resurrection is the central event of God’s whole plan of salvation*. This is how God wills to save all persons for all time. In the Risen Christ “a new age has dawned, the long reign of sin is ended, a broken world has been renewed, and we are once again made whole” (*Easter Pref. IV*).

B. Nature of the Resurrection

628. *The Resurrection was basically Jesus’ passage from death to new, definitive glorified life.* Thus it can be described from three points of view:

- 1) as *passage: an event* in human history;

- 2) as the *glorified life* of the Risen Christ; and
- 3) as *effected by the Blessed Trinity*.

629. *First*, as an *event*, Christ's Resurrection is both *historical* and *trans-historical*. It is historical in terms of the testimony of witnesses to the Risen Christ, the empty tomb, etc. But it surpasses and transcends history in that no one claimed to see the event, no one described how it took place, no one can explain what "risen, glorified existence" is essentially. Therefore, the passage to such a new state of life is necessarily a reality discerned through the eyes of Faith, not by the senses (*cf. CCC 639, 647*).

630. *Second*, the *glorified state* of *the Risen Christ is both like and unlike the historical, earthly Jesus*. He has *personal continuity* with his prior earthly bodily existence. The Risen Christ re-established direct relations with his disciples, even with the marks of his Passion. For it was the Crucified one whom "God freed from death's bitter pangs and raised up again" (*Acts 2:24*).

Yet, the Risen Christ also showed a clear *discontinuity* with his earthly state. In his risen state he transcends the bodily limits of time and space, and inaugurates the new and final creation, the final destiny of all. The Risen Christ is the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep . . . in Christ all will come to life again" (*1 Cor 15:20, 22; cf. CCC 645*).

631. Therefore, Christ's Resurrection did not mean a return to earthly life. The Risen Christ is not like Lazarus, the son of the widow of Naim or the daughter of Jairus (*cf. Jn 11:43f; Lk 7:15; Mk 5:41f*). They were revived from death to resume their earthly existence, only to die again (*cf. Jn 11:43-44; CCC 646*). Christ arose to an entirely new "glorified" existence. We recognize this in the fact that "Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him" (*Rom 6:9*). Thus we pray: "Christ is the victim who dies no more; the Lamb, once slain, who lives for ever" (*Easter Pref. III*).

632. *Third*. As *effected by the Trinity*, the Resurrection represents the definitive intervention of the Triune God into creation and our human history. As in all out-going divine acts, the Resurrection is effected by all three divine Persons working together, but each according to the distinctiveness proper to each (*cf. CCC 648-50*).

Thus, like the source of Jesus' divine sonship and mission is the Father, so too the divine power raising Jesus from the dead has its source in *the Father* (*cf. Acts 2:24*). Also, like Jesus' very conception in the Virgin Mary, the divine power re-vivifying and glorifying the dead Jesus, body and soul, is the *Holy Spirit*. And as sharing equally together with Father and Spirit the one divine power, the *Eternal Son* works his own humanity's resurrection as Jesus promised. "I have the power to lay down my life, and to take it up again" (*Jn 10:18*).

II. NEW TESTAMENT WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

633. The New Testament gives witness to Christ's Resurrection in *three* basic ways. *First*, the *Kerygma* or early preaching of the Gospel, proclaimed the central importance of Christ's Resurrection. This was true for both the commission and authority of the apostles, and for grounding the Christian Faith itself. *Second*, Jesus' *Presence*, both in the Risen Christ's appearances, and then through the teaching, moral exhortation, and worship of the Apostolic Church, witnesses to his Resurrection. The appearances of the Risen Christ illumine how he relates to us through his witnesses, and the essential need for faith.

634. And *finally*, the Resurrection is proclaimed as the *Christians' future*. It indicates how God saves, and illustrates this by the empty tomb. The empty tomb provides invaluable insight into our

future by showing how God actually saves us bodily in Christ. We shall briefly investigate each of these three ways of witnessing to Christ's Resurrection.

A. The Resurrection as Kerygma

635. The early preaching contrasts Jesus' death for sin with his Resurrection by God, and connects them with his appearances to his disciples and fulfilling Scripture. "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; . . . he was buried; . . . he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; . . . he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve" (*1 Cor 15:3b-5*). And again: "We believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, Jesus who was handed over to death for our transgressions and was raised for our justification" (*Rom 4:24-25*).

636. In key texts, Jesus' Resurrection is linked with the *apostolic commission*: "Paul, an apostle not from human beings nor through a human being, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead" (*Gal 1:1*). Matthew has the Risen Christ commissioning his disciples for their apostolic mission. "Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" (*Mt 28:18-19*). These texts show how Jesus' Resurrection directly affected the first apostolic mission, creating the daily life and practice of the first Christian communities.

637. But the Resurrection *kerygma* is perhaps most important for *grounding the Christian Faith*. For the Risen Christ not only crowns God's Self-revelation in history. He also illumines all of creation as its cosmic Lord, in whom "everything in heaven and on earth was created . . . all were created through him and for him" (*Col 1:16*). This is the basis for the genuine *universality* of Christian Faith. ***Through Christ's Resurrection, a real transformation of creation was effected by God.***

638. We see some indication of this in Christian moral praxis and spirituality. Both rest firmly on the Risen Christ's actual presence in the world. Without the Resurrection, Christians might simply relate to the historical Jesus as one religious leader among many. Or they might relate to the Risen Lord like the transcendent God, leaving behind the historical "Jesus story." But the mystery of ***the Risen Christ*** unites inseparably the ***exalted Lord with the crucified "Man-for-others"*** in a way that makes the earthly life of Jesus eternally valid and operative in our history today.

639. One particular phrase in the Easter *kerygma* is specially significant: "***on the third day***" (*1 Cor 15:4; Acts 10:40*). Throughout the Old Testament the "third day" signified a special point in salvation history, not merely numerical time. Moses told the people: "be ready on the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai" (*Ex 19:11*). Hosea prophesied: "He will revive us after two days; on the third day he will raise us up, to live in his presence" (*Hos 6:2*). In the New Testament, Jesus used the phrase in predictions of his Passion, in invoking the sign of Jonah (*cf. Mt 12:40*), and in offering the Jews a sign of his authority to cleanse the temple: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (*Jn 2:19*).

B. The Resurrection as Jesus' Presence

640. In his discourse to Cornelius' household, Peter describes the *appearances* of the Risen Christ (*cf. CCC 641-43*). "They killed Jesus, hanging him on a tree, only to have God raise him up on the third day and grant that he be seen, not by all, but only by such witnesses as had been chosen beforehand by God – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead" (*Acts 10:40-41*).

Unlike the Old Testament prophets' experience of *hearing* God's word, the disciples' encounter with the Risen Christ is constantly described in terms of *seeing*, sometimes even with "*touching*." The women "embraced" the feet of Jesus (*cf. Mt 28:9*). To his disciples who thought he was a ghost, the Risen Christ said: "Look at my hands and my feet; it is really I. Touch me and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bones as I do" (*Lk 24:39*). To the doubting Thomas Jesus said: "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side" (*Jn 20:27*).

641. These appearances of the Risen Christ have three significant characteristics. *First*, they were different from visions totally within history since the Risen Christ showed himself as transcending the ordinary limits of time and space. *Second*, except for Paul, the Risen Christ appeared only to those who could *identify* him with the earthly, historical Jesus. These thus became the once-and-for-all original witnesses founding the Church. The Apostolic Age closed with their passing; from then on, Christians are those "who have not seen and have believed" (*Jn 20:29*).

642. *Third*, and most importantly, the appearances did not remove all doubts nor the need for faith (*cf. CCC 644*). Some doubted that the one who appeared was really Jesus of Nazareth, others that he was the Christ. A real change of heart, a conversion, was needed to "see" the Risen Christ as the apostle Thomas and the Emmaus disciples clearly show (*cf. Jn 20:27; Lk 24:13-35*). Matthew describes how "those who had entertained doubts fell down in homage" (*Mt 28:17*). This confirms the fact that faith is truly a gift. "No one can say: 'Jesus is Lord,' except in the Holy Spirit" (*1 Cor 12: 3*). St. Thomas Aquinas explains that "the apostles saw the living Christ after his Resurrection with the eyes of faith" (*ST, III: 55, 2 ad 1m*).

643. But the presence of the Risen Jesus was not confined to his appearances. Rather, Christ's active presence was intensely felt by the early community, and linked with life in the Spirit. "We ourselves, although we have the Spirit as firstfruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies" (*Rom 8:23*). Jesus' presence was especially felt in *three areas*, corresponding to our present "Doctrine," "Morals," and "Worship." First, as source of the *teaching* and authority of the Christian community's leaders. Second, in the *moral exhortations* of the Pauline epistles. And *third*, in the community *worship*, especially Baptism and the Eucharist.

Teaching

644. The Risen Christ commissioned his disciples: You are to "teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you" (*Mt 28:20*). Jesus and the Father abide in anyone who is "true to my word. . . . We will come to him and make our dwelling place with him" (*Jn 14:23*). This abiding presence is effected through the Holy Spirit who "will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you" (*Jn 14:26*). For the Spirit "bears witness" to the Risen Christ (*cf. Jn 15:26*). He "will guide you to all truth. . . announce to you the things that are to come. In doing this he will give glory to me because he will have received from me what he will announce to you" (*Jn 16:13-14*).

Pauline Moral Exhortation

645. The Risen Christ's *Paschal pattern* of new life through death determines the shape of all Christian life in the Spirit. Christ's Resurrection makes spiritually present He to whom every Christian belongs. So Paul writes: "Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed" (*2 Cor 4:10*). He exhorts his Corinthian converts: "Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (*1 Cor 5:7-8*).

Liturgical Worship

646. The Risen Christ's presence was experienced perhaps most clearly in the sacramental worship of the Christian community. *First*, "in baptism you were not only buried with him but also raised to new life with him because you believed in the power of God who raised him from the dead" (*Col 2:12*). The Eucharist, for Paul, makes present Christ's Paschal Mystery: "Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes" (*1 Cor 11:26*). John stresses the notion of abiding presence through the Eucharist: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him" (*Jn 6:56*).

C. The Resurrection and the Empty Tomb

647. By itself, the tradition of the "empty tomb" does not prove anything. But when linked to the Risen Christ's appearances, it is *confirmatory of the Resurrection* (cf. CCC 640). More important, perhaps, is what the empty tomb indicates about the nature of our salvation. For the corpse of Jesus was a symbol of the ultimate human sin, and God took that corpse and made of it the beginning of the new creation. Redemption in the Catholic sense, then, is not escaping from this sinful world, but transforming it with all its evil and suffering. Moreover, respect for material creation, against all forms of spiritualism, is once again affirmed. As He had done in creation and at the Incarnation, God once again enhances matter by raising Christ from the dead.

PCP II strongly supports this respect for material creation in its appeal for "a passionate care of our earth and our environment" to preserve the "integrity of God's creation" (*PCP II 79, 321-24*).

III. CHRIST'S ASCENSION

648. But the "raising" of Christ did not stop with his Resurrection from the dead. *An integral part of Christ's Paschal Mystery is his Ascension.* The Risen Jesus told Mary Magdalene: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (*Jn 20:17*; cf. CCC 659-60). John's Gospel neatly unifies all dimensions of Christ's Paschal Mystery (Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension) by Jesus' assertion of being "lifted up" (cf. *Jn 3:14*; *8:28*; *12:32-33*). These correspond to the predictions of the Passion, Death and Resurrection in the Synoptic Gospels (e.g., *Mk 8:31*; *9:31*; *10:33-34*).

The predictions of both the Passion and "being lifted up" have two things in common. They speak of 1) the "*Son of Man*," and 2) the *divine imperative*. "So must the Son of Man be lifted up" (*Jn 3:14*). And "The Son of Man had to suffer much. . . be put to death, and rise three days later" (*Mk 8:31*).

649. The *primary meaning of* being raised or "*lifted up*" *is Christ's exaltation, sovereign authority and power over creation and all history* (cf. CCC 668-70). This recalls a "Suffering Servant" prophecy of Isaiah: "See, my Servant shall prosper, he shall be raised high and greatly *exalted*" (*Is 52:13*). It also appears in two of Peter's discourses in Acts expressing both Resurrection and Ascension. "The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him on a tree. He whom God has *exalted* at His right hand as Ruler and Savior to bring repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (*Acts 5:30-31*). Referring "lifted up" also to Christ's Ascension to the Father, then, helps explain: "When you lift up the Son of Man, you will come to realize that I AM" (*Jn 8:28*). "I AM" was the name God revealed to Moses in Ex 3:14, which John's Gospel uses to bring out the *divinity* of Jesus.

650. But *the Ascension is also a saving event for us.* Christ's return to the Father was necessary for sending the Spirit: "It is much better for you that I go. . . . If I go, I will send the Paraclete to you" (*Jn*

16:7). Jesus' Ascension to his Father did not separate him from the world. Rather, it made him even more present to his disciples.

The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven and took his seat at God's right hand. The Eleven went forth and preached everywhere. The Lord continued to work with them throughout, and to confirm the message through the signs which accompanied them" (*Mk 16:19-20*).

Paul also stresses this same active presence of "Christ Jesus who died or rather was raised up, who is at the right hand of God and who intercedes for us" (*Rom 8:34*).

651. Christ's Ascension, then, brings out *a number of basic truths* of our Christian Faith. *First*, the Ascension marks Jesus' exaltation into the heavenly realm of his Father. *Second*, it does not separate Christ from us because as he promised, from heaven he "draws everyone to himself" (*Jn 12:32*). *Third*, since "he lives forever to make intercession," Christ continues to exercise his priesthood since he entered "heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf" (*Heb 7:25; 9:24*). *Finally*, the ascended Christ as Head of the Church gives us, members of his Body, the hope of one day entering into glory with him (*cf. CCC 661-67*).

652. The Preface of the Ascension summarizes these truths neatly as it proclaims:

Christ, the Mediator between God and man,
Judge of the world and Lord of all,
has passed beyond our sight,
not to abandon us but to be our hope.
Christ is the beginning, the head of the Church;
where he has gone, we hope to follow.

IV. CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN

653. We are aware of the living presence of the Risen Christ among us in the Holy Spirit sent among us. But we also know from the Creed that he "will come again to judge the living and the dead" (*cf. CCC 687-82*). In the first eucharistic acclamation we proclaim: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!" "*Parousia*," meaning "*coming*" or "*presence*," is the traditional term for Christ's Second Coming as divine Judge (*cf. Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; etc.*). "The Son of Man will come with his Father's glory accompanied by his angels. When he does, he will repay each man according to his conduct" (*Mt 16:27-28*).

654. In the early days Christians prayed for this coming of Christ their Savior: "O Lord, come! *Marana tha!*" (*1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20*). But gradually this longing for their forgiving Savior gave way to gnawing consciousness of individual sinfulness and infidelity. The attitude of longing for the Lord was replaced by something akin to the Old Testament prophetic warnings. The "*Day of the Lord*" was pictured as a "*Day of Judgment*," a *Dies Irae* (*Day of God's Wrath*). In recent times there has been a renewal of the New Testament stress on Christ's "saving presence," and his Second Coming as introducing the final completion not just of the individuals but of the whole world. The final destiny of the human race is ultimately in God's hands.

655. But confusion often arises today, partly due to the exaggerated interpretations of the final day by some fundamentalist sects. They overemphasize and interpret in literal fashion the poetic, apocalyptic descriptions of the end of the world given in the Bible, especially in Daniel and the book of Revelation. Biblical literature of this type has to be read in terms of its typical characteristics.

First, while seemingly a revelation of the future, apocalyptic texts actually are usually a commentary on their own times. *Second*, the revelation is generally presented in a vision or dream, in which

allegorical language and complicated symbolism are used. *Third*, the texts attempt by such means to portray the final end of world history and the fearful destruction of all the evil forces in the world.

656. Given such qualities of biblical apocalyptic literature, it is more important for us, Filipino Catholics, to focus on the *basic truths of the Parousia*. The *first* is that *the Risen Christ as the Son of Man will “come to judge the living and the dead”* (2 Tim 4:1). “The Lord himself will come down from heaven at the word of command, at the sound of the archangel’s voice and God’s trumpet; and those who have died in Christ will rise first” (1 Thes 4:16).

Second, Christ’s Second Coming will be unmistakable since it will be accompanied by unprecedented signs in the heavens and on the earth. “As the lightning from the East flashes to the West, so will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Mt 24:27).

657. *Third*, regarding *when* the Parousia will take place, the Gospel is very clear. “As for the exact day or hour, *no one knows it*, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father only” (Mt 24:36). Therefore, *fourth*, because it will come unexpectedly, “like a thief in the night” (1 Thes 5:2), we must “*be constantly on the watch!* Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come” (Mk 13:33).

658. *Lastly*, because Christ is already in his glory, and has sent his Spirit among us, *the “time” of salvation has already come*. Now is the time when our salvation is being worked out in our daily acts with our neighbors. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory,” he will judge our acts according to one norm: “As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me” (Mt 25:31, 40).

INTEGRATION

659. The *doctrine* of Christ’s Resurrection and Second Coming constitutes a central part in our understanding who Jesus Christ IS. Without much speculative reasoning, the ordinary Catholic Filipino instinctively senses that Christ as Risen Savior and as Judge must be true God and true man in some way. He is both one of us, able “to sympathize with our weakness” (Heb 4:15), and yet capable of taking “away the sin of the world,” and given “the power to pass judgment” on it (Jn 1:29; 5:27). As risen from the dead, Christ is present and operative in our human history, the “Head” of the Christian communities, the Church.

660. Christian *morality* rests precisely on the presence of the Risen Christ among us today, through the Spirit he has sent into our hearts. For the living Risen Christ is not merely some external “model” of 2,000 years ago, proposed for our imitation. He is, rather, a *personal presence* through his living biblical Word, and in active grace-filled power within us. The Risen Christ’s presence, both personal and com-munitarian, in Filipino Catholics, is the abiding source of our authentic Christian moral discernment and strength for our daily living out our Christian Faith.

661. Christian *worship* depends for its validity on the Resurrection, for if Jesus be not risen, he cannot mediate for us before the Father, nor be experienced in his Sacraments. The reality of the Resurrection was brought home sharply to the early Christians precisely in their experience of him in their worship. Today, in the active liturgies of thriving parishes and BECs, we Filipino Catholics share the same experience. We come to recognize him “in the breaking of bread” (Lk 24:35).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 662.** *Why is it so important to believe in Christ's Resurrection?*
Because the Risen Christ is the key to our salvation and all authentic knowledge of God. If Christ is not risen, our faith is worthless (*cf. 1 Cor 15:17*).
- 663.** *What is the meaning and salvific importance of Christ's Resurrection?*
Christ's resurrection is *not* simply a "fact" of information, but rather, together with the Incarnation, the most significant event of the Christian Faith. It
- confirmed all Christ had done and taught during his public ministry;
 - fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies;
 - confirmed Jesus as the "only Son of the Father";
 - enabled Christ to share his new life with us as adopted sons and daughters of the Father; and
 - will be the principle and source of our resurrection.
- 664.** *What is the challenge surrounding the Resurrection?*
The challenge today is not in accepting Christ's Resurrection, but in living out the Gospel of the Risen Christ.
- 665.** *Does the Resurrection "prove" the Gospel message?*
Christ's Resurrection is not only the proof of the Gospel message. It IS the central Gospel message itself.
- 666.** *What does "Jesus Christ rose from the dead" mean?*
It means that:
- Jesus passed from death to
 - a new, definitive glorified life,
 - effected by the Blessed Trinity, and
 - is now the source of that new life for all.
- 667.** *How does the New Testament witness to Christ's Resurrection?*
The New Testament testifies to Christ's Resurrection in *four ways*, namely, in its:
- Easter proclamation and apostolic mandate;
 - descriptions of the Risen Christ's appearances to his disciples;
 - narrative of the tradition of the empty tomb; and
 - account of the early Christian community's experience of the Risen Christ's presence in the Holy Spirit.
- 668.** *What is an example of the early kerygma?*
In the First Letter to the Corinthians St. Paul wrote: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; . . . he was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, . . . he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve" (*1 Cor 15:3-5*).
- 669.** *How did the Risen Christ show his presence in the world?*
The Risen Christ was seen by his disciples, but especially experienced through the teaching, the moral exhortation, and in the liturgical worship of the early Christian communities.
- 670.** *What does the "Ascension" mean?*

It means that the Risen Christ ascended to heaven to take his place at the right hand of the Father.

The Ascension is a salvific event for us since Christ's return to the Father was necessary for sending the Spirit among us, and for Christ's continued mediating on our behalf as well as for grounding our hope in our own future resurrection.

671. *What does Christ's being "lifted up" refer to?*

In John's Gospel Christ speaks of being "lifted up" in referring to his Crucifixion, his Resurrection, and his Ascension to heaven.

672. *Why will Christ "come again"?*

The Risen Christ will come again at the *Parousia* to judge the living and the dead.

Biblical accounts of Christ's Second Coming are written in the apocalyptic genre and must be interpreted accordingly.

673. *When will Christ's Second Coming or "Parousia" take place?*

Christ clearly affirmed that no one knows this, except the Father. It is useless, therefore, to speculate on this "when."

Part Two

Christ, Our Way

**Christian Faith is centered on Jesus Christ who is himself
“the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”**

(cf. Jn 14:6)

INTRODUCTION

Part II presents Catholic *Moral Life*, or Christ our *Way*, the Way that “leads to [eternal] life” (*Mt 7:13; Jn 17:3*). For the Gospel of Christ is something not only to be believed, but to be lived. It’s a “faith that expresses itself through love” (*Gal 5:6*).

By “following Christ” in our daily moral acts, through the power of the Holy Spirit given us in Baptism and Confirmation, we grow gradually into authentic and mature disciples, “grasped by Christ Jesus” (*Phil 3:12*). We thus become living members of his Body, the Church.

For us Filipino Catholics, then, *moral life* means living out the Faith. It is a “living out” grounded in Christ’s *Truth*, received from the Church and professed in the Creed (Part I: Doctrine). It is a “living out” made possible only by the grace of sharing in Christ’s *Life*, especially through prayer and sacramental celebration, which unite us to the Risen Christ in His Church (Part III: Worship/Sacraments).

The main purpose for introducing Catholic Morality here, immediately following the Creed’s article on Jesus Christ, is to stress the fact that *living morally* for Catholics cannot be reduced to a series do’s and don’ts. Rather, it *centers on our daily following of Jesus Christ as his disciples*. with all the difficulties, challenges, and ambiguities of moral life today, “the following of Jesus Christ” may be the best single expression for catching the core of “the good life.”

Chapter 13

Living as Disciples of Christ

“What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do.”

(Jn 13:15)

But only God, who created man to His own image and ransomed him from sin, provides a fully adequate answer to [man’s basic] questions. . . revealed in Christ His Son who became man. Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man.

(GS 41)

OPENING

674. For Christians, *moral living* is simply “*following Christ*.” Yet when “morality” is mentioned, the first thing we often think about is laws, commandments, a series of don’ts, and dire punishments if we fail. But **Christian Faith is more than a set of truths to be believed; it is the way of Christ which leads to life** (cf. CCC 1696). It is the Gospel of Christ believed and lived which will decide our destiny as Christians. Fullness of life here on earth means that, in all the innumerable actions, events and problems of daily life, we *walk with Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life”* (Jn 14:6).

675. *Christian moral life*, then, is about the Gospel. It is about *growing in love and holiness*. It is the process of becoming authentically human (cf. RH 14). The Christian moral person is one who experiences the liberating and transforming presence of Christ, through the grace of his Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3:17; Jn 8:32). From this experience, Christians commit themselves, in their moral attitudes, decisions, and acts, to the ongoing process of liberating and transforming men and women into disciples of Christ. For Christ is he “from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our journey leads us” (LG 3). Thus “the world may be filled with the spirit of Christ and may more effectively attain its destiny in justice, in love and in peace” (LG 36). This is developed in the PCP II in terms of “social transformation” (cf. PCP II 256-74, 435-38).

676. But we soon find that this “*following of Christ*” is *not easy* – life is full of challenges. “From the very dawn of history human beings, enticed by the evil one, abused their freedom. They set themselves against God and sought to find fulfillment apart from God. . . . Their senseless minds were darkened and they served the creature rather than the Creator” (GS 13; cf. CCC 1707).

677. Left to ourselves, we have no power to fulfill Christ’s command: “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Yet God strengthens us by letting us share the life of Christ Jesus, through the Holy Spirit received in Baptism (cf. Rom 6:4). This Spirit, in uniting us to Christ, our risen Savior, as members of his Body, the Church, liberates and empowers us with new life to respond in our daily words and deeds to God’s love (cf. CCC 1742). Thus, as disciples of Christ, mutually supporting one another through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we come to exercise *responsible freedom* according to God’s loving design, as grasped by our gradually formed Christian *conscience*.

678. This chapter proposes the constitutive elements of personal Christian moral living: the moral agent, *human persons*; our basic dignity in *freedom* and in *personal moral responsibility*; governed

by our *conscience*, the inner guide for moral growth in virtue, through the example of Christ, the grace of the Spirit, and the Father's loving mercy (cf. CCC 1700-9).

CONTEXT

679. We, Catholic Filipinos, constituting more than 82% of our population, are rightly proud of our Christian faith. We are especially fond of *religious processions, novenas* and numerous *devotions* to Christ our Savior, to Mary and the other Saints. Our churches are crowded on Sundays and special fiestas. Moreover, recent religious movements in our country such as the *Cursillo*, the *Charismatic renewal*, the *Focolare*, and the like, have clearly shown a widespread yearning for closer union with Christ. A great number of Filipinos are seeking ways to draw closer to Christ their Lord.

680. Yet *this yearning for spiritual intimacy with Jesus often does not seem to touch the daily words and actions of some devotees*. Their piety frequently fails to produce acts of loving service, forgiveness and sacrifice. How can many pious Church-members continue to act as abusive landlords, usurers, oppressive employers, or unreliable employees? Why do many graduates of our best Catholic schools turn out to be corrupt government officials, unfaithful husbands and wives, or cheating businessmen? There seems to be a *serious gap between external ritual expression of Christian Faith, and authentic discipleship*: following Christ in action.

681. *Genuine* Christian piety, of course, inspires true Christian witness and service. But in the Philippines today, the challenge of *authentic Christian witness demands two things*: a) *interiorly*, that Filipino Catholics break through external ritualism and social conformism to *interiorize their devotional prayer and sacramental worship* deeply into their very selves (*kalooban*); b) *exteriorly, to commit themselves to Jesus Christ* and to all he stands for, in daily practice of the faith according to Catholic moral principles and the guidance of the teaching Church.

EXPOSITION

I. MORAL AGENT: THE HUMAN PERSON

682. Christian moral life is simply the call to become loving persons, in the fullness of life-with-others-in-community before God, in imitation of Jesus Christ. The key to moral life, then, is the *human person*, considered *in the light of both reason and faith*. All human rights, personal and social, all moral duties and responsibilities, all virtues and moral character – all depend directly on the answers we give to the questions: who am I as a person in community? as a disciple of Jesus Christ, in his Church? In the words of *PCP II*: “How to live as Filipino Christians in our situation of lights and shadows”? (*PCP II 35*)

683. This “sense of the *dignity of the human person* has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man” (*DH 1*). “The inviolable dignity of every human person. . . is *the most precious possession* of an individual, [whose] value comes not from what a person *has*’ as much as from what a person *is*’ ” (*CL 37*). “Hence the pivotal point of our total presentation will be the human person, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will” (*GS 3*). But just who or what IS the human person according to reason and Christian Faith?

684. Persons in Christ. For Christians, *the answer can only be grounded on Jesus Christ himself.* “In Christ and through Christ, we have acquired full awareness of our dignity, of the heights to which we are raised, of the surpassing worth of our own humanity, and of the meaning of our existence” (*RH 11*). “For by his incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person” (*GS 22*).

685. Christ reveals how *the essential dignity of all persons is grounded directly on their origin, meaning and destiny.* We believe all persons are **created** by God in His image and likeness (*cf. Gen 1:26*) through our Lord Jesus Christ, “through whom everything was made and through whom we live” (*1 Cor 8:6*). We believe all are **redeemed** by the blood of Christ (*cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:14*), and are **sanctified** by the indwelling Holy Spirit (*cf. Rom 8:14-16; 1 Cor 6:19*). We believe all persons are **called to be children of God** (*cf. 1 Jn 3:1*), **destined for eternal life** of blessed communion with the Father, His Risen-Incarnate Son, and their Holy Spirit (*cf. CCC 1692*).

686. But, despite their firm belief in these basic truths of the Christian Faith, many Catholics do not realize how these truths touch their day-to-day moral attitudes, acts and choices. Only if these credal truths are linked directly with the *Filipinos’ experience of themselves as persons*, will they influence their moral living. Hence, we have to relate these Christian truths to the common experience of “being a Filipino person.” Although we tend to take these characteristics of our own person for granted, we nevertheless need to become more conscious of them to gain a true knowledge of self and of our relationships to others and to God.

II. PERSONS IN EXPERIENCE

687. Persons are **open** and **relational** by nature. No man is an island; we grow into our full selves as persons only in relating to others. We Filipinos are outstanding in this regard: it is said “Filipinos are never alone.” We realize being a person means being *by* others (our conception, birth, upbringing), being *with* others (our family, friends, neighbors, business associates), and being *for* others (love, service). This is how we have been **created** by God – as social beings. This is how we have been **redeemed** by Christ – as a people. This is how the Holy Spirit works not only within but *among* us as the people of God, journeying toward our common **destiny** in God.

688. Persons are **conscious beings**, aware of themselves in their outgoing acts. We possess this self-awareness through our knowing and free willing (*cf. CCC 1704-7; GS 14-17*). Thus we “image” in our small way the **Creator’s infinite knowing and loving**. This is the basis for our moral life.

689. Persons are **embodied spirits**. This stresses the *unity* between our “body and soul.” Our bodies are an essential part of our being human, not merely an “instrument” we “use” according to our whims. Contrary to those who look down on the body, and make it the source of all evil, Christian Faith regards the body as “good and honorable since God has **created** it and will raise it up on the last day” (*GS 14*). Moreover, God the Son further dignified the body through his **Incarnation** – “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (*Jn 1:14*). And St. Paul admonishes us: “You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within – the Spirit you have received from God. . . . So, glorify God in your body” (*1 Cor 6:19-20*). All our relationships with others and with God are expressed through our bodies, which are the “natural sacrament” of our spiritual depth.

690. Persons are *historical* realities. We are *pilgrims on-the-way*, who gradually, through time, become our full selves. In exercising freedom, we decide for ourselves and form ourselves; in this sense we are our own cause. We *develop* as persons in discernible stages, described in great detail by modern psychology. Salvation history narrated in the Bible shows the dynamic interplay between good and evil, success and failure, within the lives of the great biblical figures. It recounts how God progressively brought His Chosen People to a clearer understanding, and higher moral vision, of their own being and of God Himself.

691. Persons are *unique*, yet *fundamentally equal*. Despite physical differences as well as differing intellectual and moral powers, we instinctively realize that *as persons*, in some basic way, *we are all equal*. This is what our Faith explains: “All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God’s image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men” (GS 29). Yet, *each of us is called to “image” God in a unique way* – no one can “take our place,” as it were. To each of us Christ says: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine” (Is 43:1). Thus, within the fundamental equality of all persons, we recognize the unique identity of each person.

692. This fundamental equality of all individual persons also grounds the *participation and solidarity* of all peoples. “Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all people, we are all called to be brothers. Therefore, if we have been summoned by the same destiny, which is both human and divine, we can and should work together to build up the world in genuine peace” (GS 92).

III. HUMAN FREEDOM

693. Throughout the world today there is an *unprecedented drive for freedom*, for breaking out of all the old structures of political oppression, racial prejudice, economic injustice, and constricting cultural mores. “The demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty” (DH 1). Since “the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation” (ITL), we recognize here “an authentic sign of God’s presence and purpose . . . for authentic freedom is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man” (GS 11, 17).

694. But it is so easy to confuse human freedom with simply “doing what I want.” *Authentic freedom* is *not* “the right to say and do anything,” but to “*do the good*” (cf. CCC 1740). It is *not* my own individual private possession, but a *shared freedom* with others in community. It is *not* found in prejudice, deceit, or ignorance, but *in truth*. Christ’s words, “the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32), set truth as both the condition for authentic freedom and a warning against “every kind of illusory freedom, every superficial unilateral freedom, every freedom that fails to enter into the whole truth about man and the world” (RH 12). “Lovers of true freedom [are those] who come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, and govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, striving after what is true and right” (DH 8). **The pillars** of this freedom are “*the truth about Jesus the Savior*, the truths about *the Church*, and the truth about *man and his dignity*” (ITL, XI, 5).

695. Freedom from Authentic human freedom has many aspects. Ordinarily we become sharply aware of the value of our freedom only when we are forced to do something against our will. Then we realize how much we long to be *free from* things imposed on us. But this “freedom *from*” all restraints can often result in following selfish inclinations or blind prejudices rather than seeking what is truly good. So St. Paul warns us:

It was for liberty that Christ freed us. So stand firm, and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time! My brothers, remember that you have been called to live in freedom—but not a freedom that gives free rein to the flesh. Out of love, place yourselves at one another’s service. My point is that you should live in accord with the Spirit and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh (*Gal 5:1,13,16*).

And St. Peter adds: “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cloak for vice. In a word, live as servants of God” (*1 Pt 2:16*).

696. Authentic freedom, therefore, involves first of all *freedom from* everything that opposes our true self-becoming with others in community. Such, for example, are *interior obstacles* like ignorance, or our disordered passions, fears, personality defects, bad habits, prejudices or psychological disturbances, and *exterior forces*, such as violent force or even the threat of violence. These impediments to authentic freedom are commonly traced to three sources: *biological*, which include inherited handicaps and defects as well as external substances like drugs; *psychological*, or interior compulsions, including those originating in the unconscious; and *social pressures* such as the many economic, political, and cultural obstacles which impede the right to freedom (*cf. CCC 1740*)

All these factors diminish our freedom and thus moral imputability and our responsibility (*cf. CCC 1735*). But *the greatest single obstacle to authentic freedom is SIN*. Liberation to true freedom means “first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin” (*Instr. on Christian Freedom and Liberation 23*).

697. Freedom for. But this freedom *from* is obviously directed towards a second freedom, the more important “freedom *for*.” Beyond being liberated *from* all the obstacles to authentic freedom is the *freedom for growing as full persons and children of God*, sharing in the life of Christ our Liberator through his Spirit. It is the freedom found in *authentic love*. Of this many-sided freedom we treat only of the *personal dimension* here; its social dimensions are explained in the next chapter.

Two levels of the individual person’s “freedom for” stand out: 1) the *freedom of choice* by which I direct my moral acts, and 2) the *fundamental freedom* of my very self. In the *first* level, we *have* the freedom to choose to **act** in this or that way, to do good or evil. But by consistently choosing to do the good, we gradually become free loving persons, the *second* level (*cf. VS 65-68*). This shows how our personal “freedom *for*” is both a *process* and a *task*. Through our free choices, striving to overcome the obstacles from within and without (task), we gradually grow (process) towards authentic, mature fundamental (self) freedom.

698. Freedom of the Children of God. The goal of this process and task of personal freedom is “to be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (*Rom 8:21*). Christ has freed us by giving to everyone the power to conquer sin and to recover the meaning of our freedom and so attain the good and accomplish our calling as children of God (*cf. CCC 1741*). Freedom “to attain the good” simply means to “act as Jesus did” – to “mirror in life the Fatherhood of God as the *Father’s* adopted sons and daughters in Jesus, *the Son*, and through Jesus’ indwelling Spirit. Promised by Christ, the *Holy Spirit* is within us creating space for our freedom and making us alive. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (*2 Cor 3:17; cf. CCC 1742*).

699. Thus *it is the power of Christ’s Spirit within us that liberates us from* sin, the law and death (*cf. Rom, chap. 5*), *for* a life of *loving service* of our fellowmen, wherein we find our true selves by imitating Christ Jesus, our Lord. For “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (*Gal 5:22f*).

700. Exercise of Responsible Freedom. But how do we learn to exercise our freedom responsibly? As Christians, we come to know what is moral good in the light of the *Gospel* and *human experience*. “For faith throws a new light on everything and manifests God’s design for our total vocation, and

thus directs the mind to solutions that are fully human” (GS 11). This “new light” regarding our moral life works through our *conscience*, “the most secret core and sanctuary of a man, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths” (GS 16). **Moral conscience is the expression of the divine law, defining what is good and what is evil.** It impels us to do the good and to avoid evil. It judges our behavior, approving what is good, condemning what is evil” (cf. Rom 1:32; CCC 1778). Thus, it is our conscience that indicates for us how, in our daily thoughts, words and deeds, we are to love God and our neighbor.

IV. CONSCIENCE

701. For most Filipinos, conscience is understood as a kind of inner voice (*tinig ng budhi*) which guides us in our moral life. This can mean our basic tendency toward the good, the “voice always summoning us to love the good and avoid evil.” More concretely it refers to applying objective moral norms to our particular acts: “the voice of conscience can, when necessary, speak to our hearts more specifically: do this, shun that.” As such, conscience acts as “*the proximate norm of personal morality*” (VS 60) for discerning good and evil (cf. CCC 1796).

On our part, we perceive and acknowledge the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all our activity we are bound to follow our conscience faithfully, in order to come to God, for whom we were created (DH 3).

To obey conscience is “our very dignity; according to it we will be judged” (GS 16; cf. Rom 21:15f).

702. A common misunderstanding arises here. How can I be free if I am “bound,” morally obliged, to follow the moral law and dictates of conscience? This complaint is based directly on the *misconception* of freedom as “doing what I want.” Our built-in tendency toward self-centered use of freedom is so deep that only the liberating grace of God can help us work against this abiding inner effect of original sin (cf. GS 17).

703. The truth is that ***freedom of conscience carries with it a corresponding duty to respect the same freedom in others.*** Each person has the right, original in human nature, to be recognized and respected as a free and responsible being (cf. CCC 1931; GS 27). Moral obligation, then, far from destroying authentic freedom, pertains *only* to our *free* thoughts, words and deeds, and guides them toward true, genuine freedom. Whenever we try to free ourselves from the moral law and become independent of God, far from gaining genuine freedom, we destroy it.

Vatican II admirably captures this apparent paradox of freedom and moral obligation co-existing: “God calls us to serve Him in Spirit and in truth. Hence we are ***bound in conscience*** but stand under ***no compulsion*** . . . we are to be guided by our own judgment and to enjoy ***freedom***” (DH 11).

704. Formation of Conscience. But *our conscience is not something “automatic.”* It is *gradually shaped* through all the many and complex factors that enter into our growth to Christian maturity. Family upbringing, basic education and catechesis in the Faith, our cultural attitudes and values, the friends we grow with in school, and the larger social environment of the community – all influence the development of conscience. Crucial to correct understanding of our conscience is its essential ***relational dimension.*** Our ongoing moral experiences, within which our consciences gradually take shape, are *never isolated*, but rather always involve countless interactions with parents, guardians, relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, religious and priests, within the social groupings of family, school, parish and community.

705. When the circumstances of life challenge us with difficult choices, we become more aware of the *need to form a right conscience*. In complex modern conditions, with new sensitivities (e.g., solidarity, social justice, peace), new demands and hopes (equal rights, liberation movements, feminism), moral judgments are more difficult and less certain. In such cases, where there are often legitimate differences among Catholics, we must be careful not to identify our opinion with the authority of the Church (*GS 43*). Rather, our conscience therefore needs to be both enlightened and informed (*cf. CCC 1783-85*).

706. Levels of Conscience. We realize that “the education of conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience” (*CCC 1784*).

Due weight being given to the advances in psychological, pedagogical and intellectual sciences. Children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities. They should be trained to acquire gradually a more perfect sense of responsibility. . . . Children and young people have the right to be stimulated to make sound moral judgments based on a well-formed conscience and to put them into practice with a sense of personal commitment (*GE 1*).

707. Forming a Christian Conscience. But to form the conscience of a disciple of Christ, *the key* is obviously *Christ and his Spirit, experienced within Christ’s community*, the Church. The formative process takes place in faith and through prayer, by attending to the Word of God and the teachings of the Church, and by responsiveness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Critical reflection on the events and experiences of our life helps us in forming moral judgements. *It is in living out the faith that we form our Christian consciences*. Two types of formative factors, are stressed: 1) “**heart**” factors such as reading and reflecting on Jesus’ teaching and actions, and our affective prayer and sacramental life wherein we encounter the Risen Christ; and 2) “**mind**” factors – attending “to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church, whose duty is to authoritatively teach that Truth which is Christ himself, and also to declare and confirm those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself” (*DH 14*).

708. Types of Conscience. St. Paul distinguishes good people from the bad, according to their faith and *good* or *bad* consciences. He admonishes Timothy: “Hold fast to faith and a *good conscience*. Some, by rejecting the guidance of conscience, have made shipwreck of their faith” (*1 Tim 1:19*). He warns against “the hypocrisy of liars with *branded* consciences” (*1 Tim 4:2*), and “those defiled unbelievers . . . [whose] minds and consciences are *tainted*” (*Ti 1:15*). This manifests the critical importance of conscience for becoming an authentic person and disciple of Jesus Christ.

709. But even within sincere believers, conscience at times can be *erroneous* – we mistakenly judge something that is really evil to be good, or something good to be evil. “Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity” (*GS 16; cf. CCC 1791-93*). Forming a Christian conscience, therefore, includes correcting any errors in conscience by instruction in the relevant moral values and precepts which provide a correct vision of Christ’s moral witness. “The more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by the objective standards of moral conduct” (*GS 16*).

710. At other times we experience feelings of *guilt* – when we are bothered by having acted against some norm or rule. These guilt feelings can be a result of an authentic Christian conscience – when we have acted contrary to the Gospel. But the guilt feelings could also be the result merely of shame over breaking some social or cultural “taboo.” Formation of an authentic Christian conscience here means clarifying the *difference* between true moral guilt (a true “guilty conscience”) and psychological guilty feelings which do not necessarily involve any moral fault. “The [genuine] sense of sin disappears

when it becomes identified with morbid feelings of guilt or with the simple breaking of rules or precepts of the law” (RP 18).

711. Work of Conscience. Chapter 15 takes up moral norms which our consciences use in discerning good from evil. Here we wish to treat only of what makes our acts good or evil. What does conscience have to decide on?

Traditionally *three dimensions* of every moral act have been highlighted: 1) the **act chosen**, 2) the **intention**, and 3) the **circumstances** (cf. CCC 1750-56). *The three are dimensions of the one moral act*; hence they **must always be considered together** to make an adequate moral judgment. For to focus only on the “act chosen” would forget the personal agent and the context. To stress only the “intention” neglects the objective nature of the moral act: a good intended end does not justify using means that are evil. Finally, considering only the circumstances would be to close one’s eyes to the objective nature of the act chosen, and all moral norms.

INTEGRATION

712. The **doctrines** grounding the intrinsic dignity of every human person, and thus of the Christian’s whole moral life, were sketched above (cf. # 684-91). We Filipinos naturally think of **God** as **Creator**, and in some way as the **final destiny** of all. Yet for many of us, both truths seem very “far away” from the hustle and bustle of everyday moral activity. *A more direct and personal experience and motivation is needed.* For this, something like Paul’s personal experience of the Risen Christ in his moral life is needed: “I speak the truth in Christ: I do not lie. My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 9:1). If the truths of the Creed are allowed to remain abstract and impersonal, they will prove powerless to motivate the constant personal effort needed to follow Christ faithfully as an authentic disciple — one who has gradually learned how to “love in deed and in truth, and not merely talk about it” (1 Jn 3:18).

713. This essential need for motivation brings out the intrinsic place of **prayer** and **sacramental worship** for Christian moral life. *Knowing* what is good and evil is not the same as *doing* good and avoiding evil. Again Paul is our example: he clearly showed that the Law was incapable of giving the power to be faithful to it. Only Christ through his Spirit can free us from sin and death, for true life. Hence without a personal relationship to Christ our Lord — begun, nourished, developed, and sustained through prayer and sacrament — we have no power to live as “children of God.”

714. This chapter has presented the basic dimensions of the follower of Christ in the light of reason and of Faith. To live as a disciple of Christ is to respond to God as:

- a) a **human person**: a conscious, historical, unique, relational embodied spirit with innate dignity — created, redeemed, graced now for eternal life hereafter;
- b) a **free self**, called *from* all enslavements *to* an authentic Christian vision and character, responsible in pursuing true good, as discerned by
- c) a **Christian conscience**, formed by directing one’s freedom to the person and message of Jesus Christ, the center of the Christian’s self-becoming and identity.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

715. *What is “moral life” for the Christian?*

Christian moral life is the following of Christ:

- in all our daily free actions, values and attitudes,
- empowered by Christ’s liberating and transforming presence,
- through the grace of his Spirit,
- within the Christian community.

It is simply responding to the Gospel call to become loving persons, in the fullness of life-with-others-in-community before God, in imitation of Jesus Christ.

716. *What problems does “moral life” commonly raise?*

We all experience numerous pressures and temptations both from inside ourselves and from without, against exercising our freedom responsibly. Strangely enough, we find it difficult to *consistently* “do good and avoid evil.”

717. *How does Christian Faith help us understand this situation?*

Scripture and Church teaching help us recognize this situation as the *universal human condition* resulting from the “Fall” at the origins of our race.

Hence our personal moral problems have a foundation that goes deeper than anything we can handle by ourselves, without the redeeming power of Christ.

718. *What is the key to Christian moral life?*

The key to Christian moral life is our dignity as human persons, created by God, redeemed by Christ, sanctified by the Spirit, and destined for eternal life with God.

719. *How do we experience ourselves as persons?*

We experience ourselves as *embodied spirits, conscious* of our *historical* process of growing up and developing, in constant *relation with others* with whom we are *fundamentally equal*, yet *unique* in ourselves.

720. *What is authentic human freedom?*

Authentic human freedom is a *shared* capacity with others in the community for *choosing* – not anything at all – but *what is the good*, in order to become our *true selves*.

It involves *both*:

- **freedom from** whatever opposes our true self-becoming with others in community, and
- **freedom for** growing as full persons before God and our fellow human persons, in authentic love.

721. *How is human freedom experienced?*

We experience freedom most naturally in our free choices to act or not to act, to do or not to do something. We accept responsibility for these acts.

Beside our individual *free acts* there is the *freedom of our very self* formed gradually by our free acts. Often called “*fundamental freedom*” or option, it is not primarily a psychological term, but rather refers to our “moral being” as a human person.

722. *What is meant by “freedom of the children of God?”*

It means the freedom we share by the power of Christ's Spirit within us, that liberates us *from* the enslavement of sin, the law, and death, *for* a life of loving service of our fellowmen.

This does not mean that

- we have no sin, no laws to obey, and we will never die;

but that the grace of God offers us the real possibility of:

- breaking out and overcoming the slavery of sin,
- living in true freedom as guided by law, and
- transcending our physical death by sharing in Christ's eternal life.

723. *What is Conscience?*

Conscience is the proximate norm of personal morality, our *ultimate subjective norm for discerning moral good and evil, with the feeling of being bound to follow its directive.*

It is the inner voice:

- summoning us to love the good and avoid evil, by
- applying objective moral norms to our particular acts,
- and thus commanding: do this, do not do that!

724. *If we are morally obliged by our conscience to "do good," are we any longer free?*

We are exercising *authentic* freedom in obeying moral laws and our consciences. The objection is based on the common erroneous idea of freedom as "doing what I want."

725. *How are our consciences formed?*

Our consciences are formed gradually through the natural educational agents of our family upbringing, our school training, parish catechesis, and the influence of friends and social contacts.

726. *How do we form a "Christian conscience"?*

A "Christian conscience" is formed gradually in faith and through personal and ecclesial prayer-life:

- by attending to the Word of God and the teachings of the Church,
- by responsiveness to the indwelling Holy Spirit, and
- by critical reflection on our concrete moral choices and experiences of daily life.

"*Heart factors*" include reading and prayerful reflection on Jesus' teaching and actions, and our own prayer and sacramental life.

"*Mind factors*" refer to a deepening in understanding of Sacred Scripture and Church teaching, especially Catholic moral principles, and sound moral guidance.

727. *What types of conscience are there?*

Many different categories are used to describe the exercise of conscience, but the most functional is:

- "*correct*" conscience corresponds to objective moral values and precepts;
- "*erroneous*" conscience, one which mistakenly judges something as morally good which is objectively evil.

Our moral responsibility is to develop a properly "informed" conscience, and to correct any erroneous conscience we may have had.

728. *What must our consciences decide on?*

To judge the good or evil of an act, our consciences must decide on its *three essential aspects*:

- the *nature* or object of the act,
- our *intention* as agents or doers of the act, and
- the *circumstances* which affect the morality of the act.

Chapter 14

The Challenge of Following Christ

Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God: “. . . The kingdom of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel!”

(Mk 1:15)

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are [shared] by the followers of Christ. For theirs is a community composed of men who, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press toward the Kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all men.

(GS 1)

OPENING

729. The preceding chapter sketched the disciple of Christ as a *person* with innate dignity shown in responsible use of *freedom* according to *conscience*. This chapter presents the *social context of the moral life of the Christian*.

We live in a world changing at an ever faster pace, where traditional moral values and ways of acting seem to disappear overnight. It is a world of sharp contrasts, where mass media flood mind and heart with images of “success” in opulent luxury and power on one hand, and of “failure” in unspeakable suffering, destitution and oppression on the other. These sudden upheavals put in question not only our daily behavior, but more basically our whole Christian vision of life and fundamental moral attitudes and values. For amidst all the incredible advances of today, we often find ourselves strangely confused, paralyzed by uncertainty about the most basic things in Christian moral living.

730. In such a situation, the Church has the “duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*GS 4*). God’s Word brings the light of Christ to bear on those “anxious questions about the current trends of the world” (*GS 3*) which so mark our times. To bring the commandments fulfilled by Christ to bear on a concrete situation is an act of *prophetic interpretation*. In so acting, the Church “is interested in one thing only – to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served” (*GS 3; cf. Jn 18:37; Mt 20:28*). Thus this chapter treats of what

constitutes *the social context* of following Christ in today's world, namely, *Christian Faith and Morality*, developed through Christ's image of the *Kingdom of God*, which calls us to personal *conversion from sin* in following Christ, as members of his people, the Church.

CONTEXT

731. Dramatic changes in Philippine life have occurred in the past decades. Some of the traditional Filipino ways of relating to one another have quietly faded away. New *heightened expectations* have roused formerly dormant people to actively espouse various causes for: a) liberating the many oppressed; b) defending the human rights of the exploited; c) improving working conditions, raising salaries, and d) promoting better living conditions among the less fortunate. The Catholic Church in the Philippines has consistently exercised a major influence on this new "social awareness" and concern for justice and the poor. *PCP II* calls for renewal as a "Church of the Poor" (cf. *PCP II* 125-36), courageously addressing the causes and conditions of poverty and social injustice (cf. *PCP II* 165, 247-49, 256-61, 290-329, etc.).

732. Yet Philippine society continues to present *glaring contradictions* which, far from "passing away," have so successfully defied all efforts thus far to remove them, that they have actually grown in depth and intensity. Never has the *gap between rich and poor* Filipinos been so wide, so tangible (conspicuous) and so shameless. Striking too, despite all the public outcry, the government stress on value education, and the many religious groups calling for high moral integrity and reform, is the alleged persistence of widespread political *graft and corruption*, and the continued *ruthless destructive exploitation of our natural resources*. The enduring spectacle of such national social ills has contributed to the apparently widespread confusion over the role of Christian Faith in moral matters.

733. Most Filipinos naturally *link their belief in God with their ideas of good and evil*. They pray for guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit when they have serious problems, or must make an important decision. They *make novenas* to gain certain favors. This speaks much of the Filipino Catholics' conviction of being close to God in their personal lives. Unfortunately, *in many cases, these practices remain enclosed within their own private prayer life*, with little relationship with others. "The split between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives is one of the gravest errors of our time" (*GS* 43).

EXPOSITION

I. FAITH AND MORALITY

734. We begin with the most general theme of all – the influence of Christian Faith on morality. Every human person, Christian or not, is called to live a moral life. Therefore, Christian faith and moral life are *not* identical. But for Filipino Christians, their Faith makes a *radical difference* in their moral lives in two basic ways:

- 1) by providing a *distinctive Christian meaning* to life; and
- 2) by *strengthening moral motivation* with uniquely Christian motives.

735. The *Christian meaning* for the *individual person* was detailed in the preceding chapter: how Christ gives new practical meaning to the innate dignity of human persons, to what it means to be authentically free, with a good and true conscience. For the broader vision of this personal meaning within the real world context, with all its problems, evils, and suffering, Faith brings further meaning. In the words of Vatican II:

736. In the Christian vision, the *world* is the whole human family, the theater of human history — its travails, its triumphs and failures — this world has been created and is sustained by the love of its Maker, [it] has been freed from the slavery of sin by Christ, who was crucified and rose again in order to break the stranglehold of personified Evil, so that it might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and brought to its fulfillment (*GS 2*).

737. The *motivation* with which Faith inspires the moral life of Filipino Christians *flows from this new meaning Christ gives, and from the Spirit of Truth* who guides us to all truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*). Motives are gradually formed by the many symbols, stories, personages, ritual ceremonies, customs and prayers through which the Faith is handed on from generation to generation. Thus, not only the mind but the imagination, affections, heart and will of the Filipino Christian are deeply touched by Faith in Christ. *PCP II* emphasizes this motivation by beginning its vision of a Church renewed with “The Way of Jesus,” and “The Call of Jesus Today” (*cf. PCP II 37-85*).

738. Christian Faith radically influences the moral life of the Filipino, then:

a) By *giving reasons for acting in a Christian way*. The Christ of the Gospels provides a new *perspective* which helps us to *interpret* the relevant moral aspects of our daily life situations. He is the “light” that illumines our consciences with the truth, so we can “judge what is God’s will, what is good, pleasing and perfect” (*Rom 12:2*). “God’s Word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. . . it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart” (*Heb 4:12*).

b) By *developing the attitudes and dispositions of Christ*. Christians grow up with the Gospel stories of Christ’s care for the poor, his fidelity to his Father, his sacrificial love. We honor Mary and the Saints for their heroic virtues in following Christ through the power given them by the Holy Spirit. Thus Christ-like attitudes are built up which “test and interpret all things in a truly Christian spirit” (*GS 62*).

c) By *inspiring “Christ-like” affections*. The Christ of the Gospel naturally attracts us. As Filipinos, our natural affective nature is formed under the sacramental influence of our Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, and weekly Eucharist celebrations. Our parish liturgy is a “school” which helps form our affections on the model of Christ’s own affectivity. But most of all, it is through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit whom our heavenly Father sends us, that our affections are ever more closely conformed to the image of His Son (*cf. Rom 8:29*).

In summary, *faith gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment*. Through moral life, especially our works of charity, our faith becomes a confession, a witness before God and our neighbors of our gift of self, like that of Jesus, the Source, Model and Means of our moral life (*cf. VS 89*).

A. The Kingdom of God

739. Having sketched the general relationship between Christian Faith and Morality, we now focus on the *essentials of Christian moral living*. They are neatly *summarized in the “Kingdom of God,”* the central image of Christ’s teaching in the Gospels. Jesus opened his public ministry by proclaiming: “The Reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel!” (*Mk 1:15*). In this basic proclamation, there is, *first*, the *condition* for entry into the Kingdom: *repentance*. As sinners, our first step must always be reform of life. *Second* is the nature of *membership* in the Kingdom: *discipleship*,

or the following of Christ. *Third* is the *life* characteristic of the Kingdom: *love*. *Fourth*, the Kingdom's *norm*, is the *New Law* of the Spirit. *Lastly*, the *charter* of the Kingdom is set forth in the *Beatitudes*.

740. Repentance. In our praying for the coming of the Kingdom in the Lord's Prayer, we ask "forgive us the wrong we have done . . . deliver us from the Evil One" (*cf. Mt 6:9-13*). John the Baptist prepared for the kingdom by "proclaiming a baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins" (*Lk 3:3*). The repentance needed for the Kingdom demands a total personal *conversion*, a change of life-style and of priorities. "I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God" (*Mt 18:3*). As Nico-demus learned, this is impossible "without being born of water and Spirit" (*Jn 3:5*). Thus we who are "baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death . . . so that we might be slaves to sin no longer . . . but dead to sin, alive for God in Christ Jesus" (*Rom 6:3, 6, 11*).

Conversion is the first and perduring condition for Christian moral living. However, as *PCP II* makes plain, it cannot be merely a private, individualistic turning to God, but must entail commitment to "social transformation" (*cf. PCP II 271-76*).

741. Discipleship. The preceding chapter dealt with the personal factors in following Christ: the human person, responsible freedom, conscience. But what does this "following Christ" entail? *PCP II* stressed the theme of "discipleship": responding to the Call of Christ, in his Community, the Church (*cf. PCP II 64-153*). Perhaps the sharpest Scriptural description is contained in Christ's "Gospel Paradox," found in all four Gospels: "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will save it" (*Mk 8:35*). At the Last Supper Christ told his disciples: "Let the greater among you be as the younger, the leader as the servant. I am among you as the one who serves" (*Lk 22:26f*). Christ commissioned his disciples to carry on his work (*cf. Mt 28:19f*), allowing no interference: "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. . . Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the Kingdom of God" (*Lk 9:60-62*). Personal commitment to being Christ's disciple is the key to all Christian morality.

742. Love. The life that is love in the Kingdom of God is first of all "not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us and sent His Son as an offering for our sins" (*1 Jn 4:10*). The basis for moral living, then, is not our good intentions or efforts, but rather the incredible fact of God's love for us. Now, since "God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (*1 Jn 4:11*), a love that is "forgiving" (*cf. Eph 4:32*), *universal*, "for all" (*cf. 1 Thes 3:12*), and *necessary*, for without love we are merely "a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal" (*cf. 1 Cor 13:1*). Two direct effects of this love are *fellowship* (*koinonia*) and *service* (*diakonia*). Fulfilling the commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" (*Rom 13:9*) creates community fellowship, the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (*2 Cor 13:13*). So too we bear one another's burdens and serve "in all humility" (*Acts 20:19*), "in the newness of the Spirit" (*Rom 7:6*).

743. New Law. Before the New Law of the Kingdom, the Christian cannot have a legalistic attitude, but must have a *filial* one. He acts neither out of fear, like a slave, nor out of calculation, like a businessman; but *out of love* like a child. He knows he must do everything possible to respond to the love of the one who "loved us first" (*1 Jn 4:19*). The rule of the Kingdom interiorized the old prescriptions, forbidding not just killing, but even anger; not only adultery, but even lustful looks; not just false oaths, but even swear words (*cf. Mt 5:22, 28, 34*). It is not external show but the "quality of the heart" that matters. "What emerges from within a man, that and nothing else, is what defiles" (*Mk 7:20*). The "weightier matters of the law – justice and mercy and fidelity" (*Mt 23:23*) are what count for Christian moral living. The norm is: "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all [other] things will be given besides" (*Mt 6:33*).

744. The Beatitudes. At the start of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ laid down the charter or “marks” of the Kingdom — a new, mysterious life-giving vision (*cf. PCP II 272, 276*). The beatitudes are *not* a series of commands: be merciful! act as peacemakers! Rather they picture for us the face of Christ in sketching the vocation of every disciple of Christ, drawn to share in his Passion and Resurrection. They spotlight the essential qualities, actions, and attitudes of Christian living; they offer the paradoxical promises which sustain hope in our tribulations; they announce the blessings and reward already obscurely experienced by the faithful and manifested in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints (*cf. CCC 1717*).

745. The blessings of the Kingdom are promised to the poor and the powerless; to the gentle and the afflicted; to those who seek eagerly for a righteousness beyond external observance; to the compassionate and the pure-hearted; to those who turn from violence and seek reconciliation. To these ***Jesus promises a unique type of happiness:*** to inherit God’s Kingdom, to possess the earth, to be a child of God, to receive mercy, to see God. This sharp contrast with the secular values of the world will be taken up in the next chapter.

B. Response to the Kingdom

746. Christian moral life has often been presented in terms of a **Call-Response** pattern. The Kingdom of God just described has provided a particularly good picture of God’s call. In similar fashion, the response to the Kingdom can be sketched as *three dimensional: respect for the worth of others; solidarity with all; and fidelity to God and to one another.*

747. First, respect for one another (*cf. CCC 1929-33*). As members of God’s Kingdom our dignity and intrinsic worth comes from God. Therefore Paul exhorts us: “Love one another with the affection of brothers . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for all; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly” (*Rom 12:10-16*). “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each of you looking to others’ interests rather than his own” (*Phil 2:3-4*).

748. Second, solidarity, “the firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all” (*SRS 38*). This means that we cannot even offer true worship to God unless we “go first to be reconciled with your brother” (*cf. Mt 5:24*). This solidarity “helps us to see the ‘other’ – whether a person, people or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, . . . but as our ‘neighbor,’ a ‘helper’ to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God” (*cf. SRS 39; CCC 1939-42*).

749. Third, fidelity to God and to one another. It is to the faithful disciple that the joy of the Kingdom is granted: “Well done my good and faithful servant . . . come share your Master’s joy” (*Mt 25:21*). But this fidelity demands watchfulness and prayer:

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith, realizing that the brotherhood of believers is undergoing the same sufferings throughout the world” (*1 Pt 5:8-9*).

750. The life-or-death importance of this fidelity or trustworthiness is portrayed in the biblical stories of the two gardens. In the *Garden of Eden*, the serpent sows the seed of distrust, and Adam and Eve prove unfaithful to God and to each other (*cf. Gn 3*). In the other garden, *Gethsemane*, betrayed by Judas, Christ remains faithful to his Father and to his mission of saving all by the blood of his Cross (*cf. Mk 14:32-*

42; Col 1:20). However, our human experience of fidelity is not a once-and-for-all reality, but a continuing challenge with consequences. The betrayals of Judas and Peter clearly illustrate this dimension: Judas' infidelity led him to suicide (cf. Mt 27:5), while Peter's opened him to repentance, forgiveness and renewed commitment (cf. Jn 21:15-19).

751. Filipinos schooled in the traditional catechesis have been taught to view this fidelity to God and neighbor in terms of VIRTUES. Today great stress is placed on VALUE FORMATION. Both come to much the same thing, if our moral values are recognized as "fruits" of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (cf. Gal 5:22f). Moreover the basic human values of *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance* (the "cardinal virtues") are strengthened by the grace and Gifts of the Holy Spirit: *wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord* (cf. Is 11:2), and grounded and purified by the "theological virtues" of *Faith, Hope and Charity* (cf. CCC 1804-32).

752. *PCP II* adds an important note in emphasizing the need to study "how the values that we have from our Christian faith can strengthen the good in our cultural values or correct what is excessive in them and supply for their deficiencies" (*PCP II* 22).

C. Parables of the Kingdom

753. We conclude this section on the Kingdom of God and Christian moral life with two of Christ's *parables*. In comparing the Kingdom to a treasure buried in a field and to a pearl of great price (cf. Mt 13:44-46), Christ indicated something of the structure of the moral response called for in the Kingdom. Both parables manifest the same *threefold pattern*: first, **discovery**; second, **divesting** oneself of everything (selling); thirdly, **action** (buying). This sketches a moral response of:

- a) An **alert open-mindedness** that discovers where the Spirit is at work building up God's Kingdom. ["The Kingdom of God is at hand!"]
- b) A **metanoia** or conversion that transforms the whole person. ["Reform your lives!"]
- c) **Responsible attitudes and actions**, cooperating with God's grace for the common good of all. ["Believe in the Gospel!"] (*Mk 1:15*).

II. THE CHURCH AND MORALITY

754. Church as Context. The response to the Kingdom is *not made alone*. The task of becoming authentic disciples of Jesus Christ in word and deed can only be accomplished *in community*. The Church, the Christian community, supports us with the ministry of God's Word and of the Sacraments (cf. CCC 2030). Christian moral teaching looks to God's abiding word as its unfailing source and guide. The Word of God, including Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, is a fount of constant inspiration and new life.

755. Moreover it is within the Church that we Filipino Catholics, *baptized into the death of Christ Jesus*, to live a new life (cf. Rom 6:3-4), encounter the Risen Christ sacramentally – forgiving us in Penance, strengthening us in Confirmation and Anointing, sanctifying our life's vocation in Matrimony and Orders, and most of all, nourishing us with his own Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Through these saving sacramental encounters, the Holy Spirit inspires and empowers us as Christ's followers, with infused virtues to strengthen us for the moral combat in the service of others.

756. Church as Communal Support. The Church provides the communal support absolutely necessary to be faithful in following Christ in our moral living. The next chapter takes up the specific role of the Church's *Magisterium*, or teaching function, as norm for our consciences in moral reasoning and the process of moral deciding (*cf. CCC 2032-37*). Here we summarize the broader mission of the Church in regard to the moral lives of her members in terms of *three functions*: a) to help form Christian moral character; b) to carry on and witness to Christian moral tradition; and c) to serve as the community of Christian moral deliberation.

757. Active Agent in Forming Christian Character. One commendable feature of today's moral thinking is the shift in emphasis *from individual acts and techniques of decision making to the formation of moral consciousness or character*. More important for moral living than explicit instructions in the form of *do's* and *don'ts* are the symbols, images, stories, and celebrations that, by capturing our active imaginations, determine in great part how we think, evaluate, judge and decide morally. Thus the Church helps form moral character with its epic Old Testament narratives of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Sinai Covenant, Exodus, and the formation of the Kingdom of Israel with their great heroes and figures – Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. The New Testament follows with the “Good News” of Jesus the Christ, who redeems all by his Passion, Death and Resurrection. Such stories are not only proclaimed by and in the Church, but also embodied in its ritual ceremonies, and imitated in its history of saintly witnesses through the ages.

Thus does the Church help form moral character by exercising an indispensable influence on the imaginations and moral sense of Filipino Catholics.

758. Bearer of Moral Tradition. A common complaint today among those plagued with difficult moral decisions is the lack of “rootedness.” So many have lost the sense of who they are, their identity, heritage and “roots.” For Filipinos, the Catholic Church can supply their solid point of reference, where they feel at home in continuity with their family and community traditions. The constancy of the Church's moral tradition through changing times helps Filipino Catholics:

- a) by **grounding** their own **moral development** with moral instructions, customs and ways of acting;
- b) by *supplying much of the content* of a Christian morality – the Ten Commandments, Christ's Sermon on the Mount, the Precepts of the Church; and
- c) by *servicing as the structure or framework* for their moral accountability as disciples of Christ.

Specifically, the Precepts of the Church include: 1) to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; 2) to fast and abstain on the days appointed; 3) to confess one's sins at least once a year, and receive Holy Communion during the Easter time; 4) to contribute to the support of the Church; and 5) to observe Church laws concerning marriage.

759. Community of Moral Deliberation. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (*CBCP*), and individual bishops throughout the land, have consistently brought before Filipino Catholics the burning moral issues affecting everyone – on violence, peace, family planning, procured abortion and euthanasia, on voting in elections, on ecology, anti-government coups, and the like. These directive/guidelines and the moral reasoning employed are often themselves the outcome of prolonged serious reflection, careful research and discussion. In this, the Church is acting as a moral community in which active and vigorous dialogue between Filipinos on serious moral matters can take place on all levels, under the guidance of the Bishops. Typical are the moral catechetical programs for school children, religious education for teenagers, *cursillos*, marriage encounter programs, and social action seminars for adults – just to name a few.

III. THE MYSTERY OF WICKEDNESS: SIN

760. But our common experience testifies to the fact that the full and perfect Reign of God has not yet come. On the contrary, we are all too conscious of our shattered world in which so many moral evils, both personal and social, afflict the human race. All too easily we can recognize St. Paul's descriptions of the "works" of the flesh: "lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy, drinking bouts, orgies and the like" (*Gal 5:19-21*). "The mystery of evil is already at work" (*2 Thes 2:7*). So we must face the *reality of SIN* which obstructs the coming of Christ's Kingdom.

761. The Mystery of Sin. But beyond the stark factual reality of sin, we must recognize that sin is not simply "doing something wrong," or "making a mistake" which we can easily rectify at will. John Paul II describes it as follows:

Clearly sin is a product of man's freedom. But deep within its human reality there are factors at work which place it beyond the merely human, in the border-area where human conscience, will, and sensitivity are in contact with the dark forces which, according to St. Paul, are active in the world, almost to the point of ruling it (*RP 14*).

The mystery of sin "hates the light" (*cf. Jn 3:19; 1 Jn 2: 9f*), and we, sinners all, are often ashamed to take it seriously. But we need to reflect deeply on sin: 1) to truly appreciate God's everlasting merciful love, and 2) to correct common distorted ideas of God, the Church, conscience, law and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

762. In summary fashion, with St. Augustine, we can define sin as "an utterance, a deed or a desire contrary to the eternal law" (*cf. CCC 1849*). We can sketch the essence of sin in a few broad strokes as:

- *refusing to follow our own conscience's call* towards the good;
- *rejecting God*, our Creator and Lord, and *our own true selves and others*, by turning away from God, our true end; and
- *breaking God's loving Covenant with us*, shown forth in Jesus Christ, dying and rising for our sake.

What must be stressed these days is the *inner link between rejecting God and rejecting ourselves*. In refusing God and wishing to make a god of ourselves, we deceive and destroy ourselves. We become alienated from the truth of our being. Hence, to acknowledge oneself a sinner, is to know oneself guilty — not only before conscience, but before God our Creator, Lawgiver, and Savior (*cf. CCC 1849-51*).

763. The "Sense of Sin." Our Christian faith alerts us to the basic fact that we are "not well," that all of us have an urgent need for a physician to "cure us."

If we say, "We are free of the guilt of sin," we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us. But if we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word finds no place in us (*1 Jn 1:8-10*).

764. Moral life, then, requires that we recognize in ourselves the tendency to sin and acknowledge ourselves as sinners when we have done evil. *PCP II* presents Jesus' mission to "liberate from sinfulness" (*cf. PCP II 53-54*), as well as his call to us for "overcoming the reality of personal sin and sinful structures" (*cf. PCP II 81-86, 266-70*). Today this sense of sin seems to have been radically weakened by *secularism*: we are caught up in the flagrant *consumerism* that surrounds us. We are

unconsciously influenced by the modern *behaviorist* psychologies that identify sin with morbid guilt feelings or with mere transgressions of legal norms (*cf. RP 18*). And through radio, TV and the cinema, we continually face so many examples of bribery and corruption in business and government, cheating in family life and lying in personal relationships, that we often end up rationalizing for our own misdeeds: “Anyway, everybody does it,” or “I *had* to do it because. . . .”

765. Even within the thought and life of the Church, certain trends contribute to the decline of this basic sense of sin. Exaggerated attitudes of the past are replaced by opposite exaggerations: from seeing sin everywhere to not recognizing it anywhere; from stressing the fear of hell to preaching a love of God that excludes any punishment due to sin; from severe correction of erroneous consciences to a respect for individual conscience that excludes the duty of telling the truth. Some conclude: “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin” (*RP 18*). Despite the “natural piety” of the Filipino, an authentic Christian “sense of sin” is gradually being eroded due mainly to *religious ignorance* and the consequent *secularistic set of attitudes and values*. A true sense of sin is a *grace* as we perceive in the saints, who (paradoxically) manifested, without exception, a far keener sense of sin than the “ordinary sinner.”

A. Sin in Sacred Scripture

766. The *Old Testament* presents *three basic notions* for what we call sin.

- a) “*Missing the mark*” focuses on the offense inflicted on another by failing to meet one’s covenant obligations. Since the first law of the Covenant is worship of Yahweh, idolatry is its clearest expression. “The worship of infamous idols is the reason and source and extremity of all evil” (*cf. Wis 14:27*).
- b) *Depravity* and *perversity* refer to the defect of character or disorder that weighs the sinner down. “For my iniquities . . . are like a heavy burden, beyond my strength” (*Ps 38:5*).
- c) *Rebellion* and *transgression* picture sin as a conscious choice which destroys positive relationships. “See what rebellious Israel has done! She has . . . played the harlot” (*Jer 3:6*).

767. More importantly, the Old Testament manifests certain *shifts of emphasis* in its conception of sin. A more *primitive*, less morally developed idea of sin pictures it as *defilement* or “*stain*,” the sense of being unclean before the face of God, the All-Holy. “You shall warn the Israelites of their uncleanness, lest by defiling my Dwelling, their uncleanness be the cause of their death” (*Lv 15:31*). Strong in its sense of God’s holiness, this “stain” image manifests a rather primitive ethical sense by: 1) missing the inner evil of sin in not seeing the difference between responsible free acts and involuntary evils; 2) fixing on sexual taboos and ritual cleanliness, but ignoring interpersonal and societal justice; and 3) being motivated by a self-centered fear that shuts out authentic faith in the transforming merciful forgiveness of God.

768. A more ethical view of sin is presented in the Old Testament prophets and “covenant” narratives. Sin is seen as a *crime*, an internal, willful violation of Yahweh’s covenant relationship. Isaiah warns: “It is your sins that make Him [Yahweh] hide His face,” and lists their sins: their works are evil, their lips speak falsehood, their hands are stained with innocent blood, their feet run to evil, and their thoughts to destruction, plunder and ruin on their highways. Crooked have they made their paths, and the way of peace they know not (*cf. Is 59:2-8*). Viewing sin as crime emphasizes its juridical aspect, with its concern for determining the nature of the crime, the culpability of the sinner, and the appropriate punishment.

769. A third model of sin is *personal rejection* of a love relationship. It draws on the Bible’s covenantal language of personal vocation, discipleship and conversion, to reduce the fire and brimstone emphasis of the more juridical “crime” image. The evil of sin in this basically personalist

model is located not in the violation of an extrinsic law, but rather in the free, responsible malice of the sinner and the harm inflicted on other persons. Sin is seen as truly *interpersonal*: the personal malice of the sinner offending the persons of God and neighbor. By sin, sinners alienate themselves from their neighbors, all creation, God, and from their own true selves.

770. Today, perhaps more important than the different models of sin, is the *loss of the sense of sin* and *its link with conscience*. John Paul II quotes Pius XII: “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin.” He explains how

this sense of sin is rooted in our moral conscience, and is, as it were, its thermometer. . . Nevertheless it happens not infrequently in history, for more or less lengthy periods and under the influence of many different factors, that the moral conscience of many people becomes seriously clouded. . . . It is inevitable in this situation that there is an obscuring also of the sense of sin which is closely connected with moral conscience, the search for truth, and the desire to make a responsible use of freedom. . . . [This] helps us to understand the progressive weakening of the sense of sin, precisely because of the crisis of conscience and the crisis of the sense of God (*RP 18*).

771. *New Testament* authors identified Christ as the suffering Servant who has come to “justify many, bearing their guilt” (*Is 53:11*). Christ calls all to a *radical conversion from the power and deadly evil of sin, to the Kingdom of his Father*. To all entrapped in the snares of sin, he offers forgiveness: “Your sins are forgiven” (*Lk 7:48*). “Sin no more!” (*Jn 5:14; 8:11*) In St. John we meet the contrast between many “*sins*” (plural) or conscious acts against the Kingdom, and “*sin*” (singular) meaning the “*world*” as hostile to God and to God’s word (*cf. Jn 1:29*). This contrast is repeated today in our Eucharistic celebrations in the *Gloria* and the *Lamb of God* prayers. Much like “world” in John’s Gospel is St. Paul’s notion of “*flesh*.” As contrasted with “*Spirit*,” it stands for the power of sin that permeates the human condition and grounds all individual sinful thoughts, words, and deeds (*cf. 1 Cor 5:5; Rom 7:5, 18*).

B. Church Teaching on Sin

772. The Church’s doctrine of original sin was taken up in Part 1, Chap. 8, as were the seven “deadly [capital] sins” of Christian tradition. Original sin also appears briefly below in Part III, Chapter 25 on Baptism. The distinction between mortal and venial sin is treated in Chapter 27 on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But two more recent approaches to sin that add considerably to a fuller pastoral understanding of sin must be briefly treated: the different dimensions of sin; and “social sin.”

773. Sin can have different dimensions. It can be described as a *spiral*, a *sickness*, *addiction*. 1) As a *spiral that enslaves us* in a contagious, pathological habit of vice that acts like a virus, infecting social attitudes and structures such as family, social groups and the like. 2) As *sickness*, drawing on St. Luke’s trait of linking healing with forgiveness of sin (*Lk 5:18-26*). 3) As *addiction*, a process over which we become powerless as it becomes progressively more compulsive and obsessive. Sin as addiction leads to a pattern of ever deeper deception of self and others, ending in the inevitable disintegration of all our major personal and social relationships. Examples given of sin as addiction are *consumerism* and *militarism*.

774. *Due consideration of these dimensions of sin helps to have:*

- a more realistic appraisal of the sinner’s actual operative freedom;
- a positive orientation toward a *process* of healing and forgiveness; and
- a stress on the over-riding importance of the social and structural dimensions of sin.

775. “**Social sin,**” stresses complicity in evil by showing how members of the same group are mutually involved. It can refer to:

- sin’s power to affect others by reason of human solidarity;
- sins that directly attack human rights and basic freedoms, human dignity, justice, and the common good;
- sins infecting relationships between various human communities such as class struggle, or obstinate confrontations between blocs of nations; and
- situations of sin, or sinful structures that are the consequences of sinful choices and acts, e.g., racial discrimination, and economic systems of exploitation (*cf. RP 16*).

Regarding the last meaning, *PCP II* urges Filipinos “to reject and move against sinful social structures, and set up in their stead those that allow and promote the flowering of fuller life” (*PCP II 288*).

INTEGRATION

776. This chapter has focused on *Faith* and *Morality*, Christ’s central symbol of the *Kingdom of God*, the *Church’s* role in Christians’ moral life, and the reality of *Sin*. These themes have described the *social context* of “following Christ.” **Doctrinally**, they are based solidly on the correct understanding of *original sin* and especially of *grace*. For the life of grace in the Holy Spirit is constantly working to build up the kingdom of God. It is the Spirit within and among Christ’s disciples that enlightens and strengthens their life of Faith in the Christian community against the power and alienation of sin.

777. As regards the **worship** dimension of these moral themes, the Sacraments of *Reconciliation* and of *Anointing* are directly concerned with *healing* and strengthening the disciples of Christ in their spiritual combat against the malice and evil of sin. These two Sacraments, then, act as a *remedy* for sin, particularly in its relational dimensions. Moreover, without an ever-deepening prayer life which alone can inspire and animate a personal relationship to Jesus Christ our Savior, this spiritual combat will never be sustained. And it is within the ecclesial context of the Church, the Christian community, that this sacramentally nourished prayer life of the follower of Christ can grow and develop by the grace of God.

778. This chapter has sketched in broad lines the key dimensions constituting the context of following Christ. *First*, the Catholic Faith influences Filipinos’ moral living by offering the distinctive perspective of the Gospel, while developing Christ-like attitudes and affections. *Second*, within Christ’s great symbol of the Kingdom of God, with its call to repentance and discipleship, Filipino Christians are called to exercise a new life of mutual respect, solidarity and fidelity. *Thirdly*, in this the Church serves as their context and communal support in their struggle against evil. *Lastly*, the “kingdom of sin” is described – the mystery of evil, experienced from within as stain, crime, and personal rejection – a spiralling sickness and addiction that so infects social relationships that society’s very structures are affected.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

779. *What is the social context of Christian moral life?*

The social context of Christian moral life today is a world-in-change, marked by the Church “scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”

780. *What is the role of Faith in morality?*

Christian Faith influences moral life primarily by:

- offering a new distinctive Christian vision of moral good and developing Christ-like attitudes and values;
- teaching moral precepts that foster this vision; and
- strengthening moral motivation by giving reasons for acting in a Christian way and inspiring Christ-like affections.

781. *How does the “Kingdom of God” summarize Christian moral living?*

The Kingdom of God is characterized by its:

- condition for entry: *conversion and repentance*;
- membership: becoming a *disciple of Christ*;
- life: *loving service* grounded on God’s Love for us;
- basic law: *new life in the Spirit*;
- charter: the *Beatitudes*.

782. *What response from us does the Kingdom call for?*

The Kingdom of God calls for:

- respect for one another;
- solidarity with all; and
- fidelity to God and to one another.

783. *What role does the Catholic Church play in moral life?*

The Catholic Church serves as the *context* and *communal support* for the moral life of its members by:

- actively forming Christian moral character;
- carrying on and witnessing to the Christian moral tradition; and
- serving as the community of moral deliberation.

784. *What is sin?*

Sin is basically a refusal of God’s love. It entails:

- refusing to follow our own conscience;
- rejecting our true selves, others, and God by turning away from God, our true end;
- breaking God’s covenant of love with us.

785. *How is sin presented in Sacred Scripture?*

Sin is presented in the inspired Word of God in the Old Testament as:

- “*missing the mark*” by failing to meet one’s obligations to God and neighbor;
- a defect or *disorder of character* weighing down the sinner; and
- a conscious *choice of rebelling against God* and transgressing His commandments.

786. *What images are used to picture sin?*

The Old Testament moves

- from the image of sin as a *stain* (unclean before the all-holy God),

- to that of *crime* (willful violation of the covenant), and finally,
- to *personal rejection* (of love relationship).

787. *How did Christ speak of sin?*

Christ called for a radical *conversion of heart* – a turning away – from *sin to service* in the Kingdom of his Father. One sign of this Kingdom was Christ’s own forgiving sins by the power of the Spirit.

788. *What new “models” of sin are proposed?*

One insightful new model of sin looks more to its social effects on the sinner as

- a *spiral* of evil that ensnares;
- a *sickness* that weakens; and
- a compulsive and obsessive *addiction* that enslaves.

789. *What is meant by “social sin”?*

“Social sin” today refers to situations and structures that attack basic human rights and dignity, and infect social relationships between communities.

Chapter 15

The Christian Law of Life-Giving Love

Jesus replied: “The first Commandment is this: You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
(Mk 12:29-31)

“I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.”

(Jn 13:34)

OPENING

790. Chapter 13 introduced Christian moral living by focusing on the *moral agent*: the Christian disciple as *person*, endowed with the tremendous gift of *freedom*, operating according to *conscience*. Chapter 14 took up the *social context* of following Christ: the role of *Christian Faith* and the *Church* in moral living, sketched by Christ in his fundamental image of the *Kingdom of God*, and engaged in the life-and-death combat with *Sin*. This chapter takes up the function of *moral norms* or laws in Christian living. Christian morality is a *response* to the *call* of God in Christ Jesus. This response is viewed:

- a) as embracing a basic moral *vision* of both person (*Chap. 13*) and social context (*Chap. 14*);
- b) codified in moral *norms*; and
- c) implemented in moral *acts* which result from a personal decision-making process (this present chapter) [*cf. NCDP 271*].

791. The major problem with moral living is MOTIVATION. We often know what we should do, but find ourselves oddly incapable of doing it. “The desire to do right is there, but not the power. What happens is that I do not do the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend” (*Rom 7:18b-19*). It is very important, then, to understand properly how *LOVE*, which is *the basic Christian motivation* and power, also constitutes its *fundamental liberating moral norm*. This entails reflecting on how *moral norms* operate in the following of Christ, both *personally* in regard to our conscience, and *communally* as members of society (*Natural Law; culture*) and of Christ’s Body, the Church (law in *Scripture* and the Christian *tradition*). Beyond understanding the proper role of moral norms, there is the basic need to develop the skill in *making moral judgments* and *acting* precisely as a true disciple of Christ in his community.

CONTEXT

792. Our Filipino culture affords many *traditional VALUES* that are deeply consonant with the Christian vision that grounds all its moral norms. For example, there is *pagsasarili*, the self-reliance that is the first step toward moral responsibility; *pakikisama*, getting-along-with-others, or the willingness to share with others; *pagkakaisa*, the unity of the community that supports all loving service; and *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, the human solidarity with all, or “being a friend of all” that supports Christian love of neighbor. Catholic Filipinos today are alert, perhaps as never before, to the task of “building a truly Christian community, a genuine *pagsasamahang Kristiyano* with *pagdadamayán, bayanihan, pakikipagkapwa-tao*, and *pagkamakadiyos* as building blocks” (NCDP 28).

793. But regarding *MORAL NORMS*, the Filipino attitude seems ambiguous. On the one hand, patient to a fault, the Filipino’s natural “personalism” tends to consider “*impersonal*” laws only in terms of *personal relations*. In the absence of a traffic policeman, traffic laws are often ignored. Overcharging in the family store is excused because money is needed for the children’s school tuition. The *kanya-kanya* syndrome gravely weakens any personal commitment to law and the common good. Obeying the law seems quite secondary in the hierarchy of Filipino cultural values.

794. On the other hand, external compliance with the law, especially with cultural mores, is demanded to safeguard one’s *amor proprio* and avoid *hiya*. The upbringing of children in the family is frequently moralistic, tending to focus uniquely on the “letter of the law” and its external observance, without due care for its inner spirit. This unfortunately carries over to much catechetical instruction on Catholic moral living pictured as:

- a) dominated by sin, explained solely in terms of breaking a law;
- b) motivated primarily by fear of punishment for sin; and thus
- c) creating a legalistic and juridical mind-set characterized by minimalistic attitudes to morality (How far can we go before committing mortal sin?).

795. Recent years have shown remarkable progress in the maturing process in the Faith of many Filipino Catholics. Primary moral motivation for many in the extraordinary events such as the EDSA ’86 Revolution, and in combatting the December ’89 coup attempt, went clearly beyond the level of reward/punishment characteristic of “instinctive” conscience – beyond even the strict moral level of justice. As the letters of the CBCP on both occasions manifested, the crisis brought many to a level of real self-sacrifice for the common good, inspired in many cases by explicit Christian love and piety. Such “highpoints” reflect the Christian moral growth taking place everyday, among ordinary Filipinos in the thousand and one moral challenges and tasks of ordinary life. The maturing process is never-ending.

EXPOSITION

796. Christ, Our Moral Norm. For Christians, the norm by which all their thoughts, words and deeds are judged and evaluated morally is not some law, but *the person of Jesus Christ*. In the Kingdom of God there is only one teacher: the Messiah (*cf. Mt 23:10*); all must listen to [his] words and put them into practice (*cf. Mt 7:24*), take up his yoke and learn from him (*cf. Mt 11:29*). *Salvation depends on one’s attitude to Jesus:*

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before men, I will deny before my Father in heaven” (*Mt 10:32f*). “For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (*Rom 10:9*).

797. This is because Jesus reveals to us not only God as our Father, but who we truly are. Jesus himself – not only what he did and taught, but his whole life and person, climaxing in his *Paschal Mystery* through which he saved us (*cf. PCP II 55*). Jesus embodies God’s loving call to us, and the perfect human response of a child of God. ***Jesus himself IS the New Covenant between God and all human persons***, the Way and authentic norm for becoming our true selves. Commenting on a Vatican II text, John Paul II describes this primacy of Christ as follows:

798. In Christ and through Christ, God has revealed Himself fully to mankind and has definitively drawn close to it; at the same time, in Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence” (*RH 11*).

“Christ, who died and was raised up for all, provides man – each and every man – with the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme calling (*RH 14; cf. GS 10*).

799. Today, educational psychologists stress the impact of “significant persons” on the moral growth and development of children and youth. For the Filipino Christian, Jesus Christ is the “most significant other.” We have already seen how Christ radically affects our ***moral vision*** of what it means: 1) to be a person (*Chapters 13, 9*), and 2) to form an authentic Christian conscience (*Chapters 13, 27*). We have also seen how Christ enters into our attitudes, affections, values and intentions (*Chapters 14, 8*). Here we wish to focus on Christ as the basis for all moral norms or laws and for the way we actually come to make our moral judgments and decisions.

I. MORAL NORMS

800. Amidst today’s great stress on personal dignity, freedom, individual conscience, and moral character, the notions of norm and “law” have become quite “unpopular.” Some consider moral “law” as a carry-over from pre-Vatican II moralistic times. St. Paul is quoted in support of this: “If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (*Gal 5:18*); “you are now under grace, not under the law” (*Rom 6:14*). But Paul’s point is not to deny all value to law, but to insist on Christ: “I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth and I may be in him, not having a justice of my own based on the law. The justice I possess is that which comes through faith in Christ” (*Phil 3:8-9*). Paul recognizes that “the law is good, provided one uses it in the way law is supposed to be used” (*1 Tim 1:8; cf. Rom 7:12*). Now just how is the law supposed to be used? Some basic notions will help to clarify this important dimension of Christian moral living.

801. What is a norm or law? We need some general idea of law that can give us some insight into its meaning when applied to God’s law, the law of the Old and New Testaments and the natural law. The standard definition is “an ordinance of reason, promulgated by competent authority for the sake of the common good” (*St. Thomas, ST, I-II, 90, 4*). Each element has its importance: 1) law is a ***reasonable decision***, i.e., prudent and with purpose, not a capricious whim; 2) ***promulgated***: communicated with sufficient notice to its subjects while respecting their rights and dignity; 3) by ***competent authority***: i.e. by those who have legitimate power to do so; and 4) for the ***common good***: for the social betterment of its subjects.

802. *Two characteristics of law*, especially moral law, help greatly in appreciating its place in Christian moral living. *First*, law is ***based on vision***, certain presuppositions. The Christian vision has

been described in detail in the two preceding chapters (*Chapters 13-14*), and is portrayed in Christ's sketch of the ideal member of the Kingdom in the Beatitudes presented below. *Second*, law arises from and *expresses basic values*. This is clearly exemplified in the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill" commands respect for human life; "Thou shalt not commit adultery," respect for sexuality; "Thou shalt not steal," respect for a person's possessions; "Thou shalt not bear false witness," respect for the truth.

Likewise, Christ's teaching in his Sermon on the Mount manifests this: "Do not swear at all" (*Mt 5:34*) commands respect for personal integrity; while "Offer no resistance to injury" (*Mt 5:39*) fosters a self-respect based not on answering violence with violence, but on acting as children of the Father. These two characteristics go far in modifying the legalistic and moralistic concept of moral norms or laws.

803. Functions of Moral Law. But don't laws contradict human freedom? Some compare our freedom and law to a lake and its shore. Laws give shape to our freedom by imposing boundaries similar to the way the shore shapes the lake within its boundaries. But moral norms or laws do more than that. *First*, they provide *criteria for judging* who we are and *how* we should act. By explicating the moral memory and value-experience of the community, moral norms afford us a broader basis for judging than our own limited personal moral experience. *Secondly*, moral norms/laws *help our moral development*, especially in the formation of conscience, by expressing typical patterns of moral behavior and human values. *Thirdly*, they *provide stability and consistency* in our lives by acting as a constant and reliable point of reference. Universal negative moral laws indictate the minimum below which moral acts cannot sink. It would be humanly impossible to decide every moral issue "from zero," i.e., with no precedent or guide. *Lastly*, positive norms/laws can also *challenge us* by stretching us in view of an *ideal*, or *correcting us* by illuminating our faults.

804. But *many Filipinos tend to confuse morality with legality*: if something is legal, permissible by law, they think it must be morally good. This misunderstanding ignores the difference between *positive civil law* which judges *crimes* against the state, and authentic *moral law* which is the objective norm for judging *sin*. Something is *legal* when it does not contradict any law of the state, but it is *morally good* only if its nature, intention and circumstances are positively good for the person as person-in-community, that is, according to *moral norms*. The functions of *moral norms* can best be seen in Sacred Scripture.

II. LAW IN SCRIPTURE

805. The Old Testament. Through His revealing word, God gave to Israel, His chosen people, the Law of the Covenant (*cf. CCC 1961-64*). This Law or Torah, called by various names such as *instruction*, *witness*, *precept*, and *word*, went far beyond the limits of merely human law. It governed the whole Covenant relationship. The *priests* promulgated the law to Israel (*cf. Dt 33:10*), instructing the people in the knowledge of Yahweh and His ways (*cf. Jer 18:18; 5:4*). The *prophets* reproached the priests for failing in their duty to the Law (*cf. Ez 22:26; Hos 4:6*), and warned: "Cursed be the one who does not observe the terms of this covenant" (*Jer 11:3*). The *Wisdom authors* extolled the Law: "The book of the Most High's covenant, the law which Moses commanded us, . . . overflows . . . with wisdom" (*Sir 24:22f*), and the *psalmist* sang:

806. The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.
The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes. . .
The ordinances of the Lord are true, and all of them just.

(Ps 19;8-10; cf. Ps 119 passim; 147:19f)

807. The Old Testament Law covered not only moral demands, and prescriptions for religious ritual, but even legal stipulations for social behavior as well. Instructive for us are certain basic characteristics.

- a) The Law flowed directly from the *Covenant relationship* of Yahweh's loving call creating His Chosen people. This means the whole law was based on the vision and values of God's Covenant with His people.
- b) *Obedience*, then, to God's comprehensive Law was the hallmark for the believing Israelite. All sin was viewed primarily as an offense against the Lord with whom the Israelites were "bonded" in every aspect of their lives by the Covenant.
- c) The law, then was God's *great gift*, bringing great joy to His people: "In your decrees I rejoice and in your statutes I take delight" (*Ps 119*).

808. But the history of Old Testament Law has also unfortunately manifested how all law is dangerously open to the serious abuse of *legalism*. The Israelites "without guile" saw the actions commanded by the law more as *symbols of love* of God, the Covenant Lord, than as means of accomplishing specific tasks. Thus seemingly insignificant acts could have rich devotional potential. But the temptation to mistake the precept for the value, the external compliance for "obedience of the heart," was ever present (*cf. Is 29:13; Mt 13:15; Acts 28:26*). Two specific abuses stand out.

- a) By putting all the law's ordinances – moral, religious, civil and ritual – on equal footing, an impossible burden was placed on the people (*cf. Lk 11:46*), and the "weightier matter" were lost (*Mt 23:23*).
- b) By so extolling obedient observance of the law, it seemed that persons could save themselves simply by perfectly keeping the law, without any need for God's grace.

809. The New Testament. Even while they vigorously attacked these abuses, the Old Testament prophets had prophesied the coming of a New Covenant. "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . . I will place My law within them, and write it upon their hearts" (*Jer 31:31, 33*). "I will put My spirit within you, and make you live by my statutes" (*Ez 36:27*). So Christ came not to "abolish the law and the prophets, . . . but to **fulfill** them" (*Mt 5:17*). He did this, *first*, by inaugurating the new law of the Kingdom. "The law and the prophets were in force until John. From his time on, the Good News of God's Kingdom has been proclaimed" (*Lk 16:16*). *Secondly*, Christ removed the imperfections allowed because of their "stubbornness of hearts" (*cf. Mt 19:8*) by proclaiming his new commandment of love which transcends all human wisdom and all morality, and summons his disciples to the sovereign demands of their calling. "Be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5:48; cf. CCC 1967-72*).

810. This is possible only by the interior strength offered by the Spirit (*cf. Jn 16:13; Acts 1:8*). *The presence of the Holy Spirit gives an absolutely new meaning to moral life*. Present in the hearts of the baptized, the Spirit is himself in a way the *New Law* which is the *law of LOVE*. The Spirit *signifies* this law because He is love. He *realizes* it because He is the gift of the love of the Father. He *calls* to love because the whole life of the baptized should express this gift (*cf. CCC 1966*).

811. *Thirdly*, Christ *perfected* the dietary laws regulating eating and purity of food, so important in Jewish daily life, by disclosing their "pedagogical" meaning, and the Sabbath Law by recalling that the sabbath rest is not broken by the service of God or of one's neighbor (*cf. Mt 12:5; Lk 13:15-16; 14:2-4*). *Lastly*, he set the precepts of the law in a hierarchical order in which *everything is subordinated to love of God and neighbor*. His law of love which "sums up the law and the prophets"

(Mt 7:12) radically transformed the ancient 'Golden Rule' from a law of simple mutual give-and-take to a law of positive love (cf. CCC 1789, 1970).

812. The Great Commandments. When asked "which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (Mt 22:37-40; cf. CCC 2055). In this reply Christ brought together two well known precepts of the Old Testament (Dt 6:5 and Lv 19:18) in a novel fashion.

First, he brought out the inner bond between love of God and love of neighbor. This is stressed in John's first letter: "We can be sure we love God's children when we love God and do what He has commanded" (1 Jn 5:2).

813. Secondly, Christ exemplified the triple "*heart, soul, and strength*" of the "*love-of-God-injunction*" **in his life and teaching.** Old Testament interpreters had identified "*heart*" with our inner and outer desires and longings; "*soul*" with obeying God at the risk even of one's life; and "*strength*" with all one's resources of wealth, property and reputation. But these three dimensions must be concretized. One necessary way is by making use of the rich Filipino cultural terms and values so expressive of these dimensions: with "*buong puso/loob/kalooban*"; with "*buong kaluluwa*," and "*buong lakas*."

814. Another way is to bring out their social and contextual effects, as Christ does in his teaching, for example in his parable of the sower, depicting three groups who failed to respond to God's word: the "*path*" group had no real desire or understanding, so the devil easily steals away the word from their *hearts*. The "*rocky soil*" group withers away under heat because it has no "*soul*" to risk life for God. The "*weeds and thorns*" group allows other interests to divide its attention and choke out undivided commitment of resources (*strength*) to God (cf. Mt 13:4-9, 18-23).

815. But perhaps the *best Scriptural concretization of loving God* with all one's heart, soul and strength is not in Christ's teaching, but in *his very life*. In his triple temptation in the desert, Christ *first* refused to satisfy his own basic needs in view of an undivided *heart* for God's word. *Second*, in refusing divine intervention, he risked his life (soul) for God. *Finally*, ignoring all enticements of the devil, Jesus committed all his *strength* to God alone (cf. Mt 4: 1-11).

816. These temptations were faced by Christ all through his life as is shown by the jeers at the Cross that parallel the three temptations. 1) "If you are the *Son of God*, save yourself!" 2) "He relied on God, let God rescue him now if He wants to. For he claimed 'I am the Son of God.'" 3) "So he is the *King* of Israel. Let us see him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him" (Mt 27:41). The temptation "Come down from the cross" has echoed through the centuries. But so too has "Father, . . . not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

817. Third, Christ gave a radically new interpretation to "neighbor." It is now to be understood universally, to cover **everyone**: those in need, as taught by the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:30-37), and even our enemies (cf. Mt 5:44). Christ went further and *made everyone "neighbor"* by *identifying himself with them* as Vatican II has pointed out, "Christ wished to identify himself with his brethren as the object of this love when he said: 'As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me'" (Mt 25:40; cf. AA 8).

818. Fourth, Christ reduced the whole law and the prophets to this – and only this – **double commandment**, because "the law of love is at the heart of each of the commandments. Love is the

source of their value and obligation” (cf. CCC 1971, 2055). “The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in the saying: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:9-10).

819. *PCP II* focuses on “loving faith,” an active love like that of Christ, a participation in God’s own love which comes to us through His Son” (*PCP II 71*). Thus, love is the summary of the whole law because it is the reflection in human life of God’s very being. “Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God” (1 Jn 4:7-8).

820. Now we are empowered to love both God and neighbor since God’s own love “has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). In the strength of this divine Spirit of love, Christ gave his own command: “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). Christ thus overcame the greatest weakness of the *Old Law*, namely, it showed people what sin was without empowering them to avoid it. But now St. Paul declares, “The law of the spirit, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has freed you from the law of sin and death. The law was powerless because of its weakening by the flesh. Then God sent His Son” (Rom 8:2-3).

821. Christ’s Liberating Law. It is this new law of love through Christ’s Spirit that is liberating, for to be conformed to the law of Christ, is to know freedom. *Christ’s new law comes to us as a gift that the Holy Spirit places in our hearts.* It carries the imperatives of the law beyond the mere external moral behavior and beyond even a sense of obligation. Christ’s law is a law of love, grace, and liberty (cf. CCC 1972). It touches the spirit rather than the letter. It requires a change of heart from which a change in behavior will follow. It names that self-giving openness to God and to others from which all the commandments derive their redemptive vitality; which changes them from servile constraints into a force which liberates our true humanity.

822. Beatitudes. Christ’s law, then, liberates *from* mere externalism, from being bound to the letter of the law, endured as servile constraints, *for* a life graced by the Spirit’s gift of a change of heart. By inspiring a new vitality in us, the Spirit enables us to experience our true humanity. Positively, as inwardly transformed by grace, re-created in God’s im-age, we are enabled to gradually establish our moral life on a different basis. The idea of simply avoiding sin, being legally “justified,” is replaced by an ideal arising faith and love, the fruit of the indwelling Spirit. This “new basis” for moral life is graphically portrayed in Christ’s poetic sketch of those “blessed.” The Beatitudes oppose the wisdom of the world (cf. 1 Cor 1:20): materialism, the cult of wealth, the lust for power, ruthless competition, the ethic of success. In God’s Kingdom, these values are reversed.

823. In the Beatitudes, Christ describes those who are truly “happy” in the Kingdom of God. Most people, according to St. Thomas, relate happiness to: 1) sensible pleasures and satisfaction of desires, or 2) success in undertakings and interpersonal relations, or finally 3) deep reflection and contemplation. Christ claims that instead of sensible satisfaction and many possessions (1), *detachment* (poverty of spirit), *meekness* and *compassion* bring us true happiness. Instead of completely self-centered activity (2), *thirsting for justice* for all and *merciful* forgiveness offer authentic human interpersonal relationships. Instead of withdrawing from the problems and concerns in the world to seek contemplation, those who are single-minded/*clean of heart*, and work for *peace* among all will find God. Such a life will undoubtedly bring trials and persecutions because of our sinful selves and the world; but it is the life of faith, hope and love of the disciples of Christ (cf. CCC 1717).

III. LAW IN THE CHURCH

824. Christian moral tradition has developed another type of law called “*Natural Law*” because it *expresses the wisdom of God in His creation* and because it *belongs to the very nature of human persons*. It is not imposed on them from the outside like an arbitrary restriction, but as a call coming from their deepest selves (*cf. CCC 1954*). Already within Sacred Scripture, moral knowledge is related to human “nature,” in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. But it is especially St. Paul who brings this out: “When Gentiles who do not have the [Jewish] law keep it as by instinct, . . . they show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness together with that law” (*Rom 2:14f*). In Catholic morality, *natural law* means ***the sum of the rights and duties which follow directly from the nature of the human person***, endowed with reason and freedom, not to be confused with social norms and conventions, nor with public opinion, nor with civil law (*cf. CCC 1954-60*).

825. *Three basic convictions* of the natural law approach are central to Catholic morality. *First*, the basis for the “natural law” is the truth that God has created everything and is the root of all things. The natural law written in the heart of man manifests the order willed by God in creation. Human moral life is ***grounded in reality*** – our moral responsibilities flow from the very structure of who we are as persons in society through history. Therefore, *secondly*, ***natural law morality is knowable by all persons***, independent of their religious faith. Engraved in the conscience of each, the natural law is accessible to all (*cf. CCC 1954*). *Thirdly*, ***there are objective moral values and teaching that can be universalized***, addressed to all people of good will. “All are required to follow its precepts” (*CCC 1956*). Paul VI offers a concrete description of the natural law in life:

826. In the design of God, all are called upon to develop and fulfill themselves, for every life is a vocation. At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities to bring to fruition. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow all to direct themselves toward the destiny intended for them by their Creator. Endowed with intelligence and freedom, they are responsible for their fulfillment as for their salvation (*PP 15*).

827. But to avoid abusive rationalistic and narrowly legalistic interpretations, the *natural law* must be viewed in terms of certain fundamental aspects. *First*, as ***real***: morality is based on reality, not just on commands as the legal positivists hold. Moral life means doing the good, not just blindly following law. *Second*, it is ***experiential*** because it directly concerns our relationships with ourselves, with others, and with society. *Third*, it is ***historical*** since our human nature is involved in the historical process of our self-becoming growth. *Fourth*, it deals with the ***specific nature and consequences of our free acts***, and therefore, *fifth*, is basically ***personal***, since it is grounded in the human person’s nature. These features indicate how the natural law approach can be effective in today’s moral climate.

828. Christ and the Natural Law. But what has this “natural law” got to do with God’s Law as manifested in “Christ, our Moral Norm”? (*cf. # 796*) Many seem to misunderstand and think of the natural law in purely philosophical terms, as completely separated from God’s law. In reality they are intimately connected, for in obeying the natural law, we obey the divine law itself – “*eternal, objective and universal*” (*DH 3*), of which it is the expression (*cf. CCC 1955*).

829. We see natural law and God’s law united in Christ. ***First in their very being***: since God creates all persons in and through Christ (*cf. Jn 1:3; Col 1:16f*), Jesus is the model for both our human nature [natural law] and all our free moral acts. *Second*, ***existentially and operationally*** they are one because Christ is both our final destiny built into our human nature, and the norm for our free moral thoughts, words and deeds by which we journey toward this destiny. *Third*, ***historically they are united in Christ*** because through the historical event of the *Incarnation*, *Passion*, *Death* and *Resurrection*, Christ

manifested and actualized all the above links. In Christ God ratified the dignity of all human persons, our unity with Him, and our path to Him through our human world and activities. Fidelity to the human in history is fidelity to Christ's presence. In the end, then, "the New Law or the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law, natural *and revealed*" (CCC 1965).

IV. PROCESS OF MORAL DECISION-MAKING

830. Elements. We have seen the person as moral agent (*chap. 13*), the social context of moral acts (*Chap. 14*), and now their structure (moral norms). What remains to be studied is *what goes on in the actual process of making moral judgments and decisions*. Here we can only treat briefly some of the more important aspects of this ordinary yet complicated process we all go through every time we make a moral decision of any importance.

831. Agent in Deciding. Moral acts have traditionally been described in terms of *the person's thinking and willing*. Three aspects of this thinking and willing are currently emphasized as particularly important in making moral decisions. First, *evaluative knowledge*. The knowing that influences making moral judgments is not only "head knowledge," speculative knowledge of quantitative facts or information, easily detached from the knower and specific occasion, and thus ready for passing on, but also what moves us to decision. It is "*knowledge of the heart*," knowledge involving *quality* and *values*, not easily detached from the knower and the concrete situation, and therefore more difficult to communicate. Evaluative knowledge is *personal knowledge*. It is how we Filipinos know one another, especially within our family and circle of friends.

832. Second, imagination. The power of the Christian story, images, and devotions has already been mentioned. What is pertinent here is the influence of imagination on our moral norms: their *effectivity* in our lives and their *applicability*. Moral norms taught us by our elders will hardly be *effective* unless our own imagination draws together the universal, abstract terms of the norms with our concrete personal experience. Finally, imagination is most needed in *applying* universal moral norms to specific actual cases.

833. Third, affectivity. Strong human passions have always been recognized as limiting the moral agent's actual freedom. Today, however, affections are seen more broadly as influencing all our moral judgments. Rather than an obstacle to freedom, our human affections often open us up to deeper knowledge and understanding in our interpersonal relationships. They help us see more truly, compassionate with others. One dimension of Christian moral education, then, is *to form true Christian affectivity* – authentic Christian ways of affectively responding to situations and others.

834. Virtues and Character. Besides these three aspects of our acts of knowing and willing, there are the more permanent, underlying factors of virtue and character which influence our personal moral life. Virtues are taken up at length in Chapter 17 on Love of Neighbor. Here we only wish to stress the current emphasis on *the moral person's character and habitual ways of acting* (virtues), rather than being overly preoccupied with detailed scrutiny of individual acts. The interplay of our fundamental commitment and stance – **who I am** – with my freedom of choice – **what I do** – is another way of expressing this influence of virtue and character on my decision-making process.

835. Process of Coming to a Moral Judgment. The process of deciding can be outlined in *three steps*: moral discernment, moral demand, judgment or decision. First, the *discerning stage* includes many elements, such as summarized in the common pedagogical "STOP" formula (*Search, Think, [consult] Others, Pray*). All these contribute to the formation of a basic relevant Vision, that will ground the decision to be made.

836. The *second* step of *demand* brings in the role of the pertinent *moral norm*, which our consciences use to formulate their dictates on what we must do. Our consciences always work on accepted moral norms. They never act as a law unto themselves. Likewise, moral norms and commandments touch us only through our consciences. Strangely enough, many do not seem to realize this dynamic interaction of conscience and law. By erroneously claiming freedom from all law by reason of their conscience, they ignore the basic *relational* nature of their authentic freedom and of themselves as persons.

837. The *third* step, the *judgment or decision stage*, simply refers to the judgment of conscience we make on the morality of any proposed action, and our consequent decision to follow this dictate of our conscience or not.

838. Conscience and the Magisterium. As Catholics, we Filipinos decide serious moral questions with the special help of the teaching office of the Church, the Magisterium. This is to be expected, for in times of crisis or serious decisions, Filipinos naturally consult others for help and guidance. It is only natural, then, that Catholics look to the moral leadership of the teaching Church, with its long tradition and world-wide experience. But the real basis, the supernatural reason is “the Holy Spirit’s unfailing guidance of the Pope and the college of Bishops when they fulfill their role as authentic teachers of faith and morals” (*NCDP 276*). It is the distinctive mission of the Church’s magisterium to proclaim and interpret the moral law before men in the light of the Gospel (*cf. DH 14; CCC 2036*). “The faithful therefore have the *duty* of observing the constitutions and decrees conveyed by the legitimate authority of the Church. Even if they are disciplinary in matters, these determinations call for docility in charity” (*CCC 2037*).

839. The interaction between Catholic Filipinos’ consciences and the teaching authority of the Church holds no danger or restriction to “freedom of conscience.” On the contrary, obedience to the Magisterium manifests clearly the relational and communitarian nature of conscience noted above. The awareness of “being obliged” is experienced within one’s own call to personal responsibility. “We discern how *freedom and obedience mutually imply each other* rather than being incompatible” (*NCDP 276*).

840. This mutual relationship of obedience and freedom is the teaching of Vatican II. On obedience, Catholics are reminded “in matters of faith and morals, the Bishops speak in the name of Christ, and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind” (*LG 25*). Regarding freedom of conscience, the laity are instructed that

it is their task to cultivate a properly informed conscience and to impress the divine law on the affairs of the earthly city. . . . It is up to the laymen to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom and with eager attention to the teaching authority of the Church (*GS 43*).

841. Christian moral maturity, then, has always included the need for *reasonable interpretation* of law. Thus the traditional principle of *epikeia* states that a merely human law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, (except invalidating and procedural laws), does not bind if right reason indicates that the legislator did not wish it to bind in these particular circumstances. This happens, for example, when the difficulty in obeying the law here and now is disproportionate to the end which the law has in view.

842. Christian moral living offers to the world perhaps our most effective *missionary witness* as Filipino Catholics. This means giving daily witness to the basic moral values which flow from our

nature as human persons and from our God-given relationship with creation. Through such witness we not only respond to the call of holiness to all within the Church (*cf. LG 39*), but draw others to personal belief in God and Jesus Christ (*cf. AA 6; CCC 2044-46*).

INTEGRATION

843. The place of moral norms in following Christ, explained at length in this chapter, rests ultimately on the *doctrinal truths of God's creation and loving call of grace to eternal life*. Christian moral norms are grounded in the vision of fundamental values proposed by Christ in his *Sermon on the Mount*. Such are the values of human life, sexuality, integrity, self-respect and love (*cf. Mt 5:21-48*). Guided by these moral norms, so grounded in the Christian vision, the Christian's conscience is enabled to discern and decide responsibly as a disciple of Christ.

844. *Prayer* and an active sacramental life are the necessary means not only for clarifying the Christian vision, but especially for motivating responsible moral decisions and acts. In the last analysis moral living is question of the "heart," rather than of complex reasoning and arguments. Following Christ in moral life means a heart "wedded to Christ" by his Holy Spirit, nourished in the Eucharist celebration, and experienced in personal prayer.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

845. *How can Christian moral life be viewed?*

Christian moral life can be viewed as our *free response to God's call* involving three essential levels:

- a basic moral *vision*;
- expressed in moral *norms* and precepts; and
- exercised in personal moral *acts* guided by conscience.

846. *What is the major problem in Christian moral living?*

Motivation is the major problem in Christian moral living — how we can inspire ourselves and others to act consistently according to the Christian moral norms.

847. *What is the basic Christian norm for moral living?*

The basic standard by which Christians judge all their thoughts, words and deeds is *the person of Jesus Christ* who reveals God as our Father, and who we truly are.

Christ is the most significant "other" in forming:

- our moral vision (values, attitudes, and affections),
- our moral norms, and
- the actual decision-making process of our conscience.

848. *What is a norm or law?*

A norm or law is a decree of reason, promulgated by competent authority, for the common good.

Moral norms, based on a moral vision comprising basic moral values, express the objective standard for judging moral good and evil.

849. *What are moral norms supposed to do?*

Moral norms are indispensable for moral life. They

- provide the objective criteria for our conscience to judge what is morally good or evil;
- help our moral development, especially in the formation of our conscience;
- offer the needed moral stability in our lives;
- challenge us to stretch for an ideal beyond our limited experience, and correct our personal moral misconceptions in the process.

850. *What was God's Law in the Old Testament?*

God's Law in the Old Testament was His great gift to His chosen people, Israel, creating with them a Covenant which called for obedience to His Law as their response to His gratuitous love.

The danger inherent in all laws is to so focus on the "letter of the law" and its external observance as to ignore the basic human values and interior dispositions which the law was made to preserve.

851. *How did Christ in the New Testament relate to the Law?*

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law by:

- inaugurating the New Law of the Kingdom which
- perfected the Old Law by
- subordinating all its precepts to love of God and of neighbor.

852. *What is Christ's own Law of love?*

In his own life Christ taught and perfectly exemplified the Old Testaments' two great Commandments of Love:

- love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and
- love your neighbor as yourself.

853. *What was new about Christ's Commandments of love?*

In his "New" commandment of love Christ:

- stressed the inner bond between love of God and love of neighbor;
- exemplified "heart," "soul," and "strength" in his example and teaching, especially his response to the triple temptations experienced in the desert and on the Cross;
- gave a radically new interpretation of "neighbor" as meaning everyone, especially those in need, and
- summarized and subordinated the whole law and the prophets to these two Commandments alone.

854. *How is Christ's law of love "liberating"?*

Christ's law of love is liberating because it not only shows us what makes us authentically free, but through the Spirit of love offers us the power to fulfill it.

855. *What pictures for us Christ's law of love?*

Christ's Spirit of love liberates us

- a) from mere external observance of the law,

b) for a life transformed by radically new values, sketched in the Beatitudes:

- detachment from worldly possessions,
- meekness and compassion,
- thirsting for justice and merciful forgiveness,
- purity of heart, and
- single-mindedness in working for peace.

856. *What is meant by the “Natural Law”?*

Christian moral tradition has developed another type of law called the “natural law” that is

- grounded in our very nature as human persons created by God,
- supporting universal objective moral values and precepts, and
- knowable by all persons using their critical reason, independent of their religious affiliation.

857. *Has not “natural law” at times led to certain abuses?*

To avoid the danger of a rationalistic, legalistic interpretation of the “natural law,” stress should be put on certain characteristics:

- its basis in reality;
- its experiential and historical dimensions;
- its dealing with the consequences of our *free* acts, and
- its being based on the human person’s nature.

858. *How is Christ related to the “natural law”?*

The “natural law” and God’s law are united in Christ since:

- everything is created in Christ;
- he is the final destiny built into the nature of every person, and
- through the Incarnation, Christ has become the concrete model for every human person, in their daily thoughts and actions.

859. *What is the process of moral decision-making?*

The process of making moral decisions involves:

- we ourselves as the moral agent or doer;
- using evaluative knowledge, i.e. personal knowledge of the heart, including affections and imagination,
- according to our basic moral character and the virtues we have freely developed.

860. *What are the stages in moral decision-making?*

Among the many proposed patterns for moral decision making, three stages are essential:

- discerning (STOP: *Search, Think, [consult] Others, Pray*),
- relevant obligating moral norms, and
- conscience’s decision in applying the objective norm to the concrete act/situation.

861. *How does the Church help Catholics in moral decisions?*

The teaching office of the Church (*Magisterium*) offers Catholics moral guidance and leadership based on the Holy Spirit’s unfailing presence, and the Church’s long tradition and worldwide experience. It thus supports and strengthens the essentially relational and communitarian dimensions of our personal consciences in their effort to achieve moral goodness.

Chapter 16

Love the Lord Your God

“I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery.”

(Ex 20:2; Dt 5:6)

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

(Dt 6:4)

OPENING

862. This chapter begins the *development* of the three previous foundational chapters: *what it means to live as disciples of Christ (Chap. 13)*, responding to his challenge of following him (*Chap. 14*), according to his Law of Life-giving love (*Chap. 15*). His Two Great Commandments of loving God and loving one’s neighbor must be spelled out in greater detail. For this, the Church, heir of ancient Israel, draws on her moral heritage of *virtues* and *commandments*. We shall draw on both in an *integrated presentation*, using the *commandments to structure the whole*. For the Ten Commandments set out systematically what the love of God and the love of neighbor demand. The first three concern our duties towards God; the remainder detail our duties towards our neighbor. Thus, the Decalogue provides a framework within which the demands of the Two Great Commandments can be expressed.

863. As candidates for Baptism, we were called to choose between “two ways,” one leading towards life, the other to death. The Ten Commandments, now completed by Christ, are seen as a privileged expression of the “way of life.” They are a classical structure for Christian moral teaching. They express God’s will for us, not as a set of arbitrary instructions but as a loving providence. What God commands to be done, His grace makes possible (*cf. CCC 2082*). ***For Christians, the Ten Commandments take on a whole new perspective*** – that of deep personal faith and loyalty to Christ. “If you keep my commandments you will live in my love . . . You are my friends if you do what I command you” (*Jn 15:10-14; cf. CCC 2074*).

CONTEXT

864. The first thing that comes to mind to many Filipino Catholics when asked about morality is the “Ten Commandments.” As Christians they usually hear “moral talk” in the form either of warnings against sin and breaking God’s commandments, *or* of pious spiritual exhortations about love and happiness. But it is rare that

either form is related to the other. Taken separately neither the commandments nor love offers a true picture of daily life where love and moral responsibility are always intertwined. The truth is that the **Ten Commandments** are actually *moral imperatives of how to love others* and *to follow Christ's own command to love*.

865. But in the popular mind of many Filipinos the Ten Commandments are linked with the story learned as children about Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai, with the two stone tablets. One had the Commandments dealing with our relations with God, the other with our relationships with one another. Now since the “story” is remembered from childhood days, it unfortunately is often understood in rather childish ways. *God's Commandments* are viewed as *something imposed* – “taboos” that must not be broken, otherwise you get punished. They are not related in any way with love, or friendship, or fidelity. Small wonder, then, that many adult Filipino Catholics do not see any direct connection between this “story” and their daily moral actions. On one side, their relations with God tend to be dominated by the external ritual piety of their upbringing. On the other, their personal moral actions and interrelationships are controlled by familial and friendship ties, or the increasingly competitive, secularistic drive for business success.

866. More recently an opposite reaction has become quite common among certain socially-oriented Filipinos. They react against the overly devotional ritualism and moralistic “platitudes in stained-glass attitudes” of some pious church-goers. Being so wholeheartedly committed to the thrust for justice and liberation, they have little or no time for “talk of sin and God.” For them, the Commandments of God are simply *not relevant to today's Philippine context* so dominated by the fight for justice and identification with the poor. Thus in the Philippines, today, some serious, well-intentioned Christians do not seem to see any particular connection between their moral lives and the Ten Commandments, especially those pertaining to our relationship with God.

EXPOSITION

867. This chapter, then, sets out to develop Catholic morality in terms of *both love and commandments*. In this it follows both Christ's own teaching on how to gain eternal life (*cf. Mk 10:17-19*), and the exposition of following Christ as his disciple proposed in the three preceding chapters (*Chaps. 13-15*). This chapter proposes *how to love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength* by explaining the nature and function of the first Three Commandments, while the following chapters take up the love of neighbor.

But this order must not obscure the *basic unity of the Ten Commandments*. They form an organic whole in which all of the commandments relate to, and mutually condition, one another. No one can relate to God authentically while sinning against one's neighbor; neither can one adequately love one's neighbor while rejecting our heavenly Father (*cf. CCC 2069*). Through the Ten Commandments God actually reveals to us the basic norms of the law written into our human nature, the Natural Law, on how to act toward God and neighbor (*cf. CCC 2070*).

I. UNDERSTANDING THE COMMANDMENTS

868. Proper Understanding Needed. A proper understanding of the Ten Commandments is often difficult for the Filipino Catholic because of the manner in which they have often been taught and memorized in catechism classes. Presented as characteristic of the “*Old Testament*,” the Ten

Commandments were viewed as the *law* imposed by a divine *Judge* who watches over everyone with an all-seeing EYE. Eternal punishment is the final end of all transgressors. Such a picture of God in the Old Testament is frequently given even today in superficial, over-simplified contrasts with Christ's "New Spirit" which allegedly liberates us from all law. In brief, then, the Ten Commandments are frequently rejected as *historically* outmoded, authoritarian, and repressive, and *spiritually* counter to the new creation in Christ.

869. Yet upon reflection, we soon realize how mistaken this easy contrast is. When asked what one must do to possess eternal life, Jesus replied by quoting the Commandments (*cf. Mk 10:17-19*). For Christ and his apostles, the Commandments represented the great gift of God's love. The divine "law" given to Moses constituted a great part of their "Sacred Scriptures." Moreover, in instituting his New Law in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did not abolish but rather fulfilled the Law and the Prophets (*cf. Mt 5:17*). Christ taught that "whoever breaks the least of these commands and teaches others to do so shall be called least in the Kingdom of God" (*Mt 5:19*). In the Gospel, ***the Old Law is not set aside but rather transformed.*** But why bother with the "Old Law" when we already have the "New"? What is the value of the Ten Commandments for the Filipino Catholic of today?

870. *First*, the Ten Commandments constitute the basic imperatives needed for ***life in community***, like a community "*Bill of Rights.*" They sketch for us the limits or parameters within which we, the People of God, must live our life of faith, hope and love in our redeeming Lord and among ourselves. The Commandments actually point in *two directions*: they call for ***reverence for God***, and ***respect for our fellow human beings***. While requiring these basic moral attitudes as constant and unchanging, the Commandments, far from being a code of rigid rules and *don'ts*, allow for the greatest flexibility in interpreting their "spirit" as well as the "letter."

871. *Secondly*, the lasting exceptional value of the Ten Commandments can be grounded in their ***historical origin***, their ***covenantal character*** and their ***liberating power***. The Commandments originated not from some particular process of philosophical reasoning nor from mystical contemplation, but from the concrete ***historical events*** of Exodus and Mt. Sinai. Therefore, to interpret them legalistically as abstract generalizations is to wrench them from their living origin in God's creative, saving will in salvation history.

872. Moreover, the Commandments are ***terms of the Covenant***, "***Ten Words***" revealing the pattern of life which is righteous in God's sight, the way of life which leads to happiness (*cf. CCC 2058-61*). In the Ark of the Covenant, the Commandments had a central part in the liturgy of God's people, celebrated in Israel's great festivals, renewed through each succeeding generation. Thus the Commandments were not some originating event receding further and further into the past, but an open-ended Covenant event looking ever to the future.

873. *Finally*, the ***Decalogue***, set in the context of Exodus, is that great ***liberating act of God which stands at the center of salvation history***. Though the Commandments have the form of prohibitions, ***they are*** also ***a deliverance from the slavery of sin***. They free men to travel towards God, a journey of faithful service, and so to discover their true selves and achieve their true destiny (*cf. CCC 2057*). The Commandments provide the ***signposts to authentic responsible freedom***, showing the way between legalistic misunderstanding of freedom on one side, and freedom mistaken as lawless license and irresponsible spontaneity on the other.

874. Preamble of the Ten Commandments. This positive understanding of the Ten Commandments shines forth in their preamble: "I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery" (*Ex 20:2*). Nothing is farther from moralistic legalism than such a blazing declaration, identifying God as Liberator. As with Christ's Resurrection in the New Covenant,

this preamble sets us free of all enslavement by *nature*, by *history*, or by *death*. Called into Covenant with the Creator, made in His very image with dominion over the earth, we are freed from all “*nature worship*.” Likewise, by entering into history God has liberated us from all *historical fatalism*. God’s love, not the inexorable cycle of history, is the source of all. Finally, not even the bondage of *death* can stand against the promise of God’s liberating presence.

875. A clarifying New Testament version of the Preamble could well be: “It is for liberty that Christ freed us; so stand firm and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time” (*Gal 5:1*). “For I am certain that neither death nor life, . . . neither the present nor the future, neither height nor depth nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (*Rom 8:38f*).

876. Rather than contrast the Ten Commandments with Christ’s new law of love, then, it is more accurate, realistic and truthful to understand them as dynamically forming together *a consistent pattern for Christian moral living*. The Ten Commandments are needed to provide:

- a) credible and durable moral norms for everyday life;
- b) a pattern and structure for living according to Christ’s Commandment to love God and neighbor; and
- c) a universally accessible source for relating to non-Christians in moral matters.

It is true that the Gospel of God’s redeeming grace *precedes* the Law – the Decalogue arises in a context of grace. But it is equally true that the Law *follows* the Gospel – that Christian life is essentially a morally structured response in faith, hope and love to God’s call in Christ and the Spirit.

877. We therefore develop the first great “*Love Commandment*” to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and strength, according to the structure furnished by the first three of the Ten Commandments.

II. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

878. *The First Commandment forms a unity with the two following commandments.* The First Tablet of the Law consists of the three Commandments of the Decalogue which set out our duties towards God arising from his Oneness and Lordship. They enable our relationship with Him, and consequently with our neighbor, to develop rightly. They mark a *first stage* in coming to understand the command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (*Dt 6:5; cf. CCC 2083*).

879. The First Commandment is usually expressed: “**I am the Lord your God. You shall not have other gods besides me**” (*Ex 20:2-3; Dt 5:6-7*). Notice how the moral obligation (you shall not. . .) is drawn directly from the reality (I am . . .). Put positively, the Commandment enjoins: “The Lord, your God, shall you adore, Him shall you serve” (*Dt 6: 13; cf. CCC 2084*). In today’s idiom, its meaning could be expressed in a number of ways: “Give God your Father His rightful place at the center of your lives. Live in faith, hope, and love in God, the Father of all.”

880. This commandment is “first” not just because it heads the list, but because, together with its preamble, it is *the most important*. From it all the other Commandments are derived and governed. To know and love God, and gratefully accept His lordship, is the foundation of all Christian moral life. In revealing Himself as out-going creative Love, God calls every person to share in His Love through a life of Faith, Hope and Charity (*cf. CCC 2086-94*). True happiness and our final destiny are achieved within the framework revealed in God’s laws. As Christ taught, “Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ” (*Jn 17:3*).

881. Christ confirmed the First Commandment in his preaching the Kingdom of God. For the first call of the Kingdom is to acknowledge the uniqueness of God as the hope of human unity: “There is but one Body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given to all of you by your call . . . one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all” (*Eph 4:4-6*).

882. Fruits of the First Commandment. The uniqueness and oneness of God our Lord, stressed by the First Commandment, is a *liberating truth*. For adoration of the one God frees us from slavery to and idolatry of the world. God’s unique oneness is also a *reconciling truth* since the one God, as Father of us all, makes us one family. Despite the endless struggles between nations and peoples, and our own ordinary conflicts and misunderstandings, we realize God created the whole world for unity and order. “The whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God . . . [to] be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (*Rom 8:19-21*). Finally, the oneness of God is a *loving truth* in that it makes possible a genuine unified love of God. For the One God has no rivals, so we may love Him with our whole heart, completely and above all. There is but one Lord and Master.

883. As a *liberating, reconciling* and *loving truth*, the Oneness of God can be the basis of our personal freedom, our unity with all our brothers and sisters under our heavenly Father, and our love for one another. This basis is expressed in the *renewal of Baptismal vows* during the Easter Vigil Eucharistic celebration. Together as a community, after rejecting Satan and all his works and empty promises, we solemnly affirm our faith in God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and their Holy Spirit. We affirm our belief in the holy Catholic Church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

884. Duty of Prayer/Worship. Christ answered Satan’s final temptation with: “Scripture has it: ‘You shall do homage to the Lord your God; Him alone shall you adore’ ” (*Mt 4:10*). The First Commandment, in proclaiming the Lordship of the one true God, expresses this *duty of worship*. Worship is *the recognition of God’s Lordship expressed in filial devotion and service*. To love and to serve God in faith and hope is our first duty and privilege. In a larger sense, the First Commandment fosters all the elements of the virtue of religion: adoration, prayer, sacrifice, religious vows, and grounds the basic human right to religious liberty (*cf. CCC 2095-2109*).

885. Some charge us, Filipino Catholics, with praying more to Mary and the saints than to our Creator and Lord. We respond that the official prayer of the Church is directed to the worship of the Father, through Christ our Lord, in the Holy Spirit. Veneration of Mary and the saints does not in any way detract from this Christ-centered worship of God. For it is God’s own special grace which has made the saints worthy models for our imitation, drawing us closer to God, the source of all holiness. Thus within the Mass, the sacrament of Christ’s own sacrificial meal, we pray “to share in the inheritance of the saints . . . on whose constant intercession we rely for help” (*EP III*).

Yet, while *PCP II* commends fostering devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the other saints, it cautions: “we must make sure that [these] devotions are seen in relationship with, and in subordination to, Christ the one Mediator between God and humankind” (*PCP II 174*).

886. Moreover, even our Christian worship of God involves other humans in that it: 1) shares in and continues the one sacrifice of Christ our Lord, inspired interiorly by the Holy Spirit; and 2) involves an in-herent and radical commitment to the service of our neighbor (*PCP II 185*). *PCP II* insisted on the intrinsic link between authentic liturgical worship and social action in the pursuit of justice and service of the poor (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 20, 3*).

887. Commands/Prohibits. The First Commandment forbids any other god than the Lord . . . that any created thing should take the place of God and receive the worship due to Him alone. It thus rules out all forms of *idolatry* which is the “substitution of someone or something else for God. Idolatry is vividly portrayed in the biblical story of the “Golden Calf” (*cf. Ex 32*). The calf or bull symbolizes the idols of biblical times: the sexual fertility in the cults of Baal and Astarte, and the military power of the Egyptians for political conquest. Today it can likewise stand for the modern idols of divinized economic power, possessions and wealth – whether concretized in the form of liberal capitalism or Marxist collectivism. “No man can serve two masters . . . You cannot give yourself to God and Money,” Christ warned (*Mt 6:24*). What the First Commandment does, then, is to repudiate all idolatrous obsession with wealth, human sexuality, politics and personality cults. *Soli Deo gloria* – to God alone be glory!

888. Idolatry and superstition are real temptations today. Enticements such as wealth, honor, success, power, sex, drugs, nation, race, are sometimes pursued with such single-minded enthusiasm that they themselves become the objects of worship in place of God (*cf. CCC 2110-14*). More serious are forms of magic, sorcery, witchcraft, satanism, astrology, fortune-telling, and all ways of seeking to manipulate events for self-interest, or discover hidden knowledge by means alien to God (*cf. CCC 2115-17*). Also rejected are all forms of irreligious such as *sacrilege* (violating sacred places, things, persons), *simony* (selling or buying spiritual goods) and *tempting God* (by demanding signs, complaining [*cf. Heb 3:8-10*] (*cf. CCC 2119-22*)).

889. No Carved Images. God reserves for Himself alone the right to express and produce images of Himself. God created Adam in His own image (*cf. Gn 1:26*). This is shown first by giving him a share in the divine *dominion* over creation; secondly, by creating them “male and female” (*Gn 1:27*), thus reflecting God’s own creative *community* of Father, Son and Spirit. But the *perfect image* of God is seen in the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ, “the image of the invisible God” (*Col 1:15*), on whose face “the glory of God shines” (*cf. 2 Cor 4:6*). It is Jesus alone who could answer Philip’s request, “show us the Father,” with “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (*Jn 14:8-9*).

890. But as embodied spirits, we experience and express the spiritual realities touching our lives in a physical, material way, through signs and symbols. Thus did Christ act and teach throughout his public ministry, using physical touch, bread and fish, wine and water, to bring God’s grace palpably present among the people. Therefore the Gospel itself grounds the use of images in the service and worship of God.

891. Yet we must recognize the ever present temptation: from merely *reminding* us of God, the material image tends to gradually “*become*” a god, an idol. In such fashion the bronze serpent made by Moses on the command of the Lord to cure those bitten by serpents (*cf. Nm 21:6-9*) was smashed by Hezekiah because “the Israelites were burning incense to it” (*2 Kgs 18:4*). An image can either bring the reality it represents to mind, to aid devotion and attention, *or* it can become a substitute for the reality itself, and thus be an object of idolatry. Thus the First Commandment forcefully reminds us that God, the Creator, is infinitely beyond any of His creatures; no image or mental concept can ever “capture” Him. *Deus semper major* – God is always greater.

892. Catholic Filipinos are attracted very much to images and statues of Christ, Mary and patron Saints. These images can offer genuine aid in their worship of Christ and veneration of God’s blessed, Mary and their patron Saints. But in the Philippines today, many who misunderstand the nature and function of venerating sacred images, reject this practice as idolatry. Against such attacks the Church firmly insists on the valuable help such images can offer for authentic Christian prayer. Nevertheless, the Church is equally insistent on the *proper use* of such images, avoiding any and all appearances of

making the images into idols, or treating them as endowed with some magical powers (*cf. CCC 2132*). This need for caution is confirmed by today's "image industry" which graphically illustrates how manipulative and deceitful human images can become, even holy images.

III. THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

893. In the Old Testament, the Second Commandment is expressed as: "**You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain**" (*Ex 20:7; Dt 5:11*). It commands reverence for God's holy name which represents God Himself. We fulfill this Commandment positively everytime we repeat the prophet Isaiah's text in the Eucharistic acclamation: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory" (*cf. Is 6:3*).

894. But it is doubtful whether many Filipino Catholics understand the *full* meaning of this Commandment. It seems for many the commandment is concerned *only* with forbidding using God's or Jesus' name in anger, or condemning all coarse, vulgar speech and profanity as degrading for professed disciples of Jesus Christ. More technically, it means *rejecting blasphemy* (speaking of God or the saints with contempt), *cursing* (calling down punishment on others), and taking *false oaths* (using God's name to confirm a false statement) (*cf. CCC 2148-52*). Now the Second Commandment surely does forbid such speech. As we read in Ephesians, "nor should there be any obscene, silly, or suggestive talk; all that is out of place" (*Eph 5:4*). But is such the full meaning of the Second Commandment?

895. "Name" in the Bible. It is common knowledge that "name" for the people of the Bible held a special importance and power. The "name" stood for the person; the name made the person present and active. God's name was conceived as the presence, the *shekinah*, of God himself. When the name was truly spoken, when God's word was remembered, then God was really present and speaking through His remembered word. So the name of God was God's gift to His covenant people. To swear falsely, using God's name was to break the covenant.

896. This same special quality and power of *name* is found in the New Testament authors. St. Paul quotes an early Christian hymn: "God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name, so that at Jesus' name, every knee must bend . . . and every tongue proclaim: JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!" (*Phil 2:9-11*). In the book of *Acts* Peter and John cured the cripple "in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean" (*Acts 3:6*). And before the Sanhedrin Peter preached: "there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (*Acts 4:12*).

897. Therefore it was believed that knowing the name of someone gave power over that person. Jesus played on that common belief when expelling unclean spirits in the territory of the Gerasenes (*cf. Mk 5:9*). Moreover, the phrase "name *in vain*" meant more than coarse language. Originally it referred to using God's name in sorcery, invoking curses on others and conjuring up evil spirits, or claiming the power inherent in God's personal name *to do harm to others*. In view of this Biblical understanding of name, then, using the name of God in vain was equivalent to refusing to follow and obey God, even trying to manipulate the power of His name for one's own benefit and to do evil to others.

898. Reverence for God's Name. God's naming of Himself was an act of revelation. In answer to Moses' question about his name he replied: "*I am who am*" (*Ex 3:14*). Through this name God expressed His eternal self-sufficient uniqueness, His lordship over history's temporal sequence of past, present and future, in a saving, liberating presence. In the Gospels we have God's definitive self-

revelation as Father, Son, and Spirit [the *Blessed Trinity*], through Jesus Christ. As the Word of God made flesh (*cf. Jn 1:14*), Jesus revealed:

- God as *Father* (*cf. Jn 1:18; Mt 6:9*),
- himself as the *only Son* of the Father (*cf. Lk 1:32f; Mt 11:27*) sharing the “I am” of the Father (*cf. Jn 8:58*), and
- their *Holy Spirit* whom he would send from the Father (*cf. Jn 15:26*).

899. As Christians we are *baptized* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Mt 28:29*). We are received into the Body of Christ, the Church, graced with the Holy Spirit, and given our own Christian names. Thus we are drawn into the communion of the Triune God as sons/daughters of the Father, through Christ our brother, in the indwelling Holy Spirit, in the Christian community, the Church (*cf. CCC 2156-59*).

900. As adopted children of the Father, young Filipino Catholics show a natural reverence for God’s name. They are taught to begin their prayer “in God’s name” with the *Sign of the Cross* which expresses the names of the Most Blessed Trinity, and reminds them of the power of the redeeming death of Jesus. They learn to pray “holy be your name” in the *Our Father*. And they hear in each of the Church’s Eucharistic Prayers how God is praised and thanked: “We come to you, Father, with praise and thanksgiving” (*EP I*); “Father, it is our duty and our salvation to give you thanks. . .” (*EP II*); “Father, . . . all creation rightfully gives you praise (*EP III*), and “Father, . . . all your actions show your wisdom and love” (*EP IV*).

901. But it is not rare that as Filipinos mature, some of this natural reverence of the child is left behind. The Second Commandment becomes very applicable, both in regard to lack of reverence for God’s name, and lack of respect for their fellow human persons. In reverence for God, oaths and vows are made on solemn occasions like baptisms, marriages, or priestly ordinations. To be “holy”, they should not be made for trivial purposes, nor entered into rashly, but must be truthful and enduring. Regarding respect for others, sometimes religion itself is misused, either in frightening people with threats of eternal punishment, or enticing them with calls for superficial, emotionally-laden conversions. Both are a misuse of power in the name of God. Religion should never be a tool for frightening people, nor a palliative promising joy without substance, love and forgiveness without demands. Hosea warns against “priests who feed on the sin of my people and are greedy for their guilt” (*Hos 4:8*). Amos and Isaiah castigate the false piety of those who exploit their fellow persons unjustly (*cf. Am 5:21-24; Is 10-16*).

902. What the Second Commandment enjoins positively, then, is the joy-filled praise of the Psalmist: “Praise, you servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord both now and forever. From the rising to the setting of the sun is the name of the Lord to be praised” (*Ps 113:1-3*). With Christ our Lord we pray: “Father, glorify your name” (*Jn 12:28*).

IV. THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

903. “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day” (*Ex 20:8; Dt 5:12*) is usually formulated for Christians as: “Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.” The Third Commandment enjoins us to keep holy the day set aside for the worship of God and for recreation. When grounded in its Old Testament context, it binds together the two tablets of the Law. For two basic sources are given for this Commandment, one stressing our direct relationship to God, the other focusing on its human,

liberating effects. Both dimensions are firmly rooted in our Filipino religious belief and cultural values tradition.

904. The *first* source relates the sabbath rest to **God's creative action** in Genesis. "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day He rested" (*Ex 20:11*). The work of creation reached its climax with the creation of human persons, made to continue God's own creativity in their own creaturely way. But the creation story does not end there: the ultimate goal is the sabbath – not creation in itself, but fellowship with God the Creator. ***The sabbath is a symbol of the final celebration and rest which is the conclusion of all God's work . . .*** creation itself is directed toward a final end.

905. The *first reason* given for the Third Commandment, then, is **God's rest on the seventh day** (*cf. CCC 2172*). This rest was not an absence of work; when God stopped working, He created something new, something which was not there before – REST. This rest was not an after-thought of creating, but its planned and essential end. "Just as heaven and earth were created in six days, rest (*menuha*) was created on the Sabbath. . . Rest here means much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. What was created on the seventh day? *Tranquility, serenity, peace and repose*" (A. Heschel, *The Sabbath*).

906. The *second reason* given for the Sabbath rest in Scripture is the great **liberation from slavery in Egypt**: "For remember that you too were once slaves in Egypt, and the Lord, your God, brought you from there with His strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the Lord, your God, has commanded you to observe the sabbath" (*Dt 5:15; cf. CCC 2170*). This reason clearly emphasizes the Sabbath as: a) commemorating the day of liberation; and b) its social dimension, focusing on the socially disadvantaged and oppressed – children, slaves, animals, aliens (*cf. Dt 5:14*).

907. Balance Needed. Throughout history, these two reasons for the Sabbath commandment have sometimes been set against each other. If the worship reason alone is stressed, then the Sabbath tends to become a day of Pharisaic legalistic piety, with its social humanitarian dimensions gravely restricted. On the other hand, if – as seems to be the more common case today – only the human social rest dimensions of the Sabbath are emphasized, the holy day becomes simply a holiday for physical relaxation and enjoyment, with only minimal concern for any religious aspect.

908. But such polarization contradicts both biblical sources: the *worship version* is of the **Creator God** precisely as radiating His love to children, slave, beast and alien, while the *humanitarian liberating rest* of Exodus is accomplished by *Yahweh, the All-Holy*. Thus, ***the two reasons for the Sabbath complement each other***, and bind together the Two Tablets. The holiness of the Sabbath is to be recognized by setting it aside for worship and for rest. In both these aspects of the sabbath we open ourselves to God and to one another. Our Sabbath celebration and rest is a foretaste of heaven.

909. Jesus and the Sabbath. Although all four Gospels record that Jesus faithfully observed the Sabbath, attending synagogue services (*cf. Mt 4:23; Mk 1:39; Lk 4:15; Jn 18:20*), they also report a number of incidents which show Jesus in conflict with the Sabbath law in the legalistic interpretation that held sway in his days. In line with the liberation grounding of the Sabbath rest, Jesus, as "Lord even of the Sabbath," taught "The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (*Mk 2:27-28*). When the legalists tried to trap Christ into breaking the Sabbath law, Jesus asked: "is it lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath — or an evil one? To preserve life — or to destroy it?" When they refused to answer, Jesus "looked around at them with anger, for he was deeply grieved that they had closed their minds against him" (*Mk 3:4-5*). This indicates that genuine Sabbath worship of God is not to be separated from human liberation: "It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice" (*Mt 12:7; cf. CCC 2173*).

910. Easter: the New Sabbath. After Christ's glorious Resurrection and the Pentecostal enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, a whole new dimension was added to the Sabbath. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote: "Those who walked in ancient customs came to a new hope, no longer sabbatizing, but living the Lord's Day, on which we came to live through him and his death." Thus, because "Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, the day after the Sabbath. Christians have always kept this day as the new Sabbath Sunday is the Easter celebration; it is a day when the presence of the risen Lord Jesus is celebrated, especially in the Eucharist" (CCC 2175).

911. Vatican II provides a similar description of this historical shift: "By a tradition handed down from the apostles, which took its origin from the very day of Christ's Resurrection, the Church celebrates the Paschal Mystery every seventh day, which is appropriately called the Lord's Day or Sunday" (SC 106). This means that for Christians, Sunday is also the coming of a new creation and of the final Sabbath-rest already foretold in the creation account, and prayed for in the liturgy of the Dead: "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them" (cf. CCC 2174).

912. Sunday Eucharist. In the centuries preceding Vatican II, the Lord's Day or Sunday rest became more and more identified with "going to Mass" and avoiding all "servile work." The fuller significance of the Lord's Day was gradually lost. With today's increasingly materialistic attitudes and secularization of culture, both these practices have come under greater and greater attack.

913. Vatican II sought a renewal of spirit in Sunday observance by stressing both its *re-creating* and *worship dimensions*. The Eucharist contributes substantially to both since it is essentially a *community act of worship*, precisely in the form of a *communal meal of fellowship in the Lord*. The Eucharist is a prayer of *thanksgiving* to God for life and for salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ in which the union between God and humankind is effectively signified. In calling us together around the Table of the Lord, it offers in a unique way a foretaste of the "rest" which completes God's work of creation and of redemption.

The Church and the Lord's Day

914. As members of the new People of God, the Church, we have the *duty to worship together as a community* so as to express our unity as one people with Christ as head (cf. 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:4-6), and to deepen our relationship with God.

On this day [Sunday] Christ's faithful are bound to come together in one place. They should listen to the word of God and take part in the Eucharist, thus calling to mind the Passion, Resurrection, and Glory of the Lord Jesus, and giving thanks to God who "gave us new birth; a birth unto hope which draws its life from the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pt 1:3). The Lord's Day is the original feast day, and it should be proposed and taught so that it may become in fact a day of joy and freedom from work (SC 106).

So in the Eucharistic Prayer IV we pray: "By your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this one bread and one cup into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise."

915. Therefore, in accordance with the Third Commandment, the Church decrees that Catholics should fulfill this obligation by actively participating in the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the New Law instituted by Christ.

On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass; they are to abstain from those labors and business concerns which impede the worship to be rendered to God, the joy which is proper to the Lord's Day, or the proper relaxation of mind and body (*CJC, Can. 1247*).

916. *PCP II* stated that “the importance of the Sunday Eucharist cannot be over-estimated,” and pleaded for “Spirit-filled and fraternally warm Eucharistic celebrations that foster a vibrant experience of dynamic fellowship in Christ and of encountering the Lord” (*PCP II 180*). Unfortunately, a considerable number of Filipino Catholics cannot regularly participate in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist because of lack of available priests, or distance from the place of celebration, and the like. In many dioceses, priestless Sunday services have been arranged as a stop-gap measure until sufficient priests are available for pastoral work in the areas.

917. Observance of the Lord's Day. Since Vatican II, the major efforts to raise the *quality* of Sunday worship have met with considerable success. Nevertheless, there has also been a *noticeable decline* in Sunday Church attendance, and in avoiding work that impedes the Sunday rest. Renewal of celebrating the Lord's Day through better understanding of the essential meaning of the Commandment and of its proper motivation, is an urgent priority for the Church. As John XXIII wrote:

God has a right to demand of man that he dedicate one day of the week to the proper and fitting worship of the eternal Godhead. . . freed from material preoccupations. In addition, man has the right and the need to periodic rest. . . to renew bodily strength, enjoy a decent measure of recreation, and to promote family unity by making possible more frequent and harmonious contacts among family members. Thus religion, morality and hygiene, all unite in proclaiming the law of periodic rest (*MM 249-50*).

918. For today's average Filipino Catholic, further clarification might be needed concerning the “rest” enjoined by the Third Commandment. Basically, the rest on the Lord's Day concerns *more than psycho-physical recreation*. It has to do with St. Augustine's famous words: “Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.” It means *a rest in God's presence*. In the Letter to the Hebrews we read: “whoever enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from His. Therefore let us strive to enter into that rest” (*Heb 4:10-11*). As Christians we have to learn more about the deeper, properly Christian, meaning of both our work and our recreation.

919. A proper Christian view of work and recreation can be sketched as an *ethics of grace*, opposing three particular modern attitudes: *heightened anxiety*, *hyper-activism*, and *success-orientation*. Being *over-anxious* against all eventualities often ends in a perverted, desperate, enslaving effort for self-made security and independence. When the rich old man in the Gospel thought he had everything, God said he was a fool. “That is the way it works with the man who grows rich for himself instead of growing rich in the sight of God” (*Lk 12:21*). Instead Christ taught: “Do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing . . . Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first his Kingship over you . . . and all these things will be given you besides” (*Mt 6:25-33*).

920. Being *active and industrious* is a highly praised virtue these days, yet some people can become so “task-oriented” that they lose all sense of proportion. Their own efforts become an “idol” for them. So, too, for those for whom *success* or achievement becomes their only goal. They tend to judge everything, even their friends and neighbors, uniquely in terms of usefulness and productivity.

921. All three attitudes, fostered to some extent by modern industrialization and technology, together form a sort of “*ideology of performance*.” They correct the Filipino “*Juan Tamad*” characterization

of laziness which unfortunately still plagues many of our poor and powerless. But they do so at a high price: introducing harsh, impersonal, self-centered attitudes, especially among the youth.

922. In contrast, *the Third Commandment prevents us from absolutizing our own achievements* by preserving the sense of God's gracious presence, a reality beyond all our powers, yet forming the basis for all our dealings with our fellow persons, our social conditions, and the ultimate meaning we discern in our lives.

INTEGRATION

923. The *doctrinal* ground for these first three commandments has already been brought out in detail: only God, as *Creator* Lord of all, is to be worshipped and adored. We must reverence the Name of God who liberated His people from the land of slavery, and sent His divine Son to redeem all from the enslavement of sin.

Thus, the *worship dimension is intrinsic to all three Commandments*, not just the Third. Our duty as human persons and as Christians is to worship our heavenly Father, the Lord our God, as members of His people, the Church, through sharing in the Eucharistic sacrifice of His own divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the power of their Holy Spirit, dwelling in and amongst us.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

924. *What are some common difficulties concerning Ten Commandments today?*

With today's unique stress on personal freedom:

- some wish to do away with Commandments since they do not focus on love, personal character, and values;
- others reduce commandments to "Bible stories" for children;
- others claim the commandments are no longer relevant in present-day "liberation-thrust" Philippines.

Common to all these objections is a startling ignorance of the Commandments themselves, and their function in human society.

925. *What is the basic function of the Ten Commandments?*

The Ten Commandments set out systematically what the love of God and love of neighbor demand of us.

The first three Commandments concern our duties towards God, the last seven our duties toward our neighbor.

926. *What is the value of the Ten Commandments for today?*

The Ten Commandments provide

- credible and durable moral norms for daily life, since they constitute the basic moral imperatives flowing from our common "Human Rights";
- the pattern for living according to Yahweh's "covenant" and Christ's double love Commandment; and

- an accepted basis for discussing moral matters with non-Christians. The Ten Commandments are “signposts toward authentic freedom.”

927. *What do the Preamble and the First Commandment proclaim?*

The Commandments are introduced with:

“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery.” This sounds the proper note for all the Commandments: they are truly *liberating!*

“I am the Lord your God. . . You shall not have other gods besides me.”

Thus, this First Commandment, grounded in Yahweh’s Exodus liberation of His Chosen People, commands that only the One, True God be worshipped, and that no created thing be adored.

928. *What is the importance of the First Commandment?*

This Commandment is “the first” not only in its position but because to know and love the One True God is the source and foundation for all the other Commandments and our whole moral life. Its function is:

- to liberate us from worshipping false gods (idolatry) and superstitious practices;
- to reconcile us with one another under the *one* God, our loving Father, and
- to manifest our duty of worship.

929. *Are statues and images used in prayer contrary to the First Commandment?*

Statues and images of Christ, Mary and the Saints are helps for authentic Christian prayer of *worship* of God, Christ himself, and of *veneration* of God’s Blessed. Religious statues and images have no power in themselves, but only help us to relate to Christ, Mary and the Saints.

Fundamentalists are fond of quoting Old Testament prescriptions against “graven images,” apparently forgetting that God’s own Son “became flesh and dwelt among us” (*Jn 1:14*).

930. *What does the Second Commandment order?*

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” commands reverence for God. This is shown primarily by:

- enjoining reverence for God’s “*NAME*” which reveals who God is. Jesus revealed God as “Father” by being and acting as the Only Son, who sends us the Holy Spirit;
- rejecting all speech against God Himself – blasphemy, cursing, false oaths, and
- refusing all use of God’s name to harm others (sorcery).

The basic rationale behind this Commandment is that all such use of speech destroys our covenant relationship with God and with one another.

Positively, the Commandment fosters joy-filled praise and admiration for the incredible love of God. Spontaneously we think of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. . . ” (*Lk 1:46*)

931. *What is commanded by the Third Commandment?*

“Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day” enjoins worship of the Lord and rest in imitation of the Creator’s rest on the 7th day.

932. *What are the Old Testament sources of this Third Commandment?*

There are *two* primary sources of the Sabbath rest:

- God’s creative rest in Genesis (*cf. Ex 20:11*) which was not the absence of work, but the essential goal of creating — communing with God;

- commemorating the Exodus liberation from slavery, and the need for social rest and recreation.

These two sources, which ground the two different emphases on worship and human social rest, must be balanced.

933. *What are the New Testament sources for this Commandment?*

The Church law reminds the faithful of their duty to worship together as a community on Sunday, the day of Christ's Resurrection, by actively participating in the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the New Law instituted by him.

934. *What does the "Sunday rest" mean?*

Sunday rest means a rest in God's presence, involving a freeing of the self from heightened anxiety, from hyperactivism, and from preoccupation with competition for success.

Chapter 17

Love One Another

“This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.”

(Jn 15:12)

“This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another.”

(Jn 13:35)

OPENING

935. The previous chapter showed how the first of the Two Great Commandments of love – *to love God with all one’s heart, soul and strength* – is developed by the first three of the Ten Commandments. This chapter, by focusing on the second – *love your neighbor as yourself* – introduces all the following chapters on the rest of the Ten Commandments. This chapter forms *a unity with the preceding one* because of the **inner connection between loving God and loving one’s neighbor**. For without this dynamic unity, neither love of God nor love of neighbor can be truly Christian, that is, Christ-like. “The commandment we have from him is this: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (*1 Jn 4:21*).

936. *Our salvation is worked out in our daily relationships with one another.* To insist on this, St. John wrote: “If anyone says, ‘my love is fixed on God’ but hates his brother, he is a liar” (*1 Jn 4:20*). St. Paul teaches the same truth: “Whatever other commandment there may be, all are summed up in this saying: ‘You shall love your neighbor as your-self’ ” (*Rom 13:9*). Both St. John and St. Paul are only repeating Christ’s own solemn teaching that we shall be judged solely according to whether or not we have shown love to those in need (*cf. Mt 25:31-46*).

937. This chapter explains Christian love of neighbor, therefore, by 1) sketching the inner unity between love of God and love of neighbor, then 2) exposing the meaning of Christ’s “command” to love others, 3) exemplified in Christ’s own ministry, which illumines 4) the reasons for such love, and finally 5) the practical ways of loving others through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and the practice of moral virtues.

CONTEXT

938. We Filipinos are very person-oriented; we naturally seek close personal relationships. Love comes “natural” to us. Most of us like to be known as someone who knows how to relate (*taong marunong makipagkapwa tao; taong marunong makisama*). Unfortunately, however, our *pakikipagkapwa tao* often remains restricted to those who are close to us, or those whom we respect and admire, or those from whom we have received (or hope to receive) some favor. Besides, in today’s Philippines, with its nationwide process of modernization and economic development, relationships are becoming more and more merely functional and impersonal. Traditional personal relationships of love and respect are frequently sacrificed at the altar of efficiency and economic gain.

939. This weakening of love relationships can only result in the loss of our genuine human worth and value, our *pagpapakatao*. For Christ’s “new command of love is the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world’s transformation” (*GS 38*). *PCP II* forcibly reminds us that “love, after all, is what enables us to know God and to be like Him, for God is love” (*PCP II 70; cf. 1 Jn 4:8*).

EXPOSITION

I. LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

940. Most Filipinos realize that there is an *inner connection between loving God and loving other people*. But very misleading conclusions are often drawn by different people. *First* are those who think they can fulfill the two great Love Commandments by prayer, devotions, and religious observance. Christ vehemently rejected the Pharisees’ practice of this position. The Bible clearly admonishes: “whoever loves God must also love his brother” (*1 Jn 4:21*). Yet many “pious” Christian Filipinos act as if their Church-going devotional piety takes care of loving both God and neighbor. They don’t understand that their *piety is authentically Christian only when it is united with loving service of others*.

941. *PCP II* explains how “expressing our faith through deeds of justice and love is particularly urgent in the Philippines where the exercise of faith often seems to be restricted to the realm of religious activities and private morality” (*PCP II 80*). Christ himself showed forth this unity in his single act of supreme love of the Father in which he saved us all by his blood. Those who *truly share Christ’s love for the Father, must share his and the Father’s love for their neighbors*.

942. Today a *second* type of rationalizing is becoming more common: *I love God by loving my neighbor*. Therefore, no more need for prayer or going to Church. But how can we truly love our neighbors if we ignore God who created them in His own image and likeness, redeemed them by Christ Jesus and dwells in them through the Holy Spirit? By separating our neighbors from God, we impoverish their true full nature and destiny as sons/daughters of the Father. Indeed we mortally weak-en our own power of loving if we do not call on God’s Spirit of love to strengthen and deepen our own efforts at unselfish interpersonal love. *The ground for our love for one another must be God* who “calls us to fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (*1 Cor 1:9*).

943. A *third* rather common misinterpretation sees love of another as *opposed* to love of God. “I know it is a sin, but I love him/her so much.” Yet we know in faith that this is an error. *All our true*,

authentic love is inspired by God. God is never in competition with another for our love. We realize that no one can possibly love us or our beloved as deeply as God does. In fact it is only when we consider God's love that we can check the hidden selfishness and purify our own loving. Christ is the light, the Spirit is the force, that directs all genuine love. "The way we came to understand love was that he laid down his life for us; we too must lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 Jn 3:16).

944. As Christians, then, we know, *first*, that our genuine human love is a participation in God's love. "Love consists in this, not that we have loved God, but that He has first loved us" (1 Jn 4:10). *Second*, through Christ and the Spirit, God is really present in both our neighbor's and our very own loving. "If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is brought to perfection in us" (1 Jn 4:12). Thus, our love for our neighbor contains within it a direct orientation to God. *Third*, our explicit love of God clearly brings out our deepest love of neighbor.

945. St. Augustine expresses this interaction well. Love of God is the First Commandment, but because we do not see God, we must first love our neighbor whom we do see. However, we do not stand still in love of neighbor, but get on the road to God together with our neighbor. By loving our neighbor and offering them help, we travel with them toward God. This is especially clear to the Christian, for by loving one's neighbor, one loves Christ, because all are members of Christ's Body. But in loving Christ, the Son of God, one also loves the Father. Hence *neighbor, the Son, and the Father – all are loved in the same love.*

946. Our human love has a strange characteristic: it is *always going beyond itself*, always aspiring to greater love. We come to realize that we can never put explicit limitations to our human loving – just so far but no more! It would not be *genuine love* any more. It is this radical and unconditional aspect within our human love of neighbor that reaches out to God Himself. This unity of genuine love of God and love of neighbor is seen in the light of *faith* which thus deepens and radicalizes our human fellowship. Concretely, this means that we can never separate our daily dealings with one another from our relationship with God.

947. It also shows up the error of "loving" another only as a means for loving God. For since God directly loves and has intrinsically blessed each and every person, no human person can ever be "*used*" as a "*means*" for anything, even for loving God. We can never make another person merely a stepping stone for our drawing closer to God. Rather it is precisely in loving recognition of the intrinsic value of other persons that our love shares in God's own love for them. Thus it is within a genuine, radical, unconditional love of persons who are loved for and in themselves, that true Christian love of God is exercised.

II. CHRIST'S COMMAND OF LOVE

948. What seems paradoxical about Christ's teaching to "love one another as I have loved you" is that it is given as a *command*! How can Jesus command "love" which is most personal and uniquely free? Yet this was clearly expressed in the early Church: "His commandment is this: we are to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as He commanded us" (1 Jn 3:23). This indicates that love here is grounded not on any natural powers of loving. Nor does it depend on the natural loveable quality of others. Rather, it rests solely on God who commands.

949. This "love command," therefore, is not about some spontaneous emotive reaction, an affective "liking." Rather, it refers to repeated *acts of will* responding to the Christian vocation of following Christ. As Christ's parable of the "Good Samaritan" shows, the command to love one's neighbor is fulfilled by active practical deeds of mercy and kindness, in concrete circumstances, toward specific

persons. Christian love goes far deeper than mere emotional affections, or vague humanitarian good feelings for all.

950. This Christian love command is *not* just one criterion, one principle of action, among many. Rather it constitutes the *central command of the sovereign Lord and his proclamation of the Kingdom*. The love commanded embraces not only the whole person of the doer, but the deeds of love and the neighbor as well. It thus not only fulfills the “duty” to love, but also constitutes the basic means to achieve true *justice*.

951. *The love command reveals the presence of God’s love within ours*. For fulfilling the command is possible only through the previous gratuitous gift of God’s love. “Christians, conformed to the likeness of that Son. . . receive ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ (*Rom 8:23*) by which they are able to fulfill the new law of love” (*GS 22*). The command to love is reasonable only because God has *already* offered the love He commands. *God’s loving presence in grace is first* – the love commandment comes after. It is only through the gift of God’s forgiving love in Christ that we can respond to the love commandment. “Love one another constantly from the heart. Your rebirth has come, not from a destructive but from an indestructible seed, through the living and enduring word of God” (*1 Pt 1: 22-23*).

952. Here the Christian *doctrine of Law* merges into the Christian *doctrine of Grace*. Obeying God’s Law is clearly the *means* toward the *goal* of sharing in God’s own life of Love, GRACE. Grace is primarily God’s loving PRESENCE, the Gift of the Spirit within us that justifies and sanctifies us (*cf. CCC 2003*). Hence it is both: 1) needed from the start to obey the love-commandment; and 2) the *goal* of our loving, namely, a deeper, fuller presence of God in us through the Holy Spirit. It is this GRACE-FILLED PRESENCE that heals us of our sinfulness and elevates us to being adopted sons/daughters of the Father (*cf. CCC 1900-99*).

953. *The love command creates a community of love called to responsible service of one another*. The love command applies to us not as isolated individuals, but as members of a Christian community. Individuals could never be commanded: “love your enemies” (*Mt 5:44*) independent of a community that loves and supports them in their witness to Christ. God’s reconciling love creates this community of love while calling it to bring about further reconciliation.

954. *PCP II* has stressed the *social demands* of the love command on the Christian community, “marked by a love of preference for the poor” (*PCP II 278, 435-37*). Loving one’s neighbor is now recognized as extending to the reform of social structures and institutions as well. Christian love can be authentic only if it awakens individuals to their social and communitarian responsibilities. Not just one “decision for Christ,” but all kinds of specific decisions and efforts are needed to foster the common good in the complexities of life today (*cf. CCC 1906-17*). As Vatican II asserted:

When we develop the earth. . . when we consciously take part in the life of social groups, we carry out the design of God. . . [and] simultaneously obey the great Christian commandment that we place ourselves at the service of our fellow human beings (*GS 57*).

955. *Christ’s command to love is also both a summons for us to repent and an offer of divine forgiveness*. For Jesus’ command to love is based solidly on the universal forgiving love of God “who wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*). This forgiving love of God in turn uncovers the depth of our own sinfulness – our profound inability to love unselfishly. Thus St. Paul teaches us to pray: “Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing. . . He likewise predestined us through Christ Jesus to be his adopted sons. . . In Christ and through his blood we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven” (*Eph 1:3-7*).

956. Conclusion. From the above we recognize the singular importance of Christ's love-commandment. In it Christ reveals how to be freed from our *past* enslavement to sin, sets us on our *present* way of life, which already shares in our *future* salvation. But the problem remains: *how do we live it?* This actually involves two problems: 1) *motivation*, and 2) *ways and means* of loving. As a "national" catechism, this chapter can only offer a basis for different particular responses which draw on specific Philippine contexts and local situations and events. We shall begin with what practical moral *motivation* could possibly be strong enough and sufficiently enduring to adequately support our loving efforts.

957. A number of different legitimate motivations are possible. *Some* Christians are morally motivated by sincere obedience to the Law, after the fashion of their Old Testament heritage, but now completely renewed by Christ and the Spirit. *Others* focus on their final goal and destiny as the basis for their moral action. A *third* group, following the basic approach of this Catechism, fixes on the following of Christ in daily life. This demands constant *discerning* of the "signs of the times" and the proper Christian response called for. Such discernment involves not only one's understanding, but all one's powers of intuition, imagination, feeling, and memory which produce the "*evaluative knowing*" discussed previously. Most of all, *an active prayer and sacramental life is needed.* For Filipino Christians, these multiple personal powers are informed, activated and constantly inspired anew by the Way and Call of Jesus of Nazareth, in his community, the Church (*cf. PCP II 34-36*).

III. THE EXAMPLE AND TEACHING OF CHRIST

958. We Filipinos naturally live and act in terms of personal relationships rather than abstract principles. As Christians, therefore, we are culturally prepared to see in Jesus Christ the source and norm of all our moral and spiritual aspirations. In Jesus' teaching, example, and very person, we Filipinos recognize God's love and transforming power. "God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and. . . he has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us" (*2 Cor 5:19*). Jesus calls us to *conversion*, a transformation of mind, will, and heart that alone makes possible the "following of Christ." *Three elements* are crucial in this process of conversion: 1) Jesus' own teaching and example; 2) the effect of Jesus on his disciples; and 3) the community formed by discipleship.

A. Jesus' Example and Teaching

959. In his total commitment to the Father's will, Jesus was completely dedicated in love for his people. St. Peter summarized Christ's whole life by describing "how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good works and healing all those who were in the grip of the devil, and God was with him" (*Acts 10:38*). Jesus himself inaugurated his mission with the solemn declaration: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, therefore He has anointed me. . . He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and release to prisoners" (*Lk 4:18*). He vindicated his role as Messiah according to the same norms: "The blind recover their sight, the cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and, the poor have the good news preached to them" (*Lk 7:22*). *Jesus* thus *defined his mission in terms of service to his people.*

960. In relating to others, Jesus had many close friends like his beloved disciple, Lazarus, Martha and Mary. But what typified Jesus in the minds of both his friends and foes was his constant *association with the outcasts* of his society. Such were Matthew, the tax collector (*cf. Lk 6:27 ff*);

Zacchaeus, the loan shark (*cf. Lk 19:1ff*); Mary Magdalene, the public sinner (*cf. Mk 16:9*); Bartimaeus, the blind beggar (*cf. Mk 10:46ff*); the ten lepers (*cf. Lk 17:11ff*); the paralytic at the pool (*cf. Jn 5:1ff*), and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (*cf. Jn 4:ff*). To one and all Christ showed himself as "the Good Shepherd" (*cf. Jn 10*) who manifested his personal love by concrete deeds of healing kindness.

961. Jesus' Teaching. Beyond performing actual deeds of physical and spiritual healing of specific individuals, Christ *taught* the multitudes the good news of the Father's redeeming love for all. He called them to respond to their ancient Law: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (*Mt 19:19*). But Jesus removed all limits to those whom we are called to love, even commanding "Love your enemies" (*Mt 5:44*). He upturned the accepted social priorities in his parable of the "Good Samaritan" (*cf. Lk 10:29-37*). To his chosen Twelve, the night before he died, Christ gave his own "new" commandment: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn 15:12*). Finally, in depicting the Last Judgment, Christ identified himself with the least of his brethren (*cf. Mt 25*). In loving even the "least person," we are loving Christ.

962. *PCP II* stresses how Jesus lived out this teaching and calls each of us, his disciples, to share in his Paschal Mystery (*PCP II 55f, 83-86*). While being nailed to the Cross, Jesus prayed for his executioners: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (*Lk 23:34*). In his death on the Cross, Christ offered his life's blood, "the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven" (*Consecration, Euch. Prayer*).

B. Effect on His Disciples

963. The conversion which Jesus worked in his disciples had two clearly marked effects. The *first* was ***their desire for an ever more intense and total union with Christ*** their Lord. Enlightened by the Spirit, the disciples' whole lives were completely focused on Christ, their loving merciful Savior. "The life I now live is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still have my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (*Gal 2:20*).

964. The *second* was ***their desire to spread the Good News*** to others. Their burning love for the Risen Christ inspired them to bend every effort to bring others to Christ. Christ's missionary command, "Go, and make disciples of all nations," (*Mt 28:19*) expresses the inner force experienced by everyone touched by Christ's love. "This is the Christ we proclaim while we admonish all men and teach them in full measure of wisdom, hoping to make every man complete in Christ. For this I work and struggle, impelled by that energy of his which is so powerful a force within me" (*Col 1:28-29*).

C. Community Built

965. One social result of being drawn to Christ was the natural desire of the disciples ***to seek out the company of fellow disciples of Christ***, thus creating the first ***Christian communities***. The Christian centuries have proven the absolute need for the Church. It not only affords the necessary context and support for the individual members' following of Christ. The Church also constitutes the intrinsic "communitarian" dimension of Christian life itself. We develop truly "Christian" moral and spiritual lives in the process of learning ***"how to become Church."*** In the Christian community, through the power of Christ's Spirit of love, our minds, wills, and imaginations are gradually drawn from their self-centeredness to become more attentive to others, and especially to "the Other" — Christ himself. We thus have a part in the other's ongoing process of conversion and transformation that is inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, our own response to God's universal call to friendship

with Him and with one another is supported and sustained by the other members of our Christian community.

IV. REASONS FOR LOVING OTHERS

966. To conclude this section on motivation for loving others, it is worthwhile to bring together the basic truths of our Christian faith that ground Christ's command of love. The *first* truth is surely the fact that *all "others,"* like oneself, *are created in the image and likeness of God.* They thereby have inalienable dignity and value that nothing on earth can take from them. Our neighbors are "sacraments" to us of God our Creator.

Secondly, Christ died for all and wishes to dwell within all through his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love. Thus our neighbors are triply blessed: created, redeemed and sanctified. These blessings, of course, refer not to anything they have done, but rather to what in faith we believe God has done for them, whether visible in their acts or not.

967. *Thirdly,* the missions of Son and Spirit, sent by the Father, reveal in the sharpest way possible, *the Father's great love for each and everyone.* We are called to love others because they are so loved by our heavenly Father "that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him may not die but may have eternal life" (*Jn 3:16*).

Fourthly, the Father's totally gratuitous love not only further dignifies all "others," but also *touches each of us personally,* so we are called to imitate this love. "If God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (*1 Jn 4:11*). *Finally, we are to love others because it is commanded by Christ our Lord* "from whom all good things come" (*EP III*).

968. Practical "Filipino" Motivation. But the problem of motivating us Filipinos to love one another in daily life cannot be solved simply by quoting general truths of our Christian Faith. Most of our actions are dominated by our own temperament and personality, our family and friends, and our concrete social and economic situation. Without denying our free moral responsibility, this influence has always been recognized by Catholic teaching. It is expressed by the principle: "Grace builds on nature." This means that God bestows His special gifts of grace on and through our concrete human natures with which He created us.

969. *PCP II* teaches this lesson in emphasizing that our catechesis must be "*authentically Filipino,*" through a process of guided and encouraged inculturation (*cf. PCP II 160-62, 202-11*). The great truths of the Catholic Faith will motivate Filipinos to practical love of others only if they are presented, and personally grasped, within our Filipino system of cultural values and religious beliefs. For example, Filipinos instinctively recognize that "*Ang pakikiramay (pagkahabag) sa kasawian ng iba ay isang pagkakawang-gawa.*" These natural Filipino qualities of *sympathy* and *compassion* can offer practical "Filipino" motivation to love others. At the same time, they can be strengthened and deepened by *grace.*

V. WAYS AND MEANS OF LOVING OTHERS

970. The second major problem mentioned in no. 956 concerns the practical implementation of Christ's love commandment. By *what ways and means* are we to "love one another as Christ loves us?" One thing is clear: love is to be shown in deeds, not just words. "I ask you, how can God's love survive in a man who has enough of this world's goods, yet closes his heart to his brother when he sees him in need? Children, let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it." (*1 Jn 3:17-*

18). Christian moral tradition has presented at least *two major ways* of exercising neighborly love: the *first* is the traditional *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*, and the *second* is the more general treatment of *moral virtues*.

A. Works of Mercy

971. We insist today on our *personal unity as embodied spirits*. Thus the *division* between corporal and spiritual works of mercy *may seem quite artificial*. Both sets of merciful works touch the neighbor's whole person, body and soul. Nevertheless, there is some practical advantage in keeping the traditional line-up, if only to alert us to the different skills and means required to minister effectively to the different needs of others. But far more important is the urgent *need to expand both these sets of merciful works* into the broader social and political spheres of action. This is especially true in view of our Philippine context in which the thrust for justice and identification with the poor have become bywords in responding to the concrete needs of so many Filipinos. In our works of mercy as Christians in these broader areas, we may well be called to go beyond even social justice. "When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, 'We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty'" (*Lk 17:10*).

972. Corporal Works of Mercy. The corporal works of mercy are drawn from St. Matthew's account of the Last Judgment (*cf. Mt 25:35f; 42f*). They are usually listed as follows: *to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit those in prison, visit the sick, and bury the dead* (drawn from the body's dignity as temple of the Holy Spirit, [*cf. 1 Cor 34:16*]). The basic *source* of these merciful acts is not our own good intentions or energies, but rather **God's grace**. "God, is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us, he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin. — By this favor you were saved" (*Eph 2: 4-5*). Merciful grace itself is doubly pertinent to all of us: it manifests both our common solidarity in sin, and our consequent common need for healing and redemption.

973. The needed expansion today of these corporal works of mercy into the social and political areas has already been sketched by the *Old Testament prophets*.

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked, and not turning your back on your own (*Is 58:6-8*).

974. This litany of loving acts of mercy responds astonishingly to the present needs of so many poor and deprived Filipinos today — despite all the good-willed efforts of government and Church. It rudely calls us to face the shocking fact that in our era of economic development and growing industrialization, ever greater numbers of Filipino homeless, sick and starving are languishing in the Provinces, or stalking the streets in the squatter areas of our growing cities. Thus *PCP II* insistently calls every Catholic Filipino to conversion to a "social transformation" in following "Jesus-in-Mission" (*cf. PCP II 271-82*).

975. Spiritual Works of Mercy. These are listed as follows: *to instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive all injuries, and pray for the living and the dead*. The Scriptural basis for these works is varied. Those works dealing with instruction and correction are grounded not only in Christ's own teaching on fraternal correction (*cf. Mt 18:15-18*). A major source is the advice in the New Testament epistles.

- "My brothers, if someone is detected in sin, you who live by the spirit should gently set him right" (*Gal 6:1*).

- “Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, *instruct* and *admonish* one another” (*Col 3:16*).
“Correct those who are confused” (*Jude 23*).
- The image of counsel and comfort is found in Isaiah: “As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you” (*Is 66:13*). And joy is promised to the apostles by Christ before his entry into his Passion: “but I shall see you again; then your hearts will rejoice with a joy no one can take from you” (*Jn 16:22*).

976. Helping others to “bear wrongs patiently,” is apparently what St. Peter intended in writing:

When a man can suffer injustice and endure hardship through his awareness of God’s presence, this is the work of grace in him. . . If you do wrong and get beaten for it, what credit can you claim? But if you put up with suffering for doing what is right, this is acceptable in God’s eyes. It was for this you were called, since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps. (*1 Pt 2:19-21*).

St. Paul likewise counsels: “Help carry one another’s burdens; in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (*Gal 6:2*).

977. Regarding *forgiveness*, the Gospels recount the repeated teaching of Christ, including his admonition to Peter to forgive “seventy times seven” (*Mt 18: 22*). But forgiveness is best seen within a general group of virtues: “Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you” (*Col 3:12f*). Finally, we are admonished to “pray constantly and attentively for all” (*Eph 6:18*), and “dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and petitions full of gratitude” (*Phil 4:6*).

B. Christian Virtues

978. A more contemporary pursuit of loving “others” is to *focus on Christian virtues*. Traditionally, *natural* virtues, especially the four cardinal virtues of *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance* (*cf. CCC 1805-9*), were distinguished from *virtues infused* by the Holy Spirit, (especially the three theological virtues of *faith, hope* and *charity* [*cf. CCC 1812-29*], but also including the moral virtues). Today’s more holistic approach stresses that God is at once both creatively sustaining our “natural” human virtues and supernaturally redeeming them in Grace. This integrative approach also grounds the intrinsic unity between loving God and loving neighbor. For it shows both God’s Spirit constantly working in and through our “natural” love of others, and our graced loving of God as exercised in our free moral relationships with one another.

979. *Virtue* in moral life refers to *any developed capacity of mind or will to accomplish moral good* (*cf. CCC 1803*). It is usually explained in terms of *habits* – learned dispositions to act in a particular way. But a key aspect of virtue is expressed in the Gospel account of Jesus curing the woman afflicted with hemorrhages: “Jesus [was] conscious at once that healing *power* had gone out from him” (*Mk 5:30*). Virtue then implies a certain force or power. In Christian life, *virtue is linked directly with the action of the Holy Spirit within us*, including His ‘Gifts’ and ‘Fruits’(*cf. CCC 1830-32*).

980. Power today is often considered a very *ambiguous* reality. *First*, because it has many forms (*exploitative, manipulative, competitive, nutritive, and integrative*). *Second*, because power can be

used in many ways: sometimes as simple persuasion, at other times as inspiring personal commitments, often as forceful coercion. Some defend power since even the poor and the weak possess powers such as bonding and believing. But the current “fashion” is to emphasize the *powerlessness* of Christ who “emptied himself” of power, “humbled himself, obediently accepting even death on a cross” (*Phil 2:7-8*). Yet praise for powerlessness can itself be a hidden form of manipulation and exploitation.

981. Basically we all need power to live and operate as persons in community. Power is the *capacity* and *ability* both to *act*, and to *receive*. “Act” stresses our nature as agents or doers; “receive” shows we are *attentive* persons, capable of listening, watching, waiting, seeing, imagining and contemplating. In the past, this “attentiveness” has often been neglected. Today it is recognized as a constitutive part of our moral life, a moral skill we all need in order to love the others as equals through accurate assessment of their true reality.

982. *Virtues* are conceived today as *definite personal attitudes responding to particular spheres of values*. Among the many approaches toward developing Christian morality in terms of virtues, three seem particularly pertinent to the Filipino. The *first* consists in rehabilitating and renewing the traditional virtues. Thus *justice* has come into new prominence through the world-wide fight against oppression, exploitation, and injustice in all its many forms. A major part of the Church’s moral teaching since Vatican II has been concerned with “justice in the world.”

PCP II presents *justice* in a multi-faceted approach: as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel (*cf. PCP II 65, 239*); as witnessing to Christ and central to the Church’s social apostolate and ecumenical thrust (*cf. PCP II Decrees, Arts. 20-21, 26, 34*), as central dimension to the Kingdom (*cf. PCP II 261*), and thus the object of a “Passion” in apostolic life and mission (*cf. PCP II 478-82*); as effected only by grace (*cf. PCP II 499*); as social concern for the laity (*cf. PCP II 442f*);

983. Today the theological virtues of *faith, hope and love are integrated* more dynamically *with the life of grace*, linking the Christians’ spiritual life with their moral activities. The virtue of hope, in particular, has been developed by the “*eschatological virtues*” of vigilance, serenity and joy.

984. The *second* approach views Christian morality in terms of a specific Christ-centered *vision*, developed in terms of *character* and *virtues*, and *grounded in the Gospel story*. This approach highlights the extraordinary importance of our *imagination* in conceiving and motivating moral action. Moreover, the Christian vision at times can turn upside down our “natural,” “reasonable” attitudes and values. For example, there is no “equal rights” justice in the Cross of Jesus, no happiness in the ordinary sense in accepting suffering, no practical utility in trusting God whom we cannot see or comprehend. Yet, our Christian Faith holds out the promise that in all these things we will experience the world *as it really is*, if we follow Christ’s way. But this works only if we don’t reduce the Christian mystery to something we can handle on our own.

985. The *third* approach, the most widespread today, focuses on the life cycle of the person, aligning the development of moral life with the process of bodily and psychological development in society. Despite the danger of psychologism – reducing moral and spiritual realities to psychological categories – this approach helps us greatly in understanding the *process* of “*maturing in faith*.” Virtues can be ordered and interrelated in a variety of ways that offer real insight into how we, as Filipino Christians, gradually grow into fuller, more authentic freedom and following of Christ. One scheme begins with basic *trust*, comprising the sub-virtues of *assurance, receptivity, fidelity, hope and passion*, and then sketches the process of growth through the stages of *humility, self-acceptance, responsibility* and *self-commitment*. Finally these virtues naturally flower into *friendship, concern* and *contemplation*.

986. The value of these various approaches to Christian morality through virtue is *not* that they offer a perfect, automatic system of “ways and means” to love others. Rather, their value lies in the fact that *they help bring us closer to what is involved in our everyday acts of concrete loving service.* Rightly understood, they offer real insight into the complex workings of our minds, wills, imaginations and hearts – all within the grace-sin tension so vividly described by St. Paul. “The desire to do right is there, but not the power. . . Who can free me from this body under the power of death? All praise to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Rom 7:18, 24f*).

INTEGRATION

987. The relationship between the *moral* content of this chapter and *doctrine* and *worship* may be outlined by making use of another popular contemporary methodology. This consists in inter-relating certain basic *Christian* spiritual “*senses*” with: 1) specific “*images of God,*” and 2) with life-views involving *moral activity.* This can be presented in schematic form as follows.

<i>Christian Sense</i>	<i>Image of God</i>	<i>Moral Attitude</i>
Radical dependence	as Creator	Trust
Gratitude	as Provident	Reasoning and will strengthened
Repentance	as Judge	Self-criticism and amendment
Obligation/duty	as Ordered and Sustainer	Accountability
Direction/Purpose	as Final End	Ordering acts to spiritual and moral ends

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

988. *How do people misrepresent the link between love of God and love of neighbor?*

People misunderstand the relationship between love of God and love of neighbor when they:

- think prayers and devotions are enough, without any deeds of service; or
- claim they love God by helping their neighbor, without any need for formal prayer or worship; or
- place their love for a particular person above the love of God.

Authentic Christian love understands how both loves are essential to each other:

- to claim to love God without loving one’s neighbor makes one a liar;
- to try to love one’s neighbor without any love of God is to reduce an adopted son/daughter of God to a mere passing, transient worldly figure without destiny.

989. *How are the two loves intertwined in our loving action?*

Our love of God and love of neighbor are intertwined:

- our both loves actually share in the same divine love, God’s own love, the Holy Spirit;

- in loving our neighbor we love someone in whom God is present, through the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit; and
- in loving God we activate the deepest reason for loving our neighbors, namely, that God loves and is present in them.

990. *What does love as Christ's "command" teach us?*

Love as a command of Christ shows that it is:

- not based on any natural capacity of ours; it is not primarily an "affective feeling" but an act of the will to do good to others;
- not one principle of action among many, but *the* central norm for all action;
- the means to reveal God's love already present among us in *grace*;
- aimed at creating a community of persons acting in responsible loving service, and
- constitutes Christ's summons to us to repent, and his offer of divine forgiveness.

991. *How do we Filipino Christians see Jesus Christ as source and norm of our morality?*

Naturally focused on personal relationships, Filipino Christians see the source and norm of their morality in:

- Jesus' own *example*: he went about doing good;
- Jesus' *teaching*: his own commandment of love;
- the disciples' intense desire to be united with Jesus and spread his Good News even at the cost of their lives;
- the creation of the early Christian community in Jesus' name and Spirit;

992. *How do these elements effect the process of our Christian conversion?*

Three elements seem crucial in Christian conversion:

- the example and teaching of Jesus,
- the personal desire to be totally united to Christ and to draw others to him, and
- the incorporation into a supporting community of disciples of Christ, the Church.

993. *What basic Christian truths motivate love of others?*

Our fellow human persons are:

- *created* in the image and likeness of God;
- *loved* by the *Father* so much that He sent
- His only begotten *Son* to *redeem* them, and
- the *Holy Spirit* to *dwell* within and *sanctify* them.

Thus the Triune God shares His divine love with us so as to ground our loving them.

994. *How do we love our neighbor?*

Love is shown in deeds, and the deeds of love of neighbor are traditionally:

- the *corporal works of mercy*: feed; give drink, clothe, shelter, visit, bury;
- the *spiritual works of mercy*: instruct, admonish, counsel, comfort, forgive, bear patiently. . .
- the *cardinal virtues*: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

A contemporary approach focuses on nurturing Christian character and virtues, according to the natural "development cycle" toward human maturity.

Chapter 18

Respect God's Gift: Life

The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

(Gn 2:7)

“I came that they might have life, and have it to the full.”

(Jn 10:10)

OPENING

995. *Human life is God's greatest gift to us.* God made us alive in His own image and likeness. Our lives, then, are sacred. Not only is human life the most marvelous of God's creations, but God further dignified human life by sending His divine Son to become man and share our human existence. “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love” (*Jn 1:14*). ***Respect and reverence for human life***, then, ***is a core human and Christian virtue***. We discover the true dignity yet fragility of our lives as human in learning to respect everyone's life, and to truly care for one another. To foster and care for our own life and the lives of others is a moral responsibility, entrusted to us by God, which we share with all other persons.

996. This chapter is the first of four that develop Christ's command to LOVE OTHERS explained in the preceding chapter (*Chap. 17*). Here we affirm that the most fundamental way we love others is to respect their human life. Life itself is *not an absolute value* as Christ plainly showed by his teaching on giving up one's life out of love for one's friends (*cf. Jn 15:13*), as he himself did on the Cross. But it is the necessary *condition* for actively loving others as well as their receiving our love. To follow Christ as his disciples, then, means concretely doing all in our power to *defend, maintain, and promote the dignity and value of human life*.

997. Respect for life actually forms the basis for *two commandments*. The Fourth Commandment, ***“Honor your father and your mother,”*** treats of the origin of our human lives. Parents are procreators of human life, acting as God's free, loving agents in bringing to birth new human life. The Fifth Commandment, ***“You shall not kill!”*** aims to protect the value of human life by rejecting any threat to it that may arise in the exercise of our God-given stewardship on earth. Both the *responsible transmission of human life*, and the protection and promotion of the *quality of human life*, are basic ways of “loving others.” They manifest maturity in the Christian Faith in showing that we recognize that, under God, we are one human family.

CONTEXT

998. As Filipinos we are noted for our love of family. Our lives, everything we are and have, are due ultimately to our birth, upbringing and support of our families. It is from our families that we first learn respect for human life. But in a pastoral letter a few years ago, our Bishops noted a strange paradox. “We Filipinos value life. We respect life. But if we indeed have such a high regard for life, then why is it treated so cheaply among us? Why is it not given the value and respect that we say we put on it as a people? . . . How is it that in a nation that prides itself in its rich Christian heritage, life is [so] cheap?” (“*Let There Be Life*” 1984). And if it is true that “the Filipino family plays a pivotal role in the life of the individual and society – its influence is pervasive” (*cf. NCDP 12*), why are infidelities and “broken homes” becoming more and more common, especially among the urban, higher income Catholic families?

999. The Bishops’ letter goes on to enumerate specific instances of a shocking lack of respect for life: the assassinations, “salvagings” and “liquidations” by government and NPA forces, and the politically motivated killings of all kinds. These, according to the Bishops, “are ‘a given fact’ that we as Christians cannot accept. It is not right that people be killed simply because their political beliefs differ from ours.” (*Let There Be Life*)

1000. More recently, *PCP II* has sketched an overall view of our socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts in “Our World – The Philippines; Lights and Shadows” (*cf. PCP II, Part I, 8-33*). But as specifically regarding human life, besides the violence of killings, kidnappings, hostage-taking, and torture that have become commonplace in the lives of so many Filipinos, we also experience at first hand the world-wide attacks on human life. On the individual personal level there is abortion, suicide, mercy killing (euthanasia), drugs, and scandal. On the societal level, the ecology crisis, economic and political exploitation and the arms race, endanger the quality of countless human lives. All these factors stress the urgent need for far greater commitment to the respect for human life enjoined by the 4th and 5th Commandments.

EXPOSITION

1001. This chapter is concerned with loving others by fostering the *quality of human life*, since, for human persons, *life and love are inseparable*. “Man cannot live without love” (*RH 10*). For Filipinos, to love one another involves the primary obligation of fostering communion within one’s own family and between families, as well as respecting the life of every human person, regardless of creed, color, or sex. These are the moral attitudes and virtues taken up by the Fourth and Fifth Commandments which are the matter for this Chapter.

I. THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

1002. “Honor your father and your mother” is the usual way of expressing the Fourth Commandment (*cf. Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16*). For most Christian Filipinos, this Commandment is “taken for granted,” as it were, since Filipino culture so stresses their abiding *utang na loob* to their parents. Yet a number of clarifications are needed to properly understand the true meaning of the Commandment.

1003. The *first* point is that its original meaning referred more to the obligation of grown children, now adults, to take care of their aged parents.

My son, take care of your father when he is old;
grieve him not as long as he lives.
Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him;
revile him not in the fullness of your strength (*Sir 3:12f*).

In time the meaning of the Commandment was legitimately expanded to include young children's duties toward their parents.

1004. *Second*, this original focus on taking care of aged parents highlights two meaningful points that were present in the Third Commandment.

a) Human life and parents are not to be evaluated in terms of productivity. Aged, unproductive parents — like Sunday rest and worship — have their own fundamental personal value and worth which must be respected. Hopefully, the drive for increased modern technology and industrialization will not be allowed to erode the traditional Filipino respect for the aged. Of what ultimate value are all the “things” money can buy if as persons we are all destined to be snubbed, ignored and left unsupported in our old age?

b) Also like worship and rest on the Lord's Day, this respect for aged parents is a necessary virtue not just for the individual family, but for the community as well. Respect for the aged is creative of, and actively builds up, the Christian community. Only recently have some “industrialized nations” begun to awaken to the depth of human value of the aged for the life of the community.

1005. *Third*, both parents are to receive equal respect. The OT books of *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* have “Honor your father and mother” (*Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16*), whereas *Leviticus* has “Revere your mother and father” (*Lv 19:3*), showing a balance which unfortunately has not always been kept in the ensuing ages. What is significant is that the 4th Commandment is not based on any either patriarchal or matriarchal patterns of society. Rather, it reflects the primal force of human love from which new human life is continually generated, according to God's divine plan of sharing His creativity. The *context* for this Commandment, as for all the others, is *the Exodus event*, expressed in the preamble: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (*Ex 20:2*). The 4th Commandment, then, liberates and frees us from enslavement to false norms for human worth and responsibility.

1006. *Fourth*, despite its obvious correspondence with Filipino cultural values, the Fourth Commandment is often *not* the “easiest” to keep. In practical Filipino life as actually experienced, ***three obstacles to honoring father and mother*** are encountered. The *first* is the sad fact that ***not all fathers and mothers act as loving parents***. Though child abuse is [hopefully] still rare, *child neglect* in one form or another is not. How many Filipino children have been gravely disturbed psychologically, or even ruined, by traumatic experiences suffered from parental action or neglect? Some parents impose on their children unreasonable burdens that come close to enslavement. More often *poverty* and *destitution* prevent even self-sacrificing Filipino parents from providing their children with even the basic necessities of life.

1007. A *second* obstacle arises from the particular stages of the children's and youth's natural growth and development which demand a certain “distancing” from parents. These periods of “growing up” are painful and potentially destructive, unless handled well with parental patience and understanding.

1008. A *third* obstacle is the generation gap that cultural history has always created between parents and children, but which has become much more intense in contemporary times because of the speed and extent of cultural change. Today many traditional Filipino attitudes, values and institutions are questioned so critically by the youth that ordinary, common sense respect for authority is often gravely weakened. Again, this obstacle demands enduring and loving patience on the part of both parents and children, especially through the “difficult years” of growing up. Such patience is admirably fostered by an active prayer life and openness to Christ’s Spirit.

1009. In a sense, these three common obstacles to honoring father and mother can be viewed as a positive force in helping us learn how to respond authentically to Christ’s command to “love others.” For they force us to look more carefully into the true meaning and values fostered by the Fourth Commandment, and its proper motivation, instead of simply assuming that it merely articulates a Filipino social custom followed in bygone eras.

A. The Family: Originating Context of Life

1010. God wills all persons to share in His divine life, to become God’s people. The family is the basic means for carrying out this plan, since it is “a community of persons, serving life through the procreation and education of offspring, participating in the development of society, and sharing in the mission of the Church” (*PCP II 575*). From our cultural family-centeredness, we Filipinos easily accept the family as the privileged place where new human life is generated, welcomed, and cared for. ***Filipinos have traditionally recognized children as a gift from God.*** They experience the birth of a baby into the world as a special moment when God’s creative power is so intimately united with their own human parental procreative powers.

1011. Moreover, this cooperative ***work of God and the parents does not stop at birth***, but continues all through the years of nurturing and educating the child (*cf. CCC 2201-6*). St. Paul indicates the depth relationship between family and God when he writes: “That is why I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name” (*Eph 3:14f*).

1012. The **nature** of the family can be considered under three titles: *Covenant relationship, domestic Church, and foundation for civil society*. First, as ***covenant relationship***, most Christian Filipinos connect the family with God creating Adam and Eve through love, and calling them to mutual love, since He made them in the image and likeness of Himself who is absolute and unending Love. They thus realize in a general way that man and woman are created for one another, to unite and become one flesh in a communion of love that grounds their marriage and family life. But perhaps many do not reflect, amidst all the difficulties of family life today, how the family union is *modeled on the covenant God made with his people* when He promised them unswerving fidelity and love.

1013. This idea of our family as covenant simply means to bring out this truth: there’s more to the daily acts, talk, and events in family life than first meets the eye. ***The “more” is love***, and a love that goes all the way back to God as its ultimate source. It is a “covenant” love because ***it creates and sustains the basic community we need to become and survive as persons***. Perhaps we recognize this most clearly in times of crisis when we face the threat of family break-up. Without our families, who are we? What is the use of anything we do or think or strive for, if we cannot share it with our loved ones? Deep down, even with all the frustrations, and ups and downs of family life, it is within our families that we come to some personal experience of God’s love and fidelity for each of us. Our family is the “covenant” where we truly belong and find our “home.”

1014. *Second, the Christian family*, beyond being this covenant relationship, “constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason, too, it can and should be called ‘the *domestic Church*’ ” (FC 21; cf. CCC 2204). For the family is not only where “new citizens of human society are born, [but] by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism, these are made children of God, thus perpetuating the People of God through the centuries. Thus the family is, so to speak, the *domestic Church*” (LG 11). PCP II calls the family “*the Church in the home*,” “*the basic unit of Christian life*,” “*the first school of discipleship*” (PCP II Decrees, Art. 48; PCP II Doc. 421, 576). It is where we come to exercise the daily Christian virtues of generous self-giving in active charity, in mutual forgiveness and obedience, in prayer and thanksgiving.

1015. Actually, *our Christian families*, like the Church itself, in some real way *share in the Communion of Persons and Love of the Blessed Trinity* (cf. CCC 2205). For in the mutual sharing of thoughts, affections, and in all their ups and downs, Christian families are actively creative like the *Father*. In offering prayers and sacrifices to God, they share in Jesus the Incarnate *Son’s* own prayer and redemptive sacrifice. Finally, Christian families form a community of interpersonal love by being inspired and strengthened by the indwelling *Holy Spirit*.

1016. If this sounds too “high” and unrealistic, it may be because of the way the Blessed Trinity has been taught as utterly “mysterious.” But such is not the way of the Gospels nor of early Christian tradition when Father, Son, and Spirit were constantly on the lips of Christians in prayer. Vatican II renews this tradition in proposing much the same image of the Christian family:

1017. Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection and sharing of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church, will manifest to all the Savior’s living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church, by the mutual love and generous fruitfulness of the spouses, by their unity and fidelity, and by the loving way in which all members of the family work together (GS 48).

1018. Thus, by its very nature as an “intimate community of life and love,” and “inspired and sustained by the new commandment of love,” the Christian family “is placed at the service of the building up of the Kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the Church” (FC 50, 64, 49).

1019. Finally, the family is also the “*first and vital cell of society*” (CCC 2207). Through its service to life by birth and the education of its youth in social virtues, the family grounds and continually nourishes the existence and development of society itself (cf. FC 42). The experience of communion and sharing which is characteristic of the family’s daily life represents its first and fundamental contribution to society (cf. FC 43). At a time when even Philippine society is becoming more depersonalized, the family constitutes an *irreplaceable school* in developing, guarding and transmitting the social virtues and values of respect, dialogue, generous service, justice and love.

1020. But its role goes beyond procreation and education to embrace, in association with other families, many social and political activities for the common good (cf. FC 44). The family must “not live closed in on itself, but [must] remain open to the community, moved by a sense of justice and concern for others, as well as by a consciousness of its responsibility towards the whole society” (FC 64).

B. Family Relationships

1021. *Filial respect for parents* is demanded of children and adults by the Fourth Commandment. This is the common teaching of the Bible. The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament advises:

“Observe, my son, your father’s bidding, and reject not your mother’s teaching” (*Pr 6:20*). In the Letter to the Ephesians we read: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for that is what is expected of you. ‘Honor your father and mother’ is the first Commandment to carry a promise with it, ‘that it may go well with you, and that you may have a long life ~~death~~’” (*Eph 6:1-3*)

1022. It is just such an attitude of filial reverence that Jesus showed Mary and Joseph in his hidden life when “he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them . . . Jesus progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” (*Lk 2:51-52*). But it is important to understand that obedience here cannot mean the automatic, unquestioning submissiveness that some Filipino parents seem to hold up as the Christian ideal for their children (*cf. NCDP 20-23*). Often such “blind obedience” shows more servile fear than authentic filial respect. True obedience arises, rather, from a willingness to listen to what is being asked, and to respond in a fully personal, conscientious manner (*cf. CCC 2216*).

1023. The Commandment’s to “honor,” then, means *showing proper gratitude, affection, respect, obedience and care* to parents (*cf. CCC 2214f*). In the complex system of typical Filipino family relationships, involving *ate, kuya, lola* and *lolo*, etc. this proper respect is extended to all who have contributed to one’s care, upbringing, and education. **The act of honoring**, far from being merely a convention of social custom, is *basically a religious act*, whose deep roots and true nature are revealed in Sacred Scripture. In the Old Testament, extreme punishment was decreed for transgressors: “Whoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death” (*Ex 21:17*). “A blasphemer is he who despises his father; accursed of his Creator, he who angers his mother” (*Sir 3:16*).

1024. This indicates how closely one’s procreators are linked with the Creator. **In honoring our parents we honor God himself.** This is expressed positively in the rewards promised to those who obey the Commandment. “For the Lord sets a father in honor over his children; a mother’s authority He confirms over her sons. He who honors his father atones for sins; he stores up riches who reveres his mother” (*Sir 3:2-3; cf. CCC 2218*).

1025. Parental respect and responsibility for children. Care and respect for their children as persons in their own right are enjoined by the Fourth Commandment. Thus we read in the Pauline letters: “Fathers, do not nag your children lest they lose heart” (*Col 3:21*). “Fathers, do not anger your children, bring them up with the training and instruction befitting the Lord” (*Eph 6:4*). In his teaching, Christ himself offered a very positive picture of human parents:

What father among you will give his son a snake if he asks for a fish, or hand him a scorpion if he asks for an egg? If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (*Lk 11:11-13*).

But it is especially in Christ’s portrait of the merciful, forgiving father in his parable of the “Prodigal Son” (*cf. Lk 15:11-32*), that we understand the full Christian meaning of parenthood.

1026. Duties of Christian parents. Thus the Church teaches that parents have the duty to provide so far as they can for their children’s needs, guiding them in faith and morals, and creating for them an environment for personal growth (*cf. CCC 2221-31*). In infancy and childhood, parents provide for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of their children. As they grow older, the parents are called to promote their growing autonomy and independence. Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, both secular and religious.

1027. Conclusion. Noted for our love of family and child-centeredness, we Filipino Christians would seem to have little difficulty with this Commandment. Yet, *problems* do arise. *First*, parents and children alike must *learn how to communicate* with one another openly and deeply, in a loving, forgiving, mutually supporting atmosphere that is honest and truthful. *Secondly*, parents as well as children must *be willing to admit errors*, since: a) no one is perfect or sinless; b) loving forgiveness is what Christ asks of all; and c) truth and a proper sense of right and wrong are the only bases for genuine forgiveness and interpersonal relationships. *Thirdly*, the whole family must *look beyond itself* and strive to offer Christian witness of the Gospel values of justice and protection of human rights to the wider Philippine community of town, province, region, and nation.

II. THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

1028. “You shall not kill” (*Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17*) *forbids direct attacks on human life and physical integrity*. It thus protects God’s gift of life and promotes practical care and respect for the life and dignity of all persons. We Filipinos generally know the biblical background of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel (*cf. Gn 4:8*). Even more relevant is God’s solemn warning in his covenant with Noah that we will be held accountable for human life. Those who shed the blood of another, by others their blood shall be shed; for in the image of God we have been made (*cf. Gn 9:5-6; CCC 2260*). This indicates that *the basis for the extraordinary value of human life is GOD*. He is the Lord and Giver of life, in whom “we live and move and have our being” (*Acts 17:28*).

1029. All human life has its basic value and dignity, therefore, because we are all created in God’s image and likeness. *Added dignity and value* are given by God’s Son becoming man in Jesus Christ, for his mission of salvation in the service of life. As “Word of life” (*1 Jn 1:1*), “light of life” (*Jn 8:12*) and “bread of life” (*cf. Jn 6:35, 51ff*), Jesus came so that we “might have life, and have it to the full” (*Jn 10:10*). He sent us the Holy Spirit who “gives life” (*2 Cor 3:6*). At the climax of his life, Christ “in fulfillment of [the Father’s] will, gave himself up to death; but by rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life” (*EP IV*). Through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, Christ has become for us “the resurrection and the life” (*Jn 11:25*).

1030. In his teaching, Jesus both perfected and intensified the respect commanded for human life. He *perfected* the respect enjoined by linking it directly with the great, ‘Love Command.’ “You have heard the commandment ‘You shall love your countryman and hate your enemy.’ My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father, for his sun rises on the bad and the good, he rains on the just and the unjust” (*Mt 5:43-45*). By his command to root out all hatred and to love even one’s enemies, in imitation of God’s own manner of acting, Jesus touched the fundamental question of life or death. “Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that eternal life abides in no murderer’s heart” (*1 Jn 3:15*).

1031. Jesus *intensified* the commandment by forbidding even anger. “You have heard the commandment imposed on your forefathers, ‘You shall not commit murder; every murderer shall be liable to judgement. What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with his brother will be liable to judgment’” (*Mt 5:21-22*). Thus did Jesus go to the root of killing, and reveal anger of the heart as the real menace. St. James repeated this teaching, as relevant today as it was for the early Christians. “Where do conflicts and disputes among you originate? Is it not your inner cravings that make war within your members? What you desire you do not obtain, and so you resort to murder. You envy and you cannot acquire, so you quarrel and fight” (*Jas 4:1-2*).

1032. The *basic value* behind both the Fifth Commandment and Jesus' teaching is that ***God alone is the ultimate Lord and Master of life.*** Since life comes from and is sustained by God, it belongs to Him. Therefore, we are stewards of life who must respect and care for our own lives and the lives of others. Hence it is not simply a question of "not killing," but of protecting, promoting, and enhancing the quality of life. "God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception" (*GS 51*).

1033. Vatican II emphasized respect for the quality of human life.

This Council lays stress on respect for the human person: everyone must consider every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all the life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus (*GS 27; cf. Lk 16:19-31*).

This includes respecting the life and human dignity of those with whom we differ in terms of political, social, economic or religious matters (*cf. GS cf. 28*). But as our Philippine bishops remind us, "to our continuing shame and sorrow as a people," the lives and dignity of such are often accounted so cheap in today's Philippines. As disciples of Christ we must always be concerned for truth and goodness. "But we must distinguish between the error which must be rejected and the person in error, who never loses his dignity as a person" (*GS 28*).

1034. The Vatican Council also makes a summary of offenses against life itself, such as *murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, and willful suicide* (*cf. CCC 2268-83*). In addition, it enumerates violations against the integrity of the human person, such as *mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures*. Also listed are offenses against human dignity such as *subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, prostitution*. Even *degrading working conditions* can seriously threaten the quality of human life when men and women are treated as mere tools for profit rather than as free and responsible persons. The Council judges that "all these and the like are criminal. They poison human society and debase the perpetrators more than the victims, and constitute a supreme dishonor to the Creator" (*GS 27*).

1035. In numerous pastoral letters the CBCP has alerted Filipino Catholics through the years of many grave dangers in our country which imperil human life and dignity.* The letters themselves are quite outstanding for their clarity and precision, and extremely pertinent to the concrete conditions among our people, such as the frequent kidnap-pings. But the problem of effectively communicating them to the great majority of Filipino Catholics, together with an appropriate and ongoing follow-up, remains yet to be solved. Much of the potential value of such instructive letters is undoubtedly lost for lack of adequate catechesis.

Particular Offenses Against Life

1036. Perhaps the most widespread abuse in our country against physical well-being are the common "vices" of *alcohol* and *drug abuse*, and to a less intensive degree, *smoking*. Medical studies have proven the serious injury in terms of physical harm and addiction, and psychological and social difficulties and dependence, which these vices can cause. The quality of life – and sometimes life itself – of both the users and their family and close friends suffers greatly. More culpable still are drug dealers and pushers who, for the sake of money, care nothing about drawing others, especially innocent youth, into addictive dependency that ruins their very lives (*cf. PCP II 381*).

1037. *Abortion*, or the deliberate ejection of a non-viable fetus from the mother's womb, is strictly prohibited by the 5th Commandment as the killing of an innocent human being (*cf. PCP II 585; CCC 2270-75*). Yet, this moral position must be related to the social and economic situation that most often is at the root of the problem. Many women who in anguish, depression and fear, succumbed to having an abortion, felt they simply had no choice in the matter – they simply felt they had to do it. Consequently, the equally urgent moral obligation is to help indigent mothers, expand adoption services, improve health care agencies for needy women and children, and the like.

1038. The principle that direct killing of the innocent is always wrong holds also for *mercy killing* or *euthanasia* – doing away with the handicapped and the terminally ill (*cf. CCC 2276-79*). No one has absolute power over life and death but God. We are stewards of the gift of life granted us by God. Therefore we must take *ordinary means* to preserve life such as medicines, treatments and operations that can be obtained and used without excessive sacrifice or expense, and when there is reasonable hope of benefit for the patient.

1039. However, when there is no real hope for the patient's genuine benefit, there is no moral obligation to prolong life artificially by the use of various drugs and machines. In fact, using *extraordinary means* to keep comatose or terminally ill patients artificially alive seems clearly to lack objective moral validity, especially in a society where the majority of the population do not enjoy even adequate elementary health care.

1040. The terrible, unalterable act of taking of one's own life, *suicide*, expresses a total loss of will to survive that results from extreme depression and despair (*cf. CCC 2280-83*). Rather than an act of deliberate malice, suicide most often seems to be some sort of psychological 'short circuit' which involves running away from a life that has become 'impossible,' and from a God who seems completely absent. As in the case of abortion, much of the blame for this terrible loss falls on society in general, and especially those more directly involved with the distressed person. As Christians we must do all in our power to help those tempted to take their own lives, to recognize God's personal love for them, and to continue to "hope in the Lord."

1041. The practice of *capital punishment* has a long history dating from biblical times. But in recent times the practice of executing those convicted of especially serious crimes has been questioned.

The *three traditional reasons* for punishing criminals seem to be lacking in the case of execution. *First* is *retribution*, or the vindication of the rights of the victim. Capital punishment, rather than vindicating rights, seems to satisfy a spirit of vengeance or revenge, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence. *Second, reform* or rehabilitation of the criminal. Obviously capital punishment, by taking the criminal's life, destroys any chance for reform, and moreover rejects any hope that God's grace could effect such reform. *Third, deterrence* or discouraging others from committing the same crime. Surprisingly enough, there is no conclusive proof that capital punishment actually deters others from serious crime. What unfortunately can be shown is the number of hardened criminals who, after being released from prison, again commit serious crimes against the community.

The Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines (CBCP) in 1979 supported abolishing the Death Penalty, and this stand against capital punishment was repeated in 1991 as "in consonance with the spirit of the Gospel and of Jesus Christ." However the CCC does "not exclude the death penalty in cases of extreme gravity" (CCC 2266). Surely the Christian ideal is to be able to abolish the death penalty in view of respect for human life. But actual societal conditions in some countries may not be such as to make this ideal feasible. Nevertheless, it remains a serious Christian task to work precisely toward changing social conditions so that the abolition of capital punishment becomes an actual possibility.

1042. Finally, the *traditional moral doctrine on “just war”* proposed criteria which amount to little more than common moral sense. War is judged moral when *all* the following conditions are present: a) a just cause; b) necessary to protect human rights and values equal to life; c) for a good proportionate to human costs of war; d) with reasonable chance for success; e) declared by legitimate authority; f) only as the last resort (*cf. CCC 2307-17*). It is extremely doubtful if these criteria were ever actually used by those considering entering into war. In any case, this doctrine has undergone radical re-evaluation since World War II with its introduction of nuclear war.

1043. John XXIII, in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963), wrote: “It is irrational to believe that war is still an apt means of vindicating violated rights.” What is clear is the *moral imperative to work for PEACE*. *PCP II* asserted that “Peace cannot be equated with the absence of war, nor with a certain balance of power. It is a harmony in the human heart and in the social order brought about by justice, requiring respect for human dignity and human rights, the promotion of the common good by one and all, and their constant practice of solidarity.” Significantly, *PCP II* adds, quoting Vatican II, “Peace is likewise the fruit of love which goes beyond what justice can provide” (*GS 78; cf. PCP II 307*).

1044. *PCP II* links peace in our country with “a strategy of non-violence,” since our socio-economic and political situation is partly one of violence and counter-violence. This requires “solidarity of spirit as well as action” as was manifested to an extraordinary degree in the active non-violence of ‘People Power’ in the EDSA Revolution of 1986 (*cf. PCP II 309*). Moreover, since “the concrete demands of the common good are constantly changing as time goes on, peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly” (*GS 78*). Yet, in the final analysis, the real peace we seek is the Lord’s because “It is he who is our peace” (*Eph 2:14; cf. PCP II 307*).

INTEGRATION

1045. Our Catholic faith has much to offer in this area of respect for human life. Perhaps never before in the history of human kind has the quality of human life been so quickly and radically advanced as in our era. Yet never, too, has the continuing disparity between the “*have’s*” and the “*have-not’s*” been so scandalous. The advances of science and technology have alleviated so much human sickness, misery, suffering, and brutal toil, and brought so many good things to so many people. But, at the same time, they have unfortunately often obscured some equally basic human life values. In the Philippines today, we can assert with assuredness that the Christian Faith provides an irreplaceable contribution toward fostering the quality of Filipino life.

1046. *Doctrinally*, by grounding the dignity of human life in God the Creator/Redeemer – Father, Risen Incarnate Son and Holy Spirit – our Faith safeguards reverence for parents and for human life in an unshakeable way. No power or institution on earth can take away the human person’s inalienable dignity. Despite all the continuing violence, torture, suffering, and injustice in the world, and even within our own country, believing in God our loving Creator stands as the abiding source of the Filipinos’ unquenchable human thirst for freedom and justice.

1047. Moreover, this thirst is nourished, proclaimed and celebrated in the *Christian liturgy* in a twofold manner. *First*, by bringing us to public, communal acknowledgement of our own sinfulness and failures, the liturgy cuts through all ideological condemnation of “others” as the sole enemy of human life. *Second*, in praying:

“Father, all life comes from you, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit” (*EP III*), we are brought inescapably before the Infinite Love that is the unique Source of our very lives – and of all human life.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1048. *What is the most basic way we “love one another”?*

We love one another by respecting the gift of each other’s God-given life, and truly caring for one another by working toward improving the quality of human life.

1049. *How do parents respect human life?*

Parents are procreators of human life, acting as God’s free loving agents through responsible transmission of human life and promotion of the quality of life.

1050. *How does the Fourth Commandment foster human life?*

“Honor your father and your mother” enjoins that basic filial respect for parents which is necessary for the good of both family and community.

1051. *How are parents to be given such respect?*

Filial respect for parents is to be given:

- not because of their actual competence, productivity, or natural virtues, but simply on their status as parents;
- not just for the good of the individual family, but as necessary for the community itself;
- equally to both father and mother.

1052. *What are common obstacles to keeping this Commandment?*

Some common obstacles are:

- parents who neglect or abuse their children;
- the children’s and youth’s “growing up” periods that challenge parental patience and understanding;
- the “generation gap” between parents and offspring that is intensified by the increased speed and extent of modern cultural and technological changes.

Yet these obstacles can also be a positive force for going beyond mere customary ways of acting, to bring out the full Christian meaning and values fostered by the Commandment.

1053. *How do parents themselves foster life within their families?*

The Fourth Commandment enjoins parents to care for and respect their children as persons in their own right. They have the duty to provide for the needs of their children as far as they can, especially for their proper education as Christians.

1054. *How does the Christian Faith view the family?*

The family as the originating context of human life can be viewed as:

- a “Covenant relationship,” established by God in creation, bringing out the “more” of family love;
- the domestic Church, which through Baptism shares in God’s own Trinitarian Communion of Love, and serves as the school of Christian discipleship and virtue;

- the first and vital cell of society, grounding and nourishing the social virtues necessary for society itself.

1055. *What is meant by the family as “covenant”?*

As **covenant**, the family is a community of love: of parents and children, of brothers and sisters with one another, of relatives and other members of the household. All are rooted in the natural bonds of flesh and blood and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

1056. *How is the family both the “domestic Church” and “first cell of society”?*

As the **“domestic Church”** the family both reveals and realizes the communion in Christ and the Spirit that is proper to the Church.

As the **“first and vital cell of society”** the family is the place of origin and most effective means for humanizing and personalizing the members of society.

1057. *How does the Fifth Commandment foster human life?*

“You shall not kill,” by prohibiting direct attacks on human life and physical integrity, protects its intrinsic dignity and quality. God alone is the ultimate Lord and Master of life.

1058. *How are human life, integrity and dignity attacked?*

Direct attacks **on life** include *murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, physical torture, hostage-taking, drugs, and willful suicide.*

Attacks **against integrity** include *mutilation, physical and mental torture, and undue psychological pressures,* while **human dignity** is attacked by *sub-human living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation and prostitution.*

The questions of capital punishment and just war are topics of ongoing moral reflection within and without the Church.

1059. *What are the most common abuses against physical well-being?*

The most common abuses against physical well-being are *alcoholism, drug addiction* and, to a lesser degree, *smoking.*

1060. *How did Jesus perfect the Fifth Commandment?*

Jesus perfected respect for human life by:

- linking it directly with its ideal, *love*, even with love for our enemies;
- interiorizing and intensifying it by forbidding even anger of the heart, which is the inner source of violence against one’s neighbor.

Chapter 19

Respecting Human Sexuality

God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. . . . God looked at everything He had made and he found it very good.”

(Gn 1:27f,31)

The Lord God said: “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.”

(Gn 2:18)

Jesus replied: “At the beginning the Creator made them male and female and declared, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ ”

(Mt 19:4-5)

OPENING

1061. The first question that a new mother asks after the birth of her child is: “Is it a boy or a girl?” Human life is marked essentially by sexuality. It is fitting, then, that immediately after the Commandment on respect for life, there should come that which fosters proper respect for our sexuality – even before treating the social imperatives concerning possessions and truthful communication. The Sixth and Ninth Commandments treat of this respect for human sexuality in two areas: a) in the relationships between men and women according to their social status (single or married), and b) in regard to interior lustful dispositions of the heart.

1062. Human sexuality is *God’s gift* to us. We are created according to God’s image precisely as “male or female.” It is not in lonely solitude but rather in relating to others through our sexual natures that we share in God’s life of love and creativity. Despite all misuses and misunderstandings, our human sexuality is *something good!* It is a God-given power for love and generativity that we must learn to gradually integrate ever more fully within our total selves. To live and associate with others in interpersonal relationships, respecting their sexuality and proper bodily expressions, is the vocation of every disciple of Christ. This chapter will take up the specific Christian view of the basic nature and value of human sexuality and of sex, together with some of their related problems, in treating of the 6th and 9th Commandments.

CONTEXT

1063. Throughout the Philippines today, the Christian Filipino is caught up in a whirlwind of changing patterns of man-woman relationships, and of the understanding of sexuality itself. The traditional chaste and modest “Maria Clara” ideal of Filipino womanhood has quietly faded away. Highly praised in past eras for being “*mayumi, mahinhin, malinis ang puso at maganda,*” today’s Filipina must face challenges posed by new career possibilities, new demands of family and community, and new economic and social situations. The direct influence of Christian faith on the sexual mores of Filipino daily life today is diluted by the growing impact of mass media: TV, the cinema, and magazines/comic books with their blatant exploitation of sex.

The Filipino family is under tremendous moral strain. Economic pressures are breaking up family solidarity. Political trends tend to foster artificial means of birth-control, including such immoral means as sterilization and abortion. Social enticements from today’s consumerist society promote the “good life” glorifying pleasure and sexual promiscuity.

1064. Together with all these changes, *PCP II* denounces the persistence of the “*double-standard*” of morality in Filipino sexual attitudes and relationships (*PCP II* 582). From a Christian perspective this is extremely harmful for both men and women. While the Filipina is expected to be a virgin before marriage, and faithful within marriage, the Filipino male youth is constantly bombarded by the opposite “*macho*” image of what it means to be “*tunay na lalaki.*” The socially accepted “*querida system*” is likewise castigated by the Document of the Plenary Council (*cf. PCP II* 587-89).

1065. In reaction, the current “*women’s liberation*” movement aims to free women from this state of injustice and subjugation which denies their true dignity. But some feminists fall into the trap of seeking equality by demanding the same licentious sexual irresponsibility as the “*macho*” male. This, of course, leads to just another form of women’s enslavement and manipulation, with social consequences clearly manifest in the rampant pornography and prostitution.

EXPOSITION

I. THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

1066. The Sixth Commandment, “**You shall not commit adultery**” (*Ex 20:14; Dt 5:17*), seems simple and direct. It forbids married persons from entering into sexual union with someone other than their spouse. But for the ancient Israelites, this Commandment had more *social* significance than *sexual*. Its aim was to **protect the family**, the absolutely necessary basis for society. The family and marriage were viewed directly in terms of the two Genesis creation narratives. God created man male and female so that man would not be alone (*cf. Gn 2:18*), and to multiply and fill the earth (*cf. Gn 1:27f*).

Sexuality, therefore, is for both *human completeness* and *procreation*. Thus while focusing on the specific relationship of marriage, the sixth commandment actually touches upon the very nature of human sexuality, the entire range of man-woman relationships, and our common vocation to love and communion (*cf. CCC 2331*).

1067. As such, the Sixth Commandment has been plagued through history by cultural conditions and prejudices that have obscured its true intent. *First*, there was the ancient *patriarchal distortion* of marriage wherein the wife was treated as “property” of the husband. The “*double-standard*” of morality from which Philippine society suffers today was clearly evidenced in the ancient law: a married woman was charged with adultery for having sexual relations with *any* man other than her husband, but a married man only when he had sexual intercourse with another *married* woman.

1068. *Second*, throughout history human sexuality has attracted more than its share of *taboos*, restrictive customs and laws. Licentious practice in society on one side frequently gave rise on the other to a quite *unbiblical hostility* among the “pious” toward sexuality and sex. *Third*, these two abusive trends tended to develop into a *moralistic, legalistic rigidity* regarding sexuality.

Actually, all these attitudes run counter to the truly liberating character of the Sixth Commandment which is grounded on the authentic nature of our human sexuality, and of marriage as the model of complete human communion. But just what is this “authentic nature of human sexuality” from a Christian point of view?

A. Christian View of Human Sexuality

1069. The first thing to be made clear to every Christian Filipino is the difference between sexuality in general, and the sex act. The *NCDP* makes this point very well.

Sexuality is today understood in a more complete and integral sense than in the past when the focus was almost completely on the sex act. Today *sexuality signifies an essential dimension of the whole person*, by which he/she enters into relationship with others. It thus touches every aspect of personal life, and has to be developed by all men and women just as life itself must be (*NCDP 287; cf. CCC 2332*).

1070. This wider meaning of sexuality is reaffirmed by the Sacred Congregation for Education: “Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love. Therefore it is an integral part of the development of the personality” (*EGHL 4*). “It is, in fact, from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress toward maturity and insertion into society” (*DCSE 1*).

1071. The *basis* for this wider understanding of *human sexuality* is, of course, **creation**. Man and woman constitute two modes of “imaging” God and they fully accomplish such a vocation not only as single persons, but also as couples, which are communities of love (*cf. EGHL 26*).

The *first consequence* of this fundamental truth of creation is that “in creating the human race ‘male and female’ *God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity*, endowing them with the inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person” (*FC 22; cf. CCC 2335*).

PCP II forcefully opposed “all forms of discrimination and exploitation of women” and emphasized “the growing awareness of their dignity and equality with men” (*PCP II 387*). For the Filipino Christian, then, this basic equality of man and woman grounded on God’s creation is the solid ground for an authentically Christian view of sexuality and of marriage.

1072. But this equality as persons does not entail any unisex sameness that denies all distinctiveness of the sexes. On the contrary, the *second consequence* of God’s creative action is that by their distinctive sexuality, man and woman are both *different* and *complementary*, not only in their physical and biological being, but reaching down to the depth of their moral and spiritual being (*cf. CCC 2333*).

This complementarity is the ground for a *third consequence*: man and woman are *called to mutual gift of self*, to a *reciprocity* (cf. EGHL 24). By and through our sexuality we are called to live in a positive complementary relationship with one another. “The partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons” (GS 12), and constitutes the basic form of our co-humanity.

1073. Concretely, then, *our sexuality is a relational power* through which we can show understanding, warmth, openness and compassion to others. The *fourth consequence*, then, is simply that *sexuality is for love* – either married or celibate love (cf. NCDP 287). Sexuality orients every man and woman toward interpersonal dialogue, and contributes to their integral maturation by opening them up to the gift of self in love.

Sexuality, oriented, elevated and integrated by love, acquires truly human quality. Prepared by biological and psychological development, it grows harmoniously and is achieved in the full sense only with the realization of affective maturity, which manifests itself in unselfish love and in the total gift of self’ (EGHL 6).

1074. John Paul II develops this in *Familiaris Consortio* by relating creation directly with love. For love is the key to: 1) God, the personal loving Creator, 2) His creating act through love, and 3) the human persons created in His likeness precisely as man and woman *for love*.

God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image *through love*, and at the same time *for love*. . . . God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion (FC 11).

1075. But the affective life proper to each sex expresses itself in ways characteristic of the different states in life. They are: 1) *conjugal union* for married persons; 2) *consecrated celibacy* chosen freely for the sake of the Kingdom of God; 3) Christian *youths* before choosing marriage or celibacy; and 4) *single blessedness* chosen by lay faithful (cf. EGHL 33). But in every case, *each one of us*, man or woman, *is called to a life of love* which channels the gift of our sexuality and its energies into positive, supporting relationships. Such relationships build up a wholesome community wherein all persons are called and helped to express their personal uniqueness through their sexuality, integrated within their very persons.

B. Biblical Perspective

1076. This Christian view of sexuality and marriage is supported and developed by the biblical narrative of God’s relationship with Israel, His “Chosen People,” through salvation history. First there was the simple innocence of original creation when “the man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame” (Gn 2:25). But sin entered and brought disorder into the couple’s relationship to God and to each other. The sexual relationship, while remaining fundamentally good, often became a divisive force. Instead of feeling joy at the unique difference of the other sex, the partners experienced the selfish desire of possession (cf. Gn 3:16). From a natural power of outward self-giving in genuine love, the human sex drive became open to the temptation of turning back on itself in self-centered hedonism.

1077. Despite the Old Testament’s strong rejection of God as a sexual being, Yahweh’s covenant with Israel was surprisingly portrayed in a marriage image. The stress was on the strength, depth, and fidelity of *Yahweh’s love* for His Chosen People: “I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and justice, in love and mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity and you shall know the Lord”

(*Hos 2: 21f*). God, moreover, forgave Israel when she proved to be an unfaithful spouse and promised to redeem her:

For he who has become your husband is your Maker; his name is the Lord of hosts The Lord calls you back, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, a wife married in youth and then cast off For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great tenderness I will take you back . . . with enduring love I take pity on you, says the Lord, your redeemer (*Is 54:5-8*).

1078. In the New Testament Jesus bypassed all the detailed prescriptions and prohibitions of the Torah regarding sexuality and marriage. He focused rather on their essential dignity and value as created by God. The Pharisees and scribes tried to trap Jesus into rejecting the Mosaic law which commanded the stoning of an adulteress. But Jesus broke through their hypocritical moralistic legalism. In an exercise of authentic divine merciful love, Jesus brought the “elders” to a consciousness of their own sinfulness, while at the same time drawing the woman away from her sin (*cf. Jn 7:53-8:11*).

Again, when questioned by the Pharisees about divorce, Jesus reiterated the Creator’s original meaning of sexuality. “ ‘A man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body’ (*Gn 2:24*). Thus they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined” (*Mt 19:3-6*).

1079. St. Paul used this same text (*Gn 2:24*) to teach that *Christian marriage takes on a new meaning. It symbolizes the intimate love relationship between Christ and the Church.* “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved his Church. He gave himself up for her, . . . This is a great foreshadowing; I mean that it refers to Christ and the Church. In any case, each one should love his wife as himself, the wife for her part showing respect for her husband” (*Eph 5:25, 32f*). Paul himself boasted to the Corinthians: “I have given you in marriage to one husband, presenting you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (*2 Cor 11:2*).

This Pauline image of Christian marriage rests firmly on the conviction that our bodies are members of Christ.

Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. . . . You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you – the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own. You have been purchased, and at a price. So, glorify God in your body” (*1 Cor 6:17-20*).

C. Redeemed Sexuality

1080. In paying the price of our redemption, Jesus Christ wished most of all to restore human relationships to what God intended before original sin distorted and corrupted them. This restoration pertains not only to our relationship with God, but especially to the mutual interrelationships between men and women within the community and in family life. *By word and example, Jesus revealed the true nature of our human sexuality and of marriage.* More importantly, through his own *Resurrection*, Jesus *redeemed our whole persons*, with all our instincts, powers and relationships, *including our sexuality.*

1081. Incorporated by Baptism into the Risen Christ, the Christian knows that his or her body, too, has been vivified and purified by the Spirit Jesus communicates. Faith in the mystery of the Risen Christ, which, through his Spirit, actualizes and prolongs in the faithful the Paschal Mystery, uncovers in the believer the vocation to the resurrection of the flesh, already begun thanks to the Spirit, who dwells in the just as pledge and seed of the total and definitive resurrection” (*EGHL 43*).

1082. The family and the nation were part of Israel's covenant with Yahweh. So for Christians today, the marriage relationship between husband and wife, and the total area of human interpersonal relationships between man and woman, are touched by the redeeming grace of Christ in his Spirit, and form an intrinsic part of the Kingdom of God.

1083. Vatican II brings out this redemptive force of Christ's love:

Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is directed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church. Thus the spouses are effectively led to God and are helped and strengthened in their lofty role as fathers and mothers (*GS 48*).

1084. *Sexuality and marriage*, then, are not just biological facts for Christians. Rather, renewed by God's love through Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit, they are a real personal power and a perduring state *for love*, a love which develops, heals, and creates. "In the light of the mystery of Christ, sexuality appears to us as a vocation to realize that love which the Holy Spirit instills in the hearts of the redeemed" (*EGHL 30*).

1085. *The Sixth Commandment*, then, when viewed through the eyes of faith in the Risen Christ, far from restricting us, actually *liberates from two "tyrannies."* The *first* is the *tyranny of puritanical attitudes and misguided taboos* regarding sexuality. The *second* is the *tyranny of "indecenty"* promoted by the so-called "new morality" that exalts casual sex while rejecting commitment and moral obligation. In rejecting fornication, and the forced violation of sexual integrity in rape, the Commandment is clearly protecting the personal dignity of both men and women, and recalling their social responsibility against scandalizing the young (*cf. CCC 2353, 2356*).

Breaking through both tyrannies, the Christian view of sexuality and marriage presents the dignity and authentic freedom of single and married life that is truly fulfilling, desirable, and fruitful.

1086. For the married, the commandment enjoins a *free and responsible fidelity to a conjugal union that is life-long* (*cf. CCC 2364f*). This means, *first*, a joining of a man and a woman in the fullness of their personal lives – a real, complete communion at all levels. *Secondly*, it means a permanent, enduring bond that is "for keeps." That is why it is right that the total giving of self in sexual intercourse be reserved for this state of marriage as a permanent covenantal bond of personal love. For only within such a communion does sexual union take on its full meaning and become truly human and creative.

1087. The high human costs of *adultery* and of *divorce* are often covered up by phrases like "having an affair." In reality, adultery gravely injures the life and character of the individual married persons involved, as well as of the community. Commitments are broken, suspicion and anger aroused, personal trust betrayed, relationships destroyed, children threatened and the whole social fabric of the community weakened (*cf. CCC 2380-86*).

1088. Despite all sexist propaganda in the mass media, real human freedom and love are not found in "free sex." In rejecting polygamy, incest, and uncommitted free unions ("living-in"), the Commandment guides us away from such false, ruinous attempts to fulfill our yearning for true love and communion (*cf. CCC 2387-90*). But Christ is ever mindful of our human frailty, and the many temptations constantly bombarding us. His grace is ever present. God's fidelity to the Covenant holds firm and with it our human covenants; in them alone will we find our true human freedom and love.

II. THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

1089. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife” (*Ex 20:17*) completes the Sixth Commandment by going to the interior root and source of disorders of the flesh: *covetousness of the heart*. “From the mind stem evil designs — murder, adulterous conduct, fornication, stealing, false witness, blasphemy. These are the things that make a man impure” (*Mt 15:19f*).

It was such covetousness that the cunning serpent played upon in tempting Eve: “you will be like gods” (*Gn 3:5*), and resulting in their loss of innocence. It was Cain’s envy that led to his resentment and murder of his brother Abel (*cf. Gn 4:4-8*). David’s lust for Bathsheba (*cf. 2 Sm 11*) led the chosen king of Judah into evil plotting and murder.

1090. Such has been the pattern down through the ages: human covetousness has been the radical source of sin that alienates us from God and our fellowmen. Three traditional forms are cited in St. John’s classic text. “All that is in the world, lust of the flesh, enticements for the eye, pride of life, is not from the Father” (*1 Jn 2:16; cf. CCC 2514*).

1091. The Ninth Commandment, of course, also rejects the effects of this covetousness, and the systematized covetousness featured in so much of today’s Philippine consumerist, sexist society. It calls us to acknowledge our deep lust for possessions and power, and to venture in an “Exodus” away from the “fleshpots of Egypt,” the house of slavery, toward the liberation of respect and solidarity with one another. We can pray King David’s psalm of repentance: “A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me” (*Ps 51:12*).

1092. Christ perfected this teaching in his Sermon on the Mount. “You have heard the commandment, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ What I say to you is: anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts” (*Mt 5:27f*). To show how serious he was in this, Jesus added: “If your right eye is your trouble, gouge it out and throw it away” (*Mt 5:29*). Likewise St. Paul exhorted his converts: “Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires and that lust which is idolatry” (*Col 3:5*). To the Ephesians he wrote: “Make no mistake about this: no fornicator, no unclean or lustful person – in effect an idolater – has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God” (*Eph 5:5*).

A. The Virtue of Chastity

1093. Positively, *what is called for is purity of heart*, or the virtue of *chastity*. All Christians have the vocation to chastity (*cf. CCC 2348*). Chastity here refers to the wholesome *integration of one’s sexuality within one’s person*. This creates in us an inner harmony and unity of body and spirit that grounds our integrity as persons and in our self-giving in love (*cf. CCC 2337-47*). As St. Paul wrote to his beloved Thessalonians: “It is God’s will that you grow in holiness: that you abstain from immorality, each of you guarding his member in sanctity and honor, not in passionate desire as do the Gentiles who know not God” (*1 Thes 4:3-5*).

1094. Admittedly, chastity is a difficult virtue, but it surely is not just a series of negative don’ts which some pretend it to be. John Paul II wrote:

In the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather, it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization (*FC 33*).

1095. Chastity deals with our external acts but precisely as expressing the inner “yearnings of our heart.” At the root, purity of heart is a positive power *for* authentic human freedom and love, not a repressive denial of the true value and exercise of our sexuality. This is proclaimed in the *Sixth*

Beatitude, “Blessed are the pure-hearted, for they shall see God” (*Mt 5:8*). The “pure of heart” designates those who direct their hearts, bodies and mind toward God, in *charity*, or purity of heart (*cf. 2 Tim 2:22*); in *chastity*, or purity of body (*cf. Col 3:5*); and in *orthodoxy*, or purity of faith (*cf. 2 Tim 2:26*). St. Paul sums this up: “what we are aiming at is. . . love that springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith” (*1 Tim 1:5*).

1096. Despite its bad press and reputation today, even among many Christian Filipinos, chastity, or purity of heart, exercises key functions in the daily, maturing process of following Christ. *Chastity puts order into our sexual drives*, much as telling the truth orders our speech. This means, that it *channels our sexual energies* toward a positive, affirmative service of love and fostering of life. Toward that goal, chastity *seeks the limits* in our behavior within which our passions can be directed so that they give rise to joy and peace, not pain, guilt and heartbreak. Thus, purity of heart, demands that we develop a certain *self-control* to meet the temptations and challenges presented by community daily life. Such self-control constitutes a good part of what it means to grow up toward becoming mature, responsible men and women and disciples of Jesus Christ.

1097. *Chastity* or purity of heart, then, can be a *major, decisive factor in Christian “growing up.”* The self-control developed by a chaste heart frees us from our selfish self-centeredness, and opens us to the penetrating realization of our need for others. Whether we fulfill this need through marriage or a celibate life, does not alter the basic truth: our sexuality clearly tells us we are incomplete without others. Growing up to being fully a man or woman means learning to respect and nourish positive attitudes towards others. Thus, St. Paul urged the Galatians: “Let us do good to all men — but especially those of the household of the faith” (*Gal 6:10*). If we do not seek the good of others, we harm the Body of Christ. To respect and nourish relations with others means being willing to sacrifice our time and selves for them, encouraging them, helping them when we can.

1098. Growing up to full maturity involves *discernment*. We learn when to say “yes” to an opportunity for positive growth and fuller relationships, and when to say a definite “no” to the dark urges playing on our vulnerable weaknesses. Being a mature man or woman involves the ability to discern true, authentic love from its many counterfeits of infatuation, desire, or simple lust. Christian purity of heart, strengthened and supported by a fervent sacramental and prayer life, greatly helps this discernment by its simplicity, its greater clarity of understanding and firmness of will, and its genuine openness to the other as gift.

B. Education for Chastity

1099. But in order for the value of sexuality to reach its full realization, *education for chastity* is absolutely essential, for it is a virtue that develops a person’s authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the “nuptial meaning” of the body. . . . Fruit of the grace of God and of our cooperation, chastity tends to harmonize the different components of the human person, and to overcome the frailty of human nature, marked by sin, so that each person can follow the vocation to which God has called (*EGHL 18*).

1100. What is *of utmost importance* in the education and practice of chastity is *motivation*. This means taking seriously our *imagination*, which is the key factor in arousing or controlling the human sexual drive. It means focusing on the *values* of our sexuality which ground the moral norms — values such as: personal growth in interpersonal dialogue and the gift of self in love, creative fecundity and the transmission of human life. Only when such values are appreciated can personal responsibility in controlling our sexuality be effectively taught.

1101. Teachers are urged in particular not to separate knowledge from cor-responding values, which give a sense and orientation to biological, psychological and social information. Consequently, when they present moral norms, it is necessary that they show their *raison d’etre* and value (EGHL 89).

1102. From a specifically “Christian” perspective, then, we can see that:

affective sex education must relate to the totality of the person and insist on the *integration* of the biological, psycho-affective, social and spiritual elements. This integration has become more difficult because the believer also bears the consequences of sin from the beginning. A true formation is not limited to informing the intellect, but must pay particular attention to the will, to feelings and emotions [and to] virtues such as *modesty, temperance, respect for self and for others, openness to one’s neighbor* (EGHL.35)[cf. CCC 2341; 2521-24].

1103. Especially for the Filipino, this long *process of education in chastity ought to be centered in the family*. This is so because chastity is FOR LOVE. It opens out naturally in *friendship* (cf. CCC 2347). Now, in our culture the family is the first and most natural setting wherein the Filipino experiences being loved and loving. John Paul II develops this:

Education in love as self-giving is also the indispensable premise for parents called to give their children a clear and delicate *sex education*. Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality . . . [in] an impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, their educational service must [be] a training truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person – body, emotions and soul – and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love (FC 37).

1104. But unfortunately it seems most Filipino youth learn more about sex from their peer group, their *barkada*, and from mass media, than from any other source. Hence, parents must be brought to fuller realization of their *duty to educate their children in the essential Catholic vision of sex*. Moreover, this education for chastity in the family will not be effective if not supported and developed in the school, the parish and the Christian community. Each must accept its proper responsibility in fostering a healthy Christian climate toward interpersonal relationships and their proper bodily expressions.

1105. In working against the disorder provoked by sin, an authentic Christian view of sexuality must be fostered not only in the individual Filipino Christian, but also in *purifying today’s Philippine social climate* (cf. CCC 2344, 2525). All available means need to be used. The present widespread ignorance must be gradually overcome by a truly *integrated and inculturated educational program in Christian chastity*. Filipinos in their families, especially the youth, must be inspired and motivated to develop the needed Christian virtues of discipline of mind and senses, prudence, moderation in recreation, sincerity of heart, humility, and especially “*modesty*” (cf. CCC 2521-24).

1106. The government’s “value education” and “moral reform” programs are valiant attempts to work toward these goals. But our Christian Faith, confirmed by 2,000 years of Christian history, shows conclusively that all such human efforts will be ineffective without a deep *spiritual renewal*. For the Catholic Filipino this involves fostering an active, personal and community prayer life, love for the Eucharist, reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to other saints who excelled in the practice of chastity.

C. Purity Calls for Self-Control

1107. Since *chastity* or purity of heart is directed toward love, it *pertains directly to all persons according to their different states of life* (cf. CCC 2349). This includes both *married* and *single*

persons. **Chastity for the married** consists in *fidelity to their marriage vows*, and to their respect and reverence for what is good and lovely in their marriage. **Self-control** is demanded by chastity of both single persons and of married couples. In both, this “mastering of oneself” is an integral part of the formation of good character and the spirit of self-sacrifice (*cf. CCC 2339*). These are indispensable virtues needed for the stability and well-being of both single persons and of married couples in their conjugal love. For the married, chastity becomes the strongest protection against not only **adultery** but also **divorce**. Both adultery and divorce bring disorder into family unity and into society itself, breaking the marriage vows of life-long self-giving in conjugal love.

1108. Regarding **contraception**, the Church has insisted that “marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children.” Hence, while rejecting *artificial means of con-traception and birth control*, **the Church encourages natural family planning** to ensure that the procreation, nurture and education of the children might be achieved in a truly human and Christian way. Vatican II urges the parents “to fulfill their task with human and Christian responsibility.” “The parents themselves must ultimately make this judgment, in the sight of God,” and with Christian consciences enlightened by the teaching of the Church, reckoning with “both the material and spiritual conditions of the times, as well as their state in life” (*GS 50*).

1109. In the Philippines today, a growing drive for **population control** has given rise to anxieties and misgivings among many Catholic Filipinos. Clearly, unlimited procreation of children, or rearing children by chance rather than choice, are not responsible ways of acting. Nevertheless, **the population problem is not primarily one of numbers**, but of the care of persons, and the improvement of the quality of human life. This involves not only food, clothing and shelter, but spiritual endowments such as *conscience* and *freedom* and *moral integrity*. Would it not be the height of folly to strive for greater material prosperity at the cost of violence done to personal conscience, freedom in decision making, and the exercise of moral integrity? The key to the problem is not in external means of control through mechanical and chemical contraceptives, but rather in the development and maturation of inner mastery of one’s sexual behavior – in the chastity and self-control demanded by the stable commitment of marriage. (*Cf. CBCP’s Pastoral Letter on the Population Problem and Family Life, 1973.*)

1110. The **chastity of the single person** is seen in both *virginity* chosen for the sake of the Kingdom and *single-blessedness*. The single person also has a vocation to love, not in the form of marriage, but in love’s “dynamism, inherent in sexuality, of self-giving openness to others.” The chastity of the celibate “seeks to obtain its strengthening and transfiguring by the presence of the Spirit, who teaches us to love the Father and the brethren, after the example of the Lord Jesus” (*EGHL 31*). Such chastity rules out all sexual intercourse which, by its definitive nature, finds its proper meaning in the married state alone.

1111. Chastity for both married and single also combats the search for solitary sexual pleasure in **masturbation** (*cf. CCC 2352*). This complex and delicate problem has repercussions on the integral growth of the person. Masturbation is *an abuse of our sexual powers* because it lacks the sexuality’s essential relationship which is ordered towards self-giving love and the service of life according to God’s design. Often it is *a result of deficient affective growth*, and/or *a symptom of much deeper personal problems*.

1112. Thus, while recognizing the objective moral gravity of masturbation, it is most important to look into its psychological and emotional factors. Attention should be focused more on the “heart” of the person rather than on the mechanics of the act. Chastity helps those caught in the habit of masturbation to look into their hearts and reflect on their values and supposed needs that cause such

acts. For the Christian, the Body of Christ is not promoted by those who turn in on themselves and hoard one of their most precious God-given gifts instead of sharing it with others in responsible interpersonal relationships.

1113. “Understanding human sexuality correctly includes recognition of heterosexuality as normative, while respecting the personhood of those with homosexual tendencies” (NCDP 287). **Homosexuality** represents *another grave impediment to the integral sexual growth* of a person. St. Paul condemns both male and female homosexual acts as God’s punishment for idolatry, the worship of unnatural lust (cf. Rom 1:18-32). *But care must be taken to distinguish between a condition of homosexual orientation, for which the homosexual cannot be held responsible, and homosexual acts* (cf. CCC 2357-59).

1114. *Like everyone else, the homosexual is called to chastity.* Chastity here rejects homosexual acts as lacking the essential openness to service of life. But, as with the solitary abuse of masturbation, while recognizing its grave objective moral disorientation, it is important to seek the factors impelling the person’s homosexuality. Among such conditions one can cite the absence of supportive parental relationships, false education, lack of normal sexual development, poor habits and even peer pressure.

1115. Finally, the virtue of *chastity and purity of heart stand in direct opposition to prostitution and pornography* (cf. CCC 2354-55). In the Philippine context, both present extreme cases of exploitation and injustice, foisted on the poor by the affluent. Rather than primarily a problem in sexual morality, both are too often simply the consequences of dire poverty and destitution. Yet, both constitute a dehumanizing, self-centered and immoral use of our God-given sexuality.

A **prostitute** is robbed of his/her dignity as a person by being reduced to a mere means for the selfish pleasure of the buyer. There is absolutely no commitment, no love, no service of life.

Pornography propagates the sexually obscene and licentious in a dehumanizing and exploitative manner. By reducing persons to sex objects for illicit pleasure, it substitutes self-centered, commitment-less “Playboy” fantasies, for genuine loving interpersonal relationships. Both prostitution and pornography flourish as parasites on a society that has become morally sick and sexually confused.

1116. Summary. The Gospel portrait of Jesus is one of a man who was completely at ease with his own sexuality and with both men and women. He was a dominating figure who taught with authority, and showed extraordinary power in casting out devils, calming nature’s storms, and working “signs” to draw his people to faith. Yet, he nevertheless was gentle and humble of heart, compassionate toward all, especially the weary and heavily burdened. He loved children and made friends among men and women with equal ease. When he met sexual frailty, it was always with great compassion and understanding. In short, he touched people deeply, and allowed others to touch him likewise.

Thus, the **Christian ideal of sexuality and marriage is based clearly on Jesus** of Nazareth, our Lord and Savior. From him we learn that sexuality is a matter of the whole person as created by God, and therefore sacred; that it deals with relationships that come from the heart, and therefore ultimately involves commitment to love and the service of life.

INTEGRATION

1117. Catholic sexual morality is based clearly on the **doctrines** that: 1) God *created* every human person precisely as male or female in His own image and likeness; 2) that *the Risen Christ has healed and perfected our whole persons*, including our sexuality, through 3) *the Holy Spirit*, received from God, *indwelling* in our bodies. Moreover, the doctrine of *original sin* and the consequent disordered

desires we experience in concupiscence show why it is so difficult to integrate our own sexuality. We need this integration to think and act responsibly, with due respect for the sexuality and marriage of others.

This indicates the urgent necessity of developing the sound Christian virtues of chastity and purity of heart, modesty and self-control. But the basis and motivating inspiration for such virtue practice can only come from regular *personal prayer* and *sacramental life*, especially contact with the Risen Christ in the *Eucharist*, the Sacrament of his universal love.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1118. *What is the value of our sexuality?*

Human sexuality is God's gift to us: male and female God created us in His own image and likeness. We share in the divine life of love and creativity not in lonely solitude, but precisely in relating to one another through our sexual natures.

1119. *How does the Sixth Commandment protect our sexuality?*

"You shall not commit adultery" prohibits married persons from entering into sexual union with someone other than their spouse.

In thus *protecting the family and marriage*, with their *two ends of procreation and human completeness*, the Sixth Commandment touches on the very nature of human sexuality and the full range of man-woman relationships.

1120. *How successful has this Commandment been in protecting the true value of our sexuality?*

This Commandment has proven to be a great protection from:

- the so-called "*double-standard*" of morality whereby what is allowed for men is denied for women; and
- rigid *taboos* and *restrictive customs* which view sexuality with fear and hostility.

[The value of our sexuality is protected by the *Sixth Commandment* when, along with a strong sense of the grave matter that is involved, we grow in our consciousness of the dignity and beauty of human sexuality through which God's creative work continues in time.]

1121. *What is the Christian view of sexuality?*

Our sexuality is viewed as a fundamental component of personality, a *good thing* created by God, restored by the power of Jesus Christ and enriched by the saving activity of the Church, and by which the whole person enters into communication with others.

Therefore *sexuality* is not the same as the *sex act*. All human persons must develop their God-given gift of sexuality. But some freely choose, for the sake of the Kingdom, not to enter into the sex act.

1122. *What are the consequences of this view of sexuality?*

From this view of sexuality *four* consequences follow.

Men and women are:

- of equal personal dignity and human rights;
- different but complementary;
- called to mutual gift of self and reciprocity;
- created through love and for love.

1123. *What are the different states of life expressing love?*

The different states of life for men and women are:

- conjugal union of the married;
- consecrated celibacy chosen freely for the sake of the Kingdom;
- Christian youths before entering into a definite state of life; and
- the single blessedness chosen by lay faithful.

1124. *What is the Biblical view of sexuality?*

The Bible describes how, from the simple innocence of original creation, sin entered to bring disorder and division into sexual relationships, and the temptation to self-centered hedonism.

Nevertheless, *Yahweh's* own love for His Chosen People is surprisingly portrayed in marriage imagery.

Christ in the Gospels bypassed all the detailed prescriptions of the Law and focused on the essential dignity and value of marriage and sexuality as created by God.

Finally, *St. Paul* stressed the new meaning of Christian marriage by comparing the love of husband and wife to *Christ's* love for his Church.

1125. *How is the Sixth Commandment "liberating"?*

When viewed through faith in the redemptive force of the Risen *Christ's* grace, the Sixth Commandment liberates from the two tyrannies of:

- "*self-righteous decency*" consisting of hypocritical moralizing and misguided taboos regarding sexuality; and
- "*indecent*", exalting casual, spontaneous sex without commitment or love.

1126. *How does the Sixth Commandment affect the married?*

For the married, the Commandment enjoins a free, responsible fidelity to life-long conjugal union that is:

- a complete union of love at all levels in the fullness of their personal lives, and
- an enduring and permanent bond.

Both these elements act against adultery and divorce which entail such high human costs.

1127. *How does the Ninth Commandment protect human sexuality?*

"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" goes to the interior root and source of the disorders of the flesh by prohibiting covetousness, or evil desires of the heart. It also rejects the many effects of this covetousness common in modern sexist consumerist society.

1128. *How do we positively fulfill the Ninth Commandment?*

Positively, the Ninth Commandment enjoins *purity of heart* or the virtue of *chastity* which signifies the spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness.

1129. *What does the virtue of chastity do?*

Chastity

- *puts order* into our use of sexuality;
- *channels* our sexual energies toward the positive service of love;
- *seeks the proper limits* within which our passions can be reasonably directed toward authentic joy and peace; and
- demands that we develop the needed *self-control* for married as well as single persons.

1130. *What does “growing up” to maturity mean?*

Growing up toward authentic integration of our sexuality entails:

- freeing ourselves from our own natural self-centeredness, to realize our intrinsic need for others;
- learning to respect and nourish positive attitudes towards others, and
- discerning when to say “No,” and the difference between true authentic love and its many counterfeit imitations.

1131. *What does “education for chastity” involve?*

Education for chastity involves:

- developing a strong *motivation* through positive focus on the authentic *values* of our sexuality;
- the importance of our *imagination*, and the *family* context, and
- the *integration* of the biological, affective, social and spiritual elements of sexuality.

1132. *What is the Church’s position on population control?*

The Church encourages natural family planning, but holds that the key to the population problem is not in external means of control, such as mechanical and chemical contraceptives, but in inner mastery over one’s sexual behavior through chastity and self-control.

1133. *What is the Church’s position on masturbation, homosexuality, pornography and prostitution?*

Chastity for married and single alike fosters integral sexual growth of the person. Both *masturbation* and *homosexuality* hinder achieving such sexual maturity by turning away from the self-giving love and service to life that is the nature of human sexuality from the Christian view.

Likewise, *pornography* and *prostitution* dehumanize and exploit human persons, robbing them of their true dignity by reducing them to “sex-objects.” Neither offers any authentic commitment, love, or service of life.

Chapter 20

Building Justice

Cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. . . . Release those bound unjustly, untie the thongs of the yoke; set free the oppressed, break every yoke; share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own.

(Is 1:16; 58:6-7)

I ask you, how can God's love survive in a man who has enough of this world's goods yet closes his heart to his brother when he sees him in need? Little children, let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it.

(1 Jn 3:17-18)

OPENING

1134. Together with the past two chapters and the following, this chapter develops Christ's commandment to love one another in terms of *our basic social obligations*. We have seen how loving others means respecting their *life* (5th Comm.) and their *sexuality/marriage* (6th/9th Comm.) Now we take up explicitly a most pressing **Christian social challenge** today: ***to work for true justice and peace***. "Action on behalf of justice, and participation in the transformation of the world, appears as an **essential** dimension in the preaching of the Gospel. . . the promotion of human rights is **a requirement of the Gospel**" (*Justice in the World*).

1135. In recent times, the Church has come to a heightened awareness that Christ calls all Christians not only to a personal conversion of mind and heart. He also calls us to social responsibility, to work for the renewal of our communities through love, justice, peace and freedom. This chapter shows how this **social responsibility** can be brought out by using the traditional structure of the *Seventh* and *Tenth Commandments* which treat of personal freedom, possessions and talents, and of the "desires of the heart." For these Commandments are the *living* Word of God that has developed through the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Beyond their historical origins at the foot of Mt. Sinai, they clarify and guide us, Christian Filipinos, *today* in our Faith's call to social responsibility.

CONTEXT

1136. Of prime importance throughout the Philippines today is the *question of justice*. Our *common problem* is *stealing on all levels*: among individuals, between families, between businesses and corporations, between private firms and the government. Widespread *poverty, injustice, and exploitation* of both people and natural resources, and the *violation of human rights*, continue to plague Filipinos. Land reform programs have generally proven ineffectual because of radical changes in their original provisions due to political pressures. Many labor organizations gravitate toward becoming either “company unions,” protecting the interests of management, or Communist-inspired pressure groups who are more interested in unrest and disorder than the workers’ authentic good.

1137. Even on the local town level in the provinces, simple cooperatives have frequently encountered serious difficulties due to the *greed* and *corruption* of their organizers. On the national level, conflicts continually arise between the expanding needs of industrial growth and the rights of individual Filipinos. *Commercial interests over-ride practical ecological concern* for the country’s natural resources. Political stability and security are endangered by ideological pressure groups, sometimes employing violence and terrorism.

These “shadows” in our society are to some extent balanced by instances of “lights,” both at the level of associations/groups and individuals. So we see an ever-growing number of NGO’s and other private organizations which fight prostitution, expose graft and corruption, promote initiatives in favor of street children, squatters and out-of-school youth. We hear with admiration of ordinary workers or taxi drivers returning to their legitimate owners big sums of money they found in the streets or inside their cab. . .

1138. *PCP II*’s call for “Renewed Integral Evangelization” puts primary stress on “social transformation” (*cf. PCP II 256-329*). This responds to a basic problem pointed out by our Bishops for many years. For a great many Catholic Filipinos “development and the structural changes it entails have no connection with Faith and the Sacraments. Injustice and ignorance are not among the sins ordinarily acknowledged.”

But in recent years most Filipino Christians have come to realize that “poverty, violence and the task of building a new society with its own intrinsic values are questions that relate to salvation itself” (*CBCP on Evangelization and Development*). Yet, as Christians and Filipinos, “we have to admit personal and collective failure to share our goods among our people.” We must “analyze the *root causes* of misery _ not only in terms of individual selfishness, but in terms of socio-economic, political and religious structures that may be causing, or maintaining, these injustices” (*CBCP, Lenten Pastoral Letter on Alay Kapwa, 1975*).

1139. Thus *the Church has been engaged in an ongoing process of “conscientization”* in our social responsibilities as Filipino Christians. Unfortunately sufficient care has not always been exercised to avoid one-sided, ideological half-truths such as the “Christian” Marxists’ call for “total liberation,” even by violent means. *PCP II* has stressed that Faith judges ideology, not the other way around (*PCP II 369*). Exaggerations in liberation theory have largely been corrected, but on the personal level of well-intentioned but poorly guided idealistic youth, the residue of mistaken initiatives, unfulfilled promises, and shrunken dreams, have left their mark.

To effectively carry through a program that actually “builds justice” in a truly Filipino and Christian manner demands a *double recognition*. *First*, that the struggle for liberation, justice and peace is really part of authentic Christian Faith. *Second*, that Christian Faith has an essential, irreplaceable role to play in achieving justice for the Filipino. As Catholic Filipinos, we must **take**

responsibility for building a just society. Each of us is called by Christ to do our part in working to reduce and eliminate the grave injustices that plague our country and harm our people.

EXPOSITION

1140. This chapter first takes up the Seventh and Tenth Commandments, followed by certain New Testament directives. With that basis, the Church's Social Doctrine is then taken up, particularly on Social Sin and Private Property. Major positive social teaching of the Church follows: man's innate dignity, the key importance of human work, the preferential option for the poor, and the dynamic interaction of justice and charity. A final section stresses the Christian duty to work toward building a Just Society.

I. THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

1141. “**You shall not steal**” (*Ex 20:15; Dt 5:19*) has undergone a development through history. The story of Joseph, favorite son of Jacob, whose envious brothers sold him into slavery for twenty pieces of silver (*cf. Gen 37*), exemplifies its *original prohibition* against kidnapping. Each Commandment of the second Tablet, then, referred to a basic social right of the free Israelite: *life* (*5th Comm.*), *marriage* (*6th Comm.*), *freedom* (*7th Comm.*), *honor* (*8th Comm.*), and *property* (*9th-10th Comm.*). Kidnapping has particular relevance to today's world-wide problem of *terrorism*. Taking hostages for ransom has become a political strategy that is not unknown even in our own country. The 7th Commandment makes it very clear: we cannot use a person's life and liberty as a means to extort money or political advantage from others, no matter how noble the cause (*cf. CCC 2401*).

1142. The Commandment's *prohibition* was then *extended* beyond kidnapping to the many other less dramatic ways of robbing another's freedom, many ways of exploiting others and stealing from them what is rightfully theirs. Exploitation in food, housing, and clothing, endangers personal freedom. Operations like financial manipulative speculation, tax evasion, gambling debts, over-pricing, arson for insurance, and the like, rob others and hurt the common good.

1143. To be realistic, then, contemporary Catholic morality takes a *comprehensive understanding of the Seventh Commandment*. From its original focus on the kidnapping of persons, the object of the commandment was legitimately extended in history to include the theft of possessions essentially needed for personal freedom. Finally, in today's economic world, many more hidden ways of enslaving and oppressing have arisen. Therefore “You shall not steal” now refers not only to privately owned personal possessions, but also to public properties, social structures and conditions which should serve the common good.

1144. This needs to be emphasized since we Filipinos often show little care and concern for what does not directly relate to us or our families. The basis for the proper social concern is simply our concrete socio-economic situation. As the Gospel reminds us, our freedom and dignity as human persons and as Christians are intimately tied up with economic and property relationships.

1145. We are *personal embodied spirits*: as *embodied*, we absolutely need food, shelter and clothing to survive. As *personal spirits*, we are born, grow up and mature within family and community

interpersonal relationships, creating for us a “cultural”, not mere animal, life, under God, our personal, transcendent Creator-Redeemer. Vatican II describes our human situation as follows:

Therefore, there must be made available to all men everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect and to appropriate information, to activity in accordance with the upright norm of one’s own conscience, to protection of privacy and to rightful freedom in matters religious, too (*GS 26*).

1146. In addition, today we realize that this also involves respect for the dignity and integrity of creation (*cf. CCC 2415*). *PCP II* urges “a passionate care of our earth and our environment.” Some environmental destruction arises from survival needs of the poor (slash and burn upland agriculture, and dynamite fishing). “But the greater sin against the integrity of God’s creation” is committed by those who “with impunity pollute rivers, seas and lakes with industrial wastes, and for profit systematically destroy our forests [causing] the destruction by droughts and floods.” In brief, we recognize today as never before the moral demand for responsible dominion over nature (*PCP II 321-24*).

II. THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

1147. “**You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, . . . nor anything else that belongs to him**” (*Ex 20:17; Dt 5:21*). This Commandment goes behind the Seventh and deals with the disordered desires of the heart, its *covetousness*, from which stealing and exploitation of our neighbor arise (*cf. CCC 2536*). It forbids not only *unjust craving for another’s property*, but also *envy* at the success of others. *Envy is a capital sin*, exemplified in Cain’s “envy-hatred-murder” sinful pattern. Death itself is said to have come into the world “By the envy of the Devil, . . . and they who are in his possession experience it.” (*Wis 2:24, cf. CCC 2538-40*).

1148. The prophet Amos expressed Yahweh’s sharp condemnation of those who, while observing the religious feasts and the Sabbath rest, *plot how they can make greater profit by cheating others*. “We will diminish the ephah [measure], add to the shekel [unit weight], and fix our scales for cheating! We will buy the lowly man for silver, and the poor man for a pair of sandals; even the refuse of the wheat we will sell” (*Am 8: 5-6*).

When Christ warned “From the mind stem evil designs,” stealing was one of his specific examples (*Mt 15:19*). He, moreover linked, possessions and heart together: “Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also” (*Mt 6:21*).

1149. An insight into the almost diabolical hold money and possessions can have on our hearts is offered by a strange event recounted in Acts. Peter and John had come to the Samaritans to pray and impose hands on them so they would receive the Holy Spirit. A certain Simon observed this, and offered money to Peter and John if they would give him that power of conferring the Spirit. Peter replied: “May you and your money rot — thinking that God’s gift can be bought! . . . Your heart is not steadfastly set on God. Reform from your evil ways. Pray that the Lord may pardon you for thinking the way you have” (*Acts 8:20-22*).

1150. How difficult such “reform” may be is illustrated by the touching story, recounted in all three Synoptic Gospels, of the rich young man asking Jesus what is necessary to share eternal life. Jesus replied with a brief list of the Commandments. The man replied: “I have kept all these since I was a boy.” Jesus then presented him the challenge: “Sell all you have and give to the poor. . . . Then come

and follow me.” At these words the man’s face fell. He went away sad, for he was a very rich man” (*Lk 18:18-23*).

What often goes unnoticed in that Gospel incident is that Jesus challenged the young man precisely in terms of the Tenth Commandment: about his possessions and their hold on his heart — whether or not he was holding on covetously to what should have been shared with the poor. The young man failed the test. Apparently the Tenth Commandment was one he had not kept since he was a boy.

1151. Christ’s challenge to the young man used attachment to possessions as the test for the whole vocation of following Christ. He challenged all: “None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions” (*Lk 14:33*). This indicates that the Tenth Commandment in some way touches the heart of the Christian vocation, of what it means to serve God. Like the First Commandment, the Tenth also makes a total, radical demand that we must serve God with our whole hearts as well as in our outward actions.

1152. But this is precisely the *real problem: we seem powerless to check our disordered desires and reform our hearts*. St. Paul confessed: “I should never have known what evil desire was unless the law had said: ‘You shall not covet.’ Sin seized that opportunity; it used the Commandment to rouse in me every kind of evil desire” (*Rom 7:7-8*). Through this Commandment, Paul realized that God called for *total dedication of heart and of desire*, not just external acts. This forced him to admit his powerlessness to fulfill the law. “What a wretched man I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death?” (*Rom 7:24*).

1153. Paul found the answer: “All praise to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (*Rom 7:25*). The Tenth Commandment, then, does not lead us to despair, but to fuller recognition of our redemption through Jesus Christ. “Do not covet” becomes “You have no need to covet!” In answer to Paul’s repeated pleas to have a “thorn of the flesh” removed, Christ replied “My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection.” Paul then wrote “And so I willingly boast of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (*2 Cor 12:8-9*). To cure our self-centeredness, then, is God’s work through Christ, in the Spirit. “I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you” (*Ez 36:26*). “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death” (*Rom 8:2*).

1154. Both the Seventh and Tenth Commandments, then, govern our basic relationships in justice with others: *the Seventh deals with our outward actions* regarding possessions and social structures, while *the Tenth focuses on the inner desires of our hearts* from which our external actions originate. So St. Paul exhorts us: “If we live in the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s lead. Let us never be boastful, or challenging or jealous toward one another” (*Gal 5:25f*). Now we need to develop further the New Testament guidelines regarding social relationships.

III. NEW TESTAMENT DIRECTIVES

1155. The Gospels give us a clear picture of the basics for Christian social responsibility. *First*, John the Baptist prepared the people for Jesus by preaching *reform*. “Reform your lives! The Reign of God is at hand” (*Mt 3:2*). In examples particularly relevant to us today, John admonished tax collectors: “Exact nothing over and above your fixed amount,” and warned soldiers: “don’t bully anyone, denounce no one falsely, and be content with your pay” (*Lk 3:12f*).

Second, Jesus pushed this to an interior reform or *conversion* that focused on our inner priorities. “No one can serve two masters . . . You cannot give yourself to God and money” (*Mt 6:24*). The Kingdom of God must take precedence over all our self-centered concerns of family, popularity and private possessions.

Third, there is the question of **restitution**. Jesus praised Zacchaeus who reported: “If I have defrauded anyone in the least, I pay him back fourfold” (*Lk 19:8*). But this action was only part of the larger ideal of sharing with others that Zacchaeus had grasped from Christ: “I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor” (*Ibid.*).

1156. Behind these three attitudes of *reform*, *conversion* and *restitution*, Jesus was calling his people to a basic trust in him and in God, their heavenly Father. “Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. . . . If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to anyone who asks him!” (*Mt 7:7-11*)

1157. Most Christian Filipinos have heard from their childhood how Jesus spoke of the way God, in His **Providence**, feeds the birds of the air and clothes the wild flowers in the field “beyond Solomon in all his glory.” Therefore,

“O weak in faith! Stop worrying over questions like, ‘What are we to eat, or what are we to drink, or what are we to wear?’ The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first His kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides” (*Mt 6:31-33*).

1158. This **attitude of trust in God** is echoed in the traditional Filipino attitude of *bahala na*. Some claim that this has led to a certain fatalism, and a lack of the energy, discipline, and purpose needed for personal, familial and national development. Actually, such fatalism is not the result of authentic trust in God our Father as revealed by Jesus Christ. Rather, it is based on mistaken belief in some magic force or luck (*swerte*) that supposedly renders our own efforts unnecessary or useless.

1159. *PCP II* clarifies that in reality, “*Bahala na ang Maykapal*” expresses a **deep trust in God’s care** that actually **calls for our social responsibility** (*cf. PCP II 435-38*). St. Paul gives a simple example: “The man who has been stealing must steal no longer; but rather let him work with his hands at honest labor so that he will have something to share with those in need” (*Eph 4:28*).

IV. THE CHURCH’S SOCIAL DOCTRINE

1160. A primary concern of the Catholic Church in our era has been the social dimension of Christian living. The social doctrine of the Church has developed **in response to the evolution of modern economics, and the new conditions of work** this has brought about (*cf. CCC 2419-49; PCP II 290-329*). The following is just one forceful presentation of the Church’s concern:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of freedom and a force for liberation. . . liberation that is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin. Its end and its goal is the freedom of the sons of God, which is the gift of grace. It calls for freedom from many different kinds of slavery in the cultural, economic, social and political spheres, all of which derive ultimately from sin, and so prevent people from living in a manner befitting their dignity (*ITL, Introduction*).

1161. The Church’s action in the temporal sphere, then, is not political, or economic, or technical since her competence, like her mission, is religious and moral in nature. Her specific contribution is the strengthening of the spiritual and moral bases of society (*cf. CCC 2420*). Within this basic stress on the moral and spiritual dimensions of the temporal sphere, *PCP II* has proposed more specific teaching, particularly regarding the *political* and *social* areas.

1162. Political Community. Following Vatican II, *PCP II* laid down general guidelines governing the Church's relation to the political community (cf. *GS 74-76; PCP II 330-53*). Political authority's legitimate autonomy in working for the common good must be exercised *within the limits of the moral order*. The Church has the role of *critical solidarity* with the government in defending the moral order. As a "good rule of thumb" to follow, *PCP II* proposed that pastors have competence in the moral principles governing politics, while the laity have competence in active and direct partisan politics (cf. *PCP II 342*). But "both clergy and laity must be involved in the area of politics when moral and Gospel values are at stake" (*PCP II 344*).

1163. *PCP II* neatly summarized the truths that must guide Filipino Catholics' participation in political life:

- the basic standard is *pursuit of the common good*;
- characterized by the *defense and promotion of justice*;
- inspired and guided by the *spirit of service*;
- imbued with the *love of preference for the poor*; and
- that *empowering people* be carried out both *as a process* and *as a goal* of political activity (cf. *PCP II 351*).

Catholics must try to infuse into the political order the overall value of *solidarity*, which urges "the active and responsible *participation* of all in public life" (*CL 42; cf. PCP II 353*).

1164. Social teaching. The Church's social doctrine is the result of careful *reflection on the complex realities of human life* in today's society *in the light of faith and the Church's tradition*. It constitutes an integral part of her evangelizing mission (cf. *SRS 41*). It simply applies the word of God to people's lives and the life of society, in all their concrete socio-economic realities. Thus the Church offers: "1) *principles for reflection*, 2) *criteria of judgment*, and 3) *criteria for action*" (*SRS 8; cf. CCC 2423*).

1165. The concrete socio-economic realities of the Philippines are only too obvious: "the widening chasm between the rich and the poor, the reality of unemployment, the problems of malnutrition, of hunger, of violation of human rights" (*CBCP Monitor, 1982; cf. PCP II 20-25*). But the growing response has been equally clear. Average Filipino Catholics have entered a real process of *conscientization* regarding their social responsibilities as disciples of Jesus Christ, united in the Catholic community. This conscientization has brought to sharpened awareness our basic *human rights*: *economic* (right to work, to a just wage, to property), *social* (right to assembly, to free association), *political* (right to vote, to equality before the law, to emigrate/immigrate), *cultural* (right to education, to freedom of speech), and *religious* (right to worship) [cf. *NCDP 297*]. It has also introduced the relatively new concept of *social sin*.

A. Sinful Social Structures

1166. *PCP II* carefully explains how sins like pride, selfishness, greed, and hatred come to infect habitual patterns of human interaction. This produces "sinful social structures" which can harden into institutions. Some terrible effects of these sinful structures are seen in the uncared for, malnourished "street children," the wretchedness of the jobless and homeless, the crimes, graft and corruption, continued widespread violation of basic human rights (cf. *PCP II 82*).

1167. Vatican II laid the ground work for this new recognition of social sin when it recognized that:

we are often diverted from doing good and spurred toward evil by the social circumstances in which we live. . . disturbances [which] at a deeper level flow from human pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. When the structure of affairs is flawed by the consequences of sin, we, already born with a bent toward evil, find there new inducements to sin, which cannot be overcome without strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace (*GS 25*).

1168. Thus, besides the *personal sins* of individuals (such as thoughts and desires of *lust* and *jealousy*), and *interpersonal sins* corrupting relationships (e.g. , *gossip*, *adultery*), there are *societal sins* located in social structures, situations and groups which oppress persons, violate their human dignity, stifle freedom, and foster unjust inequality.

1169. This idea of social sin or “group stealing” is difficult for the average Filipino Catholic. We normally think of sin in terms of personal, concrete individual acts against a particular law of God or the Church. But such a restricted idea of sin must be broadened today in view of our social responsibilities as Christians. John Paul II explains different meanings of social sin in detail.

To speak of social sin means: 1) to recognize that, by virtue of human solidarity, each individual’s sin in some way affects others. 2) Some sins by their very matter constitute a direct attack on one’s neighbor – social sins against love of neighbor, against justice in interpersonal relationships, against the rights of the human person, against others’ freedom, against the common good. 3) Sinful relationships between various human communities, in class struggle and confrontation between blocs of nations (*RP 16*)

1170. Finally, there are *situations* or “*structures*” of *sin*, in which certain social groups, institutions or organizations cause or support evil, or when they are in a position to eliminate or limit the evils, fail to do so, and through secret complicity or indifference side-step the effort and sacrifice required (*cf. RP 16*). Structures of sin, therefore, “are rooted in personal sin and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them, and make them difficult to remove. Thus they grow stronger, spread and become the source of other sins, and so influence people’s behavior” (*SRS 36*).

1171. The **intrinsic connection** between “*social sin*” and *personal sin* must be stressed. For some, overly influenced by socio-political analysis, have gone to the extreme of locating “evil principally or uniquely in bad social, political or economic structures as though all other evils came from them.” If such were the case, we could save ourselves simply by creating different economic and socio-political structures. But Christian Faith proclaims that “the root of evil lies in free and responsible persons who have to be converted by the grace of Jesus Christ in order to live and act as new creatures in the love of neighbor and in the effective search for justice, self-control and the exercise of virtue” (*ITL 15*).

1172. The problem of injustice, exploitation and “group stealing” cannot ultimately be resolved except through genuine *spiritual conversion*. Such a conversion would necessarily entail: changing the evil desires of our hearts; reforming our social relationships; and reforming our attitudes and the social structures we create to reinforce our attitudes.

How difficult this is in the concrete can easily be seen by even a cursory view of typical “social sins” in Philippine society today. In the preceding chapter we faced the social sins of sexism, prostitution and pornography. In this chapter on human freedom in terms of self and possessions, *PCP II* offers examples of two typical sinful attitudes: the all-consuming *desire for profit*, and the *thirst for power* (*cf. PCP II 270*).

1173. *Consumerism* is another clear example of “social sin.” It becomes a vice by effecting certain typical changes:

- we become enslaved by our possessions and obsessed with getting more;

- thus closing ourselves off to our own spiritual needs; and
- to the poverty and unjust exploitation of others.

These effects are well described by John Paul II:

All of us experience first-hand the sad effects of this blind submission to pure consumerism: in the first place a crass materialism, and at the same time a radical dissatisfaction because one quickly learns — unless one is shielded from the flood of publicity and ceaseless and tempting offers of products — that the more one possesses the more one wants, while deeper aspirations remain unsatisfied and perhaps even stifled (*SRS* 28).

B. Private Property

1174. Consumerism leads us to the theme of *private property*. *PCP II* states the characteristic principle of Christian social doctrine: that “God destined the earth and all it contains for ALL peoples so that all created things would be shared by all under the guidance of justice tempered by charity” (*PCP II* 297, quoting *GS* 69; cf. also *CCC* 2402). The right to private property is valid and necessary, but it does not nullify the value of this principle. Private property, in fact, is under a “social mortgage,” which means that it has an “intrinsically social function” (cf. *SRS* 42; *PCP II* 302). Paul VI indicated the limits of the right as follows: “Private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditional right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities” (*PP* 23).

1175. The Seventh Commandment guards property from two kinds of theft. The prophets constantly warned against theft “from above,” the rich robbing the poor. But there is also theft “from below,” or the have-nots taking unjustifiably from those who have. Property is misused *objectively* when it becomes a means of exercising power over others, instead of helping to improve the common quality of life. Exclusive control over the means of production, for example, creates a power that endangers social justice and peace. *Subjectively*, property is misused when greed and craving for possessions become the goal of life, destroying the human dignity of both rich and poor (cf. *below under the Tenth Commandment*).

Thus, private property often plays a key role in a destructive process whose pattern is symbolized for us in the three temptations undergone by Christ in the desert: from *possessions* (turn stones into bread) to *honors* (win favor by magical deeds) to *power* (kingdoms of the world) [cf. *Mt* 4:1-11].

1176. Concrete examples of such abusive use of property in our Philippine scene are not hard to discern. As theft “from above” there are the exorbitant interest rates being charged by banks and insurance firms; rich landowners and multi-national corporations taking advantage of the small farmer or businessman; bribery; violation of business contracts; refusal to pay just wages; tax evasion schemes and falsification of documents; excessive gambling; irresponsible borrowing, and refusal to repay legitimate debts. As thefts “from below” there are the widespread practices of shoplifting; stealing office/factory/school supplies; office work-hours wasted in sloth; borrowing and never returning; cheating with false weights or the use of inferior materials; smuggling; and over-charging to make excessive profits. . . .

Many of these examples are small and insignificant in themselves, but *together they create a situation in which simple honesty cannot be counted on*, and consequently everyone suffers continuously and often grievously.

C. Positive Social Teaching

1177. In view of such a complex social situation riddled with abuses of all kinds, the Church calls for a *renewed common effort*. “Whenever people work together, inspired by the aim of securing the dignity of every human being and of building a society based on justice, . . . ways and means will be found to share the fruits of progress with all in the community” (*PP 6*). John Paul II told Filipino farmers and workers: “You have the right to live and be treated in accordance with your human dignity; at the same time, you have the corresponding duty to treat others in the same way . . . to meet your social responsibilities in a worthy and Christian way” (*Homily in Legazpi City, 3*).

1178. The Basis. The Church’s social teaching, then, is based on the *intrinsic dignity of every human person* (*cf. PCP II 299*). Moreover, we are called to recognize a *human solidarity* that takes on specifically Christian dimensions: “awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ _ “children in the Son” _ and of the presence and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit” (*SRS 40; cf. PCP II 295, 313*).

One’s neighbor is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit (*SRS 40*).

1179. Certain *consequences* flow from this basis of the Christian vision for social justice. John Paul II drew one strong conclusion when he proclaimed in Malacañang: “one can never justify any violation of the fundamental dignity of the human person, or of the basic rights that safeguard this dignity. . . . Social organization exists only for the service of man and for the protection of his dignity; it cannot claim to serve the common good when human rights are not safeguarded” (*John Paul II, To the President and the Nation, 5*).

1180. To bring about this practical recognition of human dignity in social justice, the Church’s social doctrine has stressed a number of *fundamental principles*. They deal with integral human development, the value of work, the preferential option for the poor, and the dynamic link between justice and Christian love. To begin with, the Church teaches that *human development and liberation cannot be limited to the socio-economic and political dimensions of human life*. It must also include “*things of the spirit*.” One concrete example of this is the “spirituality of work” (*cf. no. 1186*).

D. Importance of Work

1181. In recent times great emphasis has been given to *work*. “*Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures . . . work is the mark of a person operating within a community of persons*” (*LE Intro; cf. CCC 2427*). Regarding social justice, “Human work is a key _ probably the essential key _ to the whole social question.” From the Bible’s mission to subdue the earth (*Gn 1:28*) emerges *work* in the *objective sense*: man dominating the earth by *more and more highly perfected machinery*. But this dominion introduces *work* in the *subjective sense*, the *person who is the subject of work*. Here Christ effected a radical change by instituting through word and example the “*Gospel of work*” which shows that “*the primary basis for the value of work is man himself*, who is its subject” (*LE 3-6; cf. PCP II 316*).

1182. Primacy of Work as Subjective. The priority of the subjective meaning of work is expressed in various ways. *One way* is that, “in the final analysis, it is always *man who is the purpose of work*.” Work is “for man,” not man “for work” (*LE, 6*). The basic value of work develops in *three spheres*:

the *personal sphere* wherein, through work, the person “*achieves fulfillment as a human being*”; the *family life sphere*, since the family is *a community made possible by work* and the first *school of work*; *the sphere of the great society* to which a person belongs on the basis of particular cultural and historical links. These three spheres bring out the value of work in its subjective dimension, i.e., the concrete reality of the worker, which takes precedence over work’s objective dimension (LE 9-10).

1183. A second way is the principle of the “*priority of labor over capital*” (cf. PCP II 318; LE 12). Today’s instruments of work, highly developed through science and technology, are customarily thought of as capital. Yet they are themselves the *result of the historical heritage of human labor* (LE 12).

Still a *third way* is to stress the principle of “*the primacy of man over things*.” All three ways merely spell out the basic truth “of the substantial and real priority of the subjectivity of human labor . . . independently of the nature of the services provided by the worker” (LE 13). This means not only that the worker should receive due remuneration for his work, but that in some real sense, *he is ultimately working “for himself”* (LE 15).

1184. Consequences: Rights. From this appreciation of human work flow *three basic rights*: the *right to work*; the *right to a just share in the fruits* of the work; and the *right to organize* “for the purpose of defending their interests and contributing as responsible partners to the common good” (John Paul II, *Bacolod*, 7). PCP II adds the rights *to rest, to decent work environment, to profit-sharing, and to strike* under certain conditions (cf. PCP II 319; cf. also CCC 2429-35; LE 20).

1185. Obligations. But work is not only a human right, it is “*an obligation, a duty on the part of man*” (LE 16). We have a moral obligation to work:

- a) to maintain and develop our humanity, according to the Creator’s plan,
- b) as a source of the aid and support of our families, our country and the whole human family.

PCP II affirms that workers must “discharge their responsibilities properly” (PCP II 320).

1186. Both rights and duties are greatly enhanced in a Christian “*spirituality of work*” proposed in PCP II as part of a larger “*spirituality of Social Transformation*” (cf. PCP II 317, 262-82). *First*, through work we “*share in the activity of the Creator*, and, within the limits of our own human capabilities, continue to develop and perfect that activity. *Second*, “by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ, we collaborate with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity” (cf. *Ibid.*, 24-27). John Paul II explained to the workers in Legazpi:

Christ himself immeasurably ennobled and sanctified all human work by his work as a carpenter in Nazareth and by his many other labors, thus conferring on workers a special solidarity with himself and giving them a share in his own redemptive work (John Paul II, *Legazpi*, 7).

E. Preferential Option for the Poor

1187. The Church’s social doctrine is marked with a “preferential option for the poor” (CA 57). PCP II asserts that this option, following Christ’s own,

takes on great urgency in our country where a very great number of our people wallow in abject poverty and misery, while tremendous social privileges and deference are accorded the rich and powerful (PCP II 312).

This option, however, must be properly understood. The Church obviously desires to bring the message of salvation to *every* human being, to *every* culture and social environment, but *in the first place* to those who are most in need. Thus “***the preference for the poor is a Christian preference,***” for Christ came to proclaim a message of salvation to the poor (cf. *John Paul II, To People of Tondo, 3*). It is “an option in the exercise of Christian charity to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ. But it applies equally to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living” (SRS 42).

1188. *The basis for this option is Christ’s own teaching and action, revealing God’s own love (cf. CCC 2448). “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; . . . He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor” (Lk 4:18); “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (Lk 7:22).*

But the poor ***are not mere receivers of the Gospel. They are also bearers of God’s Word,*** evangelizers, constantly challenging the Christian community to conversion. The poor incarnate the evangelical values in their lives:

Blest are you poor, the reign of God is yours;
Blest are you who hunger, you shall be filled;
Blest are you who are weeping, you shall laugh.
Blest shall you be when men hate you, when they ostracize you and in-sult you and proscribe your name
as evil because of the Son of Man . . .
Rejoice and exult, for your reward shall be great in heaven.

(Lk 6:20-23).

1189. Such a Christian option surely pertains directly to our specific situation wherein for so many Filipinos *poverty, exploitation and injustice* have become their “*way of life.*” As Christian Filipinos, we are challenged by this preference for the poor to respond to this situation in a sincere “***commitment to justice.***” * John Paul II puts this challenge in world-wide perspective:

This love of preference for the poor cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future. To ignore these realities would mean becoming like the ‘rich man’ who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (cf. *Lk 16:19-31*) (SRS 42).

F. Justice and Charity

1190. But for the Christian, dynamically linked with the rational demands of justice is Christ’s fundamental *command of LOVE*. *PCP II* states: “While the demand for justice is implied in love, still justice ‘attains its inner fullness only in love.’ For in justice, the other person can remain ‘another,’ an alien. In love the other is a friend, even a brother or sister in Christ” (*PCP II 305*).

Therefore, evangelical love, and the vocation to be children of God to which all are called, have as a consequence the direct and imperative requirement of respect for all human beings in their rights to life and dignity. There is no gap between love of neighbor and desire for justice. To contrast the two is to distort both love and justice (*ICEL 57*).

PCP II summarizes this by quoting John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra*: “justice and love are the principal laws of social life” (*PCP II 304; cf. MM 39*).

1191. The *theory* is clear enough:

Love implies an absolute demand for justice, i.e., the recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. [And] justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a brother/sister of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love (*Justice in the World*).

Yet the *real problem* is not in the theory, but in the *praxis*. Justice taken only as an impartial legal structure to render everyone his/her due usually works well only if all have equal advantages and opportunities – which simply is not the case. Something much stronger than the “letter of the law” is needed to give each one his/her due. “Justice alone is not enough, it can lead to the negation and destruction of itself if that deeper power which is love is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions” (*John Paul II, Address to Diplomatic Corps, 5*).

G. Building a Just Society

1192. But in stressing *love* we are not referring to the pious, individualistic “charity” of the rich who give out of their superabundance, often acquired through unjust exploitation of the poor. Rather, we are referring to a charity that “is never able to be separated from *justice*” (*CL 42*). It is the love animating the Filipino Christian response to building a just society.

The lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in “public life,” that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good* (*CL 42*).

1193. Since we *Filipino Catholics* constitute the great majority of our nation, we hold the *primary responsibility for building a just Philippine society*. Contrary to the commonly voiced opinion that politics and public life are ‘dirty’ and to be shunned, *PCP II* “stands on record to urge lay faithful to participate actively and lead in renewing politics in accordance with the values of the Good News of Jesus” (*PCP II 350*).

This directive is in complete accord with the Church’s consistent teaching praising the “work of those, who as a service to others, dedicate themselves to the public good of the state and undertake the burdens of this task” (*GS 75*). John Paul develops this:

The lay faithful must bear witness to those human and Gospel values that are intimately connected with political activity itself, such as liberty and justice, solidarity, faithful and unselfish dedication for the good of all, a simple lifestyle, and a preferential love for the poor and the least” (*CL 42*).

1194. But this Christian service of society and others in justice and love can never be achieved on one’s own. *PCP II* points out that the problems of modern society are too complex and interdependent. They have to be approached through the moral and social virtue of *solidarity* (*cf. PCP II 294-96, 306*). “*Solidarity*” here does not mean merely a spirit of camaraderie or “team spirit,” or some vague feeling of compassion or good will. Rather, it stands for a “*firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, i.e., to the good of all and of each individual because we are really responsible for all*” (*SRS 38*).

1195. Such commitment embraces both the *object of social programs* – poverty and injustice, promotion of peace on all levels, preservation of natural resources, and the like. It also embraces the *means* – outlawing the use of violence and the abuse of individual person’s rights in the pursuit of the common good. Moreover it extends internationally to the interrelations between all nations (*cf. CCC 2437-42*).

INTEGRATION

1196. The basic social obligations of Catholic morality just outlined draw directly on the *doctrinal truth* of *creation*, as well as on the additional truths of Christ's *redemptive Incarnation* and the *sanctifying mission* of the Spirit. But what is most needed is a vigorous development of these traditional truths in a *Filipino social context*, and within an ongoing evolutionary perspective.

1197. The *worship dimension* and this *thrust for social justice* are equally essential to each other. *PCP II* declares that "the social apostolate without worship will lose its source of strength, while worship without the social apostolate will turn into worship divorced from life" (*PCP II 185*). Worship overcomes any temptation to "ideology" in our social catechesis by its concrete focus on the *spiritual dimension* of integral human liberation/development, together with the economic, social and political liberation. Likewise, the social thrust is needed for authentic worship to keep it from self-centered, idolatrous hypocrisy. That is really what the two Great Love Commandments make plain in their inner interrelation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1198. *What is an essential dimension of preaching the Gospel today?*

"Action on behalf of justice, and participation in the transformation of the world and the promotion of human rights, appear as an essential dimension of preaching the Gospel today" (*JW*).

1199. *What are some major problems throughout the Philippines today?*

The question of justice, and the problems of stealing on all levels, due primarily to the widespread poverty, violation of human rights, and the exploitation of both persons and natural resources, are major problems of our country.

PCP II calls for a real "social transformation" that responds to the challenges of building a new society of justice and peace.

1200. *How does the Seventh Commandment foster social justice?*

"You shall not steal" fosters social justice as it prohibits all ways of robbing others' freedom by stealing what is rightfully theirs.

In today's economic world, this prohibition includes both private possessions and public properties, and actions such as corporation manipulations, unjust trade agreements and the like.

PCP II urges "a passionate care of our earth and our environment."

1201. *How does the Tenth Commandment foster social justice?*

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house, or anything else that belongs to him" fosters social justice by prohibiting the distorted desires of the heart from which stealing and exploitation of our neighbor arise.

It forbids not only unjust craving but also envy at another's success, such as seen in Cain's "envy-hatred-murder" pattern.

1202. *What is the real problem raised by the Tenth Commandment?*

The Tenth Commandment lays bare our powerlessness to check all our disordered desires, and thus reform our lives not only exteriorly but especially interiorly.

Christ's encounter with the "rich young man" brings out the almost diabolical hold which riches have on us. We thus come to realize our basic need to be saved by God's merciful love and power.

1203. *What is the Gospel picture of social responsibility?*

The Gospels sketch social responsibility in terms of:

- reform of life, as in John the Baptist's preaching;
- conversion of heart, as sketched in Jesus' parables;
- restitution, as praised by Jesus in Zacchaeus.

Basic to all three stages is a fundamental trust in God as all-Provident Father.

1204. *What role does the Church play in temporal affairs?*

The Church's action "is not political, or economic, or technical, but rather religious and moral in nature, strengthening the spiritual and moral bases of society." (*John Paul II*)

The Church's social doctrine offers:

- principles for reflection;
- criteria for judgments; and
- criteria for action.

Typical concerns of the Church are human rights and new insights such as the notion of social sin.

1205. *What are the Church's guiding truths for Filipino Catholics in political life?*

The basic truths for political involvement proposed by the Church are:

- pursuit of the common good as objective basis;
- in defense and promotion of justice for all;
- inspired and guided by the spirit of service;
- imbued with the love of preference for the poor;
- empowerment of the people to be carried out both as process and goal of political activity.

1206. *What is meant by "social sin"?*

The term "social sin" is used to describe situations or structures which cause or support evil, or fail through complicity or indifference to redress evils when it is possible. Such sinful structures are always "rooted in personal sin" (*cf. also Chap. 14, nos. 769-71*).

"Typical social sins" in the Philippine context include prostitution, pornography, consumerism and militarism.

1207. *What is the Church's position on private property?*

The right to private property is valid and necessary, but second to the intrinsically *social function* of all property.

The Seventh and Tenth Commandments protect property from theft "from above" (rich and powerful robbing the poor) and theft "from below" (the have-nots robbing the well-to-do).

1208. *What is the basis for the Church's social teaching?*

The intrinsic dignity of every human person and the basic human solidarity are the basis for the Church's social teaching.

1209. *What is the Church's teaching on work?*

Work as one distinguishing characteristic of human beings, is an essential key to the social question, especially when seen in terms of the person who is the subject/agent of work and the primary basis for its value.

1210. *What is meant by the “primacy of work as subjective”?*

This phrase stresses:

- human persons are the purpose of work, i.e., work is to achieve human fulfillment, first in the family, then in the larger community;
- the priority of labor over capital,
- the primacy of persons over things.

1211. *What are the consequences of this primacy?*

The primacy of work as subjective grounds *three basic rights*:

- the right to work;
- the right to a just share in the fruits of the work;
- the right to organize to defend the worker’s interests.

1212. *What duties go with these rights?*

The right to work also involves the *duty* to work, and the right to a just salary involves the *duty* to work honestly. Both rights and duties are enhanced by a proper “*spirituality of work*” which develops the insight of seeing work as “sharing in the activity of the Creator.”

1213. *What is meant by “preferential option for the poor”?*

This option is a “Christian preference” by which the Church desires to bring the message of salvation to every human being, to every culture and social environment, but in the first place to those who are most in need.

It follows the teaching and example of Christ himself, and the exercise of Christian charity to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness.

1214. *How are justice and Christian charity related?*

Christian charity implies an absolute demand for justice, and justice attains its inner fullness only in love.

1215. *What constitutes a primary responsibility for Filipino Christians?*

Christian Filipinos today face a major responsibility in working to build a just society. We are called to bear witness to the human and Gospel values that are intimately involved in the economic, social and political areas of activity.

Chapter 21

Respecting Truth

“If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

(Jn 8:31-32)

“Acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth. See to it, then, that you put an end to lying. Let everyone speak the truth to his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

(Eph 4:23-25)

OPENING

1216. This chapter takes up the final specific way we are to “love our neighbors,” namely, *by respecting their honor and good name in our everyday speech*. We do this through speaking truthfully, especially in public testimony. The theme of truthful witness flows naturally from the concern for justice in the preceding chapter. For just as we are commanded *not* to steal our neighbors’ goods by using false measures and weights, so we are commanded not to steal their good name and honor by false or idle words in conversation with others. False words pervert justice even more than false weights do, for they pollute the source and wellspring of social relationships that ground our communities and our whole culture.

1217. *Respecting Truth*, then, *involves much more than “telling the truth,”* or merely avoiding “verbal offenses” or “lying.” Modern man is caught up in the continuous process of searching for truth – through modern physical and social sciences, through history, philosophy and the arts. We all participate in this search for truth in our own unique ways: in reflecting on our lives, in constant dialogue with others, in our community activities – and especially in our converse with God in prayer. If we stop this search for truth, we become intolerant and intolerably self-centered and self-satisfied. Without truth we can neither develop authentically as human persons, nor relate positively to others in community.

1218. *Truth* actually *envelops our whole being*. 1) There is the *truth* of our *thoughts* when they *correspond to reality* and are *not erroneous*. 2) Then there is the *truth* of our *words*, when we honestly declare what we really think and are *not lying*. Finally, 3) there is the *truth* of our *actions* that

correspond to our words, so we are *not hypocrites* who say one thing and do another. *Each kind of truth* – of our thoughts, our words, and our actions – relates to others, and like our very persons is *essentially relational*. Truth, then, is not some private possession of ours, “all-our-own.” Rather it is the center, the meaning, and the goal of our lives as members of the human community and as disciples of Christ. Thus Christ proclaimed before Pilate: “The reason I was born, the reason why I came into the world, to testify to the truth” (*Jn 18:37*).

CONTEXT

1219. We Filipinos naturally value one who is honest in speaking and acting. We reject pretense (*pagkukunwari*), empty words and promises (*palabas lang, pakitang tao*), or double-faced persons (*doble-cara*), and over-acting (*OA, porma lamang*). Dishonesty and hypocrisy are condemned because we see how they can turn a person’s whole life into a “*living lie*.” Yet, on the other hand, most of us are so fond of *gossip* (*tsismis*) that it has almost become a major pre-occupation. Despite occasional warnings in Sunday sermons perhaps, we never really take seriously the harmful effects that careless gossip can cause to individuals and to the community itself. . . .

Until, of course, we ourselves become the object of gossip. Then we become so concerned about our own and our family’s reputation that we will go to any lengths to safeguard our good name, even at the expense of others. Or we do things like attending Mass on Sundays, or “generously” contributing to some charitable cause, to have “good standing” in the community, and possibly enhance our business and political interests. For many of us, “What will the neighbors say?” seems to be a stronger motivating factor than truth or justice.

1220. Much is said in newspapers, magazines and TV talk shows about the “*credibility gap*” which has developed in many spheres of Filipino life. Who can be trusted? Who should be believed? Whose statements are credible and trustworthy? Because of some highly publicized scandals and anomalies, credibility has suffered in various government agencies, political parties, educational institutions, business corporations, news media, and advertising.

Yet with it all, as Christians, we Filipinos have a *deep-down, unquenchable longing for truth*. What needs to be developed in our modern Filipino culture is a *more critical sense to discern* the truth from falsehood, the genuine from the sham, the authentic from the imitation. Amidst all the confusion, deception and manipulation, we Filipinos must discover that truth which Christ promised “will set us free,” and enable us to live together in mutual respect and harmony.

EXPOSITION

I. THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

1221. “**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor**” (*Ex 20:16; Dt 5:20*). Like the other Commandments, this Commandment must be understood in the context of the *Covenant*. For *truth* and *truthful witness* in the Judaeo-Christian tradition are never just an individual “private matter.” Neither do they refer to some impersonal, philo-scientific notion of “unveiling” objective reality. Rather truth means primarily that quality of human interpersonal relationships and behavior that is:

- grounded in God, the *Father*, the Source of all Truth,

- was fully manifested in his **Son**, JESUS CHRIST (*cf. Jn 1:14*), who IS the TRUTH (*cf. Jn 14:6*), come to set us free (*cf. Jn 8:32*),
- and sends his **Spirit of Truth** that proceeds from the Father (*cf. Jn 15:26; CCC 2465-66*).

1222. This understanding of truth is co-natural to us Filipinos. We habitually view everything in terms of the personal. The Eighth Commandment, then, is clearly aimed against the serious, destructive perversions of the truth that radically damage the life of the community. Moreover we can relate this Eighth Commandment with the Second, since both Commandments deal with speaking a “name” which stands for the whole person. The Second Commandment, of course, commands absolute reverence and respect in using God’s name, whereas the Eighth deals with the honor and respect owed to our fellow community members in our speech.

A. Scriptural Meaning

1223. In its original meaning in the **Old Testament**, the Eighth Commandment referred to public witness given in a court of law, upon which the life or death of the defendant often depended. The freedom and very life of fellow human beings, therefore, were at stake. This explains the severity of the punishment for breaking the commandment. For example, Jezebel had two “scoundrels” give false witness against Naboth in order to have him stoned to death, so that King Ahab, her husband, could take possession of Naboth’s small vineyard. In punishment, the Lord sent Elijah to Ahab declaring: “Because you have given yourself up to . . . evil, I will destroy you . . . because of how you have provoked me by leading Israel into sin” (*1 Kgs 21:20-22*).

A second example is given in the trial of Susanna, wherein the two elders who had given false testimony, were, “according to the law of Moses, . . . put to death” (*Dn 13:61b-62a; Dt 19:18-19*). Both examples clearly bring out the extreme *social importance* of giving truthful witness.

1224. The **prophets** were likewise strong in denouncing false witness, especially Israel’s infidelity to Yahweh. **Hosea** charged the people with perversity: “You have cultivated wickedness, reaped perversity, and eaten the fruit of falsehood” (*Hos 10:13*). **Amos** castigated them “because of the lies which their fathers followed” (*Amos 2:4*). **Isaiah** admitted “we have made lies our refuge and in falsehood we have found a hiding place” (*Is 28:15*). Thus Yahweh declared: “Your lips speak falsehood, and your tongues utter deceit. No one brings suit justly, and no one pleads truthfully” (*Is 59:3-4*). Even the Psalmist attacked evil judges: “Do you indeed like gods pronounce justice and judge fairly, you men of rank? Nay, you willingly commit crimes; on earth you look to the fruits of extortion” (*Ps 58:2-3*). The Old Testament condemned false witness, then, because it aggressively attacked the fidelity owed to Yahweh and fellow Israelites, on which the very life of the covenant rested.

1225. In the **New Testament**, **Christ** showed himself not only 1) **Lord of the Commandments**, but also 2) a **man of the Commandments**. Jesus is *Lord* of the Eighth Commandment because: “For this was I born, for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice” (*Jn 18:37*). As Lord, Jesus commanded: “You have heard the commandment ‘Do not take a false oath.’ What I tell you is: do not swear at all . . . Say ‘Yes’ when you mean ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ when you mean ‘No.’ Anything beyond that is from the evil one” (*Mt 5:33-37*). For Christians, Jesus himself becomes the norm for the truth of our basic relationship with God. “Who is the liar? He who denies that Jesus is the Christ. He is the antichrist, denying the Father and the Son” (*1 Jn 2:22*).

1226. As a *man of the Commandments*, Jesus was always himself, never “playing roles” or “putting on a false face” to impress others or win their allegiance. He was always true to himself and completely open to others, dealing with them not in abstract generalities, but in truth, i.e., in the reality of their

concrete situation. Thus did Jesus act in calling common fishermen like Peter, Andrew, James and John, to be his disciples (*cf. Lk 5:1-11*). So also in receiving Nicodemus, the Pharisee, who came by night (*cf. Jn 3:1*). In curing the Roman centurion's servant boy (*cf. Mt 8:5-13*), or the daughter of the pagan Canaanite woman (*cf. Mk 7:24-30*), Jesus was just exercising his saving mission. Most of all, he revealed his true identity in forgiving the sins of the paralytic (*cf. Mk 2:10*) and the penitent woman (*cf. Lk 7:36f*).

In all his relationships with the high and the low, Jesus related to the concrete person before him, exactly the way he/she was, both consciously within and exteriorly without.

B. Liberating Power of Truth

1227. Jesus proclaimed the *liberating power of truth*. "I am the light of the world; no follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness; no, he shall possess the light of life. . . . If you live according to my teaching, you are truly my disciples; then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (*Jn 8:12, 31b-32*). Illumined in this light, all useless talk is condemned: "I assure you, on judgment day people will be held accountable for every unguarded word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (*Mt 12:36-37*).

1228. But the strongest condemnation was reserved for those whose actions did not correspond to their words. "Their words are bold but their deeds are few. They bind up heavy loads, [hard to carry] to lay on other men's shoulders, while they themselves will not lift a finger to budge them. All their works are performed to be seen. . . . Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you frauds! You are like whitewashed tombs, beautiful to look at on the outside, but inside full of filth and dead men's bones. Thus you present to view a holy exterior while hypocrisy and evil fill you within" (*Mt 23:4-5, 27-28*).

1229. In contrast, Christ *called his disciples to imitate his transparent openness* to truth in their *thoughts, words and actions*. a) He prayed: "they have known that in truth I came from you, Father, consecrate them by means of truth . . . and I consecrate myself for their sakes, that they may be consecrated in truth" (*Jn 17:8,17, 19*). b) They were to *say* what they knew was the truth. "If we say, 'we are free of the guilt of sin,' we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us" (*1 Jn 1:8*). c) They were called to *act* according to what they said. "If we say, 'we have fellowship with him,' while continuing to walk in darkness, we are liars and do not act in truth" (*1 Jn 1:6*). "The man who claims, 'I have known him,' without keeping his Commandments, is a liar; in such a one there is no truth" (*1 Jn 2:4*). For Christ's disciples, St. Paul counsels: "We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the sake of truth" (*2 Cor 13:8*).

C. Social Dimension

1230. The liberating power of truth intensifies the *universal need to seek the truth*, and brings out more sharply its intrinsic *social dimension*. The inescapable human need for truth is *grounded on the dignity of every man and woman*.

It is in accordance with their dignity that all men, because they are persons, that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore bearing personal responsibility, are both impelled by their nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once they come to know it, and direct their whole lives in accordance with the demands of the truth (*DH 2*).

1231. Moreover, the very *pursuit of truth* has an essentially *social dimension*.

The search for truth, however, must be carried out in a manner that is appropriate to the dignity of the human person and his social nature, namely, by free enquiry with the help of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue. It is by these means that men share with each other the truth they have discovered, in such a way that they help one another in the search for truth. Moreover, it is by personal assent that they must adhere to the truth they have discovered (*DH 3*).

Moreover, as Christians, we are all called to **witness to the truth**, as the *martyrs* did of old to an extraordinary degree (*cf. CCC 2471-74*). St. Paul wrote to Timothy: “never be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but with the strength that comes from God, bear your share of the hardship which the gospel entails” (*2 Tim 1:8*).

II. TODAY’S DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

1232. Today Christian Filipinos are called to follow Christ their Lord in truthful personal, interpersonal, and communitarian relations. Ordinary conversation and dialogue are the usual ways by which we come to know one another. We thus develop close personal relationships within our families and beyond, without hypocrisy or sham. The goal of all speech and communication is not just self-expression, but the building up of love relationships with others to form a genuine community. Simply *listening to another*, or encouraging with an occasional word of praise, can do wonders. Our truthful words and actions can be truly *creative*. They can build up the speaker/doer into a person of integrity and honesty. They can create in the listeners/witnesses a positive atmosphere of fidelity, trust, and communion, as well as offer good example for imitation.

A. Offenses Against the Truth

1233. **Lying** is the most common and direct offense against the truth (*cf. CCC 2482-87*). Whereas truthfulness is the virtue by which we speak and act according to reality, lying is the **intentional misrepresentation of the truth by word, gesture, or even silence**. To deliberately intend to mislead other *persons who have the right to know the truth* can do real violence to them. For it denies them the knowledge they need to make their judgments and decisions. Moreover, lying plants seeds of division and mistrust in the minds of others, and thus weakens the whole network of social relationships which constitute the community. The evil of lying, of course, varies with the nature of the truth it distorts, the circumstances, the intentions of the person telling the lie, and the damage suffered by its victims.

1234. St. James offers a vivid description of the evils of the tongue:

See how tiny the spark is that sets a huge forest ablaze. The tongue is such a flame. It exists among our members as a whole universe of malice. The tongue defiles the entire body . . . and its flames encircle our course from birth, . . . the tongue no man can tame. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. We use it to say, “Praised be the Lord and Father”; then we use it to curse men, though they are made in the likeness of God. Blessing and curse come out of the same mouth (*Jas 3:5-10*).

1235. But **why do we fall into telling lies**? The reasons are manifold, depending on our own complex make-up and situation. But lies often begin with **self-deception**. Such deception comes from the fact that in our conscious relating to others, we are threefold: 1) the way we really are, 2) the way we think we are, and 3) the way we would like to be. Now the gap between *the way we think we are*, and *the way we would like to be*, is often quite large. This causes us frustration, and a hidden, often unconscious, attempt to reduce the other to our level. For example, instead of realizing and admitting we are aroused by envy, we criticize our neighbor for being greedy and enjoying ill-gotten possessions. Lying in these cases is really an **act of aggression** which strikes out against the other.

1236. Such lying can seriously harm:

- the integrity and reputation of the person lied about;
- those hearing the lie who are thereby led into error;
- the peace and harmony of the community; and finally,
- the genuine good of the person who lied. For liars become victims of their own lies, losing their self-respect before others, and shackling their own freedom by the web of entanglements woven by their own deception.

1237. But there are many kinds, motivations, and situations of lying. There are the common so-called “*white lies*” of *boasting* (*pasiklab*), exaggerating one’s qualities or actions to gain favor with others (cf. CCC 2481). Other lies are caused by *fear*, escapist lying (*palusot*), or for *saving face* (preserving one’s supposed good image before others, or avoiding possible recriminations). Sometimes it is just a case of *careless lying* (*sabi-sabi*), or simple *flattery* (*bola*). Often these individual lies are of small moment, but the damage done to the persons involved, especially in the situations created and the bad habits formed, is not easily rectified.

1238. But other lies can be of a more serious nature. Lies told from *malice*, to harm others; lies of *propaganda* or *for profit*, by government offices, or, more commonly, in commercial advertising, which intentionally deceive and lead others into error; lies of *hypocrisy* or of *half-truths* by which the truth is twisted or slanted to seem to say something which is not so. Contrived *flattery* of others can be lying when it is obviously exaggerated in order to gain undue favor of authorities, or win favor with another in personal relations or in politics (cf. CCC 2480). Even *silence* (*pa-simple*) can be a lie when it is the coward’s “refuge” to avoid trouble or to support something known to be wrong.

1239. More serious still are *false witness* and *perjury* which take place when the lie is spoken in public, particularly in a court of justice. Through such lying, innocent persons may be condemned, or guilty persons exonerated, thereby compromising the exercise of justice in the community. To “swear to tell truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” and then go back on one’s word, is to be guilty of *perjury*.

B. Lying Against Our Neighbor

1240. In *detraction* and *slander/calumny* we destroy the good name of our neighbors by publicly revealing, without necessity, their hidden faults. The faults may be real, as in *detraction*, or invented – which is worse – as in *calumny* and *slander* (cf. CCC 2477). Both cases, however, sin against charity and justice, for we *unnecessarily* deprive others of their right to a good name and the esteem of their fellowmen. What perhaps is more common is “*tale-bearing*,” among children, and *gossip* (*tsismis*) among adults. We find such faults listed by St. Paul: “I fear that when I come I may find you not to my liking . . . I fear I may find discord, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, slander and gossip, self-importance, and disorder” (2 Cor 12:20). The tragedy here is not so much in cases where legal action against libel is possible. Rather it is the more common occurrence of reputations destroyed by false rumors and innuendoes, which create *prejudices*, *suspensions*, *rash judgments*, and *irrational hostile attitudes* without any real basis.

1241. In terms of personal morality, a few *general moral principles* are helpful. *First, truth is a value in itself*; therefore, we have the general duty to tell the truth (truthfulness); only a greater obligation in charity – real love for others – can, in certain specific circumstances, suspend this duty. *Second,*

normally *we owe the truth to those who have the right to know*. But not everyone has a right to know everything we know, especially if the persons are indiscreet, or the knowledge would harm them. *Third, the common good can demand* at times – for example in testifying in a court case – *that the witness tell the truth even if this might cause difficulty to family or friends*.

1242. Truth in Love. St. Paul urges: “Let us *profess the truth in love* and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head” (*Eph 4:15*). So lying and falsehood are not the only problems we meet in truthful communication. To speak the truth in love cannot be done automatically; it is something we have to learn. For example, *some* are so anxious “to be loved,” to get along with others, that they are *afraid* to confront them with the truth. *Others never listen* enough to others to be able to speak the truth in love.

1243. A *third* type of persons *uses truth to beat others down*, rather than to build up relationships. They are so proud of their absolute truthfulness that they ruthlessly use “truth” to hurt others. The genuine truth fostered by the Eight Commandment and in the light of Christ always looks to the persons in their concrete human situation, involving loving concern for the neighbor. A good rule of thumb, then, is to ask three questions: “*Is it true?*”, “*Is it necessary?*”, “*Is it kind?*” The basic value remains the same: to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

1244. The “right to communication of the truth” is neither unconditional nor absolute (*cf. CCC 2488*). Rather it must conform to the Gospel law of love of neighbor which comes first. *Serving the truth* is always first of all *servicing others*, in the specific concrete events and realities of their lives. We are, therefore, called upon to judge whether or not it is appropriate to remain silent about what need not be known. Common reasons would be the good and security of others, respect for their private lives, or the avoidance of scandal.

Beyond these universal reasons, there are the particular **law of secrecy** which binds *the confessor*, and certain **professional codes** which require strict confidentiality, such as in the relationship between *doctor and patient*, or between *lawyer and client* (*cf. CCC 2490-91*).

1245. But perhaps the greatest challenge to truthful communication today comes from **mass media** (*cf. CCC 2493-99*). *First*, there is *modern advertising* which has become a full-fledged industry whose major goal is to sell the product in question, whether or not it has any particular objective value, by creating a felt-need in the prospective buyers. Reputable advertising agencies have already recognized their responsibility for honest and truthful presentations. In some cases they have voluntarily produced a production code that rejects misleading and exaggerated claims, the use of sexist means to arouse false needs and desires, and the like.

1246. *Second*, since newspapers, radio and TV are the *major sources for information* for the average Filipino, they have the responsibility for *truthful, fair, and objective presentation of the news*. They must strive to respect both the nature of the facts and the limits of their critical judgment of others.

C. Christian Witness To Truth

1247. To speak the truth about one’s neighbor involves every Christian in *bearing witness to Jesus Christ*. For in identifying himself with the least of his brethren, Jesus has become neighbor to each of us. As such, he has become in a real way *dependent on the witness of others*. After sharing everything with his disciples during his earthly life, Jesus as the Risen Christ sent them his Spirit with the mission: “You are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes even to the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8*). The disciples were to give a faithful account of what they had personally experienced:

This is what we proclaim to you: . . .
what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes,
what we have looked upon, and our hands have touched. . .
– the Word of Life – we have seen and bear witness to it,
and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present
to the Father
and became visible to us.
What we have seen and heard, we proclaim in turn to you,
so that you may share life with us.
This fellowship of ours is with the Father
and with His Son, Jesus Christ (*1 Jn 1:1-3*).

1248. As disciples of Christ, we Catholic Filipinos have received this same call. We are to be Jesus Christ’s witnesses before men and women today. To be such, we must “strip away everything vicious, everything deceitful, pretenses, jealousies and disparaging remarks of any kind” (*1 Pt 2:1*), in order “to put on the new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth” (*Eph 4:24*). As followers of Christ who is Truth itself (*cf. Jn 18:37*) St. Paul urges us as he wrote to Timothy: “Never be ashamed of your testimony to the Lord” (*2 Tim 1:8*). Through truthful harmony between thoughts and words, and between words and actions, we are “to love in deed and in truth, and not merely talk about it” (*1 Jn 3:18*).

1249. Yet, despite our best efforts, we know our witness is bound to be imperfect and distorted. Jesus foresaw this and made provisions to strengthen us. “When the *Paraclete* comes, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father and whom I myself will send from the Father — he will bear witness on my behalf. And you must bear witness as well” (*Jn 15:26-27*). If truth for us is not mere words or propositions, but ultimately Christ himself, then to “live in the truth” means to share in his life. This sharing we call *grace* – our sharing, through the Spirit, in Christ’s own life of loving God and neighbor. Truth and love are thus united in the Christian disciple’s following of Christ.

It is a false love which scorns truth. But again it is a false zeal for truth which destroys love. Truthfulness only occurs in the atmosphere of love. We are to bear our witness to the neighbor, by looking towards the witness of Jesus Christ himself, who is called in the New Testament, ‘the faithful and true witness’ (*Rv 3:14*). [Blaise Pascal]

INTEGRATION

1250. This chapter on the morality of loving our neighbor by telling the truth, has consistently brought out its *doctrinal basis*: *the created human person’s intrinsic dignity*. As this was the doctrinal ground for justice regarding one’s possessions, it is even more so here concerned with justice regarding one’s good name. The Christian truths of creation, redemption, divine indwelling, and final destiny guarantee our inalienable dignity as persons.

1251. Less clear perhaps is the *intrinsic connection between telling the truth and prayer and worship*. For it is not only a question of truthful worship – “when authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth” (*Jn 4:23*). Rather it is more a case of the personal prayer and liturgical worship needed “to profess the truth in love” (*Eph 4:15*). For this demands a *spiritual maturity and*

discernment that only comes through a vibrant spiritual life of growth in the Spirit and ever closer intimacy with Christ our Savior.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1252. *Why is the question of “truth” taken up here?*

Respecting the honor and good name of others in our everyday speech is an essential way of “loving our neighbor.” We do this especially in giving public witness.

1253. *What is “truth” as taken up in this chapter?*

As taken up in this chapter, “truth” can refer to our:

- a) *thoughts*, insofar as they correspond to reality, and therefore are *not erroneous*;
- b) *words*, when we say what we think and are *not lying*; and finally
- c) *actions*, when we do what we say and are *not hypocrites* who say one thing and do another.

1254. *How important is “truth” for Christian moral life?*

In our age of “credibility gaps,” we realize the importance of truth simply to enable us to live and work together in family and community, and to grow into the integrity we are called to as disciples of Christ.

In his encyclical “Splendor of the Truth,” John Paul II has rested the whole of Christian morality firmly on truth.

1255. *How does the Eighth Commandment foster truth, justice and love?*

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” prohibits destructive perversions of the truth that damage the life of the *covenant* community. Like all the others, the Eighth Commandment must be understood in the context of the *Covenant*. It thus touches the *truth* involved in the human interpersonal relationships of *justice* and *love* that ground the community’s life.

1256. *What is the specifically Christian view of this “truth”?*

The covenant community is built up by the *truth* that is:

- grounded in God the Father, the Source of all truth;
- fully revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ, who *is* the Truth, come to set us free; and
- indwelling in us in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

1257. *How is the “truth” grounded in Scripture?*

In the Old Testament, false witnesses were punished severely. The prophets denounced the whole people’s false witness in their infidelity to Yahweh.

In the New Testament, Christ is both

- *Lord of the Eighth Commandment* as “the Truth” in himself, and
- *man of the Commandments* as always being perfectly honest, truthful, and open with everyone he encountered.

1258. *How is truth “liberating”?*

Christ as the Truth liberates by freeing us from ignorance, prejudice, lying and hypocrisy.

He taught and prayed for his disciples that they be open and true in their thoughts, words and deeds.

1259. *What is meant by the “social dimension” of truth?*

Truth’s intrinsic social dimension flows from the very nature of human persons who need truth simply to exist and grow as persons and members of the human community. Without truthful personal, interpersonal and societal relationships, human persons wither and die.

1260. *How do we sin against truth?*

We sin against truth most commonly by the many forms of **lying**, as well as by tale-bearing, gossip, rash judgments, prejudices, detraction, slander, and perjury.

1261. *How can telling lies harm the community?*

Telling lies about oneself or others can harm:

- the integrity of the person lied about;
- those hearing the lie and led into error;
- the peace and harmony of the community; and
- the genuine good of the person who lied.

1262. *Why do people tell lies?*

In practice, there are all kinds of motives and situations that lead us into telling lies:

- exaggerations to impress others;
- fear of others, or saving face before others;
- flattery.

More serious are lies that are told:

- from malice, in order to harm others;
- from greed, in order to deceive and gain the upper hand;
- from hypocritical motives;
- as false witness or perjury in courts of justice.

1263. *How should we foster truth in community?*

St. Paul urges us to “profess the truth in love.” This demands a certain *maturity* and *discernment*. For we can offend against genuine truth when we use it to harm others. When, for example, we publicly proclaim to those who do not need to know, harmful “brute facts” about someone. Before proclaiming any “truth” we should ask three questions:

“Is it true?” “Is it necessary?” “Is it kind?”

1264. *What is meant by “Christian witness to truth”?*

In speaking the truth about our neighbor, we inescapably bear witness to Jesus Christ who has identified himself with our neighbor.

Christ himself has become dependent upon the witness of others, first, by his chosen Twelve, then down through the ages by his disciples.

We Filipinos today are called to offer witness to Christ our Truth, through the power of the Holy Spirit sent us.

Part Three

Christ, Our Life

Our Christian living is centered on Jesus Christ who is himself “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

(cf. Jn 14:6)

INTRODUCTION

Part One, *Doctrine*, presents Christ as the *Truth* who reveals God the Father Creator, in His own Redemptive mission. Part Two presents *Moral Life* as the following of Christ, the *Way*.

Here Part Three, *Worship*, presents Christ as our *Life*, life in the *Holy Spirit*. “It is the Spirit that gives life” (*Jn 6:63*). In worship and prayer we experience Christ as our life, a life in the Holy Spirit, within us and among us.

This Part Three picks up the *Creed* again, beginning with its final section on the *Holy Spirit* as “Lord and Giver of Life.” It then takes up the Spirit’s three basic activities according to the Creed. *First* in constituting the *Church*, the communion of saints. *Second*, in *sanctifying us* by the *graced, sacramental life* of the Church. *Third*, in preparing us for our final destiny, *resurrection to life everlasting* with the Triune God. “If the Spirit of Him [the Father] who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He. . . will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through His Spirit dwelling in you” (*Rom 8:11*).

This *graced life* in Christ has its source in his *Paschal Mystery*. When Jesus had been “*lifted up*” on the *Cross*, from his pierced side “immediately blood and water flowed out ” (*Jn 19:34*). *Water* is a symbol of the Spirit and of *Baptism*, source of Life in Christ. *Blood* symbolizes the *Eucharist*, the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus, the new Paschal Lamb. Together, the two sacraments signify the *Church* in its *sacramental life* and *liturgical worship* of the Holy Trinity.

Jesus, “*lifted up*” at his *Resurrection* clothes the disciples “with power from on high” (*Lk 24:49*). Their *Mission* is to “go into the whole world and proclaim the ‘Good News’ to all creation” (*Mk 16:15*), and baptize those who believe “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Spirit (*Mt 28:19*)." Christ promises us: "I am with you always, until the end of the world" (*Mt 28:20*). For "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life" (*Jn 11:25*).

Chapter 22

The Holy Spirit: Giver of Life

God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of His Son which cries out: "Abba" (Father).

(Gal 4:6)

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.

(Nicene Creed)

OPENING

1265. In the *Nicene Creed* we proclaim our firm Catholic belief in the *Holy Spirit*, who together with the Father and the Son is the living God, the Blessed Trinity. Now, just as the third part of the Creed treats of the Holy Spirit and His activities, so too does this final, third part of the Catechism. For, as the "*Giver of Life*," the Holy Spirit gives life and empowers *the Church, its sacramental life, and resurrection to life everlasting*. These *three* form the final part of both the Creed and this Catechism.

1266. This chapter on the Holy Spirit also unites Part II on *Moral* life with this present Part III on *Worship*. For it is only through "the love of God. . . poured out in our hearts through the *Holy Spirit* who has been given us" (*Rom 5:5*) that we can both act morally and worship authentically as true disciples of Christ. Moreover it is always within a Christian community, the local Church, that we follow Christ in our moral lives and worship. For when the Holy Spirit "brings those who believe in Christ to a new life. . . He gathers them into one People of God" (*AG 15*).

CONTEXT

1267. We Filipino Catholics know we become Christians and enter the Church by being *baptized* “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the *Holy Spirit*.” As children, we are taught to pray with the Sign of the Cross: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the *Holy Spirit*.” Thus, we are early introduced to the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Yet, for many of us the Holy Spirit remains the “forgotten Person.”

1268. The *Trinity* is usually taught as a “mystery” which we *cannot* understand (*cf. NCDP 200*). It therefore has little practical importance, even in the prayer life of the ordinary Filipino Catholic. Unlike the great feasts of Christmas and Holy Week (Easter), both *Pentecost* and *Trinity Sunday* arouse little spontaneous interest and devotion. The feasts of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit are overshadowed by more “popular” celebrations such as town fiestas in honor of Patron Saints, Marian devotions like *Flores de Mayo*, or the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

1269. Filipino culture is replete with all kinds of “*spirits*,” but there is much confusion about them and how they act. On the one hand, Filipinos in general are curious about “faith healers” or mysterious spiritual forces. The latest reported miraculous apparition of the Virgin or of Sto. Niño, always arouses much excitement. But on the other hand, very little attention is paid to the “*discernment* of spirits” (*cf. 1 Cor 12:10*), or to the advice in Scripture to “*put the spirits to a test* to see if they are from God” (*1 Jn 4:1*).

1270. Yet in recent years many Filipinos have been rediscovering the Holy Spirit. The Charismatic Movement, both within and outside the Catholic Church, with its “baptism in the Spirit,” its healings, speaking in tongues, and the like, has attracted many who previously were only “lukewarm” Christians. “Born Again” Christians actively attest to the powerful action of the Spirit in their lives. This experience of the Spirit has strong roots in Filipino culture. There is a great felt-need for being closely united with others, for “belonging” (“*hindi tayo nag-iisa*”). Filipinos are strongly attracted and emotionally moved by common experiences expressed in song and dance. We are often described as possessing a natural enthusiasm or optimism, a strength from within – the Filipino’s “*lakas-loob*.”

Nevertheless, the questions of discernment and testing remain: Are all these happenings truly the work of the Holy Spirit? How are we to tell?

EXPOSITION

1271. In response, this chapter *first* takes up the complex problem of *how to discern the Spirit* in three steps:

- i) *where* to look for the Spirit, and *what* the Spirit is doing;
- ii) what are the major *difficulties* that arise;
- iii) the general ways of *overcoming them* in order to discern the Spirit .

The *second* major part of the chapter develops five areas of the *Spirit’s activity*: creation , salvation history, Christ , the Church , and finally, each of us. This makes it possible in the brief *third* and final section to treat the *identity of the Spirit* himself, especially as within the *Blessed Trinity*.

I. HOW TO DISCERN THE SPIRIT

First Step

1272. Where do we look for the Spirit? To learn about the Holy Spirit, we have to focus precisely on how the Spirit is active in our total lives. This means attending to our own personal experiences on the three basic levels. *First*, the “*within*” we experience in our own thoughts and feelings. *Second*, the *interpersonal experiences* we have with family and friends. *Third*, our work and our social life in the *community* and *parish*. It is in our actual, daily ongoing living in all these levels that we discover who the Holy Spirit is and how He operates in our lives.

1273. What is the Spirit doing? At the deepest level of our experience is our very identity as persons. How is God, and particularly the Holy Spirit, involved in our very own identity? The Creed offers a clear response by grounding:

- *who we are* – our basic identity – in **God our Father** who created us and adopted us as His children;
- *what we do* in the **divine Son** sent by the Father to become one of us (*cf. Gal 4:4-5*), to teach us how to love and bring “forgiveness for our sins” (*cf. Col 1:14*);
- *what we can hope for* in the **Spirit** of adoption who enables us to cry out ‘*Abba Father*’ He gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. . . heirs of God, heirs with Christ” (*Rom 8:15f*).

1274. But the Spirit’s action is not confined within the broad lines of the Creed’s Trinitarian structure. We realize, of course, that it is the Holy Spirit that animates “what we do” in following Christ the Son. He inspires our living according to “who we are” as sons/daughters of our Father. *Basically, the Spirit unites us with the Risen Christ and with one another in Christ’s Church.* The Spirit is doing this **now**, and by this action is moving us daily toward **the future** which God promised us – life everlasting.

Christ is now at work in the hearts of men by the power of his Spirit: not only does he arouse in them a desire for the world to come, but he *animates, purifies and strengthens* the generous aspirations of mankind to make life more humane and render the whole earth submissive to this goal (*cf. GS 38*).

1275. “What the Spirit is doing” alerts us to a *twofold truth*. *One*, that in some way the Spirit is like the air we breathe, the sea in which we sail or swim, the atmosphere in which “we live and move and have our being” (*Acts 17:28*). *Two*, we discover He is nevertheless **a divine Person, the personal love** of the Father and the Risen Christ present within and among us (*cf. CCC 685*).

Second Step

1276. Difficulties in recognizing the Spirit. But it is not always easy to recognize the Holy Spirit. This is due, *first*, to the Spirit Himself because, as Spirit, He has no shape or form. Consequently, in contrast to our many personal images of the Father and Christ our Lord, we are forced to represent the Spirit through impersonal symbols such as water, fire, cloud, wind and breath, or the image of a dove, white and innocent and airy (*cf. CCC 694-701*).

Moreover, the Spirit always acts in a completely self-less manner, leading us not to Himself but to Christ and the Father (*cf. CCC 687*). He “does not speak on his own,” but “only what He hears” from Christ, the Word (*cf. Jn 16:13*). Thus, instead of praying directly *to* the Spirit we more often pray *in* the Spirit through the Son to the Father.

1277. A *second* source of difficulty in recognizing the Spirit comes from our own limitations. *First*, in thinking about the Spirit. Unlike Christ and the Father, the Spirit is not something objective, “in front of us” as it were, but rather *within* our **subjective experience**. We do not so much *think about* the

Spirit with our “*head*,” making Him the object of our thought. Rather, it is more like *becoming conscious* of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the deepest level of our *hearts*, our *loob*. This is where we feel He is at work, making us aware of the Risen Christ and of God our Father alive and present to us. Christ promised his disciples at the Last Supper the **Spirit** of truth whom “*you can recognize* because He *remains with you* and will *be within you*” (*Jn 14:17*).

1278. A *second* “limitation” which impedes recognizing the Spirit is our self-centered tendency to seek extraordinary spiritual gifts. We Filipinos seem especially attracted to ecstasies, miracles, visions, and prophecies. This fascination can lead to many distorted notions of the Spirit. It also obscures the more important “ordinary gifts” of the Spirit, especially the highest gift, divine *Love* (*cf. Gal 5:22; 1 Cor 13*).

The practical awareness of this self-seeking tendency may be the reason behind a curious fact. We are taught to pray “*Our Father*,” and we constantly refer to Christ as “*Our Lord*.” But we do not presume to call upon the Holy Spirit as “*Our Spirit*.”

Third Step

1279. Overcoming the difficulties. Where, then, can we be sure of recognizing the Holy Spirit? (*Cf. CCC 688*.) Surely, in the *Sacred Scriptures*, which “make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and apostles” (*DV 21*). But Scripture must be “read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written” (*DV 12*). This happens in the *Sacred Tradition*, which is handed down in the *Church’s ordinary teaching*. It is through the authoritative teaching of the Bishops, which is guided by the Spirit, that clarity and correct judgment are assured. For it is “through the Holy Spirit [that] the living voice of the Gospel rings out in the Church – and through her in the world” (*DV 8*).

1280. We experience the Spirit particularly *in prayer*. “For we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us” (*Rom 8:26*). We Filipinos are noted for our many *devotional practices*, novenas, days of recollection and patron saints. But they are authentic Christian prayer only if carried on “in Spirit and in truth” (*Jn 4:23*). The test is how these devotions agree with the Church’s Spirit-inspired *liturgical worship*, and help build up and unite the local Christian community.

1281. *PCP II* sees encouraging signs that by forming themselves into “little communities of faith” Filipino Catholics are now “more able to put together the practices of popular piety with the greater use of Scripture, real liturgical worship, the building up of a faith community and involvement in social issues” (*PCP II 17*).

It is only “in the Spirit” that we can become more truly united in authentic “Christian” prayer. Thus in the Third Eucharistic Prayer we ask: “Grant that we who are nourished by his [Christ’s] body and blood may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ.”

1282. A further place for meeting the Spirit is *Christian witness* (*cf. PCP II 78*). From the earliest days of Christianity right up to the present day, the Spirit has inspired countless saints, blessed, and simple ordinary Christians, to daily acts of charity in following Christ. Some were called even to the extent of heroic martyrdom. Many are still called by God to dedicate themselves fully in a public way to His service in the Church by entering religious life and proclaiming through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience the power of grace to effect the sacrifices which the following of Christ crucified entails. Today we are constantly “surprised” by the Spirit. We often experience his action in the most unexpected persons, places, times, and ways.

1283. Discerning the Spirit. But, practically speaking, how can we discover these actions of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Many conflicting claims force us to what St. Paul calls “discernment of spirits” (*cf. 1 Cor 12:10*). Scripture and Catholic tradition offer some helpful guidelines. The Spirit:

- always *leads to faith in Jesus Christ* whom he glorifies; acts always *in keeping with Scripture and Tradition* showing unity, continuity and consistency;
- *gives spiritual gifts to individuals for the service of the community*: to build up the Christian community and fellowship, and work toward overcoming dissensions and factions (*cf. 1 Cor 1:10; 3:3*);
- is *known by his fruits* which St. Paul lists as “love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity” (*Gal 5:22*);
- is *authoritatively discerned*, and the proper use of his *Gifts* is judged by “those who preside over the Church whose office is not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good” (LG 12).
- is *found in humility*: “God resists the proud, but bestows His favor on the lowly” (*Jas 4:6*).

II. THE ACTIVITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1284. We now come to the actual study of the Spirit’s manifold activity. *Six areas* of the Spirit’s work are explored:

- a) in the whole creation, and especially among human persons, created in God’s image and likeness;
- b) in salvation history among the chosen People, Israel; and
- c) in the life, death, and resurrection of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Then we shall move to consider how the Spirit is experienced today,

- d) in the Church,
- e) in each of us as disciples of Christ, and finally
- f) in two basic life orientations.

A. The Spirit’s Activity in Creation

1285. In creation. The most basic activity of the Holy Spirit is *God’s creative power giving existence now to all reality and life to all living things* (*cf. CCC 703-4*). The Holy Spirit is symbolized by the mighty wind sweeping over the waters in the Genesis creation account (*cf. Gn 1:2*). He is acclaimed by the Psalmist: “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (*Ps 104:30*).

Contrary to a common misunderstanding that God’s creative action stopped in the past, we know that it is *the Spirit’s creative activity now that keeps everything existing*.

1286. Within all creation, it is especially in the *human person* that the Spirit is especially active. Created in God’s own image and likeness, the first human persons were vivified when God blew into their nostrils “the breath [Spirit] of life,” making them living beings (*cf. Gn 2:7*). The ancient hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* encompasses the whole human race in praying:

Come, Creator Spirit, visit the minds that are yours
Fill with heavenly grace the hearts that you created.

1287. For Filipinos, God as CREATOR is by far the most popular image. *PCP II* indicates a *new* example of God's creative power, His Spirit, working within us. It speaks glowingly of "people power" as "a recognition of God's fundamental gifts of freedom and responsibility" (*PCP II* 326-29).

B. The Spirit's Activity in Salvation History

1288. The Holy Spirit is ever active in human history, since the Fall of our first parents to the present day (*cf. CCC* 705-41). In the Spirit, **Abraham** heard and responded to God's call. The Spirit brought together the twelve tribes into one Chosen People, inspiring **Moses** to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, the house of slavery. **Joseph** was "a man so endowed with the Spirit of God" (*Gn* 41:38). **David's** last words claimed: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me" (*2 Sm* 23:2). In the book of **Judges** "the Spirit came upon Othaniel and Jephthah" (*Jg* 3:10;11:29), and "enveloped Gideon" (*Jg* 6:34). Most of all, the Spirit spoke through the *prophets* to renew the Chosen People.

1289. Two prophetic lines developed. One focused on "awaiting the Messiah," the other "announcing a New Spirit" (*cf. Is* 11:1-2). Both marked the faith of the 'remnant', "the poor of Yahweh" who awaited in hope "the consolation of Israel" and "the deliverance of Jerusalem" (*cf. Lk* 2:25, 28; *CCC* 711-13). Through His Spirit, God promised He would gather together the dispersed peoples, and bring new life back to dry bones. "Thus says the Lord God to these dry bones: See! I will bring Spirit into you, that you may come to life" (*Ez* 37:5). Finally, in the prophet **Joel**, God promised:

"I will pour out my Spirit upon *all mankind*.
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
your young men shall see visions;
Even upon the servants and the handmaids,
in those days, I will pour out my Spirit" (*Jl* 3:1-2).

C. The Spirit's Activity in Christ, the Promised Messiah

1290. This universal outpouring of the Spirit was to take place through the promised Messiah. Thus Peter proclaimed in his Pentecostal discourse: "Exalted at God's right hand, Jesus first received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, then poured this Spirit out on us" (*Acts* 2:33). So did the prophetic promise of the Spirit's outpouring find its perfect fulfillment in the life, Death and Resurrection of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

We shall sketch briefly the Spirit's action in Jesus in *four steps*: 1) the Preparation; 2) Christ's Public Ministry; 3) his Paschal Mystery, and 4) his Joint Mission with the Spirit.

1. Preparation

1291. The Virgin Mary. The Spirit prepared for the coming of the Savior especially in *two* specific persons. The first, of course, was **Mary**. The Spirit had *prepared* her to become the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) by indwelling in her from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception in her mother's womb (*cf. CCC* 722-26). At the Annunciation, Gabriel told Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (*Lk* 1:35). Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, "for us and our salvation was born as to his humanity from Mary the Virgin Mother of God" (*Chalcedon, ND* 614). Filled with the Holy Spirit, Mary could exclaim to her cousin Elizabeth: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (*Lk* 1:46-47).

1292. In and through the Virgin Mary, therefore, the Holy Spirit:

- *realized* the saving plan of the Father,
- *manifested* the Son of the Father before all,
- began to draw all into *communion* with Christ.

Thus, through the Spirit, Mary has become the New Eve, the new “Mother of the Living” (*cf. CCC 723-27*).

1293. John the Baptist was the second person through whom the Holy Spirit prepared for the coming of the Savior (*cf. CCC 717-20*). “Filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb,” **John** was sent before the Messiah “in the spirit and power of Elijah, . . . to prepare for the Lord a people well-disposed” (*Lk 1:15,17*). John was a “voice in the desert crying out: Make straight the way of the Lord”; a “witness to testify to the light so that through him all might believe” (*Jn 1:23,7*). John himself confessed: “I saw the Spirit descend like a dove from the sky and it came to rest on him. . . the Lamb of God . . . who takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn 1:31-34;29*).

2. The Spirit in Christ’s Public Ministry

1294. Inauguration. St. Luke’s Gospel introduces the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry stating: “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” (*Lk 4:14; cf. CCC 714*). There, in his home town of Nazareth, Jesus laid out his whole messianic program:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because He has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives,
Recovery of sight to the blind
and release to prisoners,
To announce a year of favor from the Lord (*Lk 4:18f*).

Thus did Jesus inaugurate his public ministry in the power of the Spirit, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold of the Messiah (*cf. Is 61:1-2*).

1295. High Points. Jesus’ empowerment by the Spirit is recorded in *two* preceding incidents and confirmed in a third.

First, at his **baptism** by John the Baptist in the Jordan, Jesus was “anointed” by the Spirit, who “descended on him in visible form like a dove” (*Lk 3:22*).

Second, immediately after his baptism, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was **conducted by the Spirit into the desert** for forty days, where he overcame the devil’s temptation, no doubt in the power of the Spirit who was in him (*cf. Lk 4:1-2, 14*).

Third, confirming these two experiences was **Jesus’ Transfiguration**. “His clothes became dazzling white. . . A **cloud** came, overshadowing them, and out of the cloud a **voice**: ‘This is my beloved *Son*. Listen to him’” (*Mk 9:2-3, 7*). The cloud traditionally symbolized the presence or Spirit of the Lord. Jesus’ very identity, then, is marked by his two unique relations: to *God* who addressed Jesus as “Beloved Son,” and to the **Spirit** who transfigured Jesus.*

* These events also **indicate the three divine Persons**: God the *Father* as Voice, Jesus as *Incarnate Son*, and the *Holy Spirit* as cloud or dove. This confirms the action of the three divine Persons in the angel Gabriel’s Annunciation to Mary: “you have found favor with **God**. You shall conceive and bear a son, Jesus, [who] will be called **Son** of the Most high,” because “the **Holy Spirit** will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (*Lk 1:30-35*).

1296. “Doing Good”. The accounts of Jesus’ *Baptism, Desert Temptations, and Transfiguration* show how **Jesus** is always *directly linked with the Spirit* who inspires and empowers his public Messianic ministry. Throughout his public ministry “God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, and God was with him” (*Acts 10:38*).

3. The Spirit in Christ’s Paschal Mystery

1297. The climax came in Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection. Strengthened by the Spirit in his Agony in the Garden, Jesus prayed to his Father, “not my will but yours be done” (*Lk 22:42*). From the Cross Jesus “delivered over his Spirit” (*Jn 19:30; cf. 7:39; 20:22*).

1298. But the Spirit’s power is seen most clearly in the *Resurrection*. Jesus “was made Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (*Rom 1:4*). “Exalted at God’s right hand, [the Risen Christ] first received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, then poured this Spirit out on us” (*Acts 2:33*). St. Paul proclaims the Risen Christ has become a “life-giving Spirit” (*1 Cor 15:45*). He describes in Trinitarian terms how Christ, the *Son*, works together with the *Spirit* to fulfill *God’s* plan of salvation. For St. John, only when Christ was *risen*, could the Spirit be given, and we receive new life of grace.

4. Joint Mission of Christ and the Spirit

1299. So closely do Christ and the Spirit work together that we can rightfully speak of the “*joint mission of the Son and of the Spirit*” (*cf. CCC 689, 702, 727*). When the Father sends His Word, He always sends His Breath: there occurs a joint mission in which the Son and the Holy Spirit are *distinct* but *inseparable*. It is Christ who appears as the visible Image of the invisible God, but it is the Holy Spirit who reveals him. The knowledge of the “mysteries of the Reign of God” of which Christ is the fullness, is “given” (*Mt 13:11*) in the gift of the Holy Spirit (*cf. CCC 729*). Christ gives the form and content of salvation, while the Spirit makes present and extends this new life.

D. The Spirit’s Activity in the Church

1300. Pentecost. In St. Luke’s *Acts*, the Church is inaugurated with the spectacular *outpouring of the Holy Spirit*. “*All were filled with the Holy Spirit*” (*Acts 2:4*). This corresponds to Jesus’ inaugurating his public ministry with his opening discourse in Luke’s *Gospel*, “the *Spirit* of the Lord is upon me” (*Lk 4:18; cf. 30*). At Pentecost the large crowd were much confused upon hearing the eleven “express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamation as the Spirit prompted them” (*Acts 2:4*). The people asked: “What are we to do?” Peter answered “You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 2:38*).

1301. Thus it was *the Holy Spirit*, sent by the Father and the Risen Christ, that *gave birth to the first Christian community*, the apostolic Church. St. Paul describes the people of this New Covenant as “a letter of Christ, . . . written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on the tablets of human hearts” (*2 Cor 3:3*). This Spirit is the “Gift of God” who is Love (*cf. 1 Jn 4:8,16*), the first gift which contains all the others, and which “has been poured out into our hearts” (*Rom 5:5; cf. CCC 733*).

Until today the Holy Spirit continues to exercise three functions: *to give life to, to unify, and to move* the whole body (cf. LG 7).

1. The Spirit Gives Life

1302. The Spirit's role in *vivifying* the Church is graphically sketched in Vatican II:

When in the womb of the baptismal font the Spirit begets to a new life those who believe in Christ, he gathers them into the one People of God which is a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people' (1 Pt 2:9; AG 15).

Even the Church's practical pastoral decisions were made under such influence of the Spirit that the apostles could write: "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too, not to lay on you any burden beyond what is necessary" (Acts 15:28).

2. The Spirit Unifies

1303. Then the Spirit *unifies* the Church by uniting its members with Christ and with one another. The Spirit:

- *prepares* us to accept Christ, and *draws us to him*;
- *manifests* the Risen Christ to us interiorly, opening our minds and hearts to Christ's words and deeds, especially his Passion, Death and Resurrection;
- *makes Christ present* especially in the Sacraments, reconciling and putting us in communion with God;
- so we can bear much fruit (cf. Jn 15:5,8,16; cf. CCC 737).

We experience the Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel, celebrating the sacraments, and the deepening of our faith through the new life of grace, calling us to share in building up the People of God (cf. PCP II 428). "Throughout the ages, the Holy Spirit makes the entire Church *one* in communion and ministry; and provides her with different hierarchical and charismatic gifts, giving *life* to the ecclesiastical structures, being as it were their soul" (AG 4).

1304. Both the *life* and *unity* of the Church are fostered by the Spirit's "charisms." St. Paul described the *charismatic gifts* with which the Spirit endows individual members of the Church for the good of the whole Body.

To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing . . . but it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills (1 Cor 12:7-11).

The teaching authority of the Bishops plays an indispensable role here in judging the presence of genuine charisms of the Spirit and how they are to be used for the good of the Christian community.

3. The Spirit Moves to Ministry

1305. Finally, the Spirit *moves* the Church toward its *mission* and *ministry*. PCP II insists that the Holy Spirit:

- is the principal agent of evangelization;
- continues and brings the work of Christ to perfection;

- precedes, accompanies, and fructifies the work of the Church;
- impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and
- causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood in the depths of consciences;
- shows His presence, power, and activity not only in the Church, but in the signs of the times that mark the contemporary world (*cf. PCP II 212-15*).

Vatican II declares that the Spirit inspires “in the hearts of the faithful that same spirit of *mission* which impelled Christ himself” (*AG 4*). Thus the Church is kept focused on its primary mission of preaching the word of God, “making her own the words of the apostle Paul, ‘I am ruined if I do not preach it’ ” (*1 Cor 9:16; cf. LG 17*).

The Spirit also *moves* the Church to *renewal* and *purification*. “Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church ceaselessly exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the Church” (*GS 43*).

1306. Recent Philippine History. Our own recent history reminds Filipino Catholics of the Spirit’s role in our local Church today. The 2nd Plenary Council of the Philippines says:

The 1986 experience of solidarity in prayer and mass action preventing violence at a time of national crisis, popularly known as the “*EDSA experience*,” is to be honored as an historical event with a religious dimension that continues to call us to be a people who work for conversion, reconciliation and peace in the way of peace (*PCP II 4*).

This typifies the Church’s constant effort to actively respond to the Spirit’s guidance and inspiration. But as always, *the Spirit’s work is never a substitute for our human endeavor*. Rather the Spirit inspires new “Movements” in the Church, and empowers us with new, unsuspected strengths to grapple with the ever new problems and challenges of daily life. Besides, He often creates and “opens up” for us surprising new possibilities for fuller and deeper human life, both personal and communal.

E. The Activity of the Spirit in Christians

1307. The Holy Spirit joins us to Christ. The Spirit joins us intimately with Christ in *two basic ways*. *First, the Risen Christ* is present within and among us today in his Spirit. *Second, the Spirit* is the inner source of our life of faith by which we accept Jesus. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor 12:3; cf. PCP II 64, 68*). This means that *we can come to know, recognize, and experience Jesus only because the Holy Spirit makes it possible*.

Nor is this just pious talk far removed from daily life. Paul uses the very concrete matter of sexual morality to show that “whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him . . . your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” (*1 Cor 6:17,19*).

1308. For St. Paul, to be “in Christ” and “in the Spirit” means basically the same thing. We are *justified* in the name of the *Lord Jesus Christ* and in the *Spirit* of our God. We are *sanctified* “*in Christ Jesus*” and “*in the Holy Spirit*.” Our *righteousness* is based “*in Christ*” and equally also “*in the Holy Spirit*.” We are called to “*rejoice in the Lord*” and to find “*joy in the Holy Spirit*.” Paul claims to *speak* “*in Christ*” and also “*by the Spirit of God*.” “For in *one Spirit* we were all *baptized into one body*,” “*baptized into Christ*” to form “*one body in Christ*.” (*Cf. 1 Cor 1:2,30; 6:11; 12:3,13; 2 Cor 2:17; 5:21; Rom 12:5; 14:17; 15:16; Gal 3:27; Phil 3:1.*)

The Spirit’s Actions

1309. But by linking us to Christ, what actually does the Holy Spirit do? To spell out in some detail what the Spirit does within and among us, the following paragraphs set forth *six* particular activities.

The Spirit: 1) adopts us as children of the Father; 2) enables us to love as Christ commanded; 3) empowers us to bear witness to Christ, and 4) to know the truth; 5) draws us into community unity and service; and 6) inspires us to live a truly Christian life.

1. The Spirit Adopts Us

1310. The Spirit is first of all the “*Spirit of adoption*” by which we become “*children of God*” (cf. *Jn 1:12*; *CCC 693*). Jesus is the only begotten, God’s own Son, but through him and his Spirit we are adopted by the Father, and are “called children of God – [for] that is what we are” (*1 Jn 3:1*). We can truly call God “*Abba, Father.*” “The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of His Son who cries out ‘*Abba, Father!*’ ” (*Gal 4:6*)

2. The Spirit Empowers Us to Love

1311. The Spirit thus enables us to *love God, and love everybody else through His Spirit.* “The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (*Rom 5:5*). And “if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another . . . If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is brought to perfection in us” (*1 Jn 4:11-12*). St. Paul stresses this gift of love above all charisms. “If I speak with human and angelic tongues. . . have the gift of prophecy. . . comprehend all mysteries. . . have faith enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (*1 Cor 13:1-2,8*).

3. The Spirit Empowers Us to Bear Witness

1312. In addition, the Holy Spirit empowers us to bear witness *to Jesus Christ.* At the Last Supper Jesus told the apostles: “When the Paraclete comes, . . . he will bear witness on my behalf. You must bear witnesses as well” (*Jn 15:26f*). Just before his Ascension, the Risen Christ promised: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem . . . even to the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8*). Therefore, not only are we saved by Christ and the Spirit – God working *in* us – but we share in Their redeeming work as well – God working *through* us. In sending the Holy Spirit, the Risen Christ calls us to give witness to him before others by sharing his own triple mission of Prophet, Priest and King.

4. The Spirit Empowers Us to Know the Truth

1313. To know the truth is a further power which the Holy Spirit inspires in us. *PCP II* points out that “all persons are bound to seek the truth, especially in religious matters” (*PCP II 362*). Jesus promised his apostles the Spirit of truth who “will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you” and “guide you to all truth” (*Jn 14:26; 16:13*). John Paul II adds that this means “that the Spirit will help people understand the correct meaning of the content of Christ’s message; He will ensure the continuity and identity of understanding . . . the same truth which the Apostles heard from their Master” (*DViv 4*).

5. The Spirit Draws Us into Community, Unity and Service

1314. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is the principle of unity and service *in the community.* “The Spirit is for the Church and for each and every believer, the principle of their union and unity in the teaching of the apostles and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayer” (*LG 13*).

PCP II explains how the lay faithful are called to “animate the temporal order with Christ’s Spirit” (*PCP II 427*). This unity in loving service is made possible through the Spirit’s manifold gifts and charisms, the same promised in Isaiah the prophet: “a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord” (*Is 11:2*).

6. The Spirit Inspires True Christian Life

1315. Lastly, the Spirit vivifies us to *live a truly Christian life*. *PCP II* describes how “in the depths of the Filipino spirit is a longing for *kaayusan*, . . . a longing for the life that the creative Spirit of Jesus gives as a gift, a gift which is likewise a challenge” (*PCP II 257*). The Spirit not only strengthens us in our struggle against the powers of evil, but frees us by his interior transforming presence. “All of us, gazing on the Lord’s glory . . . are being transformed from glory to glory into his very image by the Spirit of the Lord” (*2 Cor 3:18*).

But it is especially in time of temptation and trial that we Filipino Christians learn to pray for the Spirit’s purifying and strengthening power:

A clean heart create for me, O God,
and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence,
and your Holy Spirit take not from me (*Ps 51:12-13*).

When we are troubled, in doubt, or on slippery ground, we learn to pray: “May your good Spirit guide me on level ground” (*Ps 143:10*).

F. Two Basic Life Orientations

1316. Now, according to St. Paul, there are *two basic, contradictory orientations* among us. *Either we Live according to the flesh*, turned against God and toward sin and death. *Or we live according to the Spirit of Christ*, toward life and peace (*Rom 8:4-6*). St. Paul contrasts the two orientations:

- “the *natural man* does not accept what is taught by the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it has to be judged spiritually.
- The *spiritual man*, on the other hand can appraise everything” (*1 Cor 2:14f*).

St. Paul assures the early Christians: “You are not in the flesh; you are in the spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you” (*Rom 8:9*). And exhorts them: “since we live by the Spirit, let us follow the spirits lead” (*Gal 5:25*).

1317. Proper Understanding. Special care is needed to be able to understand the saving, liberating truth of St. Paul’s message. Far from rejecting material reality, St. Paul is telling his Christian converts that they no longer are *merely* natural, material individuals, weak and tied down to earthly things. Rather, they are under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who is the strength and power of God working in and among them. The Spirit reveals the spiritual dimension within everything material, including our bodies, since He is creatively active in everything that exists. *Only through the Holy Spirit is all matter sanctified by God’s grace*. Apart from the Holy Spirit, even “spiritual things” become carnal and dead in sin.

1318. Pope John Paul II explains that “St. Paul is concerned with the *morally good or bad works*, the permanent dispositions – virtues and vices – which are the *fruit of, or resistance to, the saving action*

of the Holy Spirit” (DViv 55). Now Paul knew first-hand of suffering, poverty, and the trials and temptations of daily life. “We ourselves, although we have the Spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). Yet Paul is confident because the Spirit “helps us in our weakness” (Rom 8:26), strengthening our spirits against the brute forces, temptations and oppressive powers that enslave us.

In summary: *Evil spirits possess*; spiritless flesh *enslaves*; wicked powers *oppress, dominate, manipulate* and *exploit*. But **the Spirit of God and of Christ liberates**. For “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17). It is in the Spirit that we get a taste of “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).

1319. Furthermore, these two basic orientations of flesh and Spirit are far deeper and more powerful than our individual wills and free decisions. *We rashly think we can change our ways anytime we want*. But this proves to be *an illusion*. Rather we find that these orientations are “built into” our human condition. John Paul II explains this: “the texts of St. Paul enable us to know and feel vividly the strength of the tension and struggle going on in us between openness to the action of the Holy Spirit and resistance and opposition to him, to his saving gift” (DViv 55). Hence, when our minds are set on the things of the flesh, we are prisoners of flesh and sin. We cannot extricate ourselves from such a condition on our own power. Only when we are transformed through the Spirit’s action can we turn our own thoughts and actions toward the things of the Spirit.

1320. Eschatological Gift. Whenever we experience the Spirit acting in our lives, something of the “new heaven” is already present. For the Spirit is the seal, “the pledge of our [heavenly] inheritance, the first payment against full redemption” (Eph 1:13-14). Vatican II explains:

The promised and hoped for restoration has already begun in Christ. It is carried forward in the sending of the Holy Spirit, and through the Spirit, continues in the Church in which, through our faith, we learn the meaning of our earthly life, while we bring to term, with the hope of future good, the task allotted to us in the world by the Father and so work out our salvation (LG 48).

1321. For many *Filipinos*, talk of the “eschatological” can seem very far away from daily thinking and activities. But it really is not so. It refers not to something in the far future but to ***an inner depth dimension of our everyday life, now***. A dimension that is inspired by the Spirit. Like the love for our family and friends which we hold deep in our hearts when we go about our daily tasks. This is well expressed in the Preface of the Sixth Sunday:

Father, in you we live and move and have our being.
Each day you show us a Father’s love;
Your Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, gives us on earth
the hope of unending joy.
Your gift of the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead,
Is the foretaste and promise of the Paschal Feast in heaven.

III. THE SPIRIT’S IDENTITY

1322. In the Nicene Creed we identify the Holy Spirit as “***Lord, the Giver of Life***.” The life which the Spirit shares with us is the divine life, the life of God who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8). Now in John’s Gospel the Holy Spirit is called the ***Paraclete***: literally, “*he who is called to help*.” Thus the Spirit is our ***Advocate, Helper, Counsellor***. The life He inspires in us, then, is a life that supports, strengthens, and guides, precisely because it brings us in intimacy with Jesus (cf. CCC 692).

1323. Many times the Spirit will be *comforting* and *consoling*. At other times He will *trouble us* out of our complacency, remind us of the “fire” Jesus has come to cast on the earth in calling for our witness to justice and preferential option for the poor (*cf. Lk 12:49*). This is the *repentance* and *conversion* from our sinful ways desired by Christ and our loving heavenly Father. Yet, we come to realize that these consoling and troubling effects are just *two different manifestations* of the *same liberating, vivifying, and transforming life-in-the-Spirit*.

1324. The Nicene Creed continues: “*who proceeds from the Father and the Son.*” Thus the Holy Spirit is *not created* like we are, but like the only begotten divine Son “proceeds” from the Father. John Paul II explains “that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the Divine Persons. It is the Holy Spirit who is the *personal expression* of this self-giving, of this being-love. He is Person-Love, Person-Gift” (*cf. DViv 10*). The difference between the Divine Son and the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit proceeds as BREATH of love, while the Son proceeds as the *Word* or *Image* of the Father. Thus we speak of the Holy Spirit as the *Third Person* of the Blessed Trinity, one in being with the Father and the Son.

1325. “*With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified*” is perhaps the most suggestive part of the Nicene Creed’s description of the Holy Spirit. For it indicates *first* that it is in liturgical *worship* that we most often experience the Spirit. *Second*, in this worship the Spirit is experienced as “on our side”: He is *within us* as we pray united together in one Body under Jesus Christ our Head, to Our Father.

The Blessed Trinity: Mystery of Personal Loving Communion

1326. Now we can better appreciate the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity which states *there is ONE GOD, who is THREE EQUAL and DISTINCT PERSONS*.

1327. God is ONE. We must not imagine the three divine Persons are three Gods, nor three parts of the one God. Each Person is the WHOLE GOD. The divine Persons are RELATIONS which SUBSIST in the divine nature. The one God is Father as begetting the Son and breathing the Spirit; the same God is Son as begotten of the Father and breathing the Spirit; the same God is Spirit as Breath of Father and Son. “The Father generates, the Son is generated and the Holy Spirit proceeds, so that there be distinctions between the Persons but unity in nature” (*Lateran IV, cf. ND 318-19*). The three Persons constitute ONE GOD, one divine nature, a mystery of “PERSONAL LOVING COMMUNION” (*cf. FC 11*).

“The Lord Jesus, when praying to the Father ‘that they may all be one . . . even as we are one’ (*Jn 17:21-22*), has opened up new horizons to human reason by implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine Persons and the union of the sons of God in truth and love” (*GS, 24*).

1328. The three Divine Persons are EQUAL. God the Father does *not* come first, then the Son, and then the Holy Spirit. All three divine Persons are *equally eternal*, with no beginning and no end (*cf. CCC 255*).

We often forget that “father” and “son” are *relational terms*, and presume that the father comes first, and then the son. But this is not true. A man is a person and a husband but not a father until he has a son or daughter. Father and son are co-relational terms: one exists in relation to the other. So God the Father and God the Son relate to each other and are equally eternal. One does not come

before the other. The same for the Spirit who is the BREATH of the Father and Son. Breath and Breather are simultaneous. Neither comes before the other.

1329. The Divine Persons are DISTINCT. Jesus affirmed “the Father and I are one” (*Jn 10:30*). By this he did *not* mean he is *identical* with the Father, but rather that he is perfectly *UNITED* with the Father. As he explained to Philip “I am in the Father and the Father is in me. The words I speak are not spoken of myself; it is the Father who lives in me accomplishing his works” (*Jn 14:10*). So God the Father and Jesus, His only begotten Son-made-flesh (*cf. Jn 1:14*), are distinct Persons, yet wholly united in LOVE, their Holy Spirit (*cf. CCC 254*).

1330. In creating us, the three Divine Persons freely shared themselves, their own divine life of Love, with us. Moreover, we are raised from being “creatures” of God to being His sons and daughters. The Father adopts us as His children by sending His only begotten Son to become one of us, and the Holy Spirit to dwell within us as the inner source of divine life. This is what we properly mean by **Grace**.

1331. We Filipino Catholics, need to become more aware of the Father, Son, and Spirit in our daily lives. This is an important step in *maturing in our Christian Faith*. We begin to appreciate the reality of the **Holy Spirit** as the Spirit of the Father and the Risen Christ within us – the reality of **Grace**. Now the “Third Person of the Blessed Trinity” takes on real meaning for us, completing our previous study of God the **Father** and His only begotten **Son**-become-man, Jesus Christ, our Savior [Part I]. Now with the Holy Spirit we can come to a deeper, more personal appreciation of the **Blessed Trinity** in our lives as the loving God of our salvation.

INTEGRATION

1332. The *doctrine* or truth of the Holy Spirit is obviously the basis for all **authentic worship**. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth” (*Jn 4:23-24*). But the practical problem is *how* to discern and cooperate with the Spirit moving us. Filipino religiosity is blessed with such an exuberance of devotions that the Spirit can often be obscured, and the authentic center of Christian prayer life lost to view.

Against an exaggerated individualistic, self-centered prayer, the Spirit’s present movement is clearly toward *Prayer Groups* and *Bible Study Sessions*, in parishes and Basic Ecclesial Communities. This thrust invigorates and authenticates our own personal prayer as well as our active participation in the liturgical prayer life of our local Christian community.

1333. Moreover one great **moral challenge** in the Philippines today is “*Value Education*.” We should be clear on the important active role played by the Holy Spirit. Many current secular methods of “value education” have proven ultimately unsuccessful. They fail to motivate the struggle to go beyond one’s own self-centered good. How can ordinary Filipinos be motivated to sacrifice for others, beyond their own family and circle of friends? This is possible only through the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ and the Father. The Spirit “gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (*Rom 8:16*), and thus liberates us *from* our own narrow selves, *for* reaching out to others in loving service, as Our Lord commanded (*cf. Jn 15:12*).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1334 *Who is the Holy Spirit?*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. As “Giver of Life,” the Spirit vivifies the Church, our sacramental and moral life, and our resurrection to life everlasting.

“The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us” (*Rom 5:5*).

1335. *Why is it difficult to imagine or picture the Holy Spirit?*

The Spirit is difficult to imagine because He has no shape or form, and like “the wind . . . you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (*Jn 3:8*).

1336. *How do we experience the Holy Spirit?*

We experience the Spirit within our minds and hearts, in our loving relationships with family and friends, and in our social life in the Church and society.

1337. *What does the Spirit do within us?*

The indwelling Spirit “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God . . . heirs of God, heirs with Christ” (*Rom 8:16-17*). He animates, purifies, and strengthens the life of GRACE in our daily following of Christ in prayer and works.

1338. *How can we recognize and discern the Spirit?*

We discern the Spirit by relating to Jesus Christ, in Holy Scripture as interpreted in Catholic Tradition, in our personal prayer, devotions and especially in the Church’s liturgical worship and moral witness of loving service.

1339. *What effects does the Spirit produce?*

The traditional **gifts** of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord (*Is 11: 1-2*).

Moreover St. Paul lists the **fruits** of the Holy Spirit as “love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, gentleness, and chastity” (*Gal 5:22*).

[The Spirit unites the members of the Church to Christ, their Head, and to one another, strengthening their Faith, Hope and Charity.]

1340. *Where is the Spirit active?*

God’s Holy Spirit is active in:

- **creating** and sustaining everything in existence;
- **salvation history**, drawing all to the Father;
- **Jesus Christ**, the Savior of the world;
- the **Church**, giving her life, unity and inspiration;
- **Christians**, sanctifying, uniting and empowering them to follow Christ in word and deed;
- all **people of good will** who follow their conscience and try to serve God.

1341. *How did the Spirit act in Jesus Christ’s life?*

The Holy Spirit empowered Christ’s very conception in the Virgin Mary, was active in his baptism at the Jordan, his saving mission of bringing the Kingdom of God among us, his Transfiguration, and especially his Passion, Death and glorious Resurrection/Ascension.

Moreover, the Risen Christ himself sent the Holy Spirit upon his followers at Pentecost, and continues to do so.

1342. *How does the Spirit act in the Church?*

The Spirit *vivifies* and *nourishes* the Church in its life of GRACE through the sacraments and charismatic gifts, *unifies* its members in Christ, and moves the Church to its *mission* of continuing the liberating ministry of Christ (*cf. LG 4*).

1343. *How is the Spirit active in Christians?*

The Spirit *sanctifies* Christians by drawing them to *share* in Christ's very life as *adoptive sons/daughters* of the Father, inspiring them to:

- love God and one another,
- bear witness to Christ,
- come to know the Truth, and
- live in loving service of their neighbor.

1344. *What does "live according to the Spirit" mean?*

To live "according to the Spirit" means to respond to the Holy Spirit's creative presence, empowering us to struggle against the enslavement of the flesh and all evil powers, and offering the foretaste and promise of full liberation and unending joy.

1345. *What does the Spirit as "Eschatological Gift" mean?*

In the Spirit we already experience something of the "new heavens" that await us. The Spirit is God's pledge within us of our heavenly inheritance.

In practice, this simply means that, in faith, we recognize that the good things we experience day-by-day, like the love of our family and friends, are blessings from God that will be perfected in heaven. What happens to us daily now has meaning for eternity.

1346. *What do we know of the Spirit from his activity?*

We know the Spirit is the "*Giver of life*," the helper [Paraclete] who comforts and consoles by making the Risen Christ and the Father come to us and establish their dwelling place within us (*cf. Jn 14:23*).

1347. *How do we know the Holy Spirit is divine?*

The Holy Spirit is not created, but *proceeds* from the Father and the Son as the Breath of their mutual Love. We know He is divine because through Him the Father and Risen Christ are present within us. Thus from the apostolic times, "with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified."

1348. *How is the Trinity a "Mystery of Personal Loving Communion"?*

The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity consists of three assertions:

- God is *One*,
- in *three distinct* and
- *equal Persons*.

The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person equal to and distinct from the Father and from the Son. He is the very *Love* of Father and Son.

We are created in image of this "mystery of personal loving communion" (*FC 11*), called to share forever their divine life of love.

[The “mystery” of the Trinity is not only how One God can be three Persons. God is also “Mystery” because, as infinite LOVE, there is always more to understand and love in Him.]

Chapter 23

The Catholic Church: Nature and Mission

Jesus replied: “I for my part declare to you: you are ‘Rock’ [Peter], and on this rock I will build my Church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it.”

(Mt 16:18)

You are fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God. You form a building which rises on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. . . . In him you are being built into this temple, to become a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.

(Eph 2:19-22)

OPENING

1349. *The first great “living” work of the Holy Spirit, the “Giver of Life,” is the Church.* The word “Church” means “*that which pertains to the Lord.*” Therefore, the best way to introduce the Church’s nature and mission is to focus on Christ. “Christ is the light of all nations, and it is by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature that the light of Christ, which shines out visibly from the Church, may be brought to all men” (*LG 1*). For the Church is none other than that community of men and women “who, united in Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onwards towards the Kingdom of the Father *and* are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all men” (*GS 1*).

1350. This chapter *first* takes up the *Nature of the Church* – “what the Church is” – as *mystery* and as *sacrament*. This is developed through *scriptural images*, particularly the “Kingdom of God,” “People of God,” and “Body of Christ.” The *second* section describes *the Characteristics of the life of the Church*. These are what distinguishes the Church, its “*marks*” its being *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic*. What the Church is for and how it operates, its *Mission* and *Ministry*, are explained in the

third part. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief section on the supporting themes of “*Communion of Saints*” and “*Mary, Mother of the Church.*”

CONTEXT

1351. For most Filipinos, the Church is very familiar, perhaps in a sense “too familiar.” For some, “Church” simply means the *building* where people go to pray. For many, “Church” spontaneously evokes the image of *bishops, priests* and *religious*, or particular *Church organizations*. Moreover, whereas in earlier times Church meant the “Catholic Church,” in today’s Philippine society it can refer to many different Christian churches and sects, too numerous to count.

1352. Yet, the building where people worship is obviously a “church.” The problem, then, is not in relating “Church” to the building, but in *restricting* the total meaning of “Catholic church” to a particular material building. Likewise, since we commonly identify organizations and groups by their leaders, we make a mistake only when we *limit* the meaning of “Catholic Church” to bishops, priests and religious, or particular organizations.

1353. More important, then, is the common origin of these inadequate views of the Church. They stem from a “common sense” view of the Church as just one “*human association*” among many. This temptation to see the Church only as a human social organization may be fostered in part by the Filipinos’ deep cultural value of “*belongingness.*” We have an intense desire “to belong.” So, for us, the Church is a natural “home” wherein we can feel accepted and loved. Now surely the Church *should be* such a “home.” But its total meaning and mission cannot be reduced to relieving our insecurities by social “togetherness.” Christ indicates this with his response to the first temptation. “Not on bread alone is man to live, but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God” (*Mt 4:4*).

1354. Our Second Plenary Council has called for a renewed catechesis that can lead our people to a better understanding of the Church. This means recognizing that *the Church is much more* than a building, or a group of Church men and women, or a social grouping. Seeking this “more” leads us directly to Christ our Lord and his Holy Spirit, both sent to us by our heavenly Father who “wants all men to be saved and to come to know the truth” (*1 Tim 2:4*). We now turn to these *basic truths* that ground our personal Christian LOVE for the Church.

EXPOSITION

I. NATURE OF THE CHURCH

1355. *Ekklesia.* This “more” of the Church can be shown *first* of all from its long history. Our Catholic Church traces its origin back to the Old Testament *qahal* and the New Testament *ekklesia* (*CCC 751f*). Both terms mean “the people of God called together,” or an “assembly convoked by God.” Thus, they stress *the action of God* in calling the people together. The Church thus claims to be a

faith-assembly whose root cause is God's free call to all to share His divine goodness and love in Christ. The Church therefore is *not* just a social grouping of people drawn together by cultural values and attitudes. This faith-conviction that God is the *ever-present source and ground* for the Church is the reason for explaining the Church as “*mystery*” and “*sacrament*.”

A. The Church as Mystery

1356. In the Christian Faith there are mysteries or divine truths proposed to our belief “that are hidden in God and which can never be known unless they are revealed by God himself” (DS, 3015) and which we will never be able to understand fully because of the limitation of our intelligence (cf. DS 3016). Such is the case of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. There are also *created salvific realities* which can partly be known by our human intelligence, but which have also a *transcendent dimension* which can be perceived only through faith. These salvific realities are also called “*mysteries*” because of their *inexhaustible richness*. It is in this sense that we speak of the **Church as “mystery.”** By this term, then, we mean not something we cannot know nor understand, but rather a reality we can never *fully* grasp because there is always more to learn (cf. NCDP 200). As mystery, the Church is a God-given reality we believe in and love – like a friend or a loved one – not only something we observe and critically analyze (cf. NCDP 230; CCC 770-73).

To affirm the Church is a mystery simply means, *first*, that it is “a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God . . . always open to new and greater exploration” (Paul VI at the Opening of the Second Session of Vatican II). *Second*, it has a unique relation to God Himself, and therefore also with all of us who are called to salvation precisely as a people. But what precisely is this “unique relationship with God?”

1357. The Church is related to each Person of the Blessed Trinity. *First*, to the *eternal Father* who “resolved to assemble all those who believe in Christ in the holy Church.” In the Father’s plan, the **Church** was:

- *prefigured* from the beginning of the world;
- *prepared* wonderfully in the history of Israel,
- *instituted* finally in these last times,
- *manifested* in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,
- *to be brought to completion* at the end of time (cf. LG 2; CCC 760-69).

1358. Second, to the *Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ*. “Christ, the one Mediator, established and ceaselessly sustains here on earth his holy Church” (LG 8; cf. CCC 763-66). The Church originated and grew from Christ. “From the side of Christ as He slept the sleep of death upon the Cross came forth the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church” (SC 5). Our life in the Church is completely *Christ-centered*: “All men are called to this union with Christ who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life leads us” (LG 3).

1359. Like the Incarnate Son, the Church is both visible and invisible, human and divine. As the Son of God “became flesh” to save us from our sins, so the spiritual community of the Church takes on visible social structure to serve its mission (cf. LG 8; CCC 771-73).

1360. Third, to the *Holy Spirit* who dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16), and bears witness to their adoptive sonship (cf. Gal 4:6). The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth (cf. Jn 16:13), gives her a unity of fellowship and service, and constantly renews and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse, Christ (cf. CCC 767).

1361. Hence, the Church is *mystery* by reason of:

- its *origin* in the Father's plan of salvation,
- its *ongoing life* in the Risen Christ and the Spirit, and
- its ultimate *goal* in the fully achieved Kingdom of God.

1362. But "most Filipino Catholics approach the Church concretely and pragmatically, not in terms of 'mystery.' Yet there is deep respect, loyalty, and love for the Church which this insight into the Church as mystery can develop and confirm" (*NCDP 231*), for the Church is basically a mystery of *communion*.

Perhaps a more Filipino approach to the Church as "mystery" would focus on this *personal communion* that binds us together with the Lord and with one another. It is this living and life-giving communion that makes us belong not to ourselves but to Christ and to his Church, the community of the disciples of Christ (*cf. PCP II 87, 402*). "I am the vine, you are the branches," Christ told his disciples (*cf. Jn 15:5*). This "strong sense of *personal belonging, of self-identity and security* which Filipino 'folk Catholicism' has been able to consistently engender, is perhaps its greatest asset" (*NCDP 86*).

1363. Moreover, this communion is the 'integrating aspect,' indeed the *central content* of the Church as mystery (*cf. CL 19*). But *it is not a communion created by merely sociological and cultural factors*. Rather, the *model and source* of our communion as Christians with Jesus and with one another is God's own *Trinitarian communion* – of the Son with the Father in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Only such a source could explain how "united to the Son in the Spirit's bond of love, we Christians are united to the Father" (*CL 18*).

1364. Icon* of the Trinity. Basically, *the Church is mystery because of its relationship to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. It manifests the Blessed Trinity by both its *nature* and *mission*.

First, by its *origin* the Church arose from the saving design of the Father, the redemptive mission of the Son and the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Second, in *structure*: just as the Trinity is a *community*, the *communion of love* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so too the Church is a *community*, a *communion of believers* drawn together by Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Third, the *mission* of the Church originates "from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the decree of God the Father" (*PCP II 103; cf. AG 2*).

Fourth, the *destiny* of the Church is the full realization of this communion in the Kingdom of God. We are *pilgrims*, because "joined with Christ in the Church and signed with the Holy Spirit 'who is the pledge of our inheritance', we have not yet appeared with Christ in the state of glory in which we shall be like God since we shall see Him as He is" (*LG 48*).

1365. This *Trinitarian view* of the Church is actually quite close to the ordinary religious experience of Catholic Filipinos. For it is in the Church, especially in communal worship at Mass, when we most often:

- experience God as "*our Father*" and feel ourselves as children in His divine hands;
- come to know *Christ* as our personal Savior, and what it means to be His disciples in service of others; and

* "Icon" is a sacred image, painted on wood or formed by a mosaic, that presents persons and scenes symbolically, fostering public and private prayer and worship. Reverence shown to icons does not refer to the images themselves, but to the sacred persons represented: the living God, Christ the Savior, the Virgin, the angels and saints.

- judge true, authentic experiences of the *Holy Spirit*, among our fellow disciples of Christ, and under the guidance and leadership of Church authorities.

PCP II expressed this briefly in noting that “in the Liturgy we assemble and pray in the name of our Lord through whom ‘we have access in one Spirit to the Father’ ” (*Eph 2:18; PCP II 77*).

B. The Church as Sacrament

1366. The Church as mystery is further clarified and developed by the notion of *sacrament*. “By her relationship with Christ, the Church is both a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind” (*GS 42; cf. LG 1*). Christ then has made the Church the effective sign and symbol of:

- 1) our union with God;
- 2) the unity among men; and
- 3) of salvation.

For the Risen Christ, continually active in the world, “sent his life-giving Spirit to establish his Body, the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation” (*LG 48; cf. CCC 774-76*).

1367. The idea that the Church is “*sacrament*” may sound strange at first to many Filipinos. We have been used to thinking of “sacrament” solely as the “seven sacraments,” individual liturgical rituals such as Baptism, the Mass, Confession, etc. But if we focus on the essentials of “sacrament,” we find both Christ himself as well as the Church fulfill the notion perfectly. A sacrament is a material sign which gives grace, effecting what it symbolizes; it causes grace by symbolizing grace.

So Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, is the visible sign, the sacrament of God. So too the Church, with her visible, institutional structure, is for us the sacrament of Christ, representing him, making him present. The Church signifies in a visible, historical, and tangible form the presence and redeeming activity of Christ, offered to all persons of every age, race and condition.

1368. Thinking of the Church as “*sacrament*” has many advantages.

First, it unites inseparably the visible and invisible dimensions of the Church. “Sacrament” by definition is a visible sign making present an invisible reality. So the Church is a visible, hierarchically structured society making present a spiritual community. The two aspects form but one complex reality which comprises both a human and a divine element.

1369. *Second, “sacrament” directly relates the Church to non-Catholics.* Without neglecting the necessity of the visible Church, it helps explain how the grace of Christ can be operative beyond the limits of the institutional Church. The Church as sacrament is “used by Christ as an instrument for the redemption of all, and sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth” (*LG 9*).

The Church, then, is the tangible sign of Christ’s presence in the world, a beacon of light visible to all and drawing them in the power of the Spirit to communion with God and with one another in Christ (*cf. Acts 13:47; Mt 5:14-16*).

1370. *Third, it unites the Church closely with the Eucharist.* The many similarities are striking:

- As the Eucharist is composed of bread and wine “which earth has given and human hands have made,” so the Church is composed of men and women called together.
- As the Eucharist *makes sacramentally present* the body and blood of the Risen Christ, so the Church is *the visible sign of the presence of the Risen Christ in His Spirit*.

- As the Eucharist's bread and wine have no meaning outside of Christ's words, so the Church cannot be understood except through Christ's promise "I am with you always until the end of the world" (*Mt 28:20*).
- And as Christ's presence in the Eucharistic bread and wine is not effected by any human holiness or fidelity, but by the Risen Christ's own saving activity in the Spirit, so too is his inseparable union with the Church effected.

1371. "Sacrament" can also foster a strong *loyalty* and *personal sense of belonging to the Church*, even while recognizing our human limitations. This implies our constant need for renewal and purification. We come to love the Church as our spiritual mother and home.

Yet we know that we are a pilgrim people, already on our journey but not yet arrived. Therefore, we can appreciate the counsel that "guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church ceaselessly 'exhorts her sons and daughters to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the Church'" (*GS 43; LG 8; PCP II, 141*).

1372. *PCP II* openly averred that the Church in the Philippines is not, and will never be on this earth, the perfect bride of Christ. Ours is an imperfect Church living amidst and ministering to a very imperfect society. Both in her internal renewal, therefore, and in her service to society, the Church as the community of the Lord's disciples is destined to share in His passion and death so that she may also share in his risen life (*PCP II 142, 246-49*).

C. Scriptural Images of the Church

1373. If by its very nature the Church is *mystery* and *sacrament*, we come to better understand it more through prayerful reflection on key biblical images than by some abstract definition (*cf. CCC 753-57*). The New Testament, drawing on major Old Testament themes, contains more than 80 comparisons depicting the Church as a "*communion of life, love and truth*" established by Christ between God and His human children (*cf. LG 9*). Vatican II gathers them into *four groups*. The Church is:

- the *Flock of Christ*, the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep;
- the *Vineyard of God*, cultivated by the heavenly Vinedresser. Christ is the true vine who gives life and fruitfulness to us, the branches;
- the *Temple of God*, with Christ as the cornerstone and the apostles as foundation; and
- *our Mother*, the spotless *Spouse* of the spotless Lamb, "whom Christ loved and for whom he gave himself up that he might sanctify her" (*LG 6*).

(*Cf. Is 40:11; Ez 34:11-16; Jn 10:1-16; 1 Pt 5:4; Mt 21:33-43; Is 5:1f; Jn 15:1-5; Mt 21:42; Ps 117:22; 1 Cor 3:1; Gal 4:26; Rev 19:7; 21:2,9; Eph 5:26*).

1374. But since these are images drawn from the specific, concrete culture and times of the biblical people, they have to be carefully explained if they are to enlighten the Filipino Catholic of today on the nature of the Church. Most Filipinos have little or no contact with shepherds, flocks, vinedressers, and the like. These images, therefore, must be brought to life by showing how they manifest *basic human values* and *religious meaning* that are relevant to our own Filipino culture and spirituality.

1375. *PCP II* offers one example of adapting a biblical image of the Church to Filipino culture. Many biblical images revolve about the basic theme of the "household or *family* of God." *PCP II* developed the image of the Church as "*a community of families*." The *family* is "the Church in the home." Jesus began his earthly mission within a family; the family is where faith-life begins, is nurtured, grows to maturity. It is where Christian conscience is formed, and Christian prayer and worship is nurtured and integrated. In fact the family is "a true foundation for Basic Ecclesial Communities . . . a model of relationships in the Church. For the plan of God is that all should form one family, and the Church is

the household of God where all call upon and obey the will of the same Father through the Holy Spirit" (*PCP II 21-22*).

1376. Against the above background of these general Biblical images of the Church, and one *PCP II* adaptation, we shall take up *four* particular *biblical images* which are especially helpful for grasping the reality of the Catholic Church today: the "**Kingdom of God**," the "**People of God**," the "**Body of Christ**," and "**Temple of the Holy Spirit**."

1. Kingdom of God

1377. This is the major theme of Christ's own teaching in the Synoptic Gospels. But what exactly is this "kingdom"? *PCP II* sketches it in biblical images: the Kingdom of God is the Good News preached to the poor, the gift of God, our "*Abba*," (Father) who is sensitive to the needs and sufferings of every human being. It is the seed quietly sown, the offer of pardon to sinners, the banquet of table-fellowship and joyful communion with the Lord and our fellow men and women, the gift of salvation, eternal life. But it is a gift we must seek, demanding vigilance and active use of talents — a task and project as well as a gift (*PCP II 39-47*).

1378. Christ "inaugurated his Church by preaching the coming of God's Kingdom" (*cf. LG 5*). His parables about the Kingdom of God employed many specific images:

- a *treasure* hidden in a field,
- the *leaven* raising the dough,
- the tiny mustard *seed* growing into a tall tree,
- a *fish net* catching the good and the bad.

These can help us see how the Church, on the one hand, is *not simply identified* with the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, the Church *does serve the Kingdom* as the leaven in the dough of humanity, in sowing the seed and casting of the net (*cf. NCDP 230*). As such, the Church includes both the good and the bad fish, the wheat and the weeds. In brief, *the Church represents* the coming of the Kingdom, *the Kingdom in process*.

1379. The petition "Your Kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer clearly indicates that God's Kingdom is something *already* here, but *not yet* in its fulfillment in glory. Like the Kingdom, the pilgrim Church stands between the *already* and the *not yet*, constantly striving to prepare the way for, and witness to, the kingdom in glory, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . the assembly of the firstborn . . . in heaven" (*Heb 12:22f*).

2. People of God

1380. Vatican II's favorite image of the Church is "the new People of God." "God has willed to make men holy and save them, not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness" (*LG 9*). *Prefigured* in the Old Covenant which Yahweh set up with the people of Israel, "Christ instituted the New Covenant in his blood, by calling together a people, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit" (*LG 9*).

1381. The Church as the "People of God" has clear *distinguishing characteristics*:

- its *cause* is GOD: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God claims for his own" (*1 Pt 2:9f*);

- its **Head** is Christ “who was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification” (*Rom 4:25*);
- its **members** are “those who believe in Christ, who are reborn through the Word of the living God, ‘of water and the Spirit’ in baptism” (*cf. Jn 3:3,5*);
- its **condition** is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons/daughters of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple;
- its **law** is Christ’s new Commandment of love (*cf. Jn 13:34*), and the new Law of the Spirit (*cf. Rom 8:2*);
- its **mission** is to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, its salvation (*cf. Mt 5:134-16*);
- its **destiny** is the final Kingdom of God, brought to perfection at the end of time (*cf. LG 9; CCC 782*).

1382. This new People of God is a “**Priestly, Prophetic and Kingly People**” (*cf. PCP II 116-21; CCC 783-86, 901-13; LG 10-12; RH 18-21*). As a **priestly people** by reason of our *Baptism*, strengthened by *Confirmation* and nourished by the *Eucharist*, we Christians offer spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men (*cf. LG 34*).

As a **prophetic people**, we give witness to Christ by our understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and the grace of speech (*cf. Acts 2:17f*), “so that the power of the Gospel may shine out in daily family and social life” (*LG 35*).

As a **kingly people** we share in the power of Christ the *King* who came “to serve and give his life as a ransom for the many” (*Mt 20:28*). Thus we serve others, especially the poor and the suffering in whom we recognize “the likeness of our poor and suffering Founder” (*LG 8*). By sharing in the Spirit’s power “to renew the face of the earth”, we work to overcome sin and to permeate all with the values of Christ. “To be king is to minister, to serve” (*PCP II 121*).

1383. Filipino culture, with its more authority-structured relationships, may seem at first to run counter to this image of the Church which stresses the dignity of *all* members of “the new People of God.” But the political and social revolution of EDSA, 1986, the spontaneous response of help toward the victims of the natural calamities, and the Church celebration of its Second Plenary Council (*PCP II*) in 1990, witness to the growing sense of solidarity among Filipinos, of being “one people.” This deepening sense of national unity and national identity will help Filipino Catholics to realize and assume their full stature, dignity and responsibility as members in the Christian community, the “*family of God*.”

3. Body of Christ

1384. In the *Gospels* Jesus called men and women to follow him, to be his disciples and to share his life and mission. He identified them with himself: “He who hears you, hears me. He who rejects you, rejects me” (*Lk 10:16*). This holds true with even the least of his brethren: “I assure you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (*Mt 25:40*). Jesus spoke of an intimate communion with his followers: “Live on in me, as I do in you . . . I am the vine, you are the branches” (*Jn 15:4-5*). He even provided the means of such communion: “The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood, remains in me and I in him” (*Jn 6:56*). At the Last Supper, Jesus promised not to leave his disciples orphans (*cf. Jn 14:18*), but to send them his Spirit through whom he would be with them till the end of time. The Church is born of this personal communion between Jesus and his disciples (*cf. CCC 787-95*).

1385. “By communicating his Spirit to his brothers and sisters, called together from all peoples, Christ made them mystically into his own body” (*LG 7*). Thus the Church is not just *like* a body, but **IS the**

Body of Christ, really made one in him, in his “mystical” Body. “**Mystical**” does not mean “unreal” but rather *a reality not limited to sensible appearances*. Therefore it is *accessible to faith alone* because it *belongs to the mystery of God’s salvific plan* hidden for endless ages but revealed in the Gospel.

1386. Christ’s “**body**,” then, can refer to:

- the *physical body* of the historical Jesus, assumed at the Incarnation (*cf. Jn 1:14*); or
- his *Eucharistic body*, making sacramentally present to us the Person of the Risen Christ in his saving sacrifice; or
- his *mystical body*, the Church, the faithful united to Christ as their Head, and united and vivified by His Spirit.

1387. Unity in Diversity. Within Christ’s Body, the Church, there is a great variety of members and functions (*PCP II 91-94*). This means that the unity of the Body of Christ is *not uniformity*. Rather, “there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different ministries, but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone” (*1 Cor 12:4-6*). It is the *Holy Spirit* whom Christ shares with us as the principle of life, the *soul* of his Body, who, existing as one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body” (*LG 7*). Thus we pray:

Father, you gather your children into your Church,
to be ONE as you, Father, are one with your Son
and the Holy Spirit.
You call them to be your PEOPLE,
to praise your wisdom in all your works,
You make them the BODY OF CHRIST,
and the dwelling place of the HOLY SPIRIT.
(8th Preface for Sundays)

4. Temple of the Holy Spirit

1388. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “You are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you” (*1 Cor 3:16; cf. CCC 797f*). Animating the Church as the “Body of Christ” is the Holy Spirit. Traditional teaching of the Church declares: “As Christ is the Head of the Church, so is the Holy Spirit its soul” (*ND 852*). Vatican II describes it thus:

Christ has shared with us his Spirit who, being one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body. Consequently, the Spirit’s work could be compared to the function which the soul, the principle of life, fulfills in the human body (*LG 7*).

1389. The Filipino value of close family unity and ties should help Catholic Filipinos to appreciate the Church as the Body of Christ. “Body of Christ” actually stresses *first*, the living *unity of all the faithful among themselves through their union with Christ*. *Second*, under *Christ the Head, the organic relationships between the members* through the grace and charisms of the Spirit. *Third, the Church as Spouse of Christ* (*cf. Eph 5:27,29; CCC 789-96*).

All three aspects are actualized through *Baptism* and the *Eucharist*. “The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us . . . were *baptized* into one body” (*1 Cor 12:12-13*). Moreover, “by really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the *eucharistic bread*, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another” (*LG 7; cf. PCP II 89-90*).

II. ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH'S LIFE

1390. To distinguish itself from all other religious sects, the early Church used four criteria proclaimed in the Creed: **One, Holy, Catholic** and **Apostolic** (*cf. LG 8; CCC 811*). These are really *dynamic endowments* with which the Church is graced by the Holy Spirit, and perceived only in Faith. Besides being **gifts** they constitute **tasks** that challenge the Church as part of its *Mission*.

Moreover, they are so *closely linked with one another* that an advance in any one means an advance in the other three. Traditionally in apologetic works the marks were presented as qualities appearing in the history of the visible Church. Today they are usually related directly to Christ, starting with **unity** which leads to **holiness** and **catholicity**. “**Apostolic**” is explained as the origin and means for realizing the other three.

A brief study of each mark can help toward a deeper understanding and love of the Church.

A. The Church as ONE

1391. In the face of the numerous Christian sects and Churches, we boldly affirm in faith that the Church is **one** (*cf. CCC 813-22*).

The Church is one *first* from her very *source*, *the One living God in three Persons*. “The Church shines forth as ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit’ ” (*LG 4*).

Second, the Church is one in her *founder*, *Jesus Christ*, who:

- came to **redeem** and **unify** the **whole human race**;
- **prayed** to his Father “that all may be **one** even as you, Father, are in me and I in you” (*Jn 17:21*);
- **instituted the Eucharist** which both signifies and effects the **unity** of the Church;
- united all by his new **commandment of mutual love** (*cf. Jn 13:34*); and
- poured forth his **Spirit** through whom he calls the people of the New Covenant into a **unity** of faith, hope, and charity (*cf. UR 2-3*).

1392. The **bonds** of Church unity are clearly set forth in Scripture. Christians form “one body and one Spirit,” since “there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and works through all and is in all” (*Eph 4:4-6*). In brief, the Church is one:

- in the confession of **one faith** received from the apostles;
- the **common celebration of divine worship**, especially the sacraments; and
- the **fraternal harmony** of God’s family (*cf. UR 2; CCC 815*).

As a **visible sign** of this unity, Christ “put *Peter* at the head of the other apostles, and in him set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and of communion” (*LG 18*).

1393. But the Church is a **unity-in-diversity**, like the sheepfold of Jesus the Good Shepherd, who not only calls each of his own sheep by name and leads them out, but has “other sheep that do not belong to this fold. They shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd” (*Jn 10:3,16*). Hence the universal Church embraces not only people of different ranks, duties, situations and ways of life,

but also particular Churches which retain their own traditions while united under the Vicar of Christ (cf. *LG 13*).

1394. Church Unity as a Task. The *divisions among Christians* consequently remain a *major cause of scandal* before the world. Official breaks with Church communion include:

- a) *heresy*, the obstinate denial or doubt by baptized person of a truth which must be believed by divine* and Catholic faith;
- b) *apostasy*, the total repudiation of the Christian faith; and
- c) *schism*, the withdrawal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or from communion with the members of the Church subject to him (cf. *CJC can. 751; CCC 817*).

But closer to most Filipino Catholics are the common daily obstacles to unity against which St. Paul warned the Galatians: hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envy” (*Gal 5:20*). These both *impede authentic communion* among Catholics, as well as *frustrate legitimate ecumenical reaching out* to the many sincere non-Catholic Christian Filipinos.

1395. Ecumenism is concerned with *restoring unity of the Christian Churches*. Vatican II recognized non-Catholic Christians, for “all who are justified in faith through Baptism are incorporated into Christ and therefore have a right to be called Christians and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church” (*UR 3*). It also calls for the active involvement of all, faithful and clergy alike” (*UR 5*). But this unity can be achieved only from a radical “change of heart, new attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love (cf. *UR 7*). Ecumenical efforts include fair and respectful dialogue, working together on projects for the common good, and even common prayer (cf. *UR 4; CCC 820-22*).

1396. For *Filipino Catholics*, *PCP II* pointed out the need for both inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue (*PCP II 110-15, 216-221*). It cautioned, however, that ecumenism in the Philippines requires great pastoral discernment, due to the virulent attacks and aggressive proselytizing of many non-Catholic fundamentalist groups (cf. *PCP II 218-28; NCDP 233*). This only underlines the fact that the hope of full ecumenical unity *transcends human abilities*, and must be grounded “in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit” (*UR 24*).

B. The Church as HOLY

1397. In faith we believe *the Church is holy in a way that can never fail* (cf. *CCC 823*). *First*, because “Christ loved the Church as his Bride and gave himself up for her, to make her holy. Uniting her to himself as his body, he endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*LG 39*). *Second*, because the Holy Spirit graces her with the *fullness of the means of salvation and holiness*. Such are the preaching of the Gospel, the sacraments, the moral virtues, self-sacrificing service of neighbor, and charismatic gifts (cf. *UR 3; LG 48*). More concretely, the sanctity of the Church has shone out in the innumerable uncanonized saints among the ordinary faithful and religious, who through the ages have led holy lives.

1398. A Task. The Church’s holiness is a process of growing, a “Paschal Pilgrimage,” not a static, guaranteed state. Like Jesus, the Church welcomes sinners. But unlike Jesus she is “at the *same time holy and always in need of being purified*, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal” (*LG 8; cf. CCC 824-27; PCP II 142-44, 155*).

Christians have always been exhorted to “lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, . . . and put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are

born in truth” (*Eph 4:22-24*). This reveals the fact that “we all truly offend in many things (*cf. Jas. 3:2*). We all need God’s mercy continuously and must daily pray: ‘Forgive us our sins’ ” (*cf. LG 40*).

1399. But this means that *all in the Church are called to holiness* (*cf. 1 Thes 4:3*). This call comes from Christ: “The Lord Jesus, divine Teacher and Model of perfection, who stands as the Author and Finisher of all holiness, *preached holiness of life to each and every one of his disciples*, regardless of their situations” (*LG 40*).

1400. Traditionally, many Filipino Catholics related holiness to certain persons like priests or religious. Some laity used that as an excuse for not striving after holiness themselves. Priests and religious are called to a special state and service in the Church and vow themselves publicly to bear a special sacrificial witness to the love of God, *but all the baptized are called to live the full challenge of Christian holiness*. As priests and religious manifest the transcendence of God’s call, so lay people remind all men that God’s love has become incarnate in this world, is found there, and is to be lived there.

In reality, **Charity/Love** is the *center of holiness*, uniting inseparably both worship of God and service of our fellow human persons. Christ clearly taught this in his TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS OF LOVE. Vatican II confirms this: “love as the *bond of perfection* and fulfillment of the law, *governs, gives meaning to, and perfects all the means of attaining holiness*. Hence it is the love of God and of neighbor which marks the true disciple of Christ” (*LG 42; cf. CCC 826*).

PCP II insisted that “all are called to a union of love with God and with one another. All—without exception—*are called to holiness*, the perfection of charity, though not all pursue the same path to holiness” (*PCP II 402*).

C. The Church as CATHOLIC

1401. The term “Catholic” here means *universal, complete, all-embracing*. It applies to the Church in two different ways. *First*, the Church is world-wide, sent to all peoples. *Second*, being endowed with the “fullness of the means for salvation,” she announces the whole, true faith (*cf. AG 6; CCC 830*).

Hence catholicity is basically not a question of numbers. The Church was “Catholic” on the day of Pentecost “when was foreshadowed the union of all peoples in the catholicity of the Faith achieved by the Church of the New Covenant, a Church which speaks all languages, and lovingly understands and accepts all tongues” (*AG 4*). It will still be Catholic even if, on the last day, she may only be a “little flock” (*cf. Lk 12:32; 18:8*).

1402. The Church is “Catholic” according to a Church Father because she:

- is *spread* throughout the world (*cf. Acts 1:8*).
- possesses *all saving truth* (*cf. Jn 16:13*).
- is sent *to all peoples* (*cf. Mk 16:15*).
- can *heal all kinds of sins* (*cf. Jn 20:23*)
- abounds in *every kind of virtue* and *spiritual gift* (*Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures*).

1403. Traditionally, the Church’s “catholicity” as its *external*, visible universality, was used in **apologetics** to distinguish the one true Church from all heretical and schismatic Christian sects and groups. “Catholic” was a label identifying the Christian “denomination” to which a believer belonged. Today, “catholicity” is also explained as the Church’s *interior* capacity of exercising a universal ministry of reconciliation. Such intrinsic capacity is a gift of grace not fully accessible to any sociological study, but directly rooted in the Triune God – particularly in Jesus Christ, the universal Mediator, and in his Spirit.

1404. Vatican II explains the universality of God’s call to the whole world:

All are called to belong to the new People of God. Wherefore this People, while remaining one and unique, is to be spread throughout the whole world to all ages. . . This character of *universality* which adorns the People of God is that gift of the Lord whereby the Catholic Church strives energetically and constantly to bring all humanity with all its riches back to Christ the Head in the unity of his Spirit (LG 13; cf. CCC 831).

1405. A Task. The Church’s “catholicity” then, is both a gift and a *task* which involves *mission* and *inculturation*. In its mission the Church manifests a basic *respect for local Churches and cultures*. Its “catholicity” is not any monotonous uniformity, but reaches out to the cultural wealth of all peoples. “The Church as People of God fosters and takes to herself the abilities, resources, and customs of each people; she purifies, strengthens, and ennobles them” (LG 13).

When the Christian Faith is accepted by a people, they bring their own cultural heritage to bear. The Gospel becomes clothed in a new culture, while at the same time, it purifies what is not authentic and strengthens the culture’s true human values. This mutual *interaction of the Christian message and human culture* is an ongoing, never-completed process through history. Local Churches express the one Christian Faith in distinct ways and forms characteristic of their people, yet in harmony with all other Catholic Churches and “giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity of the Church” (UR 4; cf. AG 22).

1406. Filipino “Inculturation” was a major theme of *PCP II*. “The Christian Faith must take root in the matrix of our Filipino being so that we may truly believe and love as Filipino” (PCP II 72). To “inculturate our Faith” is a primary need for the Catholic Church in our country.

Inculturation is necessary for the sake of the Church itself. It enriches the Church This process of inculturation . . . respectfully draws the good elements within a culture, renews them from within and assimilates them to form part of its Catholic unity. The *Catholicity* of the Church is more fully realized when it is able to assimilate and use the riches of a people’s culture for the glory of God (PCP II 208). Practically speaking, “We have to raise up more and more Filipino evangelizers, formed in a ‘Filipino way’ ” (PCP II 210).

D. The Church as APOSTOLIC

1407. The Church is “Apostolic” in *three* basic ways: *first*, because Jesus Christ grounded her permanently “on the *foundation of the apostles*” (Eph 2:20); *second*, because she guards and transmits *their teaching* and *witness* (cf. Mt 28:19-20); *third*, she continues to be instructed, sanctified and guided by the apostles through *their successors* (cf. CCC 857-60).

The apostles were sent out by the Risen Lord:

first to the children of Israel and then to all the nations, so that as sharers in Christ’s power they might *make all peoples his disciples* and *sanctify* and *govern* them, and thus spread his Church and, by administering it under the guidance of the Lord, *shepherd* it all days until the end of the world (LG 19).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within her, the Church guards the sound teaching of the apostles, which forms the rich deposit of faith (cf. 2 Tim 1:13-14).

1408. These truths are brought out clearly and simply in the Prefaces for Apostles:

Father, you *founded your Church* on the apostles,
to stand firm *forever* as the *living Gospel* for all men to hear.
Through the *apostles* you watch over us and protect us always.

You made them *shepherds* of the flock to share
in the work of your Son,
And from their place in heaven they *guide us still*.

Apostolic Succession

1409. The principal way the apostles “guide us still” is through the *apostolic succession* of the bishops, assisted by the Holy Spirit (*cf. CCC 861f*). “Through those who were appointed bishops by the apostles, and through their successors down to our own time, the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved throughout the world” (*LG 20*). Christ had formed the apostles in the form of a *college* or permanent assembly, over which he placed Peter, chosen from among them (*cf. LG 19*). Today John Paul II has affirmed that:

the Church is now more united in *fellowship of service* and in the awareness of the apostolate. This unity springs from the *principle of collegiality* . . . Christ himself made this principle a living part of the apostolic College of the Twelve, with Peter at their head. Christ is continuously renewing it in the College of Bishops, united with and under the guidance of the Successor of St. Peter (*RH 5*).

1410. Thus, precisely as “Apostolic,” the Church is a *hierarchical community*, whose unity in faith and communion are grounded in the successors of the apostles, and especially of **Peter**, the chosen “*rock*” upon which Christ would build his Church (*cf. Mt 16:18; cf. LG 18*). This *Petrine commission* was confirmed when the Risen Christ, calling Peter to a threefold profession of atoning love, charged him thrice with the task of shepherding and leading the flock: “Feed my lambs” (*cf. Jn 21:15-17*). Since Christ’s commission to Peter and his apostles was destined to last until the end of the world (*cf. Mt 28:20*), the “apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically structured society,” the Church (*LG 20*). Today, the Roman Pontiff, the Pope, as Vicar of Christ and successor of Peter, has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And the Bishops, as successors of the apostles in their role as teachers and pastors, “together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, have supreme and full power over the universal Church” (*cf. LG 22*). But this power and leadership of the hierarchy is a “ministry of service” by which “our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the midst of the faithful” (*LG 21*).

1411. A Task. The challenge presented to the Church by its “apostolic” quality was commonly treated under the term “*apostolate*,” meaning the work of all the faithful who carry on the original mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles. So Vatican II’s “*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*” was issued “to intensify the apostolic activity of the People of God” (*AA 1*). Such activity is a work of grace aimed at bringing people to the knowledge and love of Christ through which they gain eternal life (*cf. Jn 20:31*). Today, this work is usually presented in terms of the Church’s Mission and Ministries, to which we now turn.

III. MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

A. Mission

1412. Christ founded his Church to continue his saving mission on earth. “The Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder, receives the *mission* to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God” (*LG 5*). This ‘mission’ is built into her very nature as originating from the Blessed Trinity. The mission flows from the Church as “*Sacrament of salvation*,” the sign and instrument for achieving intimate union with God (*cf. AG 5; LG 1*).

Briefly then, the Church has:

- a *mission mandate* (cf. Mt 228:19f);
- whose *origin* and *goal* is the Blessed Trinity (cf. AG 2);
- *motivated* by God's love (cf. 2 Cor 5:14); and
- with the Holy Spirit as *Principal Agent* (cf. R Mi 21; CCC 849-56).

1413. This mission of the "People of God" is a central theme in all *four Gospels*. **Mark** presents mission as "**proclaiming** the Gospel to lead others to the faith: "Clearly this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39). **Matthew's** mission stresses the **teaching** of the Christian community, the Church (cf. Mt 28:19-20;16:18). **Luke** emphasizes the Gospel's transforming power to work **conversion** to God's merciful love, and **liberation** from the root of all evil, sin. In **John's** Gospel Jesus sends forth his disciples on **mission**, just as the Father sent him (cf. Jn 20:21).

1414. *PCP II* describes the Church in the Philippines as a "Community in Mission" (*PCP II 102-6*). Since mission is at the center of Church's being, the **whole Church is missionary**. This means that "we are missionaries above all because of *what we are* as a Church. . . even before we become missionaries *in word or deed*" (*RMi 23*).

In the past, most Catholics thought of "mission" and "missionary" only in terms of priests, brothers, and religious who were sent to the "foreign missions." It concerned only a few who were specially called. *Today*, we realize that "*each disciple of Christ has the obligation of spreading the faith to the best of his ability*" (*LG 17*). *PCP II* asserts: "All are called to mission . . . **all** – without exception – **are called to evangelize**" (*PCP II 402*).

1415. *PCP II* goes further to describe the particular mission of the lay faithful within the one universal mission of the Church. It grounds the "Lay Apostolate" in Vatican II's teaching:

The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself. . . . The laity have this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth (*LG 33; cf. CL 14; PCP II 402-11*).

PCP II then develops the mission of the laity in terms of being called to: 1) a community of families; 2) Christian presence in the world; 3) service and evangelization; and 4) social transformation (cf. *PCP II 419-38*).

1416. The Church's mission toward non-Christians is based on *two firm convictions*. *First*, **Christ is the one Savior of all**, the one mediator between God and man.

This holds true . . . for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same divine destiny, we must hold that the Holy Spirit, in a way known only to God, offers to all the possibility of being made partners in Christ's Paschal Mystery (*GS 22*).

Second, God established **the Church** as "**the universal sacrament of salvation**, sent on mission to the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (*LG, 9*). Therefore, "it is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind, and the necessity of the Church for salvation" (*RMi 5, 9*).

1417. The *mission of every Filipino Catholic* derives from both the Lord's mandate and the life of God's grace within us. As Catholics we are **privileged** to receive the Lord's charge of **bearing witness**

to the Faith and to the *Christian way of life* as a **service** to our brothers and sisters, and as a fitting **response** to God (*RMI 11*). As members of a missionary Church, we are called to **confess** the Faith in full adherence to the Word of God, **celebrated** in the Sacraments, and **lived** in charity, the principle of Christian *moral existence*" (*CL 33*).

PCP II recalled John Paul II's words: "the Philippines has a special missionary vocation to proclaim the Good News, to carry the light of Christ to the nations." It added; "while it is true that the Church has a mission towards Philippine society, it has also a very definite mission to the other peoples of Asia" (*PCP II 106*).

1418. Church of the Poor. This mission involves a balance between the essential *inculturation* of the Faith in Filipino culture *and* the *mission to all peoples*, or the Church's international outreach. *PCP II* described at length how in the Philippines today, the Church must be a "**Church of the Poor.**" This means a Church that:

- embraces and practices the spirit of evangelical poverty; combines detachment from possessions with profound trust in the Lord;
- shows special love, a love of preference, for the poor;
- does not discriminate against the poor, but vindicates their rights;
- gives preferential attention and time to the poor;
- has Pastors and leaders who will learn to be with, work with, and learn from, the poor;
- not only evangelizes the poor, but recognizes that the poor will themselves become true evangelizers; and
- orients and tilts the center of gravity of the entire community in favor of the needy (*cf. PCP II 125-36*).

But PCP II also emphasized the missionary efforts of *Filipino* religious, priests and lay persons actively spreading the Faith in foreign lands, as well as the missionary potential of Filipino migrant workers abroad (*cf. PCP II 106ff*).

1419. A further balance must be maintained between the *evangelizing mission of proclaiming the Gospel* and *the thrust for justice and liberation*. Evangelization and human liberation, while *not identical*, are clearly *intimately connected*. PCP II speaks of a renewed evangelization which does not stop at the building of the Church. It seeks to *transform the whole fabric of society* according to the values of the Kingdom and of Christ. Thus, the Church promotes human development, integral liberation, justice and peace in society and the integrity of creation. The need for such evangelization is shown by the fact that while our churches are filled on Sundays, our society remains a sick society.

This overall view is illustrated in the "Flow Chart" of the National Pastoral Plan (*NPP*):

- from *the Call*: to be Church of the Poor;
- through *the Response*: Renewed Integral Evangelization;
- to *the Vision*: to become a Community of Disciples.

B. Ministries in the Church

1420. The mission of the Church has given rise to numerous ministries within the Church (*cf. LG 18; CCC 874*). "Ministry" means "service," and Christian ministry refers to "serving the people of God in a stable fashion." This includes any public activity of a baptized disciple of Christ, animated by the grace [charism] of the Holy Spirit, performed on behalf of the Christian community, and in the service of the Kingdom of God.

Thus, ministry is characterized by: a) *doing* something, b) *for God's Kingdom*, c) in *public*, d) on behalf of the *Christian community*, e) *empowered by a gift* of faith received in baptism, or ordination, and f) *identifiable* within the diversity of ministerial activities.

Ministry in its most general sense, therefore, is not the privilege of a selected few, but *the vocation of all baptized Christians*. The *grace* of God's active presence among us, is the *source*, the *context*, the *judge* and the *goal* of all Church ministries.

1421. Ministries in the Church have greatly expanded today, both in the *variety* of services and at the *levels* of ministerial activity. Such expansion has given rise to various groups of distinctions such as "charism, service, ministry," or "ministries, offices, roles" (*cf. CL 21*). In order to avoid confusion and arbitrary interpretations, we shall limit the following to only what is essential for our purpose.

What must be insisted upon is both the **unity** of the Church's mission in which all the baptized participate, and the **substantial diver-sity** of the ministry of Pastors and the ministries of the lay faithful, exercised in conformity to their specific lay vocation which is different from that of the sacred ministry.

1422. Ordained Ministry. There are first of all the *ordained ministries* that arise from the *Sacrament of Orders*. These ministers receive the authority and power to serve the Church, acting in the person of Christ, the Head. But they are fundamentally ordered to the service of the entire People of God (*cf. CL 22*). "The sacramental ministry in the Church, then, is a service at once collegial and personal, exercised in the name of Christ" (*cf. CCC 875-79*). The three degrees of the Sacrament of Orders: bishop, priest and deacon, are taken up in Chapter 28. Here we focus solely on the *Magisterium*, the *teaching office* of the Bishops.

1423. Infallibility. The most important duty of the Bishop is "preaching the Gospel" (*cf. LG 25*). The Bishops are the "authentic teachers," endowed with the authority of Christ, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff. Through the Spirit, Christ bestowed on his Church, in particular on the College of Bishops teaching in communion with Peter's successor, the Pope, the gift of *infallibility*. This gift preserves the Church from error in teaching what God has revealed in faith and morals (*cf. LG 12, 25; CCC 889-92*).

1424. In promising to be with the Church to the end of time, Christ, the divine Redeemer, willed this charism of *infallibility* for his Church. This simply means that Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, through his Holy Spirit, will preserve his Church from error in its solemn, definitive teaching of the deposit of faith (*cf. LG 12, 25*). This special charism of infallibility is enjoyed by the Roman Pontiff, in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful, he proclaims by a definitive act, a doctrine of faith or morals" (*cf. LG 25*). This infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the Bishops when, as a body together with the successor of Peter, they exercise their supreme teaching office.

To such definitive teaching all Catholics are obliged to adhere "with the loyal and obedient assent of faith" (*LG 25*). This "assent of the Church can never be lacking on account of the activity of the same Holy Spirit, whereby the whole flock of Christ is preserved and progresses in unity of faith" (*LG 25*).

1425. Lay Apostolate. Different not simply in degree but in essence are *the ministries of the lay faithful*, founded in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, and for a good many of them, in the Sacrament of Matrimony (*CJC, Can. 230; CL 23*).

PCP II described the laity's field of evangelizing activity as:

the vast and complex world of education, politics, society, and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media.

To fulfill the mission of communicating Christ in these vast areas, the Church needs:

all the lay faithful, rich and poor, with the special gifts, individual and collective, of farmers, fishermen, workers, mass media practitioners, educators and lawyers, civil servants, those in the medical and nursing services, and professionals in the various strata of society (*PCP II 434*).

It is clear, then, that the laity's apostolate cannot be exclusively described in terms of *ministry*.

1426. The Religious. Besides the ordained and lay ministries, there are the “*Religious Brothers and Sisters*,” those faithful who bind themselves to Christ in a state of life *consecrated to God* by the profession of the evangelical counsels of *poverty, chastity* and *obedience* (*cf. LG 44; CCC 914-33*). The Church recognizes *various forms* of consecrated life: *monastic, eremitic, religious institutes, secular institutes*, etc., and different *societies of apostolic life*. PCP II offers an extended exposition of their nature, radical discipleship, witness value, revitalizing their specific religious charisms, their essential missionary character with a “passion for justice,” within the local Church. It adds a description of their spiritualities: contemplative and contemplatives in action (*cf. PCP II 448-506*).

1427. Basic Ecclesial Communities. Filipino Catholics need to see that the Church's *Mission* and all her *Ministries* are directly *for the service of the Kingdom*. Besides the primary task of evangelization through preaching the Word, this service means establishing communities, local Churches, and forming *Basic Ecclesial Communities* which become centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach (*RMi 51*). By incarnating the Gospel in the Filipino culture, these BECs also become means for effectively spreading Gospel values, and for bringing out the eschatological dimension of daily life. Finally, *dialogue* with our Filipino and Asian brothers and sisters of other religions is an important part of the Filipino Catholic's evangelizing mission (*PCP II 104-8, 137-40*).

IV. SUPPORTING THEMES

A. The Communion of Saints

1428. To “the holy Catholic Church” the Apostles' Creed adds the explicitation: “*the Communion of Saints*.” The phrase has two meanings:

- communion in holy things (*sancta*), and
- communion with holy people (*sancti*).

Both senses are true of the Church (*cf. CCC 946-48*).

The inspired description of the primitive Church in Acts summarizes the members' “**communion in holy things.**”

They devoted themselves to:

- the *teaching* of the apostles: communion in the faith received from the apostles;
- *communal life*: fellowship in the Lord, supported by the *charisms* of the Holy Spirit;
- *the breaking of bread and to prayers*: communion in the sacraments, especially *Baptism*, the door to the Church, and the *Eucharist* which nourishes and perfects the communion;
- “*they shared all things in common*”: communion in possessions;
- “*with exultation and sincerity of heart they ate their meals*”: communion of charity (*cf. Acts 2:42; CCC 949-53*).

1429. But the Church is also the “**communion of holy people**” in *three states*. There are *first*, those who are still *pilgrims on earth*; *second*, those who are *being purified*; and *third*, those who are already *in glory*, contemplating in full light God Himself (*cf. LG 49*). Despite these different states, all are in communion in loving the same God and their neighbor, being disciples of the same Lord, and animated by the same Spirit. Moreover “the union of the living with the brethren who have fallen asleep in the peace of Christ is in no way interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the constant faith of the Church, is reinforced by the sharing of spiritual goods” (*LG 49*).

1430. Filipino Catholics are culturally attuned to *communion with the saints, communion with the departed, in one family of God*. November 1-2 are National Holidays in our country, showing how much Filipinos “cherish the memory of the dead with great piety, offering prayers for them “because it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead” (*2 Mc 12:46*) (*cf. LG 50*). Yet we must beware of *abuses*, excesses or defects which may have crept in.

“Authentic cult of the saints consists not so much in multiplying external acts, but rather in a more intense practice of our love, whereby we seek from the saints ‘example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and help in their intercession’ ” (*LG 51*). Thus, . . . for as long as we, who are sons and daughters of God and form one family in Christ, remain in communion with one another in mutual love and in one praise of the most Holy Trinity, we are responding to the deepest vocation of the Church (*LG 51*).

B. Mary: Daughter, Mother and Model of the Church

1431. In Chapter 1 we explained the unique place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Filipino Catholicism. Chapter 3 concluded its exposition of Faith by describing “*Mary: Model of Faith*.” Chapter 10 explained *Mary’s relation to Christ* as grounded in Scripture and Church teaching. The *Virgin Mary* is “acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer.”

1. Mary, Daughter of the Church

1432. Now we briefly develop *Mary’s relation to the Church*. Marian piety has uncovered an abundant richness of relationships between Mary and the Church. For example, as “being of the race of Adam and redeemed by Christ in a more exalted fashion” and as a “believing disciple of Jesus,” Mary is a “*daughter* of the Church, and our *sister* as well” (*LG 53; cf. BYM 114*). But the Vatican Council immediately adds that Mary is “clearly the *mother of the members of Christ*, since she has with love cooperated in bringing about the birth in the Church of the faithful who are members of Christ their Head” (*LG 53; cf. CCC 963*).

2. Mary, Mother of the Church

1433. Mary as “Mother of the Church” is the reflection and extension of her being the Mother of God and the associate in Christ’s saving work (*cf. BYM 117; R Ma 24*). We saw how Mary became the *Mother of God*, that is, of the historical Christ, beginning with her acceptance at the Annunciation when the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. Now we see that Mary is the **Mother of the Church** because:

- As “*Mother of Jesus Christ*” she is Mother of the Head of the Church, his mystical Body, and thus mother of all members of his Body, all his disciples. Therefore as disciples of Christ and as members of his Body, we have *Mary as our spiritual mother* (*cf. Jn 19:26f; CCC 964*).

- As “*associate in Christ’s saving work*,” Mary “cooperated in an utterly singular way by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior She is a mother to us in the order of grace” (LG 61; cf. CCC 968).

1434. Mary’s motherhood in the order of grace continues without interruption, since “taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role, but by her intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation” (LG 62; cf. CCC 968; AMB 55-59). As assumed into heaven in bodily and spiritual glory, Mary “shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come (cf. 2 Pt 3:10) as a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim people of God” (LG 68; cf. CCC 972).

1435. Motherhood of Mary and of the Church Relative to Christ. Mary and the Church mutually clarify each other (cf. R Ma 30). Their interrelation can be spelled out in terms of their life-giving maternity, following the pattern “*Word of God – Faith – birth of Christ.*”[#]

- a. • Mary brought forth Christ, the Life of the world;
 - the Church regenerates people in the Christ-life.
- b. • Mary was “overshadowed” by the Spirit at the Annunciation and Christ was conceived;
 - the Church received the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and Christ is born in his members, the Church;
- c. • Mary is a Virginal Mother, that is, entirely dependent on God, not on man.
 - the Church is likewise;
- d. • Mary, the redeemed, is missioned to be mother of the redeemed;
 - Church’s mission is to be “mother of the redeemed.”

(BYM 79-80)

In fact, Paul VI did not hesitate to affirm that “knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of the mystery of Christ and of the Church” (quoted in RMa 47).

1436. John Paul II develops this mutual relation of Mary and the Church’s maternity. On the one hand, the Church learns to be Mother and Virgin from Mary (cf. LG 64; R Ma 43). The Church learned to imitate Mary’s faith and love in carrying out the Father’s will. The Church thereby became virginal mother in her own right. Through the ministry of Word and Sacrament, she brings forth adopted sons and daughters of the Father, receiving the Word of God in faith.

On the other hand, in her new motherhood in the Spirit, Mary embraces each and every one *in* the Church and *through* the Church (cf. R Ma 47).

3. Mary, Model of the Church

1437. Mary is *Model of the Church* because she “shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues” (LG 65). Mary is the first to be evangelized, and the first evangelizer (cf. PCP II 145-52; AMB 60).

As *the first to be evangelized and redeemed*:

- in her *relationship to Christ*, she is the most admirable fruit of Christ’s redemption;

[#] Vatican II sketches this same relationship of the Church to Mary: “The Church in her apostolic work rightly looks to her who brought forth Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, so that through the Church, Christ may be born and increase in the hearts of the faithful” (LG 65).

- in relation to the *life of the Church* and its members, she is model of Faith as both virgin and mother, and the perfect disciple of Christ. She is *blest among women*, raised to a dignity of unimagined heights, “our fallen nature’s solitary boast.”

As *the first evangelizer*:

Mary is Christ’s God-chosen sharer in mediating it. She is the model of *ecclesial service*, the handmaid of the Lord who proclaimed her service in her *Magnificat*, and collaborated with her Son to evangelize for the liberation of all (*Puebla 292-303*).

1438. Mary, then, “is present in the mystery of the Church as *model* – but she is much more. Indeed, with a maternal love she *cooperates* in the birth and education of the sons and daughters of mother Church” (*R Ma 44*).

For Filipino Catholics, the central experience of Mary, Mother and Model of the Church, is her constant help and protection through her *maternal mediation*, interceding for all her children (*cf. R Ma 40*). Traditional Catholic prayers come spontaneously to Filipinos:

- We fly to your protection, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions, but in our need deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin.
- Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided. . .
- Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy; hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope;
To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;
To you do we send up our sighs, mourning
and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy towards us,
And after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit
of your womb, Jesus,
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

1439. Mary is our *model* in many ways, especially in her interior attitude of service and sacrifice. A total obedience to God’s will and the desire to help others marked her daily life. In that way, God was preparing her for the final sacrifice of the cross. *PCP II* declares that “we need to consider Mary’s qualities such as faith, generosity, courage at the Annunciation and Crucifixion, her intercessory role at Cana and at the Upper Room before Pentecost, her gentleness and nurturing love” (*PCP II 580*).

1440. In like manner, Paul VI clarified how Mary can be truly a *model for the modern woman*. He highlighted her decision making, her free choice of virginity for total self-consecration to God, her proclamation of God’s vindicating the humble and oppressed, her courageous stand in flight, exile, and persecution of her Son, and her support of the apostolic community (*cf. MC 37*).

Therefore, Mary can rightfully be considered:

an example to be imitated, not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived. . . but as an example for the way in which, in her own particular way of life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God. She heard the word of God and acted on it. . . She is the first and most perfect of Christ’s disciples (*MC 35; AMB 91*).

1441. This also refutes those who erroneously are led to conceive of Christ as the model of men, and Mary as the model of women. Christ is the Lord and Savior of all – men and women. Those who consider Mary only in her attitude of service and obedience, supposedly representing the ideal values of “femininity,” forget that *Christ is THE model of service and obedience*. Mary’s yes is Christ’s, leading to the struggle of the Cross. Mary, then, is the fulfillment of Israel raised to a new level; following Christ, she is model for both men and women.

INTEGRATION

1442. The *doctrine* of the Church as the People of God has a profound effect on Catholic *Morality*. For if it is true that God’s very life and grace are shared with us as members of the Church, then the *social dimension* of all authentic morality becomes even more sharply evident. More concretely, this doctrine of the Church underlines the Christian community’s necessary role in the ongoing formation of *Christian conscience*, especially through the moral guidance and enlightenment offered by the Church’s Magisterium to the People of God in regard to difficult moral problems.

1443. Moreover, viewing the Church as the “*foundational sacrament*” grounds the whole sacramental order and fosters a renewed appreciation of *Worship* The liturgical renewal owes much to this new dynamic view of the Church. But the most fruitful change wrought by this new ecclesiology is the stress on the *spiritual vocation of all members of the Church*. All are called to a life of authentic prayer and holiness, marked by a genuine personal intimacy with the Lord. This life is developed in the subsequent chapters on the sacramental life of the Church.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1444. *What is the Catholic Church?*

The Catholic Church is the community of men and women, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, under the leadership of the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him.
As such, “they press onward towards the Kingdom of the Father as bearers of the message of salvation intended for all” (*GS 1*).

1445. *How should we understand the Church?*

The Church is not merely a human social organization, but “the People of God called together.” It consists of all who are drawn to *personal communion* with Christ and with one another, and as “united to the *Son*, in the *Spirit’s* bond of love, [are thus] united to the *Father*” (*CL 18*).
The Church, then, is “*mystery*” – a God-centered reality in its origin, ongoing life and final goal.

1446. *How is the Church related to the Trinity?*

The Church:

- *originates* according to the **Father’s** eternal plan, from the side of the Crucified **Christ**, and is animated and united by the coming of the **Holy Spirit**;
- *structured* as a *community* of love modelled on the Trinity’s loving union of **Father, Son** and **Spirit**;
- *missioned* (sent) by the Father following the joint Mission of Son and Spirit;

- *destined* as a pilgrim people to journey toward perfect communion with the Trinity in heaven.

1447. *Do Catholics as Church members experience the Trinity?*

In practice, Filipino Catholics experience the Trinity in their parish community. Without consciously attending to it, they actually:

- come to worship God as their *Father*,
- through their union with *Jesus Christ*, their Savior,
- guided by the grace of the *Holy Spirit*, and
- under the leadership of their parish priests and the Bishops, successors of the apostles.

1448. *Why is the Church today called “sacrament”?*

The Church, like Christ himself, is rightly called “*sacrament*” because it is a *visible sign* which makes present a *spiritual grace-filled reality*.

Specifically, the Church is the efficacious symbol that unites us to God and to one another, and thus is the *efficacious symbol* of our salvation.

1449. *What advantages does thinking of the Church as “sacrament” offer?*

Thinking of the Church as *fundamental sacrament* helps us

- *unite* the visible (institutional) and invisible (mystery) aspects of the Church;
- *relate* the Church to non-Catholics for whom it is called to be the “light” of the world and “salt” of the earth;
- *link* the Church with the Eucharist in its union with Christ; and
- *love* the Church, as our home.

1450. *How does Scripture picture the Church?*

Among the many Scriptural images of the Church, three stand out: “Kingdom of God,” “People of God,” and “Body of Christ.”

1451. *What is meant by the Church as “Kingdom of God”?*

The Church is the “Kingdom of God *in process*,” that is:

- the Good News preached to the poor,
- the seed quietly sown, and
- the leaven in the dough, gradually raising all in the pilgrimage to the Kingdom of the Father, through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

1452. *How is the Church the new “People of God”?*

God saves us not merely as individuals, but by calling us into a *single people*, united in faith, whose:

- *Head* is *Christ* the Lord;
- *unifying soul* is the indwelling *Spirit*;
- *members* are those who believe in Christ and are reborn through water and the Spirit in Baptism;
- *structure* is the Christ-instituted *hierarchy* of apostles and their successors, the *Bishops*, with the Roman Pontiff as head;
- *law* is Christ’s new commandment of *Love*;
- *mission* is *loving service* of neighbor, and
- *final destiny* is *sharing in the perfect community of Love*, of Father, Risen Incarnate Son, and Spirit.

1453. *How is the Church the “Body of Christ”?*

“By communicating his Spirit to his brothers [and sisters], called together from all peoples, Christ made them mystically into his own body” (LG 7).

The Church is a real, living body whose members are formed in *Baptism* into the likeness of Christ, fed in the *Eucharist* with the very life of Christ their head, and animated and unified by his Spirit as its soul.

[Hence we see how “Christ’s body” can mean: a) his *physical body* while he was on earth; b) his *Eucharistic body*, by which his glorified body/Person is sacramentally present to us, and c) *Mystical body of the Church* formed by all his disciples, united to him as Head and sharing his very life through his Spirit in the visible society governed by the successors of the apostles.]

1454. *What are the essential characteristics of the Church?*

Traditionally the Church has been described by *four* basic *characteristics*, each of which as both *gift* and *task* relates the Church directly to Christ. These characteristics are: ONE, HOLY, CATH-OLIC, and APOSTOLIC.

1455. *What is meant by affirming the Church as “ONE”?*

Despite numerous Christian sects and Churches, the Church is essentially ONE as *Gift* in its:

- a) *SOURCE*, as a people made one with the unity of the Trinity and its founder, Jesus Christ;
- b) *LIFE*, as one body and one Spirit in:
 - the confession of one Faith;
 - common sacramental worship;
 - loving service of one another;
 - loving obedience to the Vicar of Christ on earth.

1456. *How is the Church’s oneness a “Task”?*

As followers of Christ and members of his Body, the Church, we are called to a radical change of heart to overcome the divisions rooted in heresy, apostasy and schism, and especially our own factions, rivalries, and dissensions that fracture the visible communion of Christ’s people.

1457. *What is meant by the Church as “HOLY”?*

The Church is holy as a *gift* from Christ who unites her to himself as his Body, and sends her his Holy Spirit. Empowered by the Spirit, the Church sanctifies her members by her preaching, loving service, sacramental life, and charismatic gifts.

1458. *How is the Church’s holiness also a “Task”?*

Since the Church is “at the same time holy and always in need of being purified” (LG 8), her holiness is a process of growing into the full stature of Christ.

“. . . Till we become one in faith and in the knowledge God’s Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature . . . Let us profess the truth in love and grow to the full maturity of Christ the head. Through him the whole body grows . . . and builds itself up in love” (Eph 4:13-16).

PCP II has stressed that “all – without exception – are called to holiness. . . though all do not pursue the same path” (*PCP II* 402; cf. LG 32).

1459. *What does it mean to call the Church “CATHOLIC”?*

The Church is “Catholic” or *universal* as a *gift* from the Lord because she is sent to bring all peoples “to Christ the Head in the unity of his Spirit” (LG 13).

But it is also a *Task* since “all – without exception are also called to mission, that is, to evangelize (PCP II 402; cf. LG 33).

1460. *What is meant by the Church as “APOSTOLIC”?*

As *Gift*, the Church is apostolic because Christ built [her] upon “the foundation of the apostles” (Eph 2:20), thus linking her permanently with their witness (cf. Mt 28:19-20). This apostolic charism is carried on through the apostolic succession of the Bishops.

As *Task*, the apostolic nature of the Church is exercised by all the faithful who carry on the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles.

1461. *What is the mission Christ entrusted to his Church?*

The Church received the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God (cf. LG 5). She is the “Universal Sacrament of salvation” for the whole world.

The Church is “missionary by her very nature, since she originates from the mission of the Son and the mission the Spirit, according to the plan of God the Father” (AG 2). Every member of the Church, therefore, shares in this mission, i.e., “the obligation of spreading the faith” (LG 17).

1462. *How is this mission applied to Filipino Catholics?*

Since the Church in the Philippines is a “Church of the Poor,” PCP II stresses the thrust for justice and liberation as an integral part of the renewed evangelizing mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

This mission is carried out in the various *ordained ministries* and the *ministries of the lay faithful* who, through Baptism and Confirmation, share in Christ’s triple role, as Priest, Prophet, and King.

1463. *What is meant by the “Communion of Saints”?*

The “Communion of Saints” can refer to the communion:

- *of Christ’s holy people*: those on pilgrimage, those being purified, and those already in glory – as manifested concretely in Filipino Catholics’ celebration of November 1-2; or
- *in holy things*: like the Church’s teaching, communal life, sacraments and charity (cf. Acts 2:42).

1464. *How is the Virgin Mary Daughter and Mother of the Church?*

Mary is:

- **Daughter** of the Church as redeemed by, and the perfect disciple of, Jesus Christ;
- **Mother of the Church** because she is Mother of Jesus Christ and associate in his saving work.

As she consented to give birth to Jesus, her Son, so she cooperated with love in bringing about the birth of the Church, whose faithful are united under Christ their Head (cf. LG 53).

As Mother of Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, Mary becomes the spiritual mother of all the disciples of Christ (cf. Jn 19:26f).

1465. *How is the Virgin Mary “Model” of the Church?*

Mary is venerated as **Model of the Church** because she is:

- *the first to be evangelized and redeemed*: the perfect disciple of Christ her Son, model of Faith as both virgin and mother, blest among women, the handmaid of the Lord; and

- *the first evangelizer*: with Christ, she perfectly fulfilled — and is even now fulfilling — her role in God's plan of universal salvation.

Chapter 24

Catholic Prayer and Worship

**Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord,
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us greet Him with thanksgiving. . .
Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord who made us.
For He is our God,
and we are the people He shepherds,
the flock He guides.**

(Ps 95:1-2, 6-7)

**Jesus said: “The hour is coming, and is already here,
when authentic worshipers will worship the Father in
Spirit and truth. . . God is Spirit, and those who worship
Him must worship in Spirit and truth.”**

(Jn 4:23-24)

OPENING

1466. This chapter continues to develop how the *Holy Spirit* “gives life” according to the Creed. The last chapter explained how the Spirit “gives us life” by uniting us with Christ our Head, and with one another, in the Christian community, *the Church*. Now we take up a second way the Spirit is life-giving: by inspiring our *prayer and sacramental life* within that community. Thus we see how the *Holy Spirit* is *the inner dynamic source of both our life in the Church* (Chap. 23), *and our prayer and sacramental life*, which constitute the themes of this and the following four chapters (Chaps. 24-28).

1467. Even the very notion of “sacrament” provides a further connection between these chapters. In the last chapter we saw that both Christ and the Church can in a certain sense be called ‘sacraments.’ Both involve sensible realities which confer grace and which call men to faith and love by accepting Jesus and his Body, the Church. So Jesus in his lifetime called disciples to follow him even unto death, and in love to share his love. Likewise, “by her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of communion with God and of unity among all persons” (LG 1). Thus, Vatican II pictured the Church as the “sacrament” of Christ, making the Risen Christ present and active among

us today. Therefore, *the seven ritual sacraments* we all know as Catholics must be seen as flowing directly from the broader “sacramentality” of Christ and the Church.

1468. This chapter, then, takes up our basic prayer life as Filipino Catholics. This includes us both as individual persons and as members of the Church who actively take part in its liturgy and share in its sacramental life. The Church’s sacramental life has been radically revitalized as a result of the liturgical renewal commissioned by Vatican II. This “new look” at liturgy and sacraments is the subject matter of this chapter. It forms the indispensable support for the four subsequent chapters which deal with the seven ritual sacraments of the Church.

CONTEXT

1469. We Filipinos are “spirit-oriented.” We are noted for our openness to the sacred, the transcendent dimension of life. This natural orientation provides a sound *cultural basis for Christian prayer life*. It shines through in our natural love for religious celebrations. “Filipino Catholicism has always put great stress on rites and ceremonies. *Fiestas*, processions, pilgrimages, novenas, innumerable devotional practices, both individual and communitarian, mark the concrete religious practice of most Filipino Catholics” (*NCDP 319*).

1470. Moreover, much of what the ordinary Filipino Catholic “knows of Christian doctrinal truth and moral values is learned through these sacramental and devotional practices” (*Ibid.*). For example:

- we know **God** is **Creator and Lord of all** because we have been taught to ask His *blessing* on everything that touches our lives: not only our religious statues, medals, crucifixes, rosaries, but our homes, shops, offices and factories, our cars, bridges, ships and ports, our food and crops, our holidays and vacations. . .
- we know **Christ** is **our Savior** because we make the novena of *First Fridays* in honor of his Sacred Heart, and share his suffering and death in the *Stations of the Cross*, especially every Good Friday;
- we venerate **Mary** as **our spiritual mother** who intercedes for us with her Son because we meet her in the *Panunuluyan* and at the *Belen* every Christmas, and in the *Salubong* every Easter Sunday morning. We celebrate her month of May with *Flores de Mayo*, and pray her *Rosary* throughout the year, especially in October, the month of Our Lady of the Rosary.

1471. Religious rituals and devotional practices, then, play a key role in the faith-life of the Filipino. That is why it is so important to develop a clear and accurate understanding of **what constitutes authentic Christian prayer and worship**. One practical test for us would be whether we can explain simply, in our own words, **what sacraments are** (like Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage, Reconciliation), and **how they work**.

Today, significant gains in the liturgy have already been achieved in many dioceses and parishes. For example, almost everywhere Filipino vernacular languages are used in the Mass and in celebrating the sacraments. Many new local hymns have been written and put to music for more active community participation. Lay ministers of the Eucharist have been installed, and prayer and Bible-study groups have multiplied. Perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament has gained new popular support. The “*Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*” and similar inculturated liturgies are indicative of the concrete advances of the past decades.

1472. Yet the *Second Plenary Council* recognized that “in the Philippines, worship has unfortunately been often separated from the totality of life” (*PCP II 167*). Prayer is still often relegated to mere external observance of religious conventions. This is clearly manifested by numerous “Born Again” Filipinos who admit that they were once practicing Catholics, but “never understood what they were doing.”

Perhaps the *greatest separation* is *between our prayer/worship on one side, and our moral life on the other*. Despite notable efforts at integrating prayer and the thrust for justice, many Filipino Catholics still seem to consider them completely apart. Many are surprised when asked if their Christian Faith and worship enter into their moral decisions. Apparently, they had never thought of it before. If asked how one gains God’s grace, the reply is invariably “through prayer and the sacraments.” To this answer must be added the Gospel stress on *simple acts of loving service of one’s neighbor*.

1473. Finally, within Catholic Filipino’s prayer life itself there is the *gap between private devotions* and piety, and *the Church’s liturgy* which “is often still too formal, too predominantly priest-centered” (*NCDP 330*). There is an urgent need for greater community participation, inspired by concrete tangible sacramentals such as we have on Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday. *PCP II* calls for a “Renewed Worship” that involves the whole of life, including prayer life, popular religious practices, and liturgical renewal (*cf. PCP II 167-81*). What is *needed* is a *more active, more affective worship* that can inspire and lead Filipino Catholics by actual exercise and practice, to *ground their personal devotions and piety on Scripture and the Church’s liturgy*.

EXPOSITION

1474. Following the order of the *NCDP*, this chapter *first* takes up the general elements of *Prayer*, its methods, Scripture base, and the heart and levels of Christian Prayer. A *second* section deals with *Worship*, followed by the *third* on the *Liturgy* and its essential qualities. The *fourth* major section explains what *sacraments* are, their threefold basis in human nature, Christ, and the Church, and *how they work* through faith toward saving encounters with the Lord. The *final* section deals with the related themes of *Sacramentals* and *Popular Religiosity*, particularly *Devotion to Mary, Ang Mahal na Birhen*.

I. PRAYER

1475. Filipinos instinctively realize the need for prayer. We are brought up in a Christian culture to believe in the God revealed by Jesus Christ, a personal God who personally relates to us by adopting us as his sons and daughters. He calls us to a personal response in faith, hope and love. This personal faith-relating to God is prayer (*cf. NCDP 321*). Christian prayer, then, is a loving, conscious, personal relationship with God, our all-loving, good Father, who has adopted us through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. It is “intimate conversation with God who we know loves us” (*St. Teresa of Avila*).

Actually, it is the Holy Spirit who brings us into this life of communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ (*cf. 1 Jn 1:3; 2 Cor 13:13*). Authentic Christian prayer, then, is always *Trinitarian*, since it is through **Christ** that “we have access in one **Spirit** to the **Father**” (*Eph 2:18*).

1476. Prayer develops a conscious awareness of our relationship with God. This relationship depends fundamentally on WHO GOD IS, and WHO WE ARE. It grounds several basic *types of prayer*. As creatures called to become children of God, our prayer is one of *adoration* of our Creator and *thanksgiving* to our heavenly Father, whom we *petition* for our needs. As sinners we pray in *contrition* for forgiveness from our divine Savior, and *offer* Him all our thoughts, words and deeds. Thus, we have the basic types of prayer – *adoration, thanksgiving, petition, contrition* and *offering*. They are in *no way* imposed on us, nor are they simply a product of a particular time, place or culture. Rather they spring from our deepest selves, our *kalooban*, inspired by God’s Holy Spirit. Prayer can thus be described as the very life of our hearts and souls, to which the Holy Spirit gives life (*cf. CCC 2623-39*).

A. How To Pray

1477. It is natural for most Filipinos to think of prayer primarily in terms of explicit vocal prayers like the Our Father or the Hail Mary, or devotional acts of piety like novenas to the Blessed Virgin Mary or their patron saints. Such explicit prayers are concrete expressions of a deeper dimension of our personal lives. For besides being a particular, explicit activity, prayer, for authentic believers, is more fundamentally *an essential dimension of their whole lives* – all of life. This is what Jesus taught by his many parables on the necessity of “praying always and not losing heart” (*Lk 18:1*). St. Paul constantly reminded his converts to “never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (*1 Thes 5:17f*).

1478. A recent work entitled *How to Pray Always Without Always Praying* responds to the practical difficulties experienced by active persons in their ordinary daily routine. How to “find time” for prayer? What is the best method of praying? Even what is the best posture for prayer? These are some of the practical problems which we shall always have to wrestle with. But they are all based on the *deeper reality* that *we have no way of “talking to God” unless He first turns toward us* and reveals Himself, and graces us with His Spirit.

1479. St. Paul explains how prayer is really a **grace** of God. “We do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech. He who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints as God himself wills.” (*Rom 8:26f*). Our Christian prayer, then, is not something we do on our own power “for God,” as it were, but *a precious gift to us by the Spirit*. “Prayer is not learned through the teaching of others; it has its own *special teacher, God*, the teacher of all people who gives prayer to those who pray” (*St. John Climacus, Step 28*).

But how does God teach us how to pray? Both the Old and the New Testaments illustrate how the Holy Spirit leads us into authentic prayer.

B. Prayer in Scripture

1. In the Old Testament

1480. In the OT the Holy Spirit “spoke through the prophets” of Yahweh’s complaint against those who “honor me with their lips alone, though their hearts are far from me” (*Is 29:13; cf. CCC 2581ff*). Such religious hypocrisy fastened on merely the external forms of prayer, fasting and sacrifice, while neglecting the basic demands of social justice and love of neighbor. At the beginning of Lent each year, the liturgy cites Isaiah in instructing us about the true context of our prayer and fasting:

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
 setting those bound unjustly, . . .
Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
 sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
 and not turning your back on your own.
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn. . .
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer,
 you shall cry for help,
 and He will say: "Here I am!" (*Is* 58:6-9)

Authentic prayer, then, is always rooted in the heart, and related to the neighbor in loving compassion and service.

1481. But the masterwork of the Spirit's instruction in prayer is the *Book of Psalms*, the Old Covenant's liturgical prayerbook that the Church, following Christ's own example, adopted for its prayer, especially in the Liturgy of the Hours (*Divine Office*) (*cf.* CCC, 2585-89). Herein is expressed poetically the whole range of human emotions before the living God. The *joy* of the believer: "Happy the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked . . . but delights in the law of the Lord" (*Ps* 1:1-2). *Praise* of the Creator: "O Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth" (*Ps* 8:2). *Longing* for God: "Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you, my God" (*Ps* 42:2). *Sorrow* and *contrition*: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, in your great goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense" (*Ps* 51:3). *Trust* and confidence in the Lord: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (*Ps* 23:1).

Christian prayer, then, is directly addressed to God, our Creator and Lord, while involving an intrinsic relation to one's neighbor.

2. In the New Testament

1482. In the NT, the Spirit's action is shown first in Jesus' own prayer, then in the prayer of his disciples. Jesus, "full of the Holy Spirit" (*Lk* 4:1) prays before every major act of his public life: for example, at his *Baptism* (*cf.* *Lk* 3:21), through his forty days in the desert, before *choosing his apostles* (*cf.* *Lk* 6:12), at his *Transfiguration* (*Lk* 9:29), during his *Passion* (*cf.* *Lk* 22:42) and on the *Cross* (*cf.* *Lk* 23: 34,46).

At the *Last Supper*, in his great "Priestly Prayer" (*cf.* *Jn* 17) Christ prayed that his redemptive work be brought to fulfillment, and that its fruits be shared by the apostles and all those who would believe in him through their word (*cf.* *Jn* 17:20). Finally, *on the Cross* Jesus breathed forth his last prayer, giving over his Spirit to us as he had promised (*cf.* *Mt* 27:50; *Jn* 19:30; CCC 2599-2606).

1483. *With his disciples*, Christ acted as both **perfect model** and **teacher of prayer** (CCC 2607-15). In his *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus instructed his followers: "Pray for your persecutor"; "do not be like the hypocrites who love to stand on street corners. . . but pray to your Father in secret. Do not rattle on like the pagans," but pray: "Our Father in heaven. . ." (*Mt* 6:5ff). But *Christ's greatest gift* to all his followers was his sending of the *Holy Spirit* to be the **interior animating force, source** of their whole *Christian life*. All our faith, hope, and love as disciples of Jesus, and especially every sincere prayer from our hearts, are inspired and empowered from within by the Spirit (*cf.* CCC 2652, 2670-72).

1484. This empowerment of the Spirit is frequently completely missed by our “common sense”. We often think of prayer as our own private individualistic thing, or as an obligation imposed on us – something we “have to” do, at specified times and in certain places. Some even think that by praying they are somehow doing God “a favor,” so they actually try to “make bargains with God” – promising extra prayers to gain special favors. They forget Christ’s solemn teaching that only “he who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly, for *apart from me you can do nothing*” (*Jn 15:5*).

1485. The Spirit Unites Us to Christ. St. Paul summarizes all this by admonishing us that “since we live by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s lead” (*Gal 5:25*). This indicates two things: *first*, that it is only the grace of the Holy Spirit that links us interiorly, from within, to Christ our Savior, making us his true disciples. *Second*, that we have to accept and cooperate with this grace by *FAITH*. It is not automatic; so Paul urges us: “let us follow the Spirit’s lead”. Concretely, this is possible only through a vibrant PRAYER LIFE – an honest, persevering effort on our part to commune with the Lord, dialogue with Him, “walk in His ways,” as inspired by His Holy Spirit indwelling in us.

C. Christian Prayer

1486. The Heart of Christian Prayer. Jesus is much more than just an exterior model to be imitated and copied like some popular celebrity, according to our particular fancy. On the contrary, God has “bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing. It is **in Christ** and through his blood that *we have been redeemed* and our sins forgiven” (*Eph 1:3,7*). God has *predestined us* “to *share the image of His Son*” (*Rom 8:29*). Therefore, we are told to “*put on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (*Rom 13:14*), *make our own “the mind of Christ Jesus”* (*Phil 2:5*), so we can be “*transformed* into his very image” (*2 Cor 3:18*). Our *goal* is to be able to say with St. Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; and the life I live now is not my own; *Christ is living in me*; I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:19-20*). Hence, the Colossians are counseled to “continue, therefore to live in Christ Jesus the Lord; . . . be rooted in him and built up in him, growing ever stronger in faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude” (*Col 2:6-7*).

This effort at “putting on Christ” involves Christians in *two* basic *levels* of Christian prayer.

D. Levels of Christian Prayer

1487. In their process of growing up, Catholics are taught to pray on two basic levels, that is, in *private, personal prayer* (the rosary, novenas, devotions to patron saints, meditations, etc.) and *public, communal liturgical prayer*. More often than not, many of us experience a certain tension between the two – sometimes even opposition. For example, praying the Rosary during Mass is now discouraged, contrary to an older common practice among many pious Church-goers. Actually the personal and communal prayer levels are *complementary*; both are necessary for an authentic Christian prayer life. We stand before God both as a *unique person* created in His image and likeness, redeemed and adopted as son/daughter in the Lord, and as a *member of Christ’s Body*, the Church. This means there is always a *communal context to our personal inner journey of prayer*, and a *depth of personal content in all authentic communal liturgy*. How essential this complementarity of the personal and communal levels of prayer is can be shown in Christ’s own prayer, as well as in the Prayer of the Eucharist.

1. In Christ’s Prayer

1488. Christ’s Personal/Communal Prayer. As in all other aspects of Christian Faith, *Christ shapes and guides the prayer of all Christians*. Christ’s prayer was based on his proclamation of the

Kingdom of God – the Good News that defined his life, mission and very relation to God, his “*Abba*,” Father.

On the one hand, all the great moments of Christ’s most **personal prayer** were directly ordered beyond himself toward his public life and mission, the **communal**. We see this in his temptations in the desert, his prayer on the mountain, and his agony in the Garden. Jesus’ most personal sharing in solitude with his heavenly Father was never divorced from his mission.

1489. *On the other hand*, all Jesus’ public acts manifested his extraordinary personal freedom, self-assurance, and the depth of his personal relation to his Father. Such were his inaugural sermon at Nazareth (*cf. Lk 4:18-27*), his cleansing of the Temple (*cf. Jn 2:13-17*), and his Last Supper with his apostles. Thus, Christ’s public life and mission were always the **context** of his personal interior prayer, while his inward prayerful journey furnished the **content** of all he said and did. Christ’s own prayer, then, demonstrated the essential **complementarity** of **personal** (content) and **communal** (context) that is the model for all Christian prayer.

2. In the Sacraments

1490. The **Prayer of the Eucharist** displays the same integration of the **personal** and **communal** levels of Christian prayer. After the **communal** calling together of the people, the **Liturgy of God’s Word** is addressed to each worshipper in his or her own **personal depth** and **uniqueness**. The liturgy of the Word is not a lecture or “message” for the crowd, nor does it aim at merely passing on some religious information. Rather, its purpose is to nourish, challenge and support the **personal** journey of each of the assembled disciples, calling for each one’s own personal response.

1491. The first response of the Christian believer is “Offertory,” whether of all that we are and do (*Eucharist*), or our repentance for forgiveness (*Reconciliation*), or our infirmity for healing (*Anointing*), or our availability for service (*Orders*) or for conjugal love (*Marriage*). All bring out our Baptismal commitment: our life placed within the life and prayer of Christ.

1492. The Eucharistic Prayer, then, takes the assembled congregation to the **highest point of their personal prayer** in the great AMEN, while at the same time praying that “all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ, be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit” (*EP II*). This **communal** form, expressed again in the “*Our Father*” and the “*Communio*,” never ceases to be at the same time filled with **personal content** and **depth**.

1493. This explanation indicates that there really is *no* “private” Christian prayer, but only “**personal**” which is essentially relational and thus open to the communal. Likewise, the “public” form is better termed “**communal**” or “**ecclesial**” which always includes the personal investment by each of the believers. Briefly, then, our Filipino **personal devotions must**, as Christian, always **involve the communal** as their proper **context**. Likewise, all **communal** ecclesial liturgies, if they are to be authentically Christian, must always include the **personal** investment and depth of the worshippers.

E. Constants in Prayer Guides

1494. There is a rich stream of new books on prayer: prayer guides, introductions, explanations, methods, problem-solving, and the like. This shows that our prayer shares the same basic qualities of our very lives. We are always growing, changing, being influenced in diverse ways by the constantly changing conditions of our lives. Prayer is so personal that there can be no “definitive” answers valid

for all persons, at all times and in all places, to its practical difficulties. How can I pray better? Why does God not answer my prayers? Why is my prayer so dry and empty? Like our human personal relationships, our prayer-relation with God is a personal process of growth and deepening, unique to each and every person. God is calling each of us to intimacy with His Son, in His Spirit of love.

1495. Yet there are *certain constants* in Christian prayer that are indispensable for developing an authentic prayer-life. The *WHAT* of Christian prayer has been described as a) personal communion with God our Father, b) through Jesus Christ in the Spirit, c) within the Christian community, His Body the Church, d) centered around the Eucharistic table, and e) in pilgrimage of faith, hope and loving service of neighbor (*cf. NCDP 325*). This entails a basis for *HOW* to pray, namely, prayer that is:

- a) *grounded in Sacred Scripture and the great prayers of the liturgy and of Christian Tradition;*
- b) *actively related to others* in the concrete human context;
- c) consciously seeking to *discern* and *follow* the Spirit's movements; and
- d) *open to personal growth* through a constant "letting go" which allows another to "tie you fast and carry you off against your will" (*Jn 21:18; cf. NCDP 322*).

II. WORSHIP

1496. On Sundays and feastdays in the *Gloria* of the Mass we sing or proclaim:

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father:
We *worship* you, we give you thanks,
We praise you for your glory.

Thus do we express our Christian loving worship of the one living God. This fundamental human sense of worship comes natural to us as Filipinos (*may loob sa Diyos*). It flows from our inborn gratitude for the gift of life. We spontaneously adore God our Father-Creator; Jesus Christ, His Son and our Savior, and the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us by His presence within us.

1497. Authentic worship necessarily includes both an *inner attitude* of reverence and homage before the Divine Majesty, and an *outward expression* in signs of words, actions, songs, dances, usually enacted in public ritual.

In the **Old Testament**, Yahweh called the Israelites to acceptable worship *first* by His covenant commandment:

"I, the Lord, am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides Me. . . you shall not bow down before them or worship them" (*Dt 5:6-7,9*).

But Yahweh had to give a *second lesson* on worship through His prophets who denounced empty ritualism by stressing that *true worship consists not in words on the lips but in deeds from the heart*. Authentic worship means doing good and rendering justice to the poor, the widow and orphan (*cf. Is 1:11-17; 58:1-10; Amos 5:21-24*).

1498. In the **New Testament**, Christ revolutionized worship by his *obedience* to his Father in inaugurating the New Covenant:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire
but a body you prepared for me;
holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.

Then I said, 'As is written of me in the book,
I have come to do your will, O God!' ” (*Heb 10:5-7*).

Jesus purified worship by linking it directly with daily moral living. He proclaimed that “the hour is coming . . . when authentic worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth” (*Jn 4:23*). Like the prophets, Jesus denounced empty ritualism, and promised to send his Holy Spirit through whom he would create a new priestly people, sharing in his very own Priesthood (*cf. LG 10*).

1499. *PCP II* explains how worship can be expressed on different levels. First is the individual Christian’s **personal prayer** and devotion; this develops into **group prayer**, such as Block Rosaries, charismatic meetings, etc. Finally there is the official worship of the Church in the sacred **liturgy**, which is the source and summit of our total life of prayer. In the liturgy, Christian worship takes on its special **communal** and **ceremonial/ritual** qualities.

1500. Ritual, in its broadest meaning, includes both secular and religious ceremonies. It is basically a social, programmed symbolic activity that has power for creating, communicating, criticizing and even transforming the basic meaning of community life. It is the way we have of creating our fundamental bonding with others, and the structure of social relationships which give us our basic identity. In our *social, political* and *economic* relationships, we celebrate, for example, school graduation ceremonies, inauguration of our political leaders, Labor and Independence Day holidays, etc. **Religious rituals** are even more common among Filipinos, with the great feasts of Christmas and Holy Week, countless *fiestas*, etc. Yet, mixed among authentic religious rituals are numerous *superstitious practices*. Some take the form of *magic* which tries by various means to control the divine power; others are basically *taboos* which seek to protect the ritualists by isolating them from the “fearful, dangerous Holy.”

1501. But *authentic religious rituals* develop *personal relationship* with God through actions characterized by *four constant traits*: symbolic, consecratory, repetitive and involving remembrance. Rituals are *symbolic*, using natural signs to make present the divine; they involve a certain *consecration* which enables the participants to share in the divine power/love. They are designed to be *repeated*, using traditional prayers and actions that link the celebrants with their past and the original religious event that the ritual is celebrating (*remembrance*). These traits are found in many traditional tribal rituals. But the Filipino Catholic meets authentic religious ritual, purified from all superstition, in the liturgy of the Church.

III. LITURGY

A. Nature of the Liturgy

1502. Thanks to the liturgical renewal, we now appreciate the original meaning of the word as “the *people’s* work and public duty” (*cf. CCC 1069f*). “Liturgy” used to bring to mind “rubrics”, or what priests do around altar in ceremonial worship. But now we realize that in the early Church, liturgy meant **everything** that **all Christians** did in taking part in “God’s work,” the divine “plan to sum up all things in Christ” (*cf. Jn 17:4; Eph 1:10*). This included not only divine worship, but proclamation of the Gospel (*cf. Rom 15:16*) and service of one’s neighbor (*cf. 2 Cor 9:12*).

Although “liturgy” today designates more properly the “official public worship of the Church,” these origins are important because they confirm *PCP II’s* stress on **full, active participation** of the *whole People of God* – everyone – and the essential inner connection of liturgy with social action (*cf. SC 26f; CCC 1140f*).

1503. Vatican II describes the liturgy as: “an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ” in which our human “sanctification is manifested by signs perceptible to the senses and is effected in a way proper to each of these signs,” so that “full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members” (*cf. SC 7*).

The Council acknowledged that “the liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church” – preaching the Gospel, inviting all to faith, conversion, observance of Christ’s commandments and works of charity, are explicitly mentioned (*cf. CCC 1072*). Nevertheless, the Council went on to affirm that “liturgy is the *summit* towards which the activity of the Church is directed, and the *fountain* from which all her power flows” (*cf. SC 9-10; CCC 1074*).

The Church holds in highest esteem the rich variety of liturgies, both of the Western and of the Eastern Churches (*cf. SC 37; EO 6*).

1504. The *center of the Church’s liturgy is the Eucharist* which commemorates the Paschal Mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ – his Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit (*cf. SC 5*). Through this Mystery the power of God’s salvific love is offered to all. Since this salvation touches all of creation in its entirety, liturgy in its broadest, deepest sense is the proclamation, manifestation, and celebration not only of *Christ* and His Paschal Mystery, but also of *the Church’s* own mystery and mission as universal sacrament of salvation, and of the *whole world* and the temporal order, consecrated and ordered to its Creator and Final Goal.

1505. But for the ordinary Filipino Catholic, liturgy means being caught up in the yearly cycle of *liturgical Seasons* like Advent, Lent, Holy Week, Easter time, and in celebrating feast days like Christmas, *Sto. Niño*, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, the Immaculate Conception, etc. Filipino popular religiosity has helped enormously to bring the liturgical year down into the hearts and souls of simple worshippers. What needs to be improved is the basic understanding of the essentials of Catholic liturgical worship. In simple language, *what are we doing* and *why?* We shall sketch an answer both here under liturgy and in the following section on the Sacraments.

B. Essential Qualities of the Liturgy

1. Trinitarian and Paschal

1506. The Church’s liturgical prayer is directed to the *Father*, through His *Son, Jesus Christ*, in the *Holy Spirit*. Its specific *Trinitarian* form takes on a *Paschal* quality since the liturgy celebrates the Good News of our *actual* salvation worked by the Blessed Trinity through Jesus Christ’s Paschal Mystery. The *Trinity*, then, far from being an abstract god of the theologians, is the *concrete living, saving God* who comes to us in the Risen Christ and the Spirit, within the Christian community, the Church (*cf. CCC 1084ff*).

2. Ecclesial

1507. Liturgy is the prayer of the Church gathered in assembly, an *ecclesial* activity, celebrated by the WHOLE Christ, Head and members (*cf. SC 26f; LG 10; CCC 1140*). That is, it is the action of Jesus Christ the Priest, and at the same time an activity of the community, a gathering together in an *ordered assembly* and *communion of the baptized*. Moreover, the liturgical assembly is arranged according to *different roles*: priest, deacon, readers, ministers of music and of communion, etc. While we all share the one Holy Spirit of love, different spiritual gifts or charisms are given to community members for the good of all. Thus, the power for salvation is mediated through various relationships within the Church.

1508. This *ecclesial* quality is especially important for Filipino Catholics because it draws them beyond family bonds of intimacy toward a *community solidarity* based on faith in Christ. Ecclesial solidarity is a community that has moved beyond the circle of intimacy toward unity and collaborative activity *grounded on Christian discipleship* rather than merely social relationships.

In its authentic liturgy, the Church has always *rejected the temptation* to limit the understanding of God's living Word to its earliest historical period, as the fundamentalists do; or to reduce Christian life to individualistic piety or group intimacy, as in sectarianism; or to make of faith a blind leap without any understanding, as fideism proposes.

3. Sacramental

1509. Basically the liturgy celebrates the Church's prayer through a pattern of symbolic, ritual movements, gestures and verbal formulas that create a framework within which the corporate worship of the Church can take place. By participating in the liturgy's sacramental, symbolic activities, the Church members both *express* their faith in Christ and their desire to deepen it, and actually *share* in the reality signified, namely, salvation through forgiveness and communion with the Risen, glorified Christ in the Spirit.

Among the predominant symbols used in the liturgy are the *gathering* of the baptized assembly itself, the *natural symbols* from creation like light, darkness, water, oil, and fire, as well as *humanly produced symbols* like bread and wine, and specifically *Christian salvific symbols* like the reading and interpretation of Scripture as the living Word of God, the Sign of the Cross, the Paschal Candle, laying on of hands, etc. But the liturgy's use of these symbols always involves *persons*, for they express the *personal mystery* of God's love manifest in Christ's Paschal Mystery (*cf. CCC 1147-52*).

4. Ethically Oriented

1510. *The liturgy relates directly to moral life* since it empowers the people of God to full Christian discipleship. Concretely, liturgical worship and Christian morality, both personal and social, go together. One goal of liturgical celebrations is that we, the faithful, return to our ordinary activities, newly strengthened in **faith**, confirmed in **hope**, and inspired with the power to **love**. Far from separating us from our ordinary work, duties, recreation, and relationships, *the liturgy aims at confirming our mission as Christians* to be the light of the world and leaven of the mass (*cf. SC 9*). For "it is through the liturgy that 'the work of our redemption is exercised' . . . [and] the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (*SC 2*). One norm for judging authentic liturgical worship, then, is precisely its relation with "service of our neighbor."

5. Eschatological

1511. The liturgy's ethical dimension just described reveals its *eschatological* characteristic as well. The liturgy **makes present** (incarnational aspect) Christ's saving Paschal Mystery whereby He inaugurated God's rule, the Kingdom. But God's Kingdom, *already* begun, has *not yet* been fully accomplished, as the early liturgical prayer, "*Marana tha, Come, Lord Jesus!*" clearly depicts. The liturgy, then, at once commemorates Christ's *past* saving Mystery, demonstrates the *present* grace effects brought about by Christ, and points to the *future* glory yet to come.

1512. But *this future orientation is operative now*, and every moment of our daily lives. It is not the future dreamy illusion which the Marxists claimed. They charged that the Christian answer to social injustice and oppression was to “suffer now to gain eternal happiness in heaven” – in other words, “pie in the sky” palliative. Rather this *future-orientation is active now*, just like the goal which galvanized Christ’s own ministry and mission, the very mission which Christ shares with us, his disciples, today. The liturgy, far from being some escape from the world, calls us to share in Christ’s own mission of saving the world. Again, we see the intrinsic connection between authentic worship and Christian moral witness, which *PCP II* describes as the thrust for justice and preferential option for the poor.

1513. Both the *eschatological future* and the “*now*” *dimensions* are effectively brought together in celebrating the feasts and seasons of *the Liturgical Year* (cf. *CCC 1163-73*). Vatican II describes how “in the course of the year, the Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from the Incarnation and Nativity to the Ascension, to Pentecost and the expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord” (*SC 102*).

This cycle includes *five stages*: 1) the *Lord’s Day*, 2) *Holy Week*, prepared for by Lent, 3) *Advent*, preparing for Christmas, 4) *the 33 Sundays of the Ordinary Time*, and 5) *special Feasts*, especially of Christ and Mary (cf. *NCDP 336-41*). Surely a practical and informed personal understanding of the liturgical seasons is one chief means for achieving the enthusiastic, active participation of the faithful in the Church’s worship, called for by our Second Plenary Council (cf. *PCP II 176-82*).

C. Consequence: Participation

1514. The liturgy, then, is:

- a) the official public worship of the *Blessed Trinity*,
- b) by the *whole Church*, through the celebration of Christ’s *Paschal Mystery*,
- c) in a *sacramental*, symbolic activity,
- d) with intrinsic *moral/ethical* links, and e) in a *built-in eschatological* orientation toward perfect fulfillment in the future.

No wonder, then, that

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that *full, conscious, and active participation* in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (*1 Pt 2:9,4-5*) have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism (*SC 14*).

1515. For Filipino Catholics today, this desired *full, conscious, and active participation* in the liturgy presents *a real challenge*. Though great strides have been made in the past few years, particularly through the BECs, the average Sunday Mass attendance statistics reported by PCP II prove that much more needs to be done. Such active participation in the liturgy can only come about when ordinary Filipino Catholics grasp personally how their personal lives, especially their *prayer lives*, and the *Church’s liturgy* are mutually *entwined* and ultimately *inseparable*. Ordinary Filipino Catholics have to see and personally experience the value and worth *for them* of prayer, worship, ritual, liturgy. Such realization is, of course, one of the very effects of active participation in the liturgy. Thus, the challenge comes down to how our *catechesis* and religious education can more effectively draw our people into such participation.

D. Obstacles

1516. Such active participation has to overcome rather formidable obstacles. There is, *first* our general *human laziness and weakness* of which St. Paul complained (*cf. Rom 7*), fortified by the growing *secularist materialism* of our age. *Secondly*, are the *more personal obstacles* of “growing-up” complaints of children and youth (“why do I have to. . . ?”) and common superficial reasons for Mass attendance – to be with the crowd, show off my new clothes, etc. *Thirdly*, are the obstacles posed by *the liturgy itself*: the many routine, uninspiring liturgies, lacking all spirit and heart. But even well-celebrated liturgies have to face the problem that *praise does not come “natural”* to many “modern” persons. So many have lacked any experience of genuine praise in their personal lives, or have so suffered from insincere, manipulative flattery that they distrust their emotions. But most fundamental is the current stress on “self-development,” “self-fulfillment,” etc. There is little chance of praising and “taking delight” in God and others when we are so focused on ourselves.

IV. SACRAMENTS

1517. The Church’s basic response to the obstacles posed above is the Vatican II sponsored radical renewal of the liturgy of the sacraments. The *PCP II* depicts the sacraments as the center of Catholic life. Just as without Christ, Christian Faith is impossible, so without the sacraments, there could be no Catholic Church. Two new emphases stand out: *first*, the seven *ritual sacraments are grounded directly in both Christ*, the “Primordial Sacrament,” and *the Church* as the basic or “Fundamental Sacrament.” Thus, the seven ritual sacraments are defined as “actions of Christ and of the Church” (*CJC 840*) which unite us to Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and incorporate us into his Body, the Church. The *second* emphasis is drawing the *sacraments closer to everyday life*, especially by recognizing the essential role of symbol in all human life.

1518. The basics of the sacraments remain the same. A sacramental celebration is “an encounter of God’s adopted sons and daughters with their Father, through Christ in the Spirit, expressed as a dialogue through actions and words” (*CCC 1153*). Catholic sacraments are at once sacraments:

- of *Christ* in origin and presence,
- of the *Church*, in the sense that they are *by* and *for* the Church,
- of *Faith*, as condition and ongoing expression,
- of *salvation*, as efficacious and necessary means,
- of *eternal life*, as their ultimate goal.

They are efficacious signs of grace, originating in Christ and confided to his Church, by which the divine life of grace is instilled or deepened within us (*cf. CCC 1114-31*).

1519. What is new in the Church’s sacramental renewal is evidenced in how it enlarges the older vision, while correcting and purifying many misunderstandings and inadequate ideas and attitudes that had grown up. Thus we shall structure this exposition according to the traditional three-part definition of a sacrament, namely, “*a sensible sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace.*”

1520. “Sensible sign.” For many, this “sign” notion is one step away from “real reality,” separated from the daily work-a-day world, a bit of “play-acting” best fitted for children and pious people. Just the expression “receiving” rather than “celebrating” the sacraments can indicate that for many Filipinos, sacraments are still commonly reduced to individual acts of piety, isolated from daily “practical moral life,” and from any real *ecclesial* activity. Separated, too, are they from the great *biblical themes* of *liberation* and *freedom*.

1521. In contrast, today's sacramental renewal recognizes the difference between mere *indicative signs* and signs that are *symbols*. Some *signs* merely point to something else – like indicating the proper direction to take, and therefore have one, single meaning. But others are super-charged with a variety of meanings that we “discover” rather than create; these we call *Symbols*. Taken as *symbolic acts*, *sacraments* are **performative word events** – like Jesus' own ministry of words and deeds – *real happenings that make present the spiritual reality they express*.

This absolutely essential importance of symbol is true of every aspect of our lives, natural/secular as well as religious. All interpersonal human life depends on symbols – our family relationships, our friendships, the very reality of all our social, political, and cultural ties.

1522. Far from being separate from daily “real life,” or fit only for children and the pious, then, sacraments as saving symbolic actions have a concrete *anthropological* basis. As human persons we are embodied spirits who live and act with others in community, *in* and *through* our bodies. Spiritual realities like love and freedom touch us through the material conditions of our lives. Seen from this anthropological view, sacraments communicate through *touch* (anointing, imposing hands, washing, embracing), through *gestures* (standing, bowing, sitting, kneeling) and through *words* (proclaimed, listened to, spoken and responded to). *It is through these human means of communication that the divine life and love is communicated in the sacraments*.

1523. Stressing “symbol” in understanding the sacraments helps avoid our common temptation to an overly materialistic view that locates the “sacred” solely in the objectified, mechanical elements, isolated from their proper liturgical usage which includes words, gestures and acts. It is not the isolated, objectified, physical baptismal water, or the oil/chrisem that mechanically “sanctifies,” but rather their use in the total symbolic action of washing/bathing and anointing when celebrated in faith in the liturgical ritual.

1524. “Instituted by Christ.” This expresses the *essential link between the sacraments and Christ*. But unfortunately through the centuries this link became reduced to “Jesus started them all.” *How* precisely, or *why* Christ did so, and how the sacraments were continued in the Church up to the present, were lost sight of.

The liturgical renewal has vigorously made up for these deficiencies by the key insights of **Jesus** as “*Primordial Sacrament*,” and the **Church** as the “*Foundational/basic Sacrament*.” Briefly, *Jesus in his humanity is the sacrament of God's saving love for all; the Church is the sacrament of Jesus, and the seven ritual sacraments are sacraments of the Church*, that is, they visibly manifest and effectively enact the Church's mystery and mission of making Christ present.

1525. “Instituted by Christ” does *not* mean that Jesus taught his apostles in detail that there were to be seven sacraments, and how to administer them. Rather Jesus “instituted” the sacraments *by first being the sacrament of his Father through his whole life of word and action, and then by establishing the Church to be his basic sacrament*. The Church makes Christ present to all persons in every age *first*, by being his Body, and *second*, by celebrating those actions that continue Christ's own ministry. The Church has had a definite role to play in the gradual development of our present seven ritual sacraments. Yet, each of the sacraments celebrated by the Church re-enacts certain acts of Jesus' own public ministry.

1526. “Actions of Christ” Leading to His Fullness. By being the ‘Primordial Sacrament,’ Jesus Christ is much more than simply the originator of the Sacraments. He is at once the *SOURCE*, the *PRIMARY AGENT* and the *GOAL* of all sacramental activity.

As “*SOURCE*”, Christ is the one in whom all the sacraments are rooted and from whom they derive their efficacy. As “*PRIMARY AGENT*”, he is the one who, through the actions and words of

the minister celebrating the various sacraments, baptizes, confirms, forgives, and reconciles, heals, offers himself in sacrifice, binds in faithful love and consecrates for service. As “GOAL” of all sacraments, Christ is the perfection toward which our life on earth tends. Not only does he challenge us to a response of love, but effectively empowers us, through the Holy Spirit, to grow into his fullness, i.e., to attain the perfection of holiness that he is. When properly received, then, the sacraments gradually fashion us ever more “to the image and likeness of Christ.”

Thus, briefly expressed, when we say that Christ is the “Primordial Sacrament” in reference to the seven ritual sacraments, we mean that they:

- a) *arise from the saving ministry of Christ,*
- b) *are continued in, by and for the Church,* and
- c) *form us in likeness to Christ in his Paschal Mystery (cf. CCC 1114-18).*

1527. “To Give Grace.” The Church has always taught that **the sacraments give grace *ex opere operato***. This means that any lack of holiness on the part of the minister does not prevent grace from being offered. For Christ himself acts through his Spirit when the sacraments are celebrated properly, i.e., according to prescriptions and with the intention of doing what the Church intends to do. Christ is active in all the sacraments, most especially in the Holy Eucharist, when his Body and Blood are made present under the appearances of bread and wine, through the priest’s words of consecration and the power of the Holy Spirit. He offers himself and effects a response from us, since we cannot remain neutral before a sign of God’s love. He initiated the saving encounter with men through his Incarnation, and he continues the activity of his initiative through the Church’s ministry.

1528. All the sacraments have their special graces since they all manifest the different ways in which Christ comes to us, meeting us at all the decisive and ordinary moments of our lives. Even in a child’s baptism God’s grace and love are given first and mark the child as God’s own. That love and grace remain with the child as long as the child does not sin seriously against God or his fellow men. But the **grace and love** bestowed in Baptism are ***not passive gifts***. They accompany the child and *call him to respond freely* to God’s love.

1529. *The effect of the sacraments is twofold: to draw us into a closer relationship to the Church, and thereby to relationship to Christ himself, in the Spirit, and to the Father.* How do the sacraments effect this? We know that when we fully, consciously and actively celebrate them, the sacraments exercise all our powers — mind, heart, affections, will, imagination, and behavior. The sacraments exercise their special POWER to shape our imaginations, develop our affections and direct our behavior in “*Childlikeness*” — in brief, ***to gradually transform us into Christ’s way of thinking, Christ’s way of acting, Christ’s way of praying and loving, forgiving and serving.*** So St. Paul counseled: “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Rom 13:14*). **It is the power of the HOLY SPIRIT that effects this gradual transformation into Christ’s way.**

1530. But sacraments can effect this only ***if celebrated in FAITH***, for without faith no saving personal relationship can be established or strengthened (*CCC 1122-26*). *PCP II* stressed that the sacraments *presuppose faith* and by their very celebration *evoke greater faith* in the participants. Vatican II had likewise stressed faith while explaining that the purpose of the sacraments is:

- to ***sanctify*** men and women,
- to ***build up*** the Body of Christ, and
- to give ***worship*** to God.

Because they are signs, they also ***instruct***. Furthermore:

they not only presuppose *faith*, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called ‘sacraments of faith.’ They do, indeed, *confer grace*, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to receive this grace to their profit, to worship God duly, and to practice charity (SC 59).

1531. A descriptive definition of sacrament according to the liturgical renewal would be “*a saving symbolic act or a visible sign, arising from the ministry of Christ and continued in, by and for the Church, which, when received in faith, fashions us into likeness to Christ in his Paschal Mystery, through the power of the Holy Spirit.*”

V. SACRAMENTALS AND POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

A. Sacramentals

1532. Besides the seven ritual sacraments, the People of God, the Church, over the centuries has instituted “*sacramentals*” (cf. CCC 1667-73). They are *objects, actions, practices, places, and the like*, that help us become aware of Christ’s grace-filled presence around us or liberate from the presence of the Evil One (exorcism). They *help us receive the sacraments with greater fruit*, and “render holy various occasions in life” (SC 60). Like the sacraments, they are sacred signs/symbols which signify some spiritual effect which is realized through the action of the Church. But they differ from the seven sacraments in that they *are not “instituted by Christ”* as described above, *but by the Church*, which uses them to sanctify everyday life. They do not directly modify our grace-relationship with Christ, but rather arouse us to acts of virtue and piety which strengthen God’s grace-filled presence within and among us.

1533. In disposing us toward more fruitful celebration of the sacraments, sacramentals continue the work of the sacraments and thus can be viewed as “*extending*” or “*prolonging*” the sacraments. For example, the sprinkling of holy water at the beginning of Mass “extends” the sacrament of Baptism; the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament “prolongs” the sacrament of the Eucharist; the blessing of place of our work is an extension of the sacrament of Confirmation. Vatican II describes how sacraments and sacramentals work together:

For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event in their lives with divine grace that flows from the Paschal Mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. From this source all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power (SC 61).

1534. Sacramentals are very popular among Filipinos, who eagerly make use of *blessings* (homes, cars, buildings), *actions* (kneeling, bowing, making the Sign of the Cross), *words* (grace before and after meals, indulgenced novena prayers, pious invocations, litanies), *objects* (ashes, palms, candles, crucifixes, rosaries, scapulars, statues), *places* (churches, shrines), and *time* liturgical seasons (cf. Advent, Lent, Holy Week). Filipinos tend naturally to seek concrete sensible expression of their Faith and religious experience. This is most manifest in their popular religiosity.

B. Popular Religiosity

1535. *PCP II* called for “a renewal of popular piety” that involves “the critical and fervent use of popular religious practices.” It praised these as “rich in values” in that

they manifest a thirst for God and enable people to be generous and self-sacrificing in witnessing to their faith. They show a deep awareness of God's attributes: fatherhood, providence, loving and constant presence. They engender attitudes of patience, the sense of the Cross in daily life, openness to others and devotion (*PCP II 172; cf. CCC 1674-76*).

1536. But the Council also expressed the need “to foster these popular religious practices in such a way that they do not become distortions of religion or remain superficial forms of worship, but become rather true expressions of faith.” It warned that “our pastoral practice must ensure that the Catholic religion does not become saint or Mary-centered, but that it always remains Christ-centered.” This can be done if popular religious practices “lead to the liturgy and are vitally related to Filipino life by serving the cause of full human development, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation” (*PCP II 173-75*).

But for the great mass of ordinary Filipino Catholics, popular religiosity means some form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*. It is fitting to conclude this Exposition of Catholic Prayer and Worship for the Filipino by explaining in some detail authentic Catholic devotion to Mary.

C. Marian Devotion/Piety

1. Basis for Marian Devotion

1537. Paul VI introduced his Apostolic Exhortation “*Marialis Cultus*,” by directly relating Marian piety to Christ and the Trinity.

Marian devotion takes its origin and effectivity from Christ, finding its complete expression in Christ, and leading through Christ in the Spirit to the Father. Every authentic development of Christian worship is necessarily followed by a fitting increase of veneration for the Mother of the Lord (*MC, Introduction*).

This solid basis for all Marian devotions is clearly affirmed by the Second Vatican Council:

Mary has by grace been exalted above all angels and persons as the most holy Mother of God who was involved in the mysteries of Christ. Hence the Church appropriately honors her with special reverence (*LG 66*).

1538. The Council immediately adds that this cult of Mary “differs essentially from the cult of adoration which is offered equally to the Incarnate Word, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit” (*LG 66*).

Vatican II thus clearly proclaims that Catholics do *not* worship or adore Mary. Rather, their devotion to Mary is “most favorable” for the supreme worship of God. Hence the cult, especially the liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin, is to be generously fostered and treasured (*cf. LG 67*).

2. Marian Devotion in the Liturgy

1539. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin can therefore be said to be an integral element of Catholic worship (*MC 58*). The Post-Vatican II reform of the Church's Liturgy made more organic and closely-knit the commemoration of Christ's Mother in the annual cycle of the mysteries of her Son. *Four Marian Solemnities* are highlighted in the liturgical year:

- the Feast of the *Immaculate Conception* in Advent, December 8th;
- the Solemnity of *Mary, Mother of God*, January 1st.;
- the ancient feast of the *Annunciation* of the Lord, March 25th; and finally
- the Solemnity of the *Assumption*, August 15th, which is prolonged in celebrating the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary seven days later.

1540. Various other Marian feasts commemorate salvific events involving the Blessed Virgin: her nativity, September 8th; Our Lady of Sorrows, *Mater Dolorosa*, September 15th; Our Lady of the Rosary, October 7th; the Feast of the Presentation, *La Candelaria*, February 2nd; Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11th; her Visitation, May 31st; and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, July 16th. In addition, there are the Saturday Masses of Our Lady, and the revised Liturgy of the Hours – all of which manifest the “singular place that belongs to Mary in Christian worship as the holy Mother of God and the worthy Associate of the Redeemer” (*MC 15*).

3. Mary, Model of the Church in Prayer

1541. Mary is proposed as a “model of the spiritual attitude with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries” (*MC 16*). She is “the exemplar of the Church in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ” (*LG 63*). Paul VI develops this in terms of Mary as the “attentive Virgin,” “the Virgin in prayer,” “the Virgin-Mother,” and the “Virgin presenting offerings” (*cf. MC 17-20*). Mary becomes not only an example for the whole Church in offering divine worship, but also “a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians” (*MC 21*).

1542. The Church expresses this relationship to Mary in various attitudes of devotion. These include:

- *profound veneration* before the Woman chosen by God to be Mother of the Incarnate Word, Jesus;
- *burning love* for Mary, our spiritual Mother as members of the Church;
- *trusting invocation* to Mary our Advocate and Helper;
- *loving service* to the humble Handmaid of the Lord;
- *zealous imitation* of Mary’s virtues and holiness;
- *profound wonder* at the “faultless model”, “the most excellent fruit of the redemption” (*cf. SC 103*); and
- *attentive study* of the Associate of the Redeemer, already sharing the fruits of the Paschal Mystery (*MC 22*).

1543. Mary’s own prayer, the *Magnificat* (*cf. Lk 1:46-55*), has become one of the prayers most beloved by all Catholics. Today its *prophetic quality* is emphasized. The *Magnificat* now is heard as the courageous and passionate song of one who identifies herself with Yahweh’s poor, the *anawim*. Its first part is an “explosion” of happiness and gratitude for God’s salvation. The second part is Mary’s “hymn of the poor,” bringing the blessing of the Incarnation to those who are worthy (*cf. Lk 1:50-53*), in contrast to three merely “human” modes of greatness: pride, power, and riches (*cf. Lk 1:51-53*). Salvation will come to the whole community of Israel (*cf. Lk 1:54-55*).

1544. The *Magnificat*, then, exemplifies *three major values* for our Christian prayer today. *First*, its *community* value as a prayer drawn from Israel’s tradition, and expressing the very hope of the people. *Second*, its *prophetic proclamation of liberation and salvation of the poor*, in an enthusiastic, passionate, fervent cry. *Third*, its *witness to God*, Lord and Savior, the Mighty One, the Holy, filled with enduring love and mercy – all expressed in a peal of praise and love. Catholic Tradition has often discerned a deep inner link between Mary’s *Magnificat* prayer and Christ’s *Beatitudes*.

1545. Prayer to Mary. Amid the proliferation of the countless prayers and devotions to Mary, three major types can be discerned: *invocation*, *veneration* and love, and *imitation* and remembrance (*cf. LG 66*).

We invoke Mary's intercession particularly in the *second half of the Hail Mary*, in the *Salve Regina*, the *Litany of Loreto*, and the *Memorare*.

We praise, venerate and express our love for Mary in the *first half of the Hail Mary*, the *Office of Our Lady*, in many decades of the *Rosary*, *Ave Regina Coelorum*, and numerous *novena prayers*.

We salute Mary in prayers of *remembrance* like the *Salve Regina*, the *Angelus*, the *Regina Coeli*, and using Mary's own prayer, the *Magnificat*.

1546. But perhaps the *Rosary*, with both its prayers and mysteries of salvation, together with the *Angelus*, remains the core of our Filipino devotions to Mary. By its nature, the *Rosary* calls for a quiet rhythm and a contemplative pace. Without such contemplation, the *Rosary* becomes a body without a soul, a mechanical repetition of formulas that makes us "rattle on like pagans who think they will win a hearing by the sheer multiplication of words" (*Mt 6:7*).

Pius XII in a letter to the Archbishop of Manila in 1946 called the *Rosary* "the compendium of the entire Gospel" (*MC 42*). It is made up of Gospel prayers, about the Good News of Redemption wrought by Christ. Its three sets of Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious Mysteries reflect the original proclamation set forth in St. Paul's celebrated *kenosis* hymn: self-emptying – death – exaltation (*cf. Phil 2:6-11*).

4. Renewal of Devotion to Mary

1547. *PCP II*, following the lead of Vatican II, has decreed that:

study should be made of the potential of popular religiosity, purified and enriched by the Word of God and transformed into a vehicle for effectively proclaiming the Good News and incarnating it in the lives of our people . . . Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints should be Christ-centered . . . be true expressions of our faith, and that novenas have the Word of God as an integral part (*PCP II 18*).

1548. The Philippine Bishops had earlier written of the "need of reform and renewal" in terms of doctrinal, biblical, and liturgical instruction on the role of Mary in the history of salvation, to combat the prevalent secularizing tendencies. They stressed that the faithful should:

venerate Mary out of love for her and appreciation of her dignity, not primarily to obtain personal and material favors. They should see the hierarchy of Christian values and duties in Christian life by paying greater attention to participation in the Eucharistic celebration on Sunday than in any other form of devotion. Public and traditional Marian celebrations like the *Flores de Mayo*, often connected with the *Santacruzán*, must be prevented from becoming fashion shows that take away their spiritual meaning as religious manifestations of faith (*AMB 81*).

1549. Paul VI provided an excellent summary of the "renewal" called for in devotion to Mary. Basically it means that exercises of piety directed toward the Virgin Mary should clearly express:

- the *Trinitarian* and *Christic* dimensions that are intrinsic to them; for everything in the devotion to the Virgin Mary is relative to and dependent on Christ, and within the Church's worship of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit;
- the Person and work of the *Holy Spirit*, who constantly sanctified Mary for her unique saving vocation;
- Mary's place in the *Church*; both Mary and the Church collaborate to give birth to the Mystical Body of Christ (*cf. MC 25-28*).

These qualities of authentic Marian piety are possible only if the devotions are firmly grounded on Sacred Scripture and the liturgy of the Church (*cf. MC 29-31*).

1550. Paul VI adds a further criterion for authentic Marian devotion. They should foster “the disciple who works,

- for that justice which sets free the oppressed, and
- for that charity which assists the needy;
but above all, the disciple who is the active witness
- of that love which builds up Christ in people’s hearts” (*cf. MC 37*).

John Paul II points out how “the Church’s love of preference for the poor is wonderfully inscribed in Mary’s *Magnificat*. The truth about God who saves cannot be separated from the manifestation of His love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which is celebrated in the *Magnificat*” (*RMa 37*).

1551. Our Philippine Bishops, viewing the destitution and oppression of millions of Filipinos, have called for our collaboration in God’s work of salvation in the form of work for justice, freedom and peace. Applying this call to Marian piety they state:

devotion to Mary shows itself in works, and the works which are needed in the Philippines today are the works of justice and freedom from oppression. . . our mission is “to be present in the heart of the world, proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted” (*AMB 96*).

1552. Apparitions. One element in the desired “reform” in Marian piety is a prudent, balanced attitude toward real or alleged apparitions of Our Lady, as overcoming an excessive credulity. This “balance” would involve, *first*, stressing the uniqueness of the Gospel over all alleged “messages.” “We now await no further new public revelation before the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*cf. 1 Tim 6:14; Tit 2:13; DV 4*)

Second, no one is obliged to believe in even the officially recognized apparitions such as Lourdes and Fatima. Rather, the Church’s positive recognition of their supernatural character and authorizing devotion to the Virgin, is an *invitation* to view the apparition as a *sign*, not a proof, that *can help* some people in their faith. Nothing is imposed.

Third, the norm for judging apparitions is their conformity to the Gospels. No new revelation is given – only a renewed call to the Gospel: conversion, poverty of spirit, prayer.

Fourth, proper response is *not* fulfilled by merely erecting a shrine or organizing certain devotions, but by imitating Mary’s faith, hope and love of God and neighbor. Warnings must be properly interpreted as the apocalyptic books of the Bible; they are directed to our salvation, focused *not* on the wrath of God but on seeking His mercy. The “sins” mentioned refer to all sins, not just of one type or another, or those of one nation or other.

INTEGRATION

1553. This exposition of Christian prayer, worship and the sacraments has been constantly grounded on the **doctrine** of *Christ’s Paschal Mystery*, and the active *role of the Holy Spirit* in our lives. Both emphases are particularly helpful in renewing and purifying some popular devotional practices in which the saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary tend to preoccupy the attention of its devotees more than Christ does. The ancient rule, “*the law/norm of prayer is the law of faith*” (*lex orandi, lex credendi*) means that authentic Christian prayer can only spring from sound faith, and faith itself finds its richest source, expression, and completion in the prayer of the Christian community, the Church.

1554. The **moral** dimension of Christian prayer has likewise been stressed, particularly regarding the essential *ethical quality of liturgy*, and our *sharing in Christ's own mission* through the sacraments. *PCP II* offered "the Edsa experience" as an outstanding example of the solidarity of prayer and mass action witnessing to the Gospel and preventing violence in a time of national crisis. The same inter-connection between prayer and moral behavior is experienced daily on the personal and familial levels.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1555. *How is Catholic prayer/worship connected with the Holy Spirit and the Church?*

It is the Spirit who inspires both authentic personal Catholic prayer and the Church's liturgical prayer, her sacramental worship.

Through the Spirit, both types of prayer flow from *Christ*, the "*Primordial Sacrament*," and the *Church*, the "*Foundational Sacrament*."

1556. *What is the main problem with our prayer and worship?*

According to *PCP II*, our prayer and worship are often separated from our daily living. This means they are often reduced to mere external observance of religious conventions, lacking any real "heart" commitment.

1557. *What is personal Christian prayer?*

Christian prayer is our *personal faith* response to God, that is:

- a loving relationship with God, our all-loving *Father*,
- through Jesus Christ, *the Son*,
- in the *Holy Spirit*.

Prayer is "intimate converse with God who loves us."

1558. *What are the basic types of prayer?*

All prayer is grounded on the interrelation of two realities: *who God is* and *who we are*. Based on this relationship, prayer is usually divided into five different types: ***adoration, thanksgiving, petition, contrition*** and ***offering***.

1559. *How do we learn "how to pray"?*

To pray well is really a grace of the Holy Spirit who teaches us how to pray:

- from his interior inspiration,
- through his inspired Scripture, especially the Gospel teaching and the example of Christ,
- from the teaching of the Church, and
- the witness and teaching of the saints.

1560. *What did Jesus teach about prayer?*

Jesus taught his disciples how to pray by his own example of communion with his Father. In his teaching he stressed:

- interior sincerity of the heart,
- love in action, even of one's enemies, and
- the importance of the Holy Spirit as Guide and Inspirer.

1561. *What is the “heart” of the Christian’s personal prayer?*

The heart of a Christian’s personal prayer is:

- our union with Christ Himself,
- through his Spirit indwelling in us, so we can “make our own the mind of Jesus Christ” (*cf. Phil 2:5*) and “live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me” (*Gal 2:19f*).

1562. *Are there different levels of Christian prayer?*

Christian prayer includes both our *personal prayer* as a unique person created by God, and our sharing in the *communal liturgical prayer* as members of the Church, Christ’s Body.

Christ’s example shows how these two levels complement each other. For his personal prayer always involved his communal mission, and his public acts and prayer revealed the personal interior depths of his relation to the Father.

1563. *Are personal/communal prayer complementary in the Eucharist?*

The Eucharist calls the faithful together *communally*, then addresses each *personally* in the Liturgy of the Word, to prepare for the *communal sharing* in the Eucharistic Prayer, the “Our Father,” and holy Communion, all filled with *personal* content and depth.

1564. *Is authentic Christian prayer ever strictly “private”?*

No, authentic Christian prayer, like Christ’s own prayer, is always “personal,” rather than “private.” It is essentially *relational*, and thus open to the *communal*.

Hence, our Filipino personal devotions must, as truly Christian prayer, involve the communal as their proper context. In like manner, Church liturgies must involve the personal depth and participation of the faithful.

1565. *What are the constants in “guides” to Christian prayer?*

Among the innumerable guides to prayer there are certain constants regarding its nature and method:

- As to its *nature*, Christian prayer is personal communion with God our Father, through Jesus Christ in the Spirit, within the Church, centered around the Eucharistic Table, in our pilgrimage of faith, hope and loving service of neighbor.
- As to its *method*, Christian prayer is grounded in Sacred Scripture and the Church’s liturgy, actively drawing on our concrete human context, and consciously seeking to follow the Spirit’s movement guiding us to personal spiritual growth and communal faith-commitment.

1566. *What is worship?*

Worship is interior reverence and homage offered to the Divine Majesty through words and actions in public ritual. Authentic worship “in Spirit and truth” is never empty ritualism, but includes rendering justice to the poor, the widow and the orphan.

It takes place in the individual Christian’s personal prayer, in group prayer, and especially in the Church’s liturgical prayer.

1567. *What is ritual?*

Ritual, whether secular or religious, is a social, programmed symbolic activity that can create, communicate, criticize, or transform the basic meaning of community life. It creates our fundamental bonding with others, grounding the structure of social relationships that provide our basic identity.

Filipino Catholics are strong on religious rituals, especially those marking the great feasts of Christmas and Holy Week. Authentic religious rituals show four constant traits: *symbolic*, *consecratory*, *repetitive* and involving *remembrance*.

1568. *What is "liturgy"?*

Liturgy originally meant the "people's work and public duty" in taking part in God's redemptive plan. Today it designates the "*official public worship of the Church*."

The liturgy is "an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ," centered in the Eucharist which commemorates Christ's Paschal Mystery, so that "full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by Head and members" (SC 7).

1569. *What are essential characteristics of Catholic liturgy?*

Catholic liturgy is essentially:

- **Trinitarian** and **Paschal**: directed to the Father, through His Son's Paschal Mystery, in their Holy Spirit;
- **ecclesial**: celebrated by the *whole Christ*, Head and members, actively participating in various roles;
- **sacramental**: celebrated through symbolic rituals, words and gestures by which the faithful both express Faith in Christ and share in the salvation symbolized,
- **ethically oriented**: directly related to moral life by empowering full responsible Christian discipleship;
- **eschatological**: making present God's Kingdom *already* begun but *not yet* fully accomplished.

1570. *What does the Church stress in the liturgy today?*

Today the Church stresses **full**, **conscious**, and **active participation** in the liturgy, which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy itself, and to which the Christian people "have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism" (SC 14).

1571. *What does the Church stress today about sacraments?*

Today the seven ritual sacraments are viewed as:

- grounded directly in both **Christ**, the Primordial Sacrament, and the **Church**, the Fundamental Sacrament;
- acts that presuppose and strengthen *faith*;
- closer to the everyday life of the Christian.

1572. *What are key elements in a sacramental celebration?*

Sacramental Celebrations are efficacious signs of grace, in which we encounter God our Father as adopted sons/daughters, through Christ, in his Church.

Catholic sacraments are, therefore, sacraments of:

- **Christ**: he is their origin and constituting presence;
- the **Church**: sacraments are *by* and *for* the Church;
- **Faith**: they demand faith and constitute ongoing expressions of faith;
- **salvation**: they are efficacious and necessary means of salvation;
- **eternal life**: their ultimate goal.

1573. *How is the traditional description of sacraments as "sensible signs" modified today?*

Today “sensible signs” are understood not as signs that merely point, but as *symbols* — real **performative word events**, that make present the spiritual reality symbolized, namely, the saving presence of the Risen Christ.

1574. *How are the expressions “instituted by Christ” and “actions of Christ” understood today?*

Today **Christ** is seen as the **Primordial Sacrament**. This means he is not just the *originator* of the seven sacraments, but also their *primary agent* (Christ himself baptizes, confirms, etc), their *fullest expression* or *goal*.

Moreover, the **Church** is seen as the **Foundational Sacrament** which makes the Risen Christ present *by being his Body*, and *by celebrating his saving acts* in the seven ritual sacraments.

1575. *How is “to give grace” understood today?*

Grace is *not* a “thing” automatically conferred by the sacraments, but GOD’S PERSONAL PRESENCE WITHIN US through the Risen Christ in the Spirit.

The effect of the sacraments is to draw us closer to the Church, to Christ himself in the Spirit, and to the Father. Through full, conscious and active celebration of the sacraments, our minds, hearts, affections and imaginations, and ultimately our whole behavior, are gradually shaped toward Christ-likeness.

1576. *What is a current definition of “sacrament”?*

Sacraments are saving symbolic acts or visible signs, arising from the ministry of Christ and continued in, by and for the Church, which, when received in faith, fashion us into likeness to Christ in his Paschal Mystery, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1577. *What is the purpose of the sacraments?*

Vatican II declares “the purpose of the sacraments is:

- to *sanctify* men, to *build up* the Body of Christ, and to give *worship* to God.
- Because the sacraments are signs they also *instruct*.
- They not only presuppose *faith*, but by words and objects they also *nourish, strengthen, and express* it.
- They do indeed *confer grace* but in addition, the very act of celebrating them most effectively disposes the faithful to:
 - *receive this grace* to their profit,
 - to *worship God* duly, and
 - to *practice charity*” (SC 59).

1578. *What are “sacramentals”?*

Sacramentals are objects, actions, practices, places and the like, that help us become aware of Christ’s grace-filled presence. Such are blessings, certain pious actions (kneeling, making the Sign of the Cross), words (novena prayers), objects (crucifixes, rosaries, scapulars), places (churches, shrines) and liturgical seasons (Advent, Lent).

They help us receive the sacraments with greater fruitfulness and prolong their efficacy, rendering holy various occasions in life (*cf.* SC 60).

1579. *What is the value of “popular religiosity”?*

PCP II has called for a renewal of popular piety that involves *critical* and *fervent* use of popular Filipino religious practices. These are to be fostered in such a way that they do not distort authentic Christian faith, nor remain superficial forms of worship, but rather truly express the Faith.

1580. *What is the basis for Marian devotions?*

Marian devotions are solidly grounded on Mary's perfect fulfillment of her unique God-given vocation as the Mother of God involved in the mysteries of Christ.

Authentic Marian piety leads directly to Christ and the Blessed Trinity.

1581. *Is the Blessed Virgin Mary worshipped like Christ?*

Only God is to be adored and worshipped; the Blessed Virgin Mary is *not* worshipped but venerated within the Church's liturgy and in innumerable devotions.

These devotions express profound veneration, intense love, trusting invocation, loving service, wonder and study of the Virgin Mother of God.

1582. *How does Mary influence Catholic prayer?*

Mary is the Model of the Church in prayer through:

- her own *Magnificat* and *life of prayer*;
- *inspiring prayers* of invocation and praise that relate all to Christ and salvation history.

1583. *How is Marian devotion to be renewed?*

Popular Marian devotions and alleged "apparitions" can be purified, renewed and authenticated by bringing out Mary's relationship to:

- Christ and the Blessed Trinity,
- the Person and work of the Holy Spirit,
- the Church, and its mission,
- today's work for justice and preferential option for the poor.

Chapter 25

New Life in Christ: Baptism and Confirmation

They were deeply shaken. They asked Peter and the other apostles: “What are we to do, brothers?” Peter answered “You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
(Acts 2:37-38)

Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father, we too might live a new of life.

(Rom 6:3-4)

OPENING

1584. This chapter begins our presentation of the seven ritual sacraments, and more specifically, of two of the “sacraments of initiation,” namely, *Baptism* and *Confirmation* (*cf. CCC 1212*). In the preceding chapter, the essentials of the renewed vision of sacraments in general were explained. Now we wish to apply that broad understanding specifically to the introductory sacrament of Baptism and its complement, Confirmation.

1585. A deeper link with the former chapters is that this chapter follows the order proposed in this Part III of the Catechism, namely, the *Holy Spirit – the Church – the Sacraments*. Actually, the two sacraments taken up here are the two most explicitly related to the *Holy Spirit*, whose power and inspiration create, unify and actualize all the realities taken up in this Part III. Moreover, the *Church* itself, which we saw in the past two chapters constitutes the “Fundamental or basic Sacrament,” grounds these two as well as all seven ritual sacraments.

1586. But one of the most important insights of the present sacramental renewal is the *central place* of the *Eucharist* among the seven sacraments. All the other sacraments relate to the Eucharist as the central core of the sacramental life (*cf. CCC 1211*). Therefore, some catechetical works choose to begin their treatment of the sacraments with the Eucharist. While acknowledging the values of such an approach, this work has opted for the sequence actually followed in Christian sacramental life, and

stressed in the Vatican II sponsored *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA; cf. CCC 1210)*. The best way to bring out the centrality of the Eucharist may well be to literally place its treatment in the center (Chap. 26, between Chaps. 24 and 28). This permits a gradual introduction to the Eucharist by the preceding chapters on the Sacraments in general and the “Initiation Sacraments,” together with the development of the Eucharistic life in the following chapters on the Sacraments of Healing and Vocation.

CONTEXT

1587. Baptism is very popular among Filipino Catholics. One reason is surely our basic “family-centeredness” and love of children, both of which are strongly fostered by Baptisms as celebrated in our country. Moreover, given the strong religious dimension of Filipino culture, it is natural that the religious baptismal celebrations play a significant role in creating and fostering important social relationships.

But it is commonly noted that baptisms often tend to become merely social events. Chief concern is given to the numerous *ninongs, ninangs*, and (especially in the case of the well-to-do) to the lavish feast for the invited guests. Less interest is shown in the explicit religious dimension of the sacrament itself. From a pragmatic view, Baptism seems reduced to mere *registration* into the Church, parallel with civil registration/birth certificate as a Filipino citizen. Little appreciation for Baptism as initiation into *new life* in Christ is manifested.

1588. One result of these deficiencies is that many Filipinos baptized as infants never have the chance to “grow up in the Faith.” They are “*nominal Catholics*” – Catholics only in name, not in action and deed. This results mostly from being baptized because of the prevalent “socialization process” [we are by tradition Catholics here], not by personal conviction and commitment to Christ.

Much has been done, especially through vibrant, active BECs, to “put faith in Christ” back into infant and adult Baptism. Yet, *PCP II* has highlighted the crying need for pre-sacramental catechesis, especially for Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage. The Plenary Council emphasized the *family* as an evangelizing agent, even going into detail by insisting that parents, god-parents and sponsors attend pre-Baptism and pre-Confirmation catechesis. Such directives are truly admirable in their intent, but for a number of practical reasons pose major difficulties regarding their implementation in the Church’s pastoral ministry throughout our country (*cf. PCP II, Decrees, Arts. 10, 48*).

1589. One factor which constitutes a great part of the actual problem with Baptisms in our parishes and barrio chapels is the sheer *number* of children to be baptized, especially at particular times such as Christmas, Easter and *fiestas*. Much greater participation of sufficiently formed lay persons is needed to make really possible an adequate pre-baptismal catechesis in the majority of our parishes.

This raises a second factor: *lack of trained catechetical personnel*. The *NCDP* had already admitted that “preparation for adult baptisms may demand a deeper understanding of the faith than the ordinary catechist possesses” (*NCDP 361*). This is all the more true of the average Catholic parents, god-parents and sponsors. Hence the urgent overriding need in our country for a continuing catechetical effort that effectively fosters a deeper, more personal, and more inspiring “maturing in Christian Faith.”

1590. Some have asserted that Filipino Catholics are “sacramentalized” but “not yet evangelized.” Perhaps it is more accurate to see the greatest need in helping Filipinos “to easily understand the sacramental signs and eagerly frequent those sacraments that were instituted to nourish the Christian life”

(SC 59). Toward that goal, the exposition of this chapter begins with a brief general introduction to the sacramental structure, especially the Sacraments of Initiation. The second section then develops the Sacrament of Baptism, comparing the “popular view” with the main insights drawn from Scripture in the Church’s sacramental renewal, and concluding with some contemporary points of special interest. The final briefer section does the same for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

EXPOSITION

I. SACRAMENTS AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1591. The preceding chapter noted how the sacraments are well-grounded in our very nature as embodied spirits. We all naturally use sensible symbols to actualize and make present the spiritual realities of our lives. Now we take up briefly a further dimension of this anthropological basis for the sacraments: the *parallel* between the *stages of our natural, physical/social life, and those of our Christian spiritual life* (cf. CCC 1212). Catholic tradition has drawn the comparison between our physical generation and *Baptism*, our spiritual regeneration; between our growth and *Confirmation* in which we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit; between nutrition needed for physical life, and the *Eucharist*, the bread of eternal life. Even the cure of the physical and spiritual ills of natural life are paralleled by *Penance/Reconciliation* and *Anointing of the Sick*, while *Order* and *Matrimony* relate to the essential natural community needs of leadership and propagation.

1592. While *social scientists* today take for granted and develop such parallelism, *catechists* and *liturgists* are rightfully concerned about the danger of reducing God’s utterly gratuitous Self-giving to us in Christ in the sacraments to simply the natural human growing-up process. Such concern is well grounded, given the common “scientific” and “behaviorist” attitudes so prevalent among us today. What is needed is to bring out *both* the *relationship* of human birth, growth, healing and vocation with the seven sacraments, *and* the *uniqueness* of the sacraments as uniting us with Jesus. Sacraments keep alive Jesus’ presence within us; through them we encounter Jesus our Risen Lord and Savior. Both natural growth and union with Christ in one person ultimately arise from the *one universal salvific will of God* who continually creates and redeems all that exists through the Spirit in Christ Jesus.

1593. The affirmation of both the *similarity* of our natural life with our grace-life, as well as the *uniqueness* of sacramental life, is exemplified in Catholic tradition by St. Nicholas Cabasilas. “It is thanks to the sacraments – which proclaim Christ’s death and burial – that we are born to supernatural life, develop and are united in an admirable way to the Savior. It is through these sacred signs that, as St. Paul says, ‘we live and move and have our being’” (*Acts 17:28*). The author then focuses on the sacraments of initiation:

Baptism enables us to be and subsist in Christ. It is this sacrament which gives life to those who lie in death and corruption. **Confirmation** perfects those so born by giving them the energy that goes with this life. The **Eucharist** preserves what has been received and keeps it alive. Thus, we live by this Bread, we are strengthened by this Anointing, after we have received our being in the bath of Baptism.

1594. The present sacramental renewal continues to affirm this same basic parallelism between the natural human passage and the sacramental life, especially in regard to the sacraments of initiation. These are the sacraments which lay the foundation for the whole of Christian life.

The grace of Christ has a certain analogy with the origin, growth and sustaining of natural life. Born to a new life in Baptism, the faithful are strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation and receive in the Eucharist the Bread of eternal life. Thus, through the sacraments of Christian initiation, they continually receive more riches of the divine life and advance toward perfect charity (*Paul VI, DCN*).

A new insight is alluded to here by Paul VI in linking the notions of gradual process and growth in sacramental life to the life of Christian charity, which in our *Filipino context* certainly includes Christian witness before others in the pursuit of justice and preferential option for the poor.

II. BAPTISM

Prenotes

1595. In keeping with the Church’s sacramental renewal, our exposition of Baptism shall focus on the *Baptism of adults* (cf. CCC 1247). For only with adults can the full reality of the sacrament be brought out. But this pertains equally to our common Filipino practice of Infant Baptism. For it is on the adult faith of the *parents*, the *god-parents* and *sponsors*, that the responsibility falls for developing the seed of faith received by the infants in Baptism.

1596. A *second prenote* concerns the *practical aim* to directly respond to the popular reductionist idea of Baptism with the Church’s renewed teaching. Most Filipino Catholics have a general idea of Baptism, but little interest in “how it works.” Nor despite the catechesis or religious instruction they may have received, do they have any clear idea of what Baptism has to do with their ordinary daily lives, even their spiritual lives.

Therefore our presentation of the essential Church teaching on Baptism is structured to deepen the popular understanding and reveal the truly inspiring life-giving reality of Baptism. The following table presumes the fundamental CONTINUITY of the Church’s teaching on Baptism, and simply aims at highlighting the renewal inspired by Vatican II.

A. Church’s Teaching on Baptism

<i>1597. Popular Understanding</i>	<i>Church’s Teaching</i>
Baptism makes one think of:	Baptism truly means:
1. a. water	1. a. New life in Christ , sharing in his dying and rising with him which includes the forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins
b. washing away original sin	b. through the cleansing power of water and the Spirit ;
2. a. entry into Church building;	2. a. Incorporation into the Christian community , Christ’s Body
b. babies	b. of adults and babies
c. passive reception	c. Sacrament of the Church’s faith
d. clerical ritual	d. a personal prayer of those celebrating the sacrament
e. works automatically	e. receiving the transforming grace of Baptism effecting conversion and drawing to an ever deeper Christian commitment .

- 3. a. once-for-all ritual
- b. no active influencing power in ordinary life
- c. single past event

- 3. a. a ritual calling for a **life of Christian discipleship**
- b. **influencing our daily life** by being the permanent source of **sharing in God's own life** in Christ;
- c. a **single event** grounding the baptized whole future **life-process**, as manifested in the yearly liturgical renewal of Baptismal vows.

1598. Baptism, then, is presented here under three major headings: 1) *new life in Christ* through water and the Spirit, and by dying/rising with Christ in sharing his Paschal Mystery; 2) *incorporation into the Church* through the sacrament of Faith; and 3) *sharing the Trinitarian divine life* in an on-going, progressive way that looks ever to the future.

New Life in Union with Christ

1599. Baptism's first effect is to unite the baptized with Christ, their Risen Lord. How this union is effected is biblically developed in two ways: through the symbol of water and God's Spirit, and secondly, by sharing in Christ's "baptism" of his Paschal Mystery. Both ways are superbly presented for us in the *Easter Vigil liturgy* (cf. CCC 1217).

1. *Genesis* (Chapters 1-2) presents God's **creation** of the world, with **His Spirit** hovering over the **waters**. The Church prays: "Almighty God you created all things. . . Help us to perceive your **new creation** by which you redeemed your people through the sacrifice of **our Passover**, Jesus Christ." St. Paul had reminded us that "if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old order have passed away" (2 Cor 5:17).

"And God said: 'Let there be **light**' (Gen 1:3). So the Vigil's Service of the Light celebrates **Christ our Light**, symbolized in the Paschal Candle. Baptism is called "**enlightenment**" because the baptized receive Christ the light of the world, (cf. Jn 8:12), the Word who is "the real light which gives light to every man" (Jn 1:9). So the newly baptized, after having been "enlightened" (cf. Heb 10:32), become "children of light" (1 Thes 5:5). Since they are "light in the Lord," they are admonished: "Live as children of light" (Eph 5:8; CCC 1216).

2. **Abraham's faith** in offering his only son Isaac, (cf. Gen 22) prepares us for **Christ's sacrifice**, when God the Father "did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for the sake of us all" (Rom 8:32). Through the Death and Resurrection of Christ, God fulfilled his promise to Abraham, the father of all nations, to increase His Chosen People by His invitation to the new life of grace.

3. The **Exodus deliverance** of the Israelites from Egypt, the land of slavery, through the **waters of the Red Sea**, is the Old Testament symbol of our deliverance from the slavery of sin through the baptismal waters. The Church's prayer proclaims that "**the Red Sea is a symbol of our baptism**, and the nation free from slavery is a sign of the Christian people." God who "once saved a single nation from slavery, now offers salvation to all through baptism" (CCC 1221).

4. **Isaiah** the prophet speaks of the enduring love of the "Holy One of Israel," Israel's Redeemer, who will never again deluge the earth with the **Flood waters of Noah** (cf. Is 54:5,9f). St. Peter explained how Christ suffered and died that he might lead the unjust to God, and by his Resurrection was given new life in the Spirit. This new life he communicates to believers through baptism that cleanses their consciences from sin. As Noah's family was saved **through water**, so Christians are saved **through the waters of baptism** (cf. 1 Pt 3:18-21). Early Christians saw in Noah's Ark a symbol of the Church, and the dove as symbol of the Spirit.

5. God promised through His prophet **Ezekiel** (Chapter 36) to "**sprinkle clean water**" upon his people to cleanse them from all their impurities, and to give them a new heart and place a new

spirit within them, taking away their stony hearts and replacing them with natural hearts (*cf. Ez 36:25f*). So the Church prays to God: “Send *your Spirit of adoption* on those to be born again in baptism.”

6. The Vigil’s Epistle is Paul’s description of *dying-rising with Christ in Baptism*. “We were buried with him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life” (*Rom 6:4*). Baptism, then, is how we come to share in Christ’s own death which he spoke of as his “baptism.” I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over (*Lk 12:50; cf. CCC 1225*). Baptism for us is a *radical immersion in Christ, total allegiance to him*. So Paul continues: “His death was death to sin, once for all, his life is life for God. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus” (*Rom 6:10f*).

1600. Importance of Biblical Images. This extended sketch of the Biblical images of water and Spirit is intended to correct the unreflected, superficial idea of water in the sacrament of Baptism that is commonplace today. Most Filipino Catholics are surely *not* thinking of Baptismal water as a life-death reality. Nor is Baptism considered as relating us directly to Christ. Yet such is precisely the deep meaning revealed in the Biblical narratives of Creation, the Flood, the Exodus, and Christ’s own Paschal Mystery. A renewed understanding of Baptism for ordinary Filipino Catholics, then, depends in great measure on how well they can grasp the deeper Faith-meaning of the Baptismal symbols. Can water, Spirit, and Light really bring to mind and heart the depth realities of life, death, redemption, and grace?

This goal challenges Philippine catechists today. But at least the true nature of Baptism is now clear. In the “*Introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation*” the Church explains: “When people are baptized, they share sacramentally in Christ’s death. . . For baptism recalls and actualizes the Paschal Mystery itself, because by it men and women pass from the death of sin into life” (*RCIA 6*).

Original Sin and Baptism

1601. Original sin in the context of Baptism refers not to the personal sin committed by the first human beings and described figuratively in Gen 3:1-7, but rather to the *sinful condition* into which all human beings as descendants of Adam and Eve are born, with the exception of Jesus and Mary Most Holy. Such an inherited “sinful condition or state” consists essentially in the *privation of sanctifying grace*.

The “originating sin” committed by Adam and Eve had and continues to have also *other* disastrous *consequences*, both *within each human being* and *on the environment* in which we live. Thus, not only do we experience a painful *moral weakness* in trying to do what our conscience tells us to be right (*cf. Rom 7:13-15*), but also a certain *inclination to evil*, which has traditionally been called “*concupiscence*.”

As a consequence of concupiscence and our moral weakness and personal sins, we find ourselves in a society which is characterized by sinful structures, injustices, suffering, frustrations and moral aberrations, which clearly stand against God’s original plan for mankind.

1602. Now baptism’s sensible sign of washing with water symbolizes and effects a *cleansing from all sin and rebirth to new life in THE SPIRIT* (*cf. CCC 1263*). Traditionally, *original sin* has been described as a “black mark” to be washed off in Baptism. This image seeks to portray the hereditary privation of sanctifying grace. *It is the HOLY SPIRIT that frees us from sin*. Put simply, we are in a state of sin when God’s Holy Spirit does not dwell within us. Therefore “sin is removed” by the coming of the Spirit. *Baptism takes away all sin*, both *original and personal* for adults, *by signifying and effecting the coming of the Holy Spirit*. So St. Peter proclaimed at Pentecost: “Be baptized. . .

that your sins may be forgiven; . . . then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 2:37f*). St. Paul reminded Titus that God “saved us through the baptism of new birth and renewal in the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he lavished on us through Jesus Christ our Savior” (*Ti 3:5*).

The core of original sin, then, is the privation of grace, which is removed by the coming of the Holy Spirit effected in Baptism.

1603. This does *not* mean that the baptized no longer experience any effects of original sin. We all remain in the world marked by the weight of evil that burdens us all. We must all continue to “wrestle with” and resist our inner inclination to sin (concupiscence) (*cf. Trent, ND 512*). **How then does Baptism “take away” original sin?** It does so by symbolizing and effecting the baptized’s saving solidarity with Christ, within the Spirit-filled community of his Body, the Church. The struggle against sin must go on, but now the baptized are *marked with Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and supported by the Christian community*. How else could the Father “wipe away our sins” except through the loving embrace of the Spirit, joining us to Christ, our Savior, and to one another, members of his Body, the Church?

1604. Summary. The main point of this section has been to explain that *Baptism focuses on Christ, not on washing away original sin. The core of Baptism is new life in Christ*, a sharing in Christ, a radical change of allegiance to Christ. It is “a new birth; a birth unto hope which draws its life from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; a birth to an imperishable inheritance (*1 Pt 1:3f*).

Christ as the “*Primordial Sacrament*” means here not only that “when anyone baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes” (*SC 7*). It also means Christ himself is the goal and fullness for which Baptism is administered. Jesus is the man completely immersed in God, his Father, whose presence completely and perfectly fills Christ’s humanity. Jesus is the “man for others” because he is utterly and totally “for the Father.” “I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father; . . . The Father loves me for this: that I lay down my life. . . This command I received from my Father” (*Jn 10:14-18*). “The Father and I are one” (*Jn 10:30*).

All our celebrations of Baptism thus *derive from* Jesus, the Christ (the *Anointed One*), and are *ordered to bringing us into vital relationship with him*, the Good Shepherd, our Savior.

Incorporation into the Church

1605. Baptism’s second effect is to unite us with others as members of Christ’s Body, the Church (*cf. CCC 1267-70*). “The body is one and has many members but all the members many through they are, are one body, and so it is with Christ. It was in one spirit that all of us. . . were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit” (*1 Cor 12:12f*). This means that our personal relationship with Christ is never any “private affair” we have created by ourselves, but always a loving friendship *that originates, develops and grows in union with fellow-members of Christ’s Body*, the Church. Our baptismal life is never a solitary, isolated thing, but a communal sharing with others in Christ our Lord.

PCP II describes how, empowered through *Baptism*, the lay faithful act as the heart of the Church in the heart of the world (*cf. PCP II 424*).

1606. Some Filipinos misunderstand this to mean merely that the Church is the place where people are baptized. But obviously “Church” here refers not primarily to the physical building, but to the baptized persons forming the Christian community. The Church *IS* the *BAPTIZED PEOPLE!* As such it does not just celebrate one action called “baptism,” but is essentially constituted precisely by those baptized as disciples of Christ. Its unity is grounded in the real presence of *the Baptized One, THE RISEN CHRIST*, the Head of the Body, the Church. The Church – this community of the baptized – is really Church only to the extent

that it is the *SACRAMENT* of the Risen Christ for all peoples. It makes the Risen Christ and his Spirit present in the world today.

1607. St. Peter pictures this for us in exhorting his Christians to “Come to him [Jesus], a living stone, rejected by men but approved, nonetheless and precious in God’s eyes. You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (*1 Pt 2:4-5*). Thus, in being “incorporated into the Church,” becoming “living stones” of the spiritual house that is Christ’s Body, the baptized become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, called out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were ‘no people,’ but now you are God’s People; once there was no mercy for you, but now you have found mercy” (*1 Pt 2:9-10; cf. CCC 1268*).

1608. Thus, Baptism confers a sharing in Christ’s very mission (*cf. CCC 1270*). Particularly in *his threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King*. Vatican II explains:

The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that through all their works as Christians they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the perfection of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light (*cf. 1 Pt 2:4-10*). . . . Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give answer to everyone who asks a reason for their hope of an eternal life which is theirs (*LG 10*).

1609. Thus, the baptized are called to exercise their sharing in Christ’s priesthood (offer spiritual sacrifices) and bear witness to Christ (proclaim, give answer) who is their Light. But this can take place only in the “spiritual house,” the living community of members bonded together sacramentally in Baptism.

By the sacrament of Baptism, . . . a person becomes truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ and is reborn to a sharing in the divine life. . . . Baptism therefore constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who, through it, are reborn. But Baptism of itself is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ. Baptism is thus ordained toward a complete profession of Faith, . . . (*UR 22*).

1610. PCP II describes how the baptized are called “to live prophetically as Christ lived, to witness as He did, to the luminous coming together of Gospel and life. To the world they manifest and communicate Christ, Christ who loves, Christ who serves, Christ who saves” (*PCP II 424*).

Sacrament of Faith

1611. Baptism, then, is rightly called the “sacrament of Faith” in *two senses*. When people request Baptism, they are questioned: “What do you ask of God’s Church?” They respond: “Faith.” They realize they can only believe fully and authentically within the community of believers. But obviously they would not ask for Baptism if they did not already possess some initial faith. Therefore, Baptism is also “the sacrament of that faith by which men and women, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, respond to the Gospel of Christ” (*Gen. Introduction to Christian Initiation 3; cf. CCC 1253-55*).

1612. Both the initial faith which prompts people to ask for baptism, and the baptismal grace deepening that faith, are clearly shown through the catechumenate of the restored *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. It presents us with a model not only for becoming a Christian, but for remaining a Catholic Christian. Its core reality is *conversion* of adults to Christ and his mission, a dynamic

process of Christian Faith formation which involves the *whole community* in a variety of *ministries* that focus on the *Word of God* and dominant Church *symbols*. The process includes *four major periods*, each separated by a particular liturgical ritual:

1. *Pre-Catechumenate Period* of evangelization, leading to the Rite of Enrollment as Catechumens;
2. *Catechumenate Period* of catechetical instruction leading to the Rite of Election;
3. *Period of Purification and Enlightenment*, preparatory for the Reception of the Sacraments;
4. *Period of Deepening (Mystagogia)*, or the time of developing the Christian experience by entering more fully into the life and communion of the faithful.

1613. The RCIA clearly shows that Baptism is *not* something just *passively received*, but rather demands a “proper disposition of soul” and an active, personal response that continues throughout the faith life of the baptized. Baptism thus is really a PRAYER EVENT that involves a radical “*turn around*,” a “*conversion*,” a *passage* from one way of living to a radically different way. But this change is *not* produced by any “automatic” or “magical” power of Baptism. Rather, Baptism offers an initial grace, a new relationship with the Risen Christ in the Spirit, within the Christian community. Its perduring effectivity depends on the baptized’s continuing cooperation with grace in personal persevering effort.

1614. This is clearly shown by the numerous apostolic exhortations to recently baptized Christians. To the Ephesians St. Paul wrote: “Lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth” (*Eph 4:22-24*). In the Letter to the Hebrews we read: “Let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith” (*Heb 12:1-2*).

1615. Sharing the Divine Life. From this new life in Christ and being united in his Body, the Church, Baptism is the effective symbol of our sharing in the divine life. We become a “new creation” (*cf. 2 Cor 5:17*), sharers in the divine nature (*cf. 2 Pt 1:4*) – not simply creatures any more, but children of God (*cf. 1 Jn 3:1*), through THE SON, Jesus Christ, (*cf. Gal 4:4-7*) in the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us (*cf. 1 Cor 6:19*). Thus Baptism ushers us into sharing the very life of the Trinity. “Baptism is heaven-sent regeneration. . . culminating in the invocation of the Blessed Trinity. Signed with this name, the baptized are consecrated to the Blessed Trinity and enter into fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*Gen. Introduction to Christian Initiation 5*). This is expressed in the Baptismal formula: “N. . . , I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The ordinary ministers of baptism are: the Bishop, priest and deacon. In case of necessity, any person, even someone not baptized, can baptize if he or she has the intention of doing what the Church intends to do, and uses the Trinitarian baptismal formula (*cf. CCC 1256*).

1616. But the problem for many *Filipinos* with these lofty biblical faith-assertions is that they seem so far away from ordinary daily living, even Christian living. In such a situation, a general rule is to go directly to the Gospels and see what all this means in the life of Christ.

We know that John the Baptist’s baptism was not a sacrament, but a baptism of repentance, ushering in the new age of the coming of the Messiah. Jesus came to be baptized by John as a sign that he IS the new age in person. In the Gospel account of Jesus’ baptism, we can see more concretely what this “sharing the divine life” really means. First, there is the Spirit appearing as a dove, recalling the Old Testament accounts of creation and the Flood. Then Christ’s definitive identity and Messianic mission are revealed: “You are my beloved Son, on you my favor rests” (*Mk 1:11*). Finally, with the

heavenly voice, the Spirit symbolized in the dove, and the Incarnate Son emerging from the Jordan, **the Blessed Trinity** is revealed to us *in action*.

1617. More importantly, Christ's baptism inaugurated his whole public ministry, climaxing in his Passion, Death and Resurrection. Jesus emerged from the waters of the Jordan as he would rise from the tomb at his Resurrection. He was anointed with the Spirit, manifesting his divine Sonship, in which we all share as he promised. The heavens were opened to Christ as he would open them for all persons when he ascended to his Father. What we have in Christ's own baptism is the anticipation, the ritual enactment, of the whole drama of his redemptive mission. And we have seen how St. Paul claims that through the Sacrament of Baptism, we share in Christ's very life and mission.

1618. But how? *How* does our ordinary, daily life, actually share in Christ's? Briefly, **the key is the Holy Spirit**, the interior, indwelling source of our life of grace. *PCP II* warns that "the laity must not be deprived of the exercise of their charisms. By this exercise, they fulfill their baptismal responsibilities" (*PCP II 429; cf. LG 18; AA 24*).

What this means is that with God's Spirit within us, we actually share the divine life. The Spirit helps us to have *faith* in God, *hope* in God's fidelity and mercy, and respond to God in *love*. In other words, the Spirit helps us to begin to think like disciples of Christ, overcome problems, and be outgoing in love rather than turned back on ourselves. This sharing in Christ's own life is spelled out more practically in terms of the *gifts* (*cf. Is 11:2-3*) and *fruits* (*cf. Gal 5:22f*) of the Spirit. But this is not any magical formula that automatically "divinizes" us. Rather it is **a life-long process** that needs to be *confirmed* and constantly strengthened by our free cooperating with God's grace.

B. Current Questions on Baptism

1619. Necessity of Baptism for Salvation. The Church teaches that "Christ is the one Mediator, and the Way of salvation. . . In explicit terms, he himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism" (*LG 14*). Jesus warned Nicodemus: "No one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit" (*Jn 3:5*). Mark's Gospel has: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned" (*Mk 16:16; cf. CCC 1257-58*).

But what of all those who are not Christian, and have never been baptized with water and the Spirit? We know that God wills "all men to be saved and come to know the truth" (*1 Tim 2:4-6*). Therefore, the Church also teaches that:

those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God, and moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of their conscience, can attain eternal salvation (*LG 16*).

1620. This has traditionally been called "**baptism of desire**," since by their lives these persons show an implicit desire for baptism. Likewise, those who, although they have never been baptized with water, die for the faith or for perfect charity, are said to have gained salvation through a "**baptism of blood**." Moreover, Vatican II has directly linked the salvation of these non-baptized with Christ's Paschal Mystery:

For since Christ died for all and since all are in fact called to one and the same divine destiny, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all in a manner known only to God the possibility of being made partners in Christ's Paschal Mystery (*GS 22; LG 16; CCC 1258-60*).

1621. The same action of God's loving Providence could confidently be applied to **unbaptized children**. The Church does not know of another way for infants to be saved except by Baptism.

However, she entrust the unbaptized children who have died to God's mercy upon his will of universal salvation. Contemporary Church teaching, in fact stresses God's universal salvific will as well as the necessary faith-preparation of the children's parents. "All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism" (CCC 1261).

Regarding the infants who die without having been baptized, the Church prays:

Father of all consolation, from whom nothing is hidden,
You know the faith of these parents
 who mourn the death of their child.
May they find comfort in knowing that you have taken the child
 into your loving care.

Baptismal Seal or "Character"

1622. Three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Orders, imprint a permanent sign or seal, called "character" in technical language (cf. CCC 1121; 1271-74). That is why these sacraments can only be received once. For although the sacramental grace they confer can be lost through personal sin, this "character" remains permanent. It represents the decision of God which cannot be withdrawn. St. Paul reminded the Corinthians: "He has put his seal upon us and given his Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor 1:22). He admonished the Ephesians: "do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed against the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). The book of Revelation speaks of "the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God" (Rev 7:3).

1623. The "*character*" is Christ's permanent mark on us, effecting *a real change in our relationship to him and to the Church*. Through the baptismal character, all share in Christ's royal priesthood, thereby enabling them to actively participate in the Church's liturgy, to receive the other sacraments, and to grow closer to Christ through personal sanctification. In terms of the Christian community, the baptismal character is the inner source fostering inter-group communication, while helping to reduce and control the group tensions and conflicts by strengthening the baptized's self-identity and social bonding with the other members of the community.

Baptism of Infants

1624. With the new stress on Baptism as the Sacrament of Faith, involving commitment and conversion, the practice of baptizing infants has been questioned by some. But the Church has always understood that children should not be deprived of Baptism because they are being baptized "in the Faith of the Church" (cf. CCC 1250-52). Concretely, this means the parents and godparents, who moreover have a serious obligation to see that the baptized children are formed in the Faith by Catholic upbringing as they grow and mature (cf. CCC 1231).

1625. Infant Baptism highlights the fact that *Baptism* is above all *a free gift of God's grace*, not something merited. Secondly, just as the origin and growth of the personal life of every child begins immediately upon birth, so likewise does the Christian life of faith in Christ. Infant baptism simply shows God's initiative in loving the child, the first step "wholly directed toward acquiring the fullness of life in Christ" (UR 22). More concretely, for believing parents it would be inconceivable that they would not desire to share their life's basic faith thrust. Out of their common life of faith in Christ, they commit themselves to raising their child not in any artificial religiously "neutral" vacuum, but in their actual Christian family. Contemporary philosophical and social science studies on the development of the person, including the person's authentic freedom, provide strong, confirmatory support for the Church's traditional practice of infant baptism.

III. CONFIRMATION

1626. The sacrament of Confirmation is described by Vatican II in terms of its *two essential characteristics: closer union with the Church, and strengthening and empowerment by the Holy Spirit to actively spread the Faith.*

By the sacrament of Confirmation, the faithful are more perfectly bound to the Church and are endowed with the special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses to Christ, more strictly obliged to spread the faith by word and deed (*LG 11; cf. CCC 1285*).

The Council also decreed that “the rite of Confirmation is to be revised so that its intimate connection with the whole of Christian initiation may more clearly appear. For this reason the renewal of Baptismal promises should fittingly precede its reception” (*SC 71*).

PCP II decreed that “a diocesan program for the sacrament of Confirmation should be drawn up, preferably as a part of the regular syllabus in Catholic schools, public schools, and in catechetical instruction for adolescents” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 9,2*).

1627. Originally what we call Confirmation was part of the developed Baptismal rite. Yet, there is a certain scriptural basis in distinguishing the bestowal of the Holy Spirit through water-Baptism and by the “laying on of hands.”

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. As Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, they began to speak in tongues and to utter prophecies (*Acts 19:5f; cf. 8:14-17*).

Through the centuries, because the increasing number and size of dioceses, parishes, and infant baptisms made it a practical impossibility for the Bishop to confirm all, the anointing and laying on of hands were separated from water-Baptism to form a separate sacrament. In the East it is called “*Chrismation*,” meaning “anointing with chrism.”

1628. Thus Paul VI described the origin of Confirmation in the revised rite as follows:

The Apostles, in order to accomplish the will of Christ, passed on to the neophytes, by the laying on of hands, the *gift of the Spirit which brings to completion the grace of Baptism This laying on of hands* is rightly considered by Catholic Tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation which perpetuates in a way the grace of Pentecost in the Church (*DCN; cf. CCC 1288*).

1629. The sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by “*anointing with holy Chrism on the forehead, done while imposing the hands* and by these words: ‘N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (*CCC 1300*). In the Old Testament, *anointing* signified healing, purification and strengthening, but most of all *empowerment*. Aaron was anointed high *priest* (*cf. Lv 8:12*); Samuel anointed Saul and David as *king* (*cf. 1 Sam 10:1;16:13f*), and Isaiah was anointed *prophet* (*cf. Is 61:1*). Eventually, however, the Spirit was to be communicated to the *whole messianic people* (*cf. Ez 36:25-27; Jl 3:1-2; CCC 1286-87*).

In the New Testament, **Christ is the “Anointed One,”** perfectly fulfilling through the power of the Holy Spirit the *triple role* of **Prophet, Priest** and **Servant-King**. Hence, *through Confirmation, Christians share more fully in Christ’s prophetic, kingly and priestly roles*. Through the laying on of hands, they are claimed by Christ as his own, and empowered by the Spirit to spread the Gospel by word and deed, and thus build up Christ’s Body, the Church.

1630 The ordinary minister of Confirmation is *the Bishop* who is successor of the apostles, with the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The Bishop's administering demonstrates the *effect* of Confirmation: to unite the confirmed more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ. (*cf. CCC 1313*). However, for grave reasons, the Bishop may delegate to priests the faculty to administer the sacrament.

A. Effects of Confirmation

1631. The *main effect* of Confirmation is ***to strengthen and confirm the grace of Baptism*** (*cf. CCC 1302-3*). This means a more intense sharing in the mission of Christ and of the Church, empowering the confirmed to be ***public witnesses*** of the Faith:

- *witness* to the Kingdom of God and God's power present in the new age begun in Christ;
- *witness* to Jesus the Christ, as the unique Savior of all;
- *witness* to the freedom from the slavery of sin brought by God's presence through Christ and the Spirit;
- *witness* to the love of God, Father, Risen Incarnate Son, and Spirit, by loving service of others in the Spirit; and
- *witness* to Christ's real presence in the Christian community, the People of God, the Church.

1632. This witness flows from the *permanent "character"* imprinted on those confirmed by the Sacrament (*cf. CCC 1304-5*). In the Gospel of Luke, the Risen Christ explained to the apostles that "the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. In his name, penance for the remission of sins is to be preached to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of this. I send down upon you the promise of my Father [the Spirit] (*Lk 24:46-49*). The introduction to the Rite of Confirmation explains the origin and function of this "character," originally included in the baptismal ritual:

Signed with the oil by the Bishop's hand, the baptized person receives the indelible character, the seal of the Lord, together with the gift of the Spirit, which *conforms him more closely to Christ* and *gives him the grace of spreading the Lord's presence among men* (RC 9).

B. Qualities of Christian Witness

1633. To be effective witnesses to Christ and the Church demands certain basic qualities:

- personal knowledge, awareness, and experience of Christ in their daily lives;
- strong and enthusiastic Christian convictions and active commitment to Christ and the Church;
- a basic grounding in Scripture, Church teaching and fundamental human experience;
- the human leadership qualities of honesty and integrity that inspire confidence and a following;
- the communication skills needed to present Christ's challenge to the Filipino of today in an attractive and persuasive manner; and
- the courage to suffer and risk for the Kingdom of God.

C. Age for Confirmation

1634. Such a description of qualities needed for confirmed Christian witness naturally raises the pastoral question of *when* the sacrament of Confirmation should be conferred. In ancient times it was given immediately after Baptism. But when infant Baptism became the standard practice, the

sacrament of Confirmation was postponed to a later time — *the age of discretion*. Today there are some advocating restoring the original unity while others wish to postpone it further to young adulthood. Yet there are good reasons for confirming around the age of discretion or later, as is the more common Church policy in the Philippines. The adolescents begin to move away from childish ways and take their first steps toward a personally chosen Faith, and begin to take an active part in Christian community life.

1635. *More important* than endless arguments among the “experts” over what age is the best time for the administration of the sacrament is the *careful preparation* needed. Both the candidates for Confirmation and their parents (as well as godparents and sponsors) have to be prepared well if the Sacrament is to be truly efficacious. Without such careful preparation a fruitful celebration of the sacrament is simply not possible.

1636. *Current Proposal*. Most agree that Confirmation is: 1) a sacrament of initiation, 2) received only once, which 3) completes Baptism, 4) by a post-baptismal reception of the Holy Spirit. From an anthropological point of view, Confirmation would be classified as a *transitional ritual* – like all the other Sacraments except the Eucharist which is rather an *intensification* ritual. As a transition ritual, *Confirmation marks a change in the self-understanding of those confirmed, as well as in the community’s estimate and reception of them*.

1637. While as a sacrament of initiation, Confirmation should be *linked with Baptism* as the completion of initiation into the Church, nevertheless Confirmation also marks a *new stage* in the confirmed’s Christian life. The change is basically *from being passively served to active service* of others in the Church, from first initiation into the Church to *public declaration of full discipleship* in the Church’s ministry. The “time” for the celebration of this change is *not* primarily a matter of *chronological age* (*chronos*), but rather of the *“appropriate moment”* (*Kairos*) for marking this change. This “appropriate moment” ordinarily does not come spontaneously, but has to be prepared for, over a certain period of time. A process for preparing for Confirmation could be worked out along the lines of the *RCIA*, which prepares adults for Baptism.

D. Confirmation’s Relation to Christ and the Church

1638. As Jesus was shown to be *the Baptized One*, so here it is obvious that *Christ is also the Confirmed One* in the Holy Spirit. From his conception, through his redemptive mission of his public ministry, climaxing in his Resurrection and Ascension to his Father, the man Jesus is constantly guided, strengthened and led by the Spirit. *The Spirit in Christ* our Lord is:

- the Spirit of *HOLINESS* who makes present the All-Holy One;
- the Spirit of *LOVE* who enables his followers to love as he loves;
- the Spirit of *LIFE* who came that we “might have life and have it more abundantly”;
- the Spirit of *POWER* to fulfill the Father’s will and enable his followers to do the same;
- the Spirit of *TRUTH* who sets us free; and
- the Spirit of *FORGIVENESS* who brings eternal salvation to the repentant.

1639. We meet this Spirit of the Lord in his Body, the Church. Christ’s Church is the *“Confirmed Church,”* the Church of the *SPIRIT*, precisely because of Christ’s real presence within his Body. Pentecost affirms the active presence of the Spirit in the Church from its inception. Viewing Confirmation in terms of Christ and the Church helps to see it as a *prayer event*, a celebration making explicit what God has done and is continuing to do with and among His People. The communal, *ecclesial dimension* of Confirmation *is essential*; not the age of Confirmation, but *the presence of the Spirit* is the true *point of focus*.

E. Godparents/Sponsors for Baptism and Confirmation

1640. In the Philippines, social relations between families often seem to play the dominant role in the choice of godparents and sponsors for Baptisms and Confirmations. In a Catholic country like ours, it is natural that the social structure and family alliances find expression in religious activities as well. But this practice can become a “secularizing” *temptation that obscures the primary Faith-meaning of the sacraments*. This temptation must be faced and overcome by insisting on the properly ***Faith norms*** for choosing godparents and sponsors. They should be: a) sufficiently mature persons (ordinarily at least 16 years old), b) good-living Catholics who themselves have been initiated in the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist; and c) who are capable and truly intend to help the newly baptized/confirmed to faithfully live up to all the duties inherent in Christian life. Today the Church recommends that the godparents at Baptism be present and even be the sponsor at Confirmation, though it is always possible to choose a special sponsor for Confirmation.

INTEGRATION

1641. The sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation offer an admirable example of the integration of *worship* with ***Catholic doctrine*** and *morals*. It is impossible to attain even a minimum appreciation of Baptism and Confirmation as sacraments initiating us into the Christian life without a sound understanding of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the Spirit’s joint mission with the Incarnate Son. Moreover, an appreciation of the Church as necessary for salvation is the necessary context for understanding Baptism’s necessity and relationship with Faith (*cf. LG 14*). The importance of grasping these relationships may be proven by the tragic consequences so evident among fallen-away Catholics who never were adequately catechized about these fundamental Catholic realities.

1642. Regarding ***Catholic morality***, the social thrust of the Catholic Church in our country puts a premium on the fruitful celebration of Confirmation. With the great majority of Filipinos purporting to be Catholic, at least nominally, it is very difficult to raise the typical Catholic community and parish to the quality of witness to Christ proposed here. Too often we seem to be the mass of dough rather than the dynamic yeast that raises the whole mass. One of the most powerful means for fostering social awareness and action among Filipino Catholics *should be the total process of preparing for and celebrating the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation*. That such does not always seem to be the case may confirm the urgent call of *PCP II* for sacramental catechesis.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1643. *What are the sacraments of initiation?*

The sacraments of initiation are ***Baptism, Confirmation***, and the ***Eucharist***.

These sacraments, by drawing us toward full stature in Christ, empower us to carry out our mission as Christians in both the Church and the world.

1644. *What are the effects of the sacraments of initiation?*

Through these sacraments:

- a) we are freed from the power of darkness by being baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, and
- b) receive the Spirit, who
 - makes us adopted sons and daughters of the Father, and
 - incorporates us into the Church, the People of God,
 - with whom we celebrate the Eucharistic memorial of Christ's Paschal Mystery (*RCIA 1*).

1645. *Do the sacraments parallel our natural human growth?*

Yes, Catholic tradition has compared the stages of our natural human development with those of our Christian spiritual life. Thus it relates:

- physical generation with **Baptism**, our spiritual regeneration;
- growing into maturity with **Confirmation**;
- physical nourishment with the **Eucharist**, the Bread of Life;
- physical and psychological healing with **Reconciliation** and **Anointing**, and
- community realities of family life and leadership with **Matrimony** and **Orders**.

1646. *What is the value of such a comparison?*

Comparing the *similarities* between our natural growth process with the sacraments helps us appreciate how intrinsic our Christian spiritual growth is to our full human "self-becoming."

But the comparison also brings out the *uniqueness* of the *sacraments as encounters with the Risen Christ*, our Lord and Savior, through whom we share God's own life of love as members of his Body, the Church.

1647. *What is the sacrament of Baptism?*

Baptism is the sacrament of Faith which:

- brings us new life in Christ and forgiveness of sins through water and the Spirit,
- incorporating us into the Church, and
- into sharing in the Trinitarian divine life as adopted sons and daughters of the Father, in a progressive way that looks ever to the future.

1648. *How does Baptism bring us new life in Christ?*

Baptism unites us to the Risen Christ:

- through the biblical symbol of water and the Holy Spirit, and
- by making us share in Christ's "baptism" of his Paschal Mystery.

Both themes are presented in the Readings of the Easter Vigil's liturgy.

[They start with the Genesis account of creation, prefiguring our new creation in Christ. Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his only son, prepares us for the sacrifice of Christ, God's only Son. The Exodus deliverance of the Chosen People from Egypt, the land of slavery, through the Red Sea, symbolizes our own deliverance from the slavery of sin through the waters of Baptism. Finally, Baptism itself is presented as a dying-rising with Christ in his Paschal Mystery.]

1649. *How does Baptism take away original sin, and every personal sin in adults?*

Baptism's sensible sign of washing with water symbolizes and effects a cleansing from all sin and a rebirth to new life *by the Spirit*. To be in a state of sin means that God's Holy Spirit is not dwelling within us. Therefore, the coming of the Holy Spirit removes sin. It is the Spirit that frees us from sin.

[The *focus* of Baptism is *not* on washing away original sin, but on *new life in Christ*. Christ himself as Primordial Sacrament, is the fullest expression of Baptism (*he is the Baptized One*), and its primary agent. “When anyone baptizes, it is really Christ himself who baptizes” (SC 7).]

- 1650.** *Since some effects of original sin remain, how can Baptism be said to “remove” original sin?*
Baptism “removes” original sin by symbolizing and effecting our saving solidarity with Christ, within the Spirit-filled community of his Body, the Church.
We are thus strengthened in the life-long struggle against sin through the loving embrace of the Spirit, joining us to the Risen Christ, our Savior, and to one another, as members of his Body, the Church.
- 1651.** *How does Baptism incorporate us into the Church?*
Baptism unites us in Christ with the other members of Christ’s Body, the Church. “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. . . all given to drink the one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). It is our union with *the Baptized One, the Risen Christ*, that makes us “Church.” As members of Christ’s Body, we share in his mission of serving as Prophet, Priest and King.
- 1652.** *Why is Baptism called the “sacrament of faith”?*
Baptism is rightly called the sacrament of faith because in asking to be baptized we are asking God’s Church for the gift of Faith. Only within the community of believers, Christ’s Body, and enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, can we respond fully to the Gospel of Christ.
- 1653.** *How does the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults [RCIA] shed new light on Baptism?*
The RCIA shows that the fruitful reception of Baptism demands proper disposition of soul. Far from being merely passively received, Baptism is really a prayer-event that involves a *radical conversion* of heart, whose lasting effectivity depends on the continuing cooperation of the baptized with grace.
- 1654.** *How does Baptism effect a “sharing in the divine life”?*
Baptism effects a sharing in the divine life through the coming of the Holy Spirit. Through their Holy Spirit, the Father and Risen Christ are present in the baptized. Hence they share in the Trinitarian life of love, exercised through the virtues of faith, hope, and charity.
- 1655.** *Is Baptism necessary for salvation?*
Christ, the unique Mediator and Way of salvation, affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism. But since God wills ‘all to be saved’ (1 Tm 2:4), the grace needed for salvation is offered to all. “For since Christ died for all, . . . we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all, in a manner known only to God, the possibility of being made partners in Christ’s Paschal Mystery” (GS 22).
- 1656.** *What is meant by the “Baptismal Seal” or “Character”?*
Three sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation and Orders) imprint a permanent spiritual seal or “character” on the soul, marking a specific relationship to Christ and to the Church.
- 1657.** *Why do we baptize infants?*
Infants are baptized in “the faith of the Church,” or concretely in the faith of the parents and god-parents.
Infant baptism highlights the truths that baptism is:
- a free gift of God, not something merited by us;
 - the beginning of our faith-life;

- a gift given through the parents' Christian faith-life.

1658. *What is the sacrament of Confirmation?*

Confirmation is the sacrament in which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, a baptized person is drawn into closer union with the Church and endowed with strength to actively spread the Gospel.

1659. *What is the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation?*

Confirmation was originally part of the expanded rite of Baptism. But as the Church grew in size, the gift of the Spirit by the "laying on of hands," which in a way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church, was formed into a separate sacrament.

1660. *How is the sacrament of Confirmation conferred?*

Confirmation is conferred by the laying on of hands over the head of the candidates, the anointing of the forehead with holy Chrism, and the prayer: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit."

1661. *What are the effects of the sacrament of Confirmation?*

Confirmation strengthens and confirms the grace of Baptism, strengthening and confirming the *mission* to give public witness to Christ and the Church.

This "witness" flows from the permanent "*character*" imprinted by the sacrament on those confirmed.

1662. *What is the proper age for conferring Confirmation?*

Within the ongoing discussion regarding the best time for conferring the sacrament, there are good reasons for confirming around the age of discretion or later, which is the more common Church policy in the Philippines.

More important than the exact age at which to confirm is the *careful preparation* needed, for both the candidates and their parents and sponsors. *PCP II* has stressed the urgent need for such a preparatory catechesis.

1663. *How is Confirmation related to Christ and the Church?*

As the Primordial Sacrament, *Christ* himself is the Confirmed One in the Holy Spirit, as shown throughout his earthly life, especially in his Paschal Mystery.

But this Spirit of the Lord Jesus is met in his Body, the *Church*, the Confirmed Church, inaugurated at Pentecost.

1664. *How are godparents/sponsors for Baptism and Confirmation to be chosen?*

In the Philippines, social relations between families often play a dominant role in the choice of godparents and sponsors. While natural in a predominantly Catholic country, its "secularizing" tendency must be balanced by an equal insistence on proper Faith norms for choosing godparents and sponsors.

Faith norms indicate sponsors should be:

- sufficiently mature persons, at least 16 years old;
- good-living Catholics who have been confirmed; and
- capable and sincerely intending to help the newly confirmed to faithfully live out the duties of Christian life.

Chapter 26

Christ, the Living Bread of Life: The Eucharist

“I am the living bread...anyone who eats this bread shall live forever; the bread I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world. . . . He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day . . . [for] he remains in me and I in him.”

(Jn 6:51, 54, 56)

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, “I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. . . .” Then, taking bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body to be given for you. Do this as a remembrance of me.” He did the same with the cup after eating, saying, as he did so: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you.”

(Lk 22:14f, 19f)

OPENING

1665. We now come to the centerpiece of the seven ritual sacraments and “the source and summit of the whole Christian life,” the *Eucharist* (cf. *LG 11; CCC 1324*). Catholics in general realize in some way that “going to Mass” is the most basic action of Catholic worship. But few have the chance to consider all the incredibly rich meanings and values of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is how Catholics worship God as members of Christ’s Body, the Church. It is the memorial of Christ’s *sacrifice*, the *sacrament* of the *Lord’s Supper*, and the center of his sacramental *presence*, uniting the “People of God,” the Church. “In the sacrament of the Eucharistic Bread the unity of believers who form one body in Christ, is both expressed and brought about” (*LG 3*).

1666. This chapter on the Eucharist actually unifies the entire Part III of the Catechism, for it draws directly on the preceding chapters and prepares for the following. The Eucharist is effected by the power of the *Holy Spirit* (cf. *Chap. 22*), celebrated by the Risen Christ and the Catholic community, the *Church* (cf. *Chap. 23*). It forms the center of Catholic prayer and worship (cf. *Chap. 24*), and constitutes the crown of the three sacraments of initiation. For “by the reception of the *Eucharist* the faithful who have been consecrated in *Baptism* and *Confirmation* (cf. *Chap. 25*) are fully incorporated

in the Body of Christ” (PO 5). Moreover, it prepares for the development of Christian living in the two succeeding chapters on the sacraments of healing and vocation (cf. *Chaps. 27-28*). Finally, the Eucharist is the “pledge of the future glory given to us” as our final goal of everlasting life with God (cf. *Chap. 29*).

1667. Hence, this chapter on the Eucharist is conceived in view of the *Holy Spirit’s* activity in the *Church*. Its position flows from *Baptism* and *Confirmation*, and like them, its *primary focus* is **Christ our Lord**. For as *Baptism* means initiation into “New Life in Christ,” and *Confirmation*, the strengthening of this Christ-life by the Holy Spirit, so now the *Eucharist* is the sacramental presence of Christ himself. He is “our Passover and the Living Bread which gives life to all through his flesh – that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit” (PO 5; cf. CCC 1324).

1668. But celebrating the Eucharist is never just an activity of private, individualistic piety. Rather, “the other sacraments as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate are linked with the Holy Eucharist and are directed towards it . . . all are thereby invited and led to offer themselves, their labors and every created thing with Christ” (PO 5). Thus, the Eucharist is the unique Christ-given means for gradually transforming our everyday activities and works into meaningful service of God and our neighbor by uniting us with Christ.

CONTEXT

1669. Filipino Catholics generally have high regard for the Eucharistic celebration, or “Holy Mass” as they usually refer to it. The ongoing Christian life of the typical parish – its many spiritual, social and service group activities – revolves around the Eucharistic liturgy. Even Filipino family celebrations and anniversaries of marriages and deaths, are often graced by a Mass. All kinds of social meetings, conventions, and assemblies of Catholic groups usually begin and/or conclude with a Holy Mass. The Mass or Eucharistic celebration has become perhaps the most familiar religious activity in Filipino society – some would say *so familiar* that at times it has become routine or taken for granted.

1670. But in the post-Vatican II Church, a marked advance has been made in the way the Eucharist is celebrated in many of our parishes and chapels. The introduction of Filipino vernacular languages, the active participation of lectors, commentators, servers, and the choir leading the congregation in singing Filipino hymns – all have made the Eucharistic celebration a far more active **community-sharing** in the Lord’s Supper. The growing use of Sunday Mass leaflets in many parishes is a great help in bringing the Liturgy of the Word to the faithful. But since the central Eucharistic Prayer is not included in the leaflets, they can unintentionally tend to reduce the Mass in the minds of the Mass-goers to a Bible Service.

1671. Yet, many *difficulties* still plague us. *We lack priests*, so that even though our Sunday Masses are usually crowded, many – perhaps the majority of – Filipino Catholics are not able to share in the Sunday Eucharist. Moreover, even those who are able to regularly attend weekly Mass frequently lack proper understanding of the Eucharist. Some participate only as *spectators*, merely watching the priest, commentators and readers “doing their thing.” Others are *solitary worshippers*, unmindful of anything besides their own private devotions. Despite their deep faith, Filipino Catholics are often quite vague or confused about how the Mass can link them with Christ and help them worship God.

1672. **Personal motivation** for going to Mass varies greatly. Some go simply because they think they “*have to go*” to avoid mortal sin, or to obey parents. Some go out of *routine*; others through *social conformity*, to be with their social group of friends, or even to show off their new clothes. Such weak

motivation often leads to increasing rebellious reactions among the youth. “Why do I have to go to Mass? – I can pray better at home.” Or “why do I have to take Communion? – It’s just a meaningless show anyway.” In response, their elders often feel incapable of fostering a real loving understanding of the Eucharist, and thus fall back on distasteful authoritarian command.

1673. Filipinos with a “folk Catholicism” notion of God have a different type of motivation. They tend to treat God as a *compadre* who can be charmed into granting some special favor, or as a *judge/policeman* who can be bribed to avoid punishment. God is expected to answer this *utang na loob* incurred toward those who “attend Mass”. This misleading image of God and false idea of prayer tend to picture the Mass as some sort of *magical ritual* whose chief purpose is to win the favors sought from God.

1674. Yet the *most serious weakness* is that so many Filipino Catholics *separate the Mass from their daily lives*. For many Filipino Mass-goers, the Eucharistic celebration has little to do with their ordinary moral activities, especially any social action for the poor. A sharp contrast arises between:

- *the very nature* of the Eucharist as the “Sacrament of love” and bond of fraternal unity, which actively challenges the exploitative abuses of both the consumerist and communist values of current Philippine secularist society, *and*
- *actual Masses* which can be manipulated into serving as *either* symbols of sanctimonious respectability for the “pious” upper class, *or* “religious” fronts for protest rallies of various ideological movements.

1675. Thus, *a clear understanding and LOVE of the Eucharist* is what we urgently need today. This is the core of the “*renewed worship*” and *liturgical renewal* called for by *PCP II*. Only such a loving knowledge of the Eucharist can inspire the typical Filipino Catholic to an intense, persevering personal commitment to the goals of *service, evangelization* and *social transformation* (*cf. PCP II 404-47*).

The following exposition presents the essentials of the Catholic Faith in the Eucharist.* The *goal* is to foster a deeper, more personal and more prayerful understanding of the Eucharist as God’s special GIFT of LOVE to us. The *means* is to present the Eucharist as a mystery of Faith, following the clear, schematic pattern of the *NCDP*.

EXPOSITION

I. BASIC DESCRIPTION OF THE EUCHARIST

1676. The basics of the Catholic Faith in the Eucharist are presented in Vatican II’s “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.”

* The text consciously seeks to avoid the two extremes *of*, “explaining” the *object* of study, the Eucharist, in an overly “*rationalistic*” way that loses sight of its religious depth as mystery, and the alleged “*practical realistic view*” that so focuses on the everyday secular hungers of the *subjects* celebrating the Eucharist, that their *deeper spiritual yearnings* are ignored.

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the *Eucharistic Sacrifice* of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church,

- a *Memorial* of his death and resurrection;
- a *Sacrament* of love, a sign of unity and bond of charity,
- a *Paschal banquet* in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and
- a *Pledge of future glory* is given to us.

(SC 47; cf. CCC 1323)

1677. The specific points of this descriptive definition of the Eucharist can be summarized as follows.

First, the Eucharist was *instituted by Christ*. He *prepared* for it in the many fellowship meals which he shared during his public life. He *established* the Eucharist at the Last Supper, the night before he died on the Cross. And he *confirmed* it as the Risen Christ in his Easter meal appearances to his disciples.

Secondly, the Eucharist is celebrated with Christ by the Christian community, the Church. It is an essentially *ecclesial* act, carried out “by the Mystical Body of Christ, by the Head and its members” (SC 7)

Thirdly, the Eucharist is at once both *sacrifice* and sacred *meal*. It is the *memorial* instituted by Christ so that the saving benefits of his Death and Resurrection can be shared by the People of God through every age.

Fourthly, Christ himself is *really present* in the Eucharistic celebration in multiple ways, but especially under the sacramental signs of bread and wine.

Finally, the Eucharist is the *eschatological pledge* and foretaste of our future glory.

1678. Structure of the Mass. The whole Eucharistic celebration consists of:

- *Introductory Rites*: Entrance Hymn, Greeting, Penitential Rite, the Gloria, and Opening Prayer;
- *Liturgy of the Word*: Scripture Readings, Homily, Creed, and Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions);
- *Liturgy of the Eucharist*: Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic Prayer, including:
 - Preface, Invocation (Epiclesis) of the Holy Spirit;
 - Last Supper’s Narrative of Institution, Acclamation;
 - Commemoration (Anamnesis), 2nd Invocation of Spirit;
 - Intercessions, great Doxology with Amen;
- *Communion Rite*: the Our Father, Prayer for Deliverance, Prayer for Peace, Breaking of the Bread, Communion, Prayer after Communion;
- *Concluding Rites*: Final Blessing, Dismissal (cf. CCC 1346-55).

1679. Order of Presentation. Given this “stupendous content and meaning” of the Eucharist (RH 20), the following exposition begins with the Eucharist as *thanksgiving worship* carried on by and in the Catholic community’s celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Then John Paul II’s triple description of the Eucharist is used to structure the following exposition of the Eucharist: first as *Sacrifice-Sacrament*, then as *Communion-Sacrament*, and finally as *Presence-Sacrament*, which constitutes the *pledge* of eternal life hereafter (cf. RH 20; NCDP 366).

II. THANKSGIVING WORSHIP

1680. When Filipinos on the way to Mass say they are “going to Church,” they are actually expressing a profound truth. For the Christian community is never more “Church” than in its celebrating, here and now, the memorial of Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrificial Death and Resurrection. In the Eucharistic celebration the Church finds the source of its mission and the pledge of its future destiny. “Just as the Church ‘makes the Eucharist,’ so ‘the Eucharist builds up’ the Church” (*DC 4*).

The Eucharistic celebration brings us together as a community in Christ in whom we have “received the means for giving worthy worship to God” (*SC 5*). This community worship in and through the Risen Christ celebrates most perfectly all the essential goals of prayer: *thanksgiving*, *praise* and *adoration* of God, *contrition* for our sins, *petition* for His grace, and *offering* of all we have, do and are.

1681. Recognizing “the Eucharist as the source and summit of the whole Christian life” (*LG 11*), PCP II decreed that “the centrality of the Eucharist in Catholic piety shall be given greater emphasis” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 8*). This was developed by urging Filipino Catholics

to return the Eucharist to its rightful place – at the center of our private, ecclesial and societal lives, and not at its fringes where it is considered as a mere personal devotion or obligation or merely a means of gaining favor” (*PCP II 181*).

A. Trinitarian

1682. But *to whom* is our thanksgiving offered? Eucharistic Prayer I begins: “We come to you *Father*, with praise and thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ your *Son*”. Eucharistic Prayer II prays that the *Spirit* both “come upon these gifts to make them holy,” and “bring together in unity all who share the body and blood of Christ.” John Paul II clarifies this *Trinitarian* Eucharistic worship:

This worship is directed towards *God the Father* through *Jesus Christ* in the *Holy Spirit*. In the first place towards the *Father* who “loved the world so much that He gave His only Son . . .” It is also directed in the *Holy Spirit* to the *Incarnate Son*. . . [whose] voluntary Death, glorified with the Resurrection, when sacramentally celebrated, brings us to adore the Redeemer (*DC 3*).

1683. Thus the Eucharist is essentially an act of *thanksgiving* (*eucha-ristein*) to the **Father**, a *memorial* (*anamnesis*) of **Christ’s** Pasch, and an *invocation* (*epiclesis*) of the **Holy Spirit** (*cf. CCC 1357-66*). Moreover, it is precisely in celebrating the Eucharist that the Christian community grows in deeper understanding of the *Holy Trinity*. For the Eucharistic celebration immerses us within the direct saving, liberating action of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit.

B. Christ the Center

1684. The center of the Eucharist as Thanksgiving Worship is Christ, the **SUPREME WORSHIPPER** of the Father. For the Eucharist encompasses Christ’s whole life of total self-giving to the Father and to us. Not only does Jesus reveal the Father’s love for us, and show us how we are to love and commit ourselves to God in return. Christ also enables us to share in his own thanksgiving and thus offer fitting worship to the Father. “The Father wants the ‘true worshippers’ to worship Him precisely in this Eucharistic way, and it is Christ who in this sacrament makes possible [this] worship” (*DC 7*).

1685. Now, we Filipinos are moved especially by personal relationships. Thus, we may understand “Christ as Center” better through John Paul II’s words which can be seen as a description of our “*utang na loob*” to Christ in our Eucharistic worship:

This adoration . . . compenetrated by Christ's Death in which each one of us has been loved "to the end" (*Jn 13:1*) . . . tries to repay Christ's death on the Cross; it is

- *our* "Eucharist," *our* giving him thanks,
- *our* praise of him for having redeemed us by his death and having made us sharers in immortal life through his Resurrection (*DC 3*).

1686. Some Exaggerations. Christ's central place in the Eucharist must be stressed in view of a temptation today to focus solely on *our* activities. For example, the current emphasis on the Eucharist as *fraternal meal*, as spiritual nourishment and "*fellowship*," is sometimes carried to the extreme of ignoring Christ's sacrifice. At times the Mass is reduced to a purely social gathering among friends. Or again, the Preparation of the Gifts is sometimes highlighted in such innovative and imaginative ways that Christ's central role is obscured or overshadowed. The community's "Bless *us* and *our* gifts" takes the center of attention rather than Christ's giving thanks to the Father.

C. Our Spiritual Worship

1687. When viewed adequately, the Eucharist is our "spiritual worship, holy and pleasing to God" which St. Paul commends (*cf. Rom 12:1*). For all Christians, *the mighty act of God is Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery*. Only in Christ can the Christian offer fitting worship to the Father. This is dramatically expressed at the conclusion of all the Eucharistic Prayers, when the priest celebrant raises the gifts and proclaims:

through him [*Christ*], with him [*Christ*], and in him [*Christ*]
in the unity of the *Holy Spirit*,
all glory and honor is yours almighty *Father*, for ever and ever.

To this Great Doxology the congregation responds: "**Amen!**" St. Jerome bragged that in his day, this "Amen" sounded like a clap of thunder resounding through the great basilica. Today we often respond with communal singing of the Amen, sometimes repeated thrice and embellished with a suitable number of "Allelujas!"

D. Immersed in Daily Life

1688. Yet this worship is *not* something separated or removed from daily life. Vatican II insists on the *unity of our daily acts with the Eucharist*:

All their [the laity's] works, prayers and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if carried out in the Spirit – even the hardships of life if patiently borne – all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these are most fittingly offered to the Father along with the Body of the Lord. And so worshipping by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (*LG 34*).

This surely is the most practical way in which Filipino Catholics can enter into "*full, conscious, and active participation* in liturgical celebrations" (*SC 14*) which both Vatican II and PCP II constantly stress.

The following sections of the Exposition present the three essential dimensions of the Eucharist as described by John Paul II.

III. SACRIFICE-SACRAMENT

A. Sacrifice

1689. Christ instituted the Eucharist at his Last Supper with his apostles, so that his bloody sacrifice on the Cross could be perpetuated through all ages (*cf. SC 47; CCC 1356-72*). Pope Paul VI explained what this means: “through the mystery of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the Cross which was once offered on Calvary, is remarkably reenacted and constantly recalled, and its saving power exerted for the forgiveness of sins” (*MF 27*).

1690. Christ instituted the Eucharist so that his once-and-for-all saving Death on the Cross might be made present even *to us* – 2,000 years later. The Eucharist is a *sacrifice* because Christ is present precisely as “offering himself for us as a sacrifice to the Father” (*EM 3 b*). Thus, the heart of the Eucharistic celebration is *Christ, our Lord’s perfect saving LOVE*.

Our Savior himself is present in his total offering of himself to the Father. In the Eucharist, the Death and Resurrection of Christ are not just remembered, but effectively proclaimed and made present. Briefly then, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it:

- represents, makes present, the sacrifice of the Cross;
- is its memorial; and
- applies its fruit (*cf. CCC 1341, 1366; cf. Trent, ND 1546-48*).

1691. Therefore the Mass is *not* a sacrifice *separate from* the Cross. Rather,

the sacrifice of the Cross and its sacramental renewal in the Mass are, apart from the difference in the manner of offering, ONE and the SAME sacrifice. It is this sacramental renewal which Christ the Lord instituted at the Last Supper and commanded his apostles to celebrate in his memory. The Mass is therefore a sacrifice of praise, of thanksgiving, of propitiation and of satisfaction (*Instr. Rom. Missal 2*).

B. Christ the Key

1692. Again the key to this UNITY of the *Eucharistic sacrifice* and the *Sacrifice of the Cross* is **Christ himself**. For Catholics, the Eucharist is more than just a “sign” of Christ’s sacrifice without the reality of that sacrifice. Rather, the Eucharist is the presence of Christ’s sacrifice, because *Christ’s sacrifice IS Christ*, and Christ is really present in the Eucharist. Christ is both *Priest* and *Victim* of the Sacrifice of the Cross, which is celebrated sacramentally in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Therefore Christ is central to the Eucharist not just as SUPREME WORSHIPPER, but, more importantly, as the PRIEST and VICTIM of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

1. Understanding Christ’s New Sacrifice

1693. But Christ’s sacrifice radically changed the sacrifices of the Old Covenant with their slaughter of animals, sprinkling of blood, and the sacrificial meal. Instead of the blood of animals, at the Last Supper Christ instituted the sacrifice of the NEW Covenant in his own blood, telling his apostles: “This is my blood, the blood of the Covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt 26:28*).

But this was *not to placate a wrathful Father*. On the contrary, Christ’s sacrifice was in perfect, loving obedience, revealing the Father’s own redeeming love for us. Therefore,

- in the *Father's eyes*, Christ's sacrifice meant that His beloved Son was redeeming the whole universe by offering all men and women the power to give glory to the Father with himself, the "first-born of all creation" (*Col 1:15*);
- for *Christ himself*, his death meant the way "to pass from this world to the Father," by "loving his own to the end" (*Jn 13:1*). Through his dying in an act of perfect self-giving love, Christ became the Risen Lord who sends the Holy Spirit on us all.

2. Death and Resurrection

1694. The "newest" thing about Christ's sacrifice, what makes it unique, is that it ended not in death but in a new and glorious life. Christ's *Resurrection* is both the fulfillment of his sacrificial act and the sign of the Father's acceptance of his sacrifice. As *Victim*, Christ is the new Passover Lamb of the Last Supper and of Calvary. He IS in his very being *the one perfect sacrifice of love*. Moreover, Christ, the victim, has passed from death to life. Therefore he is the *LIVING SACRIFICE*, really present in the Eucharist, eternally, pleasing to the Father. St. Paul writes: "Christ Jesus. . . died, rather, was raised, . . . is at the right hand of God and. . . intercedes for us" (*Rom 8:34*).

1695. Actually, *Christ's whole life constituted a redeeming process*, begun at the Incarnation when he "was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary." It developed through his Hidden Life, his Public Ministry of teaching, preaching and miracles, leading to the Last Supper, his Passion and Death. The *final moment* and culmination of this whole process of redemption was *his glorious Resurrection*.

Rather than simply as a "reward" from the Father for his sacrificial physical death on Calvary, Christ's Resurrection should be seen as the perfect fulfillment of his whole life of redeeming LOVE. As such it is the *first moment* of his new, glorified life in the Spirit, and his entry into eternal life as the Risen Lord, who sends his Spirit upon us.

C. The Church Offers

1696. Christ entrusted his Eucharist to the Church. *It is the whole Christ*, Jesus the Head and all of us as members of His Body, *that celebrates the Eucharist* (*cf. CCC 1368-69*). The Eucharist, then, is "the action not only of Christ, but also of the Church. The Church, the spouse and minister of Christ, performs together with him the role of priest and victim, offers him to the Father and at the same time makes a total offering of herself together with him" (*EM 3c*). Here again we see the *call to actively participate* in the Mass, sharing in Christ's role both as *Priest* offering sacrifice, and as *Victim* being offered, by joining all our own activities to Christ's redeeming work.

PCP II explains how the lay faithful live Christ's priesthood in three dimensions:

- as a *consecration* to God;
- as *mediating* God's plan to transform the world; and
- as a *sacrifice of life* together with Christ celebrated in the Eucharist (*cf. PCP II 413*).

1697. Filipino Catholics used to be urged to "attend" Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. But now this is changed to emphasize that the Church together with Christ actually *celebrates* the Eucharist. In the Mass Jesus actually incorporates us into his very own redeeming sacrifice. Therefore, in celebrating on the altar "the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Passover [Paschal lamb] has been sacrificed' (*1 Cor 5:7*), the work of our redemption is carried on" (*LG 3*). Thus in Eucharistic Prayer III the priest celebrant prays:

We offer you, in thanksgiving,

this holy and living sacrifice.
Look with favor on your *Church's offering*, and
see the Victim whose death has reconciled us to yourself.

D. Memorial

1698. We know *the Eucharist is a memorial of Christ's Death and Resurrection*. At the Last Supper, Christ commanded his apostles: "Do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk 22:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:24*). So in Eucharistic Prayer IV the priest celebrant prays:

Father, we now celebrate this *memorial* of our redemption.
We *recall* Christ's death, his descent among the dead,
his resurrection, and his ascension to your right hand;
and looking forward to his coming in glory,
we offer you his body and blood,
the acceptable sacrifice
which brings salvation to the whole world.

1. Biblical Sense of Remembrance

1699. But when Christ commanded the apostles "Do this in memory of me," he did not mean what we today usually have in mind in celebrating various anniversaries, birthday parties, and the like. In the biblical tradition, "remembrance" is not primarily a *looking backward* to recall a past event, but rather a *making present* the great acts of the past which God had worked (*cf. Ex 13:3*). Thus the Old Testament Passover ritual is described: "*This day* shall be a memorial feast for you, which all generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord as a perpetual institution" (*Ex 12:14*).

The *Jewish memorial meal* of the Passover, then, was not just a subjective remembering on the part of the Jews, of God's past saving action. Rather, it was primarily *the action of God, making present to later generations His saving power* of the Exodus (*cf. CCC 1363*).

1700. So the Eucharistic celebration makes present Christ's "exodus", by which he once-for-all took away sin (*cf. Heb 9:26, 28*). In comparison with Israel's thanksgiving Passover remembrance, Christians have their remembrance of Jesus' Passover – his Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and sending the Spirit. So Christians celebrate their memorial:

- for *deliverance from Egypt*, the land of slavery, *but more* for the Lord's *Resurrection* and *Ascension* to the Father;
- for *crossing the Red Sea*, *but more* for their own *Baptism* delivering them from sin and death;
- for the *pillar of fire* illumining the desert at night, *but more* for *Christ* the true guiding *Light* (*cf. Jn 8:12*);
- for the *manna* in the desert, *but even more* for the *living Bread*, given for the life of the world (*cf. Jn 6:51*);
- for *Moses*, the "faithful servant," *but more* for *Jesus* the faithful *Son* placed over us, God's house (*cf. Heb 3:5-6*);
- for the springs of *living water* in the wilderness, but more for the "spring welling up to *eternal life*" (*cf. Jn 4:14*);
- for the *Law of God (Torah)* promulgated on Sinai, *but more* for the love of God poured out into our hearts by the *Holy Spirit* (*cf. Rom 5:5*).

2. Christian Memorial

1701. But Christ added a radically *NEW* dimension to the Passover memorial. The Eucharist is a *new creation* by Christ and the Holy Spirit. In it we not only experience the saving power of Christ's past act, but are brought into his actual *personal presence*. For the *Eucharist* as memorial is a sacrifice-sacrament precisely because the Father makes present to us through the Holy Spirit, Christ himself, the Son, in his "mighty act," the sacrament:

- of the Father, and
- of the New Covenant of the Father's love,
- and its creative sacrifice.

This is why we are called to *joy-filled praise* and *thanksgiving* of the Father, whose covenant with us is not imprisoned in the past, but is incarnated in the *living person* of Christ Jesus our Savior, Risen from the dead.

IV. COMMUNION-SACRAMENT

A. Paschal Banquet

1702. The Eucharist is also essentially the "*sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal Banquet*" (*SC 47; cf. CCC 1382*). Instituted by Christ himself at the Last Supper, the Eucharist was commonly known among the early Christian communities as "*the breaking of Bread*." Thus, the book of Acts describes the life of the first Christian community: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (*Acts 2:42*). This meant that all who ate the one blessed, broken Bread that is Christ, were drawn into communion with him and with one another, to form one single body with him. So St. Paul writes:

Is not the cup of blessing that we bless, a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread that we break, a sharing in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (*1 Cor 10:16f*).

1. Sacred Meal

1703. The original setting of the Eucharist at the Last Supper brought out the *meal dimension* very strongly. But this simply continued Christ's "*meal ministry*" that he had carried on throughout his public life. From the start Jesus had scandalized the scribes and Pharisees by sitting at table with sinners and tax collectors. One such was *Matthew*, whom Christ called to be his apostle (*cf. Mt 9:10-13*). Another, *Zacchaeus*, Christ called down from his perch in a tree, so that Jesus could eat with him at his home (*cf. Lk 19:5*). Even when a *Pharisee* called *Simon* had invited Jesus to dine with him, Jesus used the opportunity to contrast the great faith of the sinful woman who had entered uninvited, with the lack of common hospitality shown by the Pharisee (*cf. Lk 7:36-50*). After his Resurrection, Jesus "broke bread" with the *two disciples* on the way to Emmaus (*cf. Lk 24:30-31*), and with *seven* of the *apostles* on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (*cf. Jn 21:12f*). In all these meals Christ brought salvation to those who opened their hearts to him in loving communion.

2. Sign of unity and bond of charity

1704. Christ instituted the Eucharist to signify and thus bring about the unity of the Church (*cf. UR 2*). Even in our local parishes, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the most effective way to "weld the whole Body together," for it is the clearest symbol of "that charity and unity of the Mystical Body without which there can be no salvation" (*cf. LG 26*). For in celebrating the Eucharist together, the

faithful are drawn into the compelling love of Christ, to become one heart in love and practice in deed what they profess by the Creed (*cf. SC 10*).

Since *Filipinos* are both *naturally gregarious* – always accompanied by someone – and *fond of eating together*, this essential dimension of the Eucharist as fraternal meal in the Lord is very attractive.

3. Elements of a meal

1705. In sharing a meal together we satisfy much more than physical hunger. Equally important is our deep *hunger for understanding, love, companionship*. A shared meal involves *three basic elements*: a coming together, a dialogue, and a sharing of food and drink. *First*, like in a family meal or among people united by some common bond, the Eucharist *brings Catholics together*, united by their Baptism, their common faith in Jesus Christ, their Savior, and by their hope of deepening their union with Christ and with one another. *Second, conversation* provides the meal's distinctive human quality. The whole *Eucharist* is a dialogue between God and His faithful. For example, God speaks through the Scriptural Readings (*Liturgy of the Word*), and the faithful respond by their profession of faith (Creed) and the General Intercessions.

1706. Finally, a meal involves *preparing the food and drink, offering* them to the participants, and *eating and drinking together*. So likewise in the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*, there is the preparation of the Gifts, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the Consecration by the priest celebrant, using the very words of Christ:

*“Take this, all of you, and eat it:
This is MY BODY which will be given up for you. . . .
Take this, all of you, and drink from it:
This is the cup of MY BLOOD,
the blood of the new and everlasting Covenant.
It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in memory of me.”*

Following the Eucharistic Prayer, the faithful receive holy Communion to be united with Christ and with one another.

1707. The reality of this Eucharistic meal rests squarely on Christ's solemn promise:

*“I myself am the living bread come down from heaven;
If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever.
The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world
He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal
and I will raise him up on the last day.
For my flesh is real food, and my blood real drink.
The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood
remains in me and I in him
the man who feeds on me will have life because of me.”*

(Jn 6:51, 54-57)

B. Human Hungers

1708. Thus, in the Eucharistic meal, through the sign of physical nourishment in a meal, Christ becomes the Bread of our spiritual lives, nourishing our faith, hope and love. The Eucharist responds

to the deepest hungers of our lives, both personal and communal. Such are the *basic human hungers* for

- *love and acceptance,*
- *understanding,*
- *purpose in life,* and
- *justice and peace.*

As persons created in the image of God who IS LOVE, we hunger for *acceptance and love*. In the Eucharist, Christ comes to each of us with his total acceptance and self-giving love. Christ who “loved me and gave himself up for me” (*Gal 2:20*), calls each of us into intimate communion with him, strengthening our own inner security and personal self-acceptance.

1709. We hunger for *understanding*, especially from our loved ones. Such understanding we find ultimately only in Jesus Christ, who alone knows us perfectly from within. In the Eucharist, Jesus becomes truly closer and more intimate to each of us than we are to ourselves. Moreover, in the Eucharistic experience of “being understood,” we are challenged to reach out to others to understand them beyond our own prejudices and limitations. Thus, the Christian community is inspired in celebrating the Eucharist to respond to the basic human yearning of its members for understanding.

1710. To our basic hunger for a *clear purpose in life*, the Eucharist brings Christ precisely in his redemptive mission of bringing us to the Father, and sending us the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts and minds. The Eucharist, then, calls us to renew our own commitment to share in Christ’s redemptive mission by promoting, in our own small ways, the Kingdom of God on earth.

But more, the Eucharist gives meaning and value to all our actions, pains and sufferings, because we can offer them together with Christ’s own Self-offering, as members of his own Body. Thus, St. Paul wrote: “I find my joy in the suffering I endure for you. In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church” (*Col 1:24*).

1711. Finally, responding to the hunger for *justice and peace*, the Eucharist is the sacrament of God’s Universal Love. There are no distinctions around the Table of the Lord. Christ died and rose from the dead for ALL, with no exceptions! Sharing the Bread of Life, then, relates each communicant to every other son/daughter of the Father, even with – following Christ’s example – a “love of preference for the poor” (*cf. PCP II 312*).

Many Filipino Catholics are only now beginning to realize the close connection between the Mass and social justice. The *PCP II* laid great stress on our Church as “Church of the Poor” (*cf. PCP II 122-36*). It called Filipino Catholics to a *radical conversion*, based on the formation of a *social conscience* (*cf. PCP II 283-89*), inspiring a spirituality of *social transformation* (*cf. PCP II 262-82*), which fosters social justice and peace (*cf. PCP II 304-6*), by means of active non-violence (*cf. PCP II 307-11*).

C. Liturgy of the Eucharist

1712. In the structure of the Mass we now focus on the meal’s elements of preparing, offering, and sharing food and drink. These elements of the *Liturgy of the Eucharist* are patterned on the *four* solemn actions of Christ at the Last Supper: “He *took* (*Preparation of the Gifts*), *blessed* (*Eucharistic Prayer*), *broke* (*Breaking of the Bread*), and *gave* (*Communion*) to his disciples” (*Mk 14:22; cf. NCDP 364*).

1713. In imitation of Christ at the Last Supper, *bread* and *wine* are the food and drink in the Eucharist. At the *preparation of the Gifts* we thank the God of all creation through whose goodness we have this

bread and wine to offer, “which earth has given and human hands have made.” Both bread and wine thus exemplify the intrinsic working-together of God and ourselves in everything we do. In the Old Covenant, bread and wine were offered in sacrifice among the first fruits of the earth, in acknowledging God as the Creator of all.

1714. Bread as “staff of human life” was for the Jews a symbol of the Torah, God’s LAW that shaped their covenant lives. Christ, God’s Wisdom Incarnate, goes beyond the Law given through Moses, and offers himself as the “bread from heaven” (*cf. Jn 6:25-34*). The **unleavened bread** used in the Mass follows the Jewish Passover meal’s use which symbolized the hasty Exodus (departure) from Egypt, the land of slavery, to freedom. The Exodus context also recalls the **manna** in the desert. Like the Israelites in their Exodus, the Church is a **pilgrim** people, **on the way** to the promised heavenly Kingdom.

Unleavened bread was also a symbol of *purity and newness*. Thus, St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Get rid of the old yeast to make of yourself fresh dough, unleavened bread as it were. For Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (*1 Cor 5:7-8*).

1715. Wine was commonly used since Old Testament times “to gladden men’s hearts” (*Ps 104:15*) and for medicinal purposes. But in a larger sense, wine was related to Israel as the vine planted by Yahweh to yield choice grapes (*cf. Is 5:1-7*). At the Last Supper, Christ proclaimed himself as the true Vine (*cf. Jn 15:1-8*) whose fruit is experienced in the “wine of the Spirit” which would be bestowed at Pentecost.

1716. At the Last Supper, Christ broke the customary silence of the Paschal Meal by identifying the bread and wine with his own body and blood. **“Body and blood”** must be understood in the Hebrew way of meaning the **whole PERSON**. In the Eucharist, then, **Jesus is present in his total personal reality**, and precisely as “given-for-us,” “poured out for us.” It is Jesus sacrificed for us, “obediently accepting even death on a Cross” (*Phil 2:8*) and raised from the dead.

When we receive the Eucharist, then, either the consecrated bread or wine, we receive the whole living Lord. Through the sacramental signs we enter into intimate communion with our Risen Savior. And in communing with him in his sacramental presence, we are actually “proclaim[ing] that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of **God the Father**” (*Phil 2:11*) in a total covenant relationship which we experience in the indwelling **Holy Spirit**.

D. Fruits of Receiving Communion

1717. Catholic tradition teaches that “all the effects that material food and drink does for the life of the body – preserves, increases, renews, and delights – the Eucharist produces for the spiritual life” (*Council of Florence, ND 1511*).

1. Union with Christ

The *first effect* of receiving Holy Communion worthily is to **“unite us with Christ”** (*cf. CCC 1391*). “the man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him” (*Jn 6:56*). This communion with Christ brings us true life.

Just as the Father who has life sent me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on me will have life because of me. . . Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless, the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever# (*Jn 6:57f*).

2. Liberating from Sin

1718. A *second effect* of Holy Communion is to “*separate us from sin*,” since we receive Christ whose life-giving blood was “poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt 26:28; cf. CCC 1393*). This communion with the Risen Christ “gives life through the Holy Spirit” (*PO 5*), deepening our life of grace begun in Baptism. As bodily food restores our physical energies, so the Eucharist is a “remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sin” (*Council of Trent, ND 1515; cf. CCC 1395*). It strengthens our life of loving service, weakened by our disordered desires, self-centered attitudes, and sins.

PCP II states simply that the “Eucharist is the primary source of renewal and the center of community” (*PCP II 457*).

3. Reconciliation

1719. *To reconcile* and *be reconciled* is a major effect of the holy Eucharist as the “sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity” (*SC 47; cf. CCC 1394, 1398*). Without displacing in the least the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Eucharist thus constitutes the chief ordinary means of reconciliation in the Church. It brings us together around the table of the Lord, uniting us in sharing food and drink in a sacred meal hosted by Christ himself. The Eucharist thus “educates us in active love for neighbor. [For] if Christ offers himself equally to each one, it shows us what value each person, our brother or sister, has in God’s eyes. It makes us grow in awareness of the dignity of each person . . . [and] becomes the deepest motive of our relationship with our neighbor” (*DC 6*).

At the holy table all differences of race or social class disappear, . . . The Eucharist becomes the great instrument for bringing men closer to one another. . . to establish a better relationship among themselves, leading to recognition of one another’s rights and corresponding duties as well” (*John Paul II, ND 1590*).

E. The Eucharist Builds up the Church

1720. By drawing all communicants to closer union with Christ and reconciling them with one another, the *Eucharist effects the building up of the Church*. St. Augustine admonishes, “If you are the body of Christ and his members, the Eucharist is your sacrament that is placed on the Lord’s table . . . You hear the words ‘Body of Christ’ and you answer ‘Amen.’ Be therefore a member of Christ so that your ‘Amen’ can be real” (*Sermo 272, quoted in CCC 1396*).

But it is equally true that the Eucharist can only be realized and celebrated within the Body of Christ, the Church, whose members confess Jesus as their Lord. *There is no Eucharist where there is no Church*. That is why we should pray and strive that all Christians be reunited with the Catholic Church where the full reality of the Eucharist is celebrated and preserved. The Eucharist is a constant call to overcome the divisions among the Christian Churches, divisions which contradict its very nature and frustrate the common sharing at the table of the Lord.

V. PRESENCE-SACRAMENT

“To live forever” does *not* exclude physical death, but rather the death that destroys “both soul and body in Gehenna” (*Mt 10:28*). As Christ explained to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he should die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (*Jn 11:25f*).

1721. Besides being the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice and of communion with him in the Paschal Banquet, the Eucharist is also the sacrament of his **Presence**. Christ's Eucharistic presence must be seen against the many ways he is present in the Church. Paul VI elaborates on the Vatican II doctrine by explaining that:

Christ is present in the **Church**:

- when she *prays*, since Christ prays for us and with us;
- as she performs her *works of mercy* (cf. Mt 25:40);
- on her *pilgrimage of struggle* toward eternal life;
- as she *preaches* the Word of God in the name of Christ, by the authority of Christ, and with Christ's help;
- as she *governs* the People of God with power from Christ;
- most effectively when she *offers the Eucharist*.

(MF 35)

A. Christ's Multiple Presences

1722. Within the *Eucharistic celebration* itself, Christ "is really present in the *assembly* itself, gathered in his name, in the person of the *minister*, in his Word [since he speaks when the *holy Scriptures* are read], and indeed substantially and unceasingly under the *Eucharistic species*" (SC 7; cf. Instr. Rom. Missal 7). Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine is called 'real' "not to exclude all other types of presence, but because it is presence in the fullest sense, a substantial presence by which Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present" (MF 39; cf. CCC 1374).

1. Qualities of Christ's Presence

1723. In our daily experience, "presence" can refer to physical things close to one another, like furniture in a *sala*, or people crowded together in a bus. Or it can refer to the *personal presence* of persons to other persons through personal sharing of knowledge, affection and love. This is done by communicating through cognitive or affective signs. In the *Eucharist*, the Risen Christ is present *not* like one physical thing to another. Rather, through the consecrated hosts and wine the Risen Christ is *personally present* to us.

1724. How then can we describe this personal presence of Christ in the Eucharist? In its essentials, Christ's presence is:

- a) *sacramental*: an objective presence, through the signs of bread and wine, seen through the eyes of FAITH of the faithful;
- b) *personal*: a real, substantial presence in order to enter into personal communion with his Church and each member of his Body, "in spirit";
- c) in his *glorified body*: not in his earthly condition, but in his RISEN glorified body. The one risen Body of Christ – the "spiritual body" which St. Paul contrasts with the "natural body" (cf. 1 Cor 15:44) is sacramentally present at the same time in all the tabernacles of the world.
- d) *dynamic* and *lasting*: in the consecrated bread/wine, which are dynamic and lasting "*effective signs*" of his love for us, and inviting us to respond in love.

2. Limitations

1725. Yet there are obvious limitations to Christ's presence in the Eucharist. We do not encounter him bodily, as we do with our friends, but only *through the sacramental signs* of bread and wine. Contrary to what happens when we speak to a friend, we have difficulty at times distinguishing

between what Christ is saying to us from what we might be saying to ourselves. Our dialogue is *within a faith encounter*, and we need to “test” what we think we hear from Christ in the wider context of our personal and social responsibilities as Christians. Finally, these limitations of the Risen Christ’s presence in the Eucharist lead us to pray for full, perfect communion with him: “*Marana tha* – come Lord Jesus!” (1 Cor 16:22).

B. Transformation of Bread and Wine

1726. Christ’s *real presence* in the bread and wine has challenged belief from the time of Christ’s own promise to be the food and drink of his disciples. Many who heard him reacted: “This sort of talk . . . how can anyone take it seriously” (Jn 6:60). Jesus responded by referring to his Ascension and Glorification as the Son of Man (cf. Jn 6:62). The Gospel therefore stresses both the *realism of Christ’s presence*, and the *spiritual eating* of Christ’s glorified body and blood. “It is the spirit that gives life . . . the words I spoke to you are spirit and life” (Jn 6:63). Thus *two extremes* are avoided:

- a *crude, materialistic understanding* of the change of bread and wine into Christ’s earthly “flesh and blood” that would make communicants equivalent to cannibals; and
- the opposite extreme of a *merely symbolic interpretation* of the change, which would reject the real eating and drinking of the Lord.

1. The Eucharistic Change

1727. In the Eucharist, then, the bread and wine as food and drink take on a new, deeply personal *meaning and purpose: Christ’s personal self-giving presence for our salvation*. Both new meaning and purpose are based on a *radical change* in the reality of the bread and wine, which is known in the Catholic tradition as *trans-substantiation* (Trent, ND 1519,1527; cf. CCC 1376). This simply means that by the *power of the Holy Spirit*, the earthly substance of bread and wine is changed into a reality of a different level: *the glorified Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen*.

2. Eucharistic Change and the Risen Cosmic Christ

1728. Thus, in the Eucharist ordinary bread and wine, products of nature and culture, are transformed to make present to us the Risen Christ precisely in his redeeming sacrifice. They take on an “eschatological form” since they are no longer “food that perishes,” but “the food that remains unto life eternal” (Jn 6:27). This change of the bread and wine must be seen in terms of the Risen Christ as Redeemer and Unifying Center of all creation. “In him everything continues in being” (Col 1:17), since in his own glorified body Christ sums up and recapitulates all things in himself. The changed bread and wine, then, *prefigure* the glorification of all matter in the new age, begun already in the Resurrection of Christ but taking place fully only at his Second Coming.

C. Cosmic Redemption

1729. We know that all creation yearns to “be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). We too, graced with the Spirit, “groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). Now Christ instituted the sacramental celebration of his sacrifice on the Cross precisely to carry out his mission of universal redemption. In the Eucharistic change effected by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine become the *symbols* of the “already, but not yet complete” universal Redemption of all of creation.

VI. THE EUCHARIST AS PLEDGE OF FUTURE GLORY

1730. Thus, we see the Eucharist is not only a *memorial* of Christ's passion and death. Nor merely a *present means* for filling our souls with grace. It is also a *pledge* for our *future glory* (cf. CCC 1402-4). So at the Consecration of the Mass we acclaim: "*Christ has died* (Past), *Christ is risen* (Present), *Christ will come again* (Future)." At the Communion the priest celebrant pleads for deliverance from all evil and sin "as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." Thus, in every Mass we echo the ancient prayer: "*Marana tha* – come Lord Jesus!" (1 Cor 16:22) Vatican II describes the specifically future (eschatological) dimension of the Eucharist as follows:

Christ left to his followers a pledge of this hope and food for the journey in the sacrament of faith, in which natural elements, the fruits of man's cultivation, are changed into his glorified Body and Blood, as a supper of brotherly fellowship and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (GS 38).

A. Eschatological Meal

1731. The hope for future glory is expressed in celebrating the Eucharist as an eschatological meal, "until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). And following the ancient practice of the Church, the Eucharist is given to the dying as *Viaticum* (*with-you-on-the-way*). "Strengthened by the Body of Christ, the Christian is endowed with the pledge of the resurrection in his passage from this life" (EM 39). Moreover, this Eucharistic hope embraces both the individual believer and the whole world as well. "What we await are new heavens and a new earth where, according to his promise, the justice of God will reside" (2 Pt 3:13).

B. By the Power of the Holy Spirit

1732. This pledge for future glory is really a *Spirit-inspired and empowered* life-long process of growing in Christ-likeness. The second Preface for the Holy Eucharist prays: "We come to this wonderful sacrament to be fed at your table, and grow into the likeness of the Risen Christ." Vatican II described how "Christ is now at work in the hearts of men *by the power of the Holy Spirit*" who "animates, purifies, and strengthens" both the human yearning for our heavenly home, and the generous service to make life here on earth more humane (cf. GS 38).

In the Eucharist, it is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that effects both the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ, and the unity of the faithful. Thus, the Spirit is twice invoked (*epiclesis*):

- to "come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (EP II), and
- "that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ" (EP III).

VII. ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

1733. A shining quality of Catholic prayer and piety is devotion to the Blessed Sacrament (cf. CCC 1378-81). Worship of the Eucharist is "the focus where all other forms of piety must ultimately merge" (MF 64). Now the practice of reserving consecrated hosts was initially to offer *Viaticum* to the dying, and Holy Communion to the sick and disabled. This practice of reservation "led to the praiseworthy custom of adoring the heavenly food preserved in churches" (EM 49). Belief in the real

presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Love naturally developed into various forms of Eucharistic devotion: personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, hours of adoration, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Church-wide celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi (*cf. DC 3*).

PCP II notes “the growing popularity of perpetual Eucharistic adoration” (*PCP II 169*). Such adoration of the Blessed Sacrament “has a valid and firm foundation” (*EM 49*). For the Risen Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is:

- not a momentary gift, but enduring;
- not a one-sided relation, but mutual;
- not simply physical, but personal and spiritual;
- not just of this world, but even now reaching beyond death to eternal life.

1734. Countless Filipino Catholics have found that personal devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament has filled out their lives in a unique fashion. Praying before the Blessed Sacrament invariably draws us into deeper sharing in Christ’s Paschal Mystery. We come to enjoy his intimate friendship, pour out our hearts before him, offer all our thoughts and actions with him to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We experience a deepening of our faith, hope and love. Our authentic Christian attitudes and dispositions are nourished, so that we can better reach out to others in loving service. In brief, drawing close to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament helps us to “pull things together,” so that we actually live more like how we pray and worship.

INTEGRATION

1735. Doctrine. The “Opening” of this chapter pointed out that the Eucharist unifies and brings together all the major truths of our Christian Faith. For in the Eucharist, we:

- a) worship the Holy *Trinity*,
- b) through the *memorial of the Paschal Mystery-sacrifice of the Incarnate-Risen Son*, Jesus Christ,
- c) celebrated *by and in* his Body, the *Church*,
- d) in a sacramental ritual meal in which the *created realities of bread and wine are transformed into the glorified Body and Blood of our Risen Savior*,
- e) giving the gifts of bread and wine an *eschatological meaning*, a pledge to us of eternal life,
- f) through the power of the *Holy Spirit*.

The Eucharist thus offers us an inexhaustible source of saving truth and insights.

1736. Morals. Christ in the Eucharist “is truly Emmanuel, ‘God with us.’ Day and night he is in our midst; he restores morality, nourishes virtues, consoles the afflicted, strengthens the weak. He proposes his own example to those who come to him that all may learn to be, like himself, meek and humble of heart and to seek not their own interests but those of God.” In brief, the Eucharist cultivates a “social love” by which the common good is given preference over our own individual desires (*MF 67, 69*). For the Eucharist impresses on all of us one inescapable truth: we all stand with equal dignity before God around the table of the Lord.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1737. *How does the Eucharist unify Part III of this Catechism?*

The Eucharist is:

- effected by the power of the **Holy Spirit** (Chap. 22);
- celebrated in the Christian community, the **Church** (Chap. 23);
- center of its **prayer/worship** (Chap. 24); and
- crown of its sacraments on initiation, **Baptism** and **Confirmation** (Chap. 25);
- nourishment for the life strengthened by the **healing sacraments** (Chap. 27); and
- ongoing food for life ordered by the **vocation sacraments** (Chap. 28), while
- **already** constituting a pledge of the **not yet** perfect heavenly banquet with God.

1738. *How are we to study the Eucharist?*

In studying the Eucharist we must avoid excessive explanation that tends to “rationalize” the Eucharist, and instead consciously aim at a deeper, more personal, more prayerful understanding of this great Mystery of Faith and Gift of God’s LOVE to us.

1739. *What does the Catholic Faith assert of the Eucharist?*

The Eucharist is:

- an **ecclesial act** carried out by the Body of Christ, both Christ the Head and we, the members;
- **instituted** by Christ at the Last Supper,
- as both **sacrifice** and sacred **meal**, a **memorial** of Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection,
- through which the Risen Christ is **really present**,
- constituting an eschatological **pledge** for future glory.

1740. *How can we summarize the whole mystery of the Eucharist?*

The Eucharist is the Catholic Church’s fundamental act of **thanksgiving worship** of God, constituting at once a **Sacrifice-Sacrament**, a **Communion-Sacrament**, and a **Presence-Sacrament** (cf. RH 20; NCDP 366).

1741. *How is Christ the center of our Eucharistic worship?*

As Primordial Sacrament, Christ is the **origin**, **primary agent**, and **fullest expression** of each sacrament.

In the **Eucharist**, Christ is the SUPREME WORSHIPPER, offering the Father:

- the perfect **sacrifice** in which he is both **Priest** and **Victim**,
- in a sacred **meal** of communion in which he is the **food** for eternal life, really **present** to us under the appearance of bread and wine.

1742. *How is the Eucharist “prayer”?*

The Eucharist celebration is “prayer” because it offers:

- perfect worship to the **Father**,
- making present the sacrifice of his Incarnate **Son** on the Cross,
- through the power of their **Holy Spirit**.

The five goals of authentic prayer are thus realized in the Eucharist: **thanksgiving**, **praise** and **adoration**, **contrition**, **petition** and **offering**.

1743. *How is the Eucharist related to our daily life?*

All our daily actions are fittingly offered to the Father along with the Body of the Lord in the Eucharistic celebration.

The Mass can unify and deepen our ordinary activities by consecrating them to God. Likewise, it is through these very activities that we *live out* the Mass.

1744. *How is the Eucharist a “Sacrifice-Sacrament”?*

Through the Eucharist, Christ’s sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary is made present, and its saving power exerted for the forgiveness of sins.

The Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross are one and the same sacrifice. Christ as Priest and Victim, dying for the salvation of all, is the same in the Mass as on the Cross. Only the manner of offering is different:

Christ’s bloody sacrificial death on the Cross is made present in an unbloody manner in the ritual sacrificial meal instituted by Christ himself at the Last Supper.

1745. *What is unique about Christ’s sacrifice?*

Christ’s **Resurrection** makes his sacrifice unique, since through his Resurrection Christ becomes a *Living Sacrifice*, really present in the Eucharist, and interceding for us at the right hand of God (*cf. Rom 8:34*).

Christ’s Resurrection is both the *final moment* and *culmination* of his whole earthly saving ministry, and the *first moment* of his new glorified life in the Spirit as Risen Lord.

1746. *How is the Eucharist a “Memorial”?*

At the Last Supper, Christ commanded the apostles: “Do this in memory of me” (*Lk 22:19*). This followed the tradition of the Paschal meal which, by celebrating the “memory” of Yahweh’s great saving deed in the Exodus, made it present *today*, through **God’s** action.

Likewise the Eucharist brings us into the saving presence of the Risen Christ, precisely in his act of perfect sacrificial Love.

1747. *How is the Eucharist a “Communion-Sacrament”?*

Christ instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper so that all who shared in his Body and Blood might become one body with him. The Eucharist, then, becomes a *meal* of “communion” — a sign of unity and bond of charity.

1748. *How does the Eucharist foster unity and charity?*

Christ used the natural elements of a *meal* — coming together, conversing and sharing food and drink together — to bring his saving, loving presence among us.

In the Eucharist, Christ and the Christian community respond to our deepest human hungers for love and acceptance, for understanding, for clear purpose in life, and for justice and peace in our communities.

1749. *How is the Mass structured like a meal?*

In the Eucharistic celebration, we are *called together*.

The **Liturgy of the Word** – Readings, Homily, Profession of Faith – carry on the meal’s *conversation*. Then the **Liturgy of the Eucharist** follows Christ’s four solemn actions:

- **took** (preparation of Gifts),
- **blessed** (Eucharistic Prayer),
- **broke** (Breaking of the Bread), and
- **gave** (Communion).

1750. *What do “bread and wine” in the Eucharist signify?*

The bread and wine are:

- the food and drink in the Eucharistic meal.
As products of both God-given sources and human work, they exemplify the intrinsic working together of God and human persons, in essential life-supporting food;
- changed into the **Body and Blood** of Christ, making present the **WHOLE PERSON OF CHRIST**. The Risen Christ is *really present* in his total personal reality, under the appearance of each species, bread or wine.
[The use of **unleavened bread** recalls the Exodus background of the Eucharist as Passover meal, and symbolizes the purity and newness of the new “bread of life.” **Wine** symbolizes the product of Israel as Yahweh’s vine, and of Christ, God’s true vine (*cf. Jn 15:1-8*).]

1751. *What are some effects of receiving Communion?*

Receiving Holy Communion worthily:

- **unites** us with Christ,
- **separates** us from sin,
- **reconciles** us with one another, and
- **builds up** the Christian community, the Church.

1752. *How is the Eucharist a “Presence-Sacrament”?*

In the Eucharistic celebration, Christ is present in:

- the assembly,
- the person of the priest celebrant,
- the Holy Scriptures, and
- substantially and unceasingly under the Eucharistic species of bread and wine.

1753. *How is Christ’s presence limited?*

Christ’s presence is not:

- in bodily form,
- visibly and audibly perceivable, but only in faith,
- full, but prompting us to pray “Come Lord Jesus!”

The traditional hymn, “Adoro Te” expresses this:

“I adore you devoutly, Godhead unseen,
Who truly lies hidden under these sacramental forms. . .
Sight, touch, and taste are no guide in finding you,
On the Cross only the Godhead is hidden,
But here the humanity is hidden as well. . . .
Jesus, as I look at your veiled presence,
I pray that. . . I may see your face unveiled,
And be happy in the vision of your glory. Amen.

1754. *How are the bread and wine changed in the Eucharist?*

In the Eucharist, bread and wine, as food and drink, take on a new:

- personal **significance** (trans-signification), and
- purpose or **finality** (trans-finalization), both based on the new
- **reality** of bread and wine (trans-substantiation)

We are *not* to imagine some magical change from one material substance (bread and wine) to another (the earthly Christ). Rather, the change is from ordinary earthly bread and wine to a different level of reality, the Risen Christ. It is no longer “food that perishes,” but “food that remains unto life eternal” (*Jn 6:27*), the glorified Risen Christ.

1755. *How are we to understand this change?*

The change of bread and wine into the Risen Christ must be seen within the larger mystery of how the Risen Christ:

- makes “everything continue in being” (*Col 1:17*), and
- brings redemption to “all creation groaning. . . to be
 - i. set free from its slavery to corruption, and
 - ii. share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (*Rom 8:21f*).

The Eucharistic bread and wine, therefore, prefigure the glorification of the whole material creation in the Risen Christ at his Second Coming.

1756. *How is Christ present in the Eucharist?*

The Risen Christ is present:

- *not* like a material thing, but
- in a **personal** presence,
- under the **signs of food and drink** (bread and wine),
- in a dynamic, lasting **presence**,
- in his **risen, glorified body**.

1757. *How is the Eucharist a pledge of future glory?*

In the Eucharist, Christ left us a pledge of our own resurrection and new life, food for the journey, and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (*cf. GS 38*).

Celebrating the Eucharist “until he comes” is an *eschatological* meal embracing the hope of both the individual believer and the whole world as well.

1758. *How is the Holy Spirit active in the Eucharist?*

It is the Holy Spirit’s transforming power that “makes holy” our gifts of bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of our Risen Savior, and that draw us together to become one body, one spirit in Christ (*EP III*).

1759. *How important is devotion to the Blessed Sacrament?*

Adoration of the Risen Christ in the Eucharist:

- draws us into more intimate friendship with Christ,
- deepens our sharing in his Paschal Mystery, and
- forms the center where all other forms of Catholic piety finally merge.

In addition, it cultivates in us a “social love” of all others who share Christ’s own saving love.

Chapter 27

Christ's Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing

Jesus said to them: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them bound, they are held bound. "

(Jn 20:21-23)

Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the presbyters of the Church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name [of the Lord] This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his.

(Jas 5:14-15)

OPENING

1760. Central to the healing ministry of Jesus are his *call to repentance and reconciliation*, and his *compassionate acts of healing*. Even before his birth he was named "Jesus" because his mission was to save his people from their sins (*cf. Mt 1:21*). He began his ministry preaching: "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (*Mk 1:15*). He identified himself by his work: "the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the Good News preached to them" (*Mt 11:5*).

The Risen Christ entrusted his ministry of healing and reconciliation to his Church in the apostles. Thus Peter began preaching the Good News with: "You must reform and be baptized. . . in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Acts 2:38*).

1761. But Christ foresaw that human ills and weaknesses would lead even baptized Christians to "turn aside from [their] first love" (*cf. Rv 2:4*). He therefore empowered his apostles with the Holy Spirit to bring God's own healing and forgiveness of sins they committed after baptism (*cf. Jn 20:21-23*). The *primary reality* for Christians, then, is not human suffering and sin, but *God's healing* and

forgiveness of sin. “We go so far as to make God our boast through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received reconciliation” (*Rom 5:10*).

1762. This chapter on Christ’s healing, embracing both the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Anointing, flows directly from the preceding chapters of Part III of this Catechism. For it is the *Holy Spirit* (*Chap. 22*) who brings God’s healing and forgiveness, and reconciles us with one another. This is effected through the ministry of our Christian community, the *Church* (*Chap. 23*), in *sacramental* rituals of *worship* (*Chap. 24*). These Sacraments of Healing flow from the Sacraments of Initiation. The primary sacrament of forgiveness is *Baptism* (*Chap. 25*), through which we are freed from sin and are joined to the Risen Christ our Savior, in his Body the Church. Moreover, the *Eucharist* (*Chap. 26*), in which we celebrate Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, repairs our less grievous injuries and reconciles us in our loving relationships with God and our neighbor.

1763. This chapter is particularly important because Vatican II initiated a *major renewal* in the understanding of both Sacraments of Healing. *First*, the common names of both Sacraments have been changed to bring out the deeper, fuller meaning of the *faith-realities involved: Grace, Sin, Contrition, Forgiveness, Sickness, and Healing*. *Second*, the image of Christ as “*healing Physician*” is regained. *Lastly*, both Reconciliation and Anointing deal with basic issues of daily Christian living – of what it means to follow Jesus Christ as his disciples in everyday life.

CONTEXT

1764. Filipinos are known the world over for their many healing ways, and especially for their deep personal relationships. Thus, both Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, touch something deeply rooted in our culture. The Filipino’s deeply-felt desire for God’s *forgiveness*, and for *spiritual healing and reconciliation*, is clearly manifested through various prayer and charismatic groups, and in social service activities. Spiritual *counseling, almsgiving* for the people caught in natural disasters, *fasting* for spiritual favors, and many perduring devotional *healing and penitential practices*, all have shown remarkable growth in recent years.

1765. Unfortunately, superstition and ignorance impede the full flowering of these basic *Christian values*. Simple, good-willed people “feel” reconciled with God through a once-a-year devotional procession, or fulfilling some personal *panata*. “Healing” is often sought through the various “faith healers,” miraculous statues, pilgrimages to sites of alleged apparitions, and the like. Thus the urgent need for an adequate catechesis in both these sacraments of healing – a truly inculturated catechesis that can draw on the valuable elements of our “Filipino Folk Catholicism” in bringing the truth and value of Christ’s healing to the Filipino Catholic of today. We shall take up the specific context and exposition of Reconciliation first, followed by our exposition of Anointing.

1766. Regarding Reconciliation. There has been a sharp, dramatic decline in the number of Catholics regularly going to “Confession,” as the Sacrament of Reconciliation is commonly called. Pope John Paul II recognized that “the Sacrament of Penance is in crisis” (*RP 28*). Many reasons are offered: the loss of a “sense of sin” and personal guilt; a widespread confusion over what is morally right and wrong; or a deep dissatisfaction with impersonal routine confessions that failed to bring about any authentic spiritual conversion.

1767. For many Filipino Catholics, “confession” became so routine, so impersonal, that it had little to do with their real daily activities in their families, businesses, and communities. The “sins” confessed were often those learned from lists found in a catechism, not the real moral faults that hurt their relationships to others, to God, and to their own true selves, in their everyday lives. *Contrition* and *sorrow* were usually reduced to the external “piety” of “going to confession” – not any deep conversion of heart, or serious effort to get to the root causes of the habitual sin. *Doing penance* was saying three Hail Mary’s, without any practical steps to repair the real harm inflicted by sin, nor to reform one’s life. The *priest’s absolution* was like a magical formula that wiped away all sins, without really effecting any change in the penitent’s attitudes or spiritual life.

1768. This deterioration in the **understanding** and **practice** of sacramental reconciliation is shown in the persistent complaints of the youth: “*Why do I have to confess to a priest?*” “*What’s the use of going to confession when I always fall into the same sins?*” The response must be to situate confession within the *Christian community*, and within the total *conversion process* to which Filipino Catholics are summoned. *PCP II* declared that the EDSA experience of 1986 “continues to call us to be a people who work for *conversion, reconciliation, and peace*” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 4*). Among the means recommended, it stressed that “the Sacrament of Penance must be strongly emphasized in the life of the Church” (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 9*).

1769. The following exposition of the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation takes up, *first*, Vatican II’s desired revision of the Sacrament, focusing on God who forgives, the Christian community, the Church, and the penitent’s ongoing conversion. *Second*, the basic realities of conversion and sin are explained, followed by the *third* section on the revised sacramental rites with the basic actions of both penitent and confessor.

EXPOSITION

I. PENANCE OR RECONCILIATION

A. Vatican II’s View of “Confession”

1770. Pre-note on Names of the Sacrament. Different names bring out particular dimensions of the Sacrament. “*Confession*” stresses the importance of *acknowledging our sins* while asking for God’s forgiving grace. “*Sacrament of Penance*” emphasizes rather the whole *process of conversion*, including contrition, repentance and satisfaction, which the penitent enters into, both personally and as a member of the Church community. “*Sacrament of Reconciliation*” brings out the inner *relationship* between being *reconciled with God* and being reconciled *with our neighbor*. This link is stressed by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount: “go first to be reconciled with your brother,” “then come and offer your gift” to God (*Mt 5:24; cf. CCC 1423*).

Purpose of the Sacrament

1771. Vatican II presents the purpose of the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation in the life of the Church as follows:

Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for offenses committed against Him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have

wounded by their sins and which by charity, example and prayer, labors for their conversion (*LG 11; cf. CCC 1422*).

1772. This text and the subsequent new approved rites stress *three basic realities* that were often lost in typical routine confessions:

- **God** who in His infinite mercy grants *forgiveness* and reconciles us to Himself and to one another in this sacrament celebrated in the context of His Word in *Scripture*;
- the **Church**, the *Christian community*, as continuing Christ's ministry of forgiveness and reconciliation; and
- *continued personal conversion* and *heartfelt repentance* for sins against God and neighbor, supported by the charity, good example and prayers of the whole community.

Each of these three essential dimensions of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be briefly developed in what follows.

God Who Forgives/Reconciles

1773. Many poorly catechized Filipino Catholics are still plagued by fears, superstitious taboos, and irrational guilt feelings, based on an un-Christian view of a vengeful God. Jesus came to liberate us from such fears and guilt anxieties by revealing to us the "Good News" that God is our loving Father who loves us in His divine Son-made-man. Thus the Christian is sorry for sin and repentant before the Triune God of Love who, through salvation history, continues to draw sinners to true repentance (*R Pen. 1*).

The **Father** has shown forth His mercy by reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, and by making peace for all things on earth and in heaven by the blood of Christ on the Cross (*cf. 2 Cor 5:18ff; Col 1:20*).

Christ, the *Son of God-made-man*, lived among us in order to free us from the slavery of sin, and call us out of darkness into his own wonderful light (*cf. 1 Pt 2:9*).

After his Resurrection, Christ breathed upon the apostles and said: "Receive the **Holy Spirit**. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; If you hold them bound, they are held bound" (*Jn 20:22f*).

1774. This Christian image of the Triune God is clearly presented in the new Rite of Penance. The ultimate purpose of the sacrament is that we should love God deeply and commit ourselves completely to Him: to the **Father** who "first loved us" (*1 Jn 4:19*), to **Christ** who gave himself up for us (*cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 5:25*), and to the **Holy Spirit** who has been poured out on us abundantly" (*cf. Ti 3:6*) *R Pen. 5*).

1775. Profession of Faith. Thus, to confess our sins in the sacrament of Penance is really to profess our Catholic Faith. By "going to Con-fession," we implicitly affirm our FAITH convictions that:

- a. *we are sinners*;
- b. we need the *mercy of God our Father* who sent His *Son* to save us and the *Holy Spirit* to dwell within us;
- c. God's mercy, *always available* to us, comes through:
 - **Christ**, the "Primordial Sacrament" of God's mercy;
 - the **Church**, the "Fundamental Sacrament" of Christ;
 - the *priest*, representing both Christ and the Church.
- d. God calls us *to conversion, that is, to be truly sorry* for our sins, to "*make up*" for our sins and the sins of others, and *to do better* with the help of His **Grace**.
- e. The closer intimacy with Christ and re-integration in the Church community effected in confession finds a natural *completion* in the *Eucharistic celebration*.

In the Christian Community, the Church

1776. The second great emphasis is to view “confession” as a *communitarian* and *ecclesial* action. In contrast to the *inadequate individualistic* notion of penance which often characterized the “routine confessions” in the past, we now recognize that *the whole Christian community is involved in forgiveness and reconciliation*. For like each of her members, the Church herself needs to be both forgiven and forgiving, reconciled and reconciling. Thus, the Christian community in every Eucharistic celebration prays as Christ the Lord taught his disciples: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us” (*Mt 6:12*).

1777. Our Catholic Church needs forgiveness because she is not an elite social group of the “saved,” but like Christ her Head receives both sinners and the just. Hence she “is at the same time holy and always in need of purification, [and] constantly pursues repentance and renewal” (*R Pen. 3, quoting LG 8*). Our parish communities, then, are called to give living and concrete witness of reconciliation, bringing peace to people’s minds, reducing tensions, overcoming divisions, and healing the wounds her members have inflicted upon one another. “We must try to be united in what is essential for Christian Faith and life, in accordance with the ancient maxim: In what is doubtful, freedom; in what is necessary, unity; in all things, charity” (*RP 9*).

1778. But the Church not only calls sinners to repentance by preaching the Word of God. She also intercedes for them and helps penitents to *acknowledge* and *confess* their sins, and so obtain the mercy of God who alone forgives sins. For it is “to the whole Church, as to a priestly people, that the Lord entrusted the ministry of effecting reconciliation in various ways” (*R Pen. 8*). Thus, the Church herself becomes the instrument of conversion and absolution of her penitents through the ministry entrusted by Christ to the apostles and their successors” (*Ibid*).

1779. The Church was commissioned by Christ to preach the “*Good News of forgiveness of sins* for the repentant.” In the past, some mistakenly overstressed God’s hatred for sin and the terrible punishments in store for the *unrepentant* sinner as the focus of Church preaching. Today the opposite charge is made: at Mass everyone comes up for Communion, seemingly without any concern for sin. Actually, the Church is following her Lord by both calling sinners to the positive step of **conversion**, and celebrating penance in witness to *Christ’s victory over sin* (*R Pen. 1*).

Thus, celebrating the Sacrament of Penance is really an “act in which the Church proclaims her faith, gives thanks to God for the freedom Christ has won for us (*cf. Gal 4:31*), and offers her life as a spiritual sacrifice in praise of God’s glory, as she hastens to meet the Lord Jesus” (*R Pen. 7b*).

The Process of On-Going Personal Conversion

1780. Insistence on the whole process of *conversion* is perhaps the most striking change introduced by the present renewal of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (*cf. CCC 1426 -30*). PCP II made conversion one of its outstanding themes (*cf. PCP II 64, 156, 189, 271-75*). The Church, solicitous in calling the faithful to *continual conversion* and *renewal*, urges them to acknowledge their sins with *heartfelt repentance, celebrate the sacrament of Penance, and attend penitential celebrations* (*cf. Decree, R Pen.*).

The Sacrament of Penance must be put against the wider horizon of the Christian **virtue of penance**, and within the whole process of conversion. “Going to confession” must be linked explicitly

to the many other means the Church uses to bring about reconciliation, particularly the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and non-sacramental penitential services and devotions.

1. Baptism

1781. The Nicene Creed proclaims “one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins,” indicating that Christ’s victory over sin touches us first and foremost in Baptism. For it is in Baptism that we receive the Spirit of the Father and the Risen Christ, so that we may no longer be slaves to sin, but rise with Christ and live for God (*cf. Rom 6:4-10*). But this new life given in Baptism does not eradicate our human weaknesses and openness to temptations and to sin. Thus, Christ taught his disciples to pray daily: “**Forgive us our sins**” (*Lk 11:4*). Moreover, he linked God’s forgiveness of our sins with our mutual pardon of one another.

Thus, the early Church considered *Penance* a “**Second, laborious Baptism,**” the means for repairing the original grace of Baptism. Peter’s second conversion of shedding bitter tears of repentance after denying the Lord three times (*cf. Lk 22:62*) served as a model. St. Ambrose taught that in the Church there is both the *water of Baptism* and the *tears of Penance* (*cf. CCC 1429*).

2. Eucharist

1782. Filipino Catholics in the past were carefully instructed on the need to confess all mortal sins in Confession before receiving Holy Communion. This wise pastoral decree of the Church guards against abusing God’s great gift to us in the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is the real symbol of our union with God and with one another. Anyone who is turned away from God and from the community because of mortal sin, therefore, should publicly repent of this sin and celebrate through the Sacrament of Penance God’s forgiveness and restoration to the community.*

1783. Few Filipino Catholics, however, have been catechized to understand the *Eucharist* as the traditional *sacrament of reconciliation* for our everyday failures and sins committed after Baptism. The Eucharist, after all, is *the sacrament* celebrating the redeeming *love* of the **whole Christ**, both Head and members. Both as *communion-sacrament* and as *sacrifice-sacrament*, it thus signifies the *basic value* of *reconciling us to God and to one another*.

As *communion-sacrament*, the Eucharist was instituted by Christ to climax his “meal ministry” of reconciliation with his Paschal feast of loving communion with his apostles. Moreover this manner of reconciling is typically Filipino: we develop *smooth interpersonal relationships (SIR)* and reconcile with one another by inviting others to come, sit down, and share in eating and drinking in a fraternal meal.

1784. The Eucharist also reconciles from its very nature as *Sacrifice-sacrament* of Christ’s body and blood, “poured out on behalf of the many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt 26:28*). In the Eucharist Christ is present and offered as “the sacrifice which has made our peace” with God, in order that “we might be filled with the Holy Spirit and become one body, one spirit, in Christ” (*EP III*).

1785. Actually, Catholic tradition has consistently taught that the Eucharist is “also a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sin” (*Trent; ND 1515; EM 35; CCC 1436*). In the Eucharist, Christ’s bloody sacrifice is “represented, its memory perpetuated and its salutary power

* Following St. Paul’s warning (*1 Cor 11:29*) the Church teaches that “no one who is conscious of having committed mortal sin, even if he believes himself to be contrite, should approach the Holy Eucharist without first making a sacramental confession” (*Trent; ND 1522f*). “If someone finds himself in a case of necessity, however, and there is no confessor to whom he can go, then he should first make an act of perfect contrition” (*EM 35. Cf. 1983 Code of Canon Law, 916*).

applied for the *forgiveness of sins* which we daily commit” (*Trent; ND 1546*). Thus the sacrifice of the Mass truly makes amends for our sins: “if we draw near to God with an upright heart and true faith, with fear and reverence, with sorrow and repentance, through it we may receive mercy and favor, and find help in time of need” (*Heb 4:16*). “For the Lord, appeased by this oblation, grants grace and the gift of repentance, and He pardons wrong doings and sins, even grave ones” (*Trent; ND 1548*).

3. Other Means for Conversion

1786. The Sacrament of Penance also needs to be situated within different non-sacramental means for effecting ongoing conversion (*cf. CCC 1434f*). In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ clarified the three traditional Jewish forms: *almsgiving, prayer, and fasting* (*cf. Mt 6:1-18*). He developed the image of authentic penitential prayer in the parable of the self-righteous Pharisee contrasted with the tax collector who “went home justified” by his humble prayer: “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (*cf. Lk 18:9-14*).

1787. But among Filipinos, perhaps the most common form of reconciliation is found in our daily acts of sympathy, kindness, persevering patience, and works of mercy. Especially helpful are our ordinary acts of *loving service* which “covers a multitude of sins” (*1 Pt 4:8*). Even simply admitting one’s own faults is a practical form of repentance. Fraternal correction of others, when truly motivated by love, can be a real act of love and reconciliation. For as St. James tells us: “The person who brings a sinner back from his way will save his soul from death and cancel a multitude of sins” (*Jas 5:20*).

1788. In recent years, the Church has especially encouraged *penitential celebrations* which involve the proclamation of God’s Word, suitable songs, psalms, periods of silence, a homily, and common prayers and litanies, climaxing in the communal recitation of the Lord’s Prayer. These celebrations have proven very effective in fostering the spirit of penitence within the parish or BEC community. They help the ordinary adult Filipino Catholic to prepare more effectively for confession, and contribute effectively to the gradual formation of a Christian conscience in the children and youth. Both adults and youth are aided toward that “perfect contrition” that comes from loving God more deeply and personally (*cf. R Pen. 36f*).

Yet, these communal celebrations of personal Christian repentance, effective as they hopefully are, must not be confused with the *Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation*. No amount of personal fervor and communal spirit can constitute a *Sacrament*, which is the work of God’s grace through the Risen Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church.

B. The Process of Total Conversion

1789. “Conversion” here means not only an individual act, but also the whole life-long process of *moving toward* closer union with Christ our Savior, in his community, the Church, *away from* sinful ways and habits (*cf. CCC 1430-31*). Hence it does *not* refer only to a single act of moving from atheism to belief in God, nor from one religion to another. As a life-long call to repentance and turning back to God, conversion is a constant theme throughout the Bible.

Conversion in the Bible

1. Old Testament

1790. In the Old Testament, three themes predominate. *First*, the insistence on a real **conversion of the heart**, inspired by love and true knowledge of God (*cf. Hos 6:1-6*). *Second*, an equally strong demand for a **radical change in behavior**. “Put away your misdeeds: . . . cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim; redress the wronged” (*Is 1:16f*). *Third*, the sharp realization that it is **God** who **effects true conversion**: “a clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me” (*Ps 51:12; cf. Ez 36:26ff*).

1791. These themes are sharply etched in **David’s conversion** which presents a paradigm of the conversion process (*cf. 2 Sam 12*). It begins with the **conflict** between David’s covenant with God and his grave sins of adultery and murder. There follows the **encounter** with Nathan the prophet who brings David to **self-discovery** (“I have sinned against the Lord”) and to opening himself to the **transformation** worked by God’s pardon.

2. New Testament

1792. **Jesus** continued and deepened this call to the same conversion process. “I have not come to invite the self-righteous to change of heart but sinners” (*Lk 5:32*). Coming as a source of life and light with his simple goodness and love shining through his every act, Jesus naturally drew sinners into a process of conversion. The penitent woman, Zacchaeus the tax collector, Peter himself – all were brought through **conflict** and **encounter** with Christ to true **self-discovery** and **transformation**. Christ’s teaching on the whole process of conversion is best exemplified in his parable of the **Prodigal Son**, or the **“Forgiving Father”** (*cf. Lk 15:11-32*). It brings out God’s special concern and unconditional love for the sinner, and the human process of acknowledging one’s sin and turning back. Clearly **no sin is beyond the mercy of God**. Nothing we do can ever change or diminish God’s incredible love for each of us. But we must respond.

1793. The parable illumines the same basic elements of David’s conversion process. First, the **conflict** with cultural norms in leaving the father’s house; then, the **encounter** with the deceitful illusion of wanton living and profound disgrace of complete destitution, followed by the **self-discovery** in “coming to his senses” with sorrow and determination to confess his sin before his father. Finally, the **transformation** worked in the son by the father’s unheard-of compassionate welcome. The prodigal son is restored to his position in the family through robe, ring and shoes, and to table fellowship in a joyous feast. The father’s love even reconciles him with his older brother, explaining “This brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost, and is found” (*Lk 15:32*). Thus, the father’s overwhelming love reconciled both prodigal and elder sons to himself and to each other.

1794. But this reconciling love of the **grace of conversion** is never imposed — we must freely accept and cooperate with it. Some do not. St. John tells us that “the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil” (*cf. Jn 3:19*). For example, Jesus cured the paralytic at the pool and urged him to inner repentance: “do not sin anymore so that nothing worse may happen to you.” Unlike the healed man born blind who withstood all attacks against Jesus and ended by believing and worshipping him (*cf. Jn 9:38*), the healed paralytic did not even thank Jesus, but went off and informed the Jews that Jesus was the one who had cured him (*cf. Jn 5:15*).

Matthew’s Gospel even describes the process of dealing with an unrepentant sinner in the community: first, private correction; then, cor-rection before two or three witnesses; finally, before the whole community. If even that fails, the sinner is to be expelled from the community (*cf. Mt 18:15-18*). St. Paul explained how this apparently “harsh” excommunication is for the good of both the sinner and the community (*cf. 1 Cor 5:1-5*).

C. History of the Sacrament

1795. The conversion process is likewise manifested in the historical development of the Sacrament of Penance in the Church. *Three factors* from history stand out as essential for today:

- a) being restored into the fellowship of the Christian community (*cf. CCC 1443*);
- b) through interior contrition and purpose of amendment (*cf. CCC 1450-54*); and
- c) by the actual confession of sins and priestly absolution (*cf. CCC 1455ff*).

These factors correct the *magical view* fostered by “routine confessions” which focused only on the individual penitent’s recital of sins and the priest’s absolution. Thus the *community-dimension* of both sin and authentic Christian repentance was lost, and the primary importance of the *whole process of interior conversion*, which leads to confession and continues after it, was ignored.

1. Developmental process in community

1796. Authentic conversion then is not something we can accomplish in a moment, all by ourselves. On the contrary, it takes time and we need the help of our family, our friends, and fellow members in our Christian community, to sustain us in our personal effort to turn away from sin, selfishness, pride, and toward Christ and God our Father.

Moreover, authentic Christian conversion involves restoring our relationships with the other members of our Christian community. Christ taught his apostles to forgive “not seven times, but seventy times seven times” (*Mt 18:22*). We are all responsible to our fellow-Christians for how we give witness to our common Faith. We are all called to be “*ministers of reconciliation*” to one another, in our own little ways, not judging others’ interior motives, but instead, witnessing to the unconditional love and acceptance of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

2. Dimensions of Total Christian Conversion

1797. Our daily ongoing Christian conversion has many dimensions. We spontaneously think of turning away from the self-centered pursuit of satisfying our own egotistical needs, and toward loving service of others (*moral conversion*). Such always involves our feelings, emotions, and imagination needed to support an out-going love that overcomes the temptations to prejudices, exaggerated *amor proprio*, over-sensitivity, hatred and pride (*affective conversion*).

But this re-direction of our affections can last only if grounded in a shift in the ways we understand and judge the basic meaning and value of our lives (*intellectual conversion*). Each of these three conversions actually contributes to a fourth which is really a “falling in love with God” (*religious conversion*). This happens through God’s grace, when we freely respond to the Father’s Self-giving through Jesus Christ His Son, in their Holy Spirit of undying LOVE.

D. Conversion and the Understanding of Sin

Notion of Sin

1798. *The biblical notion of conversion developed together with the understanding of sin.* Likewise, to renew our celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation we need to know: *what really is SIN?* Unfortunately, confessional practice *sometimes* drifted into routine, without developing a deeper understanding of sin in the penitents. Real sin — that biblical *mystery of iniquity* which cost

the life of God's only Son — can only be really grasped at the foot of the Cross. Loss of the “sense of sin” is really a loss of the realistic awareness of the actual damage and evil caused by sin — an awareness that is actually a grace grounded in faith in Christ's redeeming love for us.

1. Christian Sense of Sin

1799. A genuine “*Christian sense of sin*” is the opposite of a “guilt complex.” Its *source point of reference* is *God, not ourselves*. Since Filipinos are so person-minded, we only really recognize the “shadow of sin” in our lives when it is contrasted directly to the *Person of Jesus Christ*, our personal Savior, the true Light coming into the world, the Light which enlightens everyone and offers the “light of life” (*Jn 1:9;8:12*).

2. Talking about Sin

1800. Frequently, the more we “talk about” sin, the less we really grasp its reality. In fact just the way we talk about sin manifests sinful attitudes. For example, some speak of sin in a way that passes the blame on to others and denies our own responsibility, or in a way that stirs up irrational guilt anxieties in ourselves and in others. Others picture sin as only breaking some impersonal law rather than as violating our basic relationships of respect and love with our fellow persons and with God. Still others cynically view sin as more powerful than Christ's redeeming grace. In brief, our talking about sin can be sinful when we fail utterly to grasp its true evil in our very selves, standing before God and the community, and thus lack all repentance, purpose of amendment, and any desire to share the Good News of conversion in Christ.

3. Descriptions of Sin

1801. Sin is variously described as breaking God's law, or our love relationship with Him and others, or as going against one's conscience, and the like. While expressing some aspect of sin, all these descriptions remain abstract notions in the head, with little power to portray sin's reality. As John Paul II wrote: “It is not possible to deal with sin and conversion only in abstract terms” (*RP 13*). But what, then, is *sin in the concrete*, specifically *in relation to the Sacrament of Reconciliation*?

1802. The ongoing renewal of confessional practice has helped to form a more accurate view of sin. *Sin* as faced in the Sacrament of Reconciliation can be described in terms of its basic *reality*, its *structure*, and its *degree*. In each division, we are concerned with how a truer, more accurate grasp of sin can foster a deeper contrition of heart and, more fruitful celebration of the Sacrament. By correcting common false, erroneous notions of sin, we remove one major factor that has contributed greatly to making past confession *unproductive and futile*.”

Dimensions of Sin

1. Reality

1803. All *moral reality* is made up of the *objective nature* of the act/attitude, the *intention* of the agent, and the *circumstances*. Sin as a *moral reality* is an *attitude*, an *action* or *failure to act*, or a *power* or *force* that leads us into evil. Sin *separates* us from, *alienates* us from, i.e., makes us strangers (aliens) from . . . what? From our true *selves* (*intra-personal*), our *neighbors* (*inter-personal*), the larger *community* (*societal*), and *God*, the ground and source of all three (*cf. NCDP 259-63*).

Real sin hurts us and our loved ones. Real sin is no joke; contrary to how it is often portrayed in movies, TV, paperbacks, and comic books, sin is *not glamorous* at all. Just the opposite – it really destroys, injures, dishonors, perverts, poisons, corrupts. Yet sin often has a *compulsive aspect* to it. We seem to be “caught in it” and “addicted,” like an illness that *weakens* us and keeps us in the *dark*, with its own kind of *pain*.

The real sin, then, is *not* just a chance slip, or a momentary mistaken *act* that happened unnoticed. Real sin has roots that involve the *objective moral order* and *our fundamental moral stance*, that is, how we view what is good and what is evil for all, and our commitment to do the good.

2. Structure

1804. Sin, taken strictly, is always *personal*. But in a larger sense we speak of *social* and *structural* sin. These are distinguished by their proper structures and remedies.

Personal sin is never just “private,” with no effect on anyone else. Rather, just as all “persons” are relational, always affecting others and the community in everything they do, and likewise being affected by what others do, so personal sin is neither committed nor overcome in “private.” The grace of *personal conversion and repentance* always involves a *community dimension*.

Social sin refers to negative moral attitudes and acts or failure to act that are common to a community or particular society. Its remedy is to change what is negative or lacking in the community’s moral acts or attitudes into what is positive and graced.

Structural “sin” is *not* a question of a particular person’s or a community’s moral knowledge, attitudes and responsibility. Rather, it refers to existing structures that condition society in a harmful and unjust way, such as long-standing racial or sexist prejudicial structures, unjust economic taxation systems, established military and political customs, and unfair immigration legalities. These need to be reformed by a long tedious process of concerted social moral effort.

Therefore, since sin is *never* just a private, individualistic mistake, but always injures the *community*, it should *not* be confessed as some kind of superficial slip. Rather, we must go after the *root causes* of sin in our lives, like selfishness and pride, and with God’s grace perseveringly work against them.

3. Degree

1805. Sin can be *venial* or *mortal* depending on the different levels of MORAL EVIL involved. Traditionally, sin is defined as “*mortal*” when its *nature, intention* and *circumstances* involve *grave matter, sufficient knowledge*, and *full consent* of the will. Precisely because the act involved is serious in itself and we act with sufficient knowledge, profoundly engaging our freedom, such acts cannot be dismissed as merely superficial or as not really affecting our relation with God. They clearly involve a degree of personal commitment that touches the roots of our freedom where basic decisions about our life’s values and orientations are made through the choice or avoidance of a single act.

1806. Mortal sins – or sins which lead to death, the loss of true or “eternal life” – “exclude from the Kingdom of God” (*cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5*). They are *mortal* because they kill the over all LOVE pattern of our relation to God, our fundamental core freedom as related to God. By such sins, a person “freely rejects God, his law, the covenant of love God offers, preferring to turn in on himself or to some created and finite reality, something contrary to the divine will” (*RP 17*). Such sins must be confessed in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation (*cf. CJC 988, 1; 989*).

1807. Sins called *venial* (from “*venia*”, meaning pardon or forgiveness) are “excusable” sins which do not involve the person’s fundamental freedom nor lead to spiritual death. “All wrong doing is sin, but not all sin is deadly” (*1 Jn 5:17*). Venial sins harm our relationships with God and others by undermining the fervor of our life of charity, and can gradually lead to mortal sins.

Though venial sins are by definition pardonable, they should not be taken lightly, for they offend God. Some are clearly more serious than others because of the damage done to the person involved or others. Moreover, carelessness with regard to them, especially when a habit develops, can lead to mortal sin. Our Lord warned us against ‘lukewarmness,’ saying to the church of Laodicea, “Because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth” (*Rv. 3:16*).

Misunderstanding

1808. One major *misunderstanding* of the evil and the dynamic power of sin is expressed in the question: “how far can I go without committing mortal sin?” This mentality does not take sufficient account of the real evil of *sin* as a violation of our relationships with God in love. The very *life* of a Christian consists in fulfilling Christ’s command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (*Mk 12:30f*). Directly contrary to this fundamental Christian pattern of true living is the attitude that venial sin is unimportant – after all, it is destroying our friendship with God only a little bit!

1809. As Catholics we are obliged to confess all mortal sins committed after Baptism, and are encouraged to confess venial sins as well (*CJC, Can. 988*). Frequent confession can be a very valuable means for the ongoing conversion process of clarifying and purifying our minds and hearts, thereby fostering real growth in our spiritual lives. We should use confession to judge not only *our acts* but also the *underlying attitudes* which those acts represent. Thus, the Sacrament can help us with its grace to better root out the deep-seated habits of sin and con-cupiscence which trouble our relationship with God. Confession can open us up to an ever more complete awareness of our sinfulness, our need for God’s grace, and most of all, the tremendous love of God for us sinners. Consequently, it will empower us, out of a sense of *utang-na-loob* (gratitude) to God’s incredible love, to dedicate our lives more profoundly to Him.

1810. In summary, then, the sins we confess in the renewal of our confessional practice have:

- **roots** in our *fundamental moral stance*; they are not just passing superficial acts that can be rectified in one momentary act of repentance and amendment;
- **community** dimensions; they are not just individualistic, private realities;
- different **degrees** of **moral evil**, which involve the “objective moral order” as operative in the actual exercise of our practical evaluative knowing and willing.

E. Celebrating the Sacrament

New Emphases

1811. The new *Rite of Penance* offers three different rites of Reconciliation. Besides revising the traditional rite “of Individual Penitents,” it added the rites “of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution,” and “of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution,” as well as sample Penitential Services (*cf. CCC 1480-84*). The Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession now appears more *communal* and less individualistic, more *liturgical* and less legalistic, more focused on the *ongoing conversion* process and less on simply the confession of sins and

absolution. Basically, the revised Rite focuses on the necessity of the “*inner conversion of heart*” which goes deeper than a change in external behavior.

1812. These emphases respond well to what was lacking in the “routine confessions” of the past. “Confession” is now better integrated with the other means the Church offers for reconciliation. The whole developmental process of *on-going conversion* with its essential *communitarian* dimensions now appears more clearly, while the legalistic idea of sin is overcome by the insistent demand for a real *change of heart* against sin in its true evil, including its social dimensions.

Parts of the Sacrament

1813. As followers of Christ, we come to the Sacrament of Penance to be converted to Christ with our whole hearts. Such inner conversion of heart embraces three essential *acts of the penitent*:

- 1) **contrition** or heartfelt sorrow (*cf. CCC 1451-54*);
- 2) **confession** of all grave/mortal sins to the priest, minister of the Church, acting in the person of Christ (*cf. CCC 1455-58*); and
- 3) **penance/satisfaction** for sins committed, by restitution and reparation of injury, and firm purpose of renewal of life (*cf. CCC 1461ff*).

The essential act of the priest is **absolution** which is the efficacious sign of God’s pardon.

1814. In scriptural images, this is how the New Rite sketches the Sacrament:

the Father receives the repentant son who comes back to him; Christ places the lost sheep on his shoulders and brings it back to the sheepfold; and the Holy Spirit sanctifies this temple of God again or lives more fully within it. This is expressed in a renewed and more fervent sharing at the Lord’s table where there is great JOY at the banquet of God’s Church over the one who has returned from afar (*R Pen. 6d*).

Celebrating the New Rite

1815. The New Rite proposes an ideal description of celebrating the Sacrament which, while often not fully feasible in actual pastoral practice, nevertheless presents its life-renewing factors. “Priest and penitent should *first prepare themselves by prayer* to celebrate the sacrament (*R Pen. 15*). Then, after both penitent and priest have made the Sign of the Cross, the priest *welcomes* the penitent warmly with words like: “May the Lord Jesus welcome you. He came to call sinners, not the just. Have confidence in him.” A short *reading from scripture* is recommended, followed by the penitent’s *confession* of sins and *acceptance* of a penance. Here the priest is instructed to “offer suitable counsel, “reminding the penitent that through the Sacrament of Penance the Christian dies and rises with Christ and is thus renewed in the Paschal Mystery” (*R Pen. 44*).

1816. The act of penance proposed by the priest “should serve not only to make up for the past, but also to help the penitent begin a new life and provide him with an antidote to weakness. This act of penance should correspond to the seriousness and nature of the sins, taking the form of prayer, self-denial, and especially service of one’s neighbor and works of mercy. These underline the social aspect of sin and forgiveness” (*R Pen. 18; cf. CCC 1460*).

1817. Then the penitent prays an act of contrition and resolution of amendment, asking for God’s pardon, and the priest confessor extends his hand over the head of the penitent and pronounces the words of absolution:

God, the Father of mercies,
through the death and resurrection of His Son
has reconciled the world to Himself
and sent the Holy Spirit among us
for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God give you pardon and peace.
And I absolve you from your sins
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

To which the penitent answers: “Amen” (*R Pen. 46*).

1818. As the Rite itself explains, this form of absolution clearly shows the Trinitarian *reality of reconciliation* which comes from the mercy of the **Father**, through Christ, the Incarnate **Son’s** Paschal Mystery, in the reconciling love of the **Holy Spirit**. Moreover the *ecclesial dimension* of the Sacrament is clearly stressed by the fact that reconciliation with God is asked for and given through the ministry of the Church (*R Pen. 19*).

Effects of the Sacrament

1819. For all who receive the Sacrament with a contrite heart and authentic religious disposition, the basic effect is *reconciliation with God and the Christian community*, the Church (*cf. CCC 1468-70*). But “just as the wound of sin is varied and multiple in the life of individuals and of the community, so too the healing which penance provides is varied. Those who by *grave sin* have withdrawn from the communion of love with God are called *back . . . to the life* they have lost” (*R Pen. 7*). Others, through frequent and careful celebration of the Sacrament, find a useful remedy for venial sins, drawing strength to overcome their daily weaknesses and gain the full freedom of the children of God. By thus seriously striving to perfect the grace of their Baptism, and become more closely conformed to Christ and to follow more attentively the voice of the Spirit, they are moved to more fervent service of God and neighbor (*cf. R. Pen. 7,b*).

F. Indulgences

1820. By its very nature sin has two effects. When grave/mortal, it destroys our communion with God, thus depriving us of eternal life (*eternal* punishment). But all sin also weakens and wounds our union with God and our relations with others and the community (*temporal* punishment). *Both* these “punishments” are *not* imposed by God, but rather *flow from the very reality of sin*.

Eternal punishment of sin is remitted when the guilt of our sins is forgiven and we are restored to communion with God. Yet the *temporal consequences remain*. We are called to work against these temporal effects by patient suffering, toil, prayer, and acceptance of death as term of our earthly human condition. We are urged to put aside “the old self” corrupted through deceitful desires, and “put on that new man created in God’s image, whose justice and holiness are we born of truth” (*Eph 4:22-24*).

1821. But *we carry on this effort precisely as members of one great communion, Christ’s Body, the Church*. Now the Church, as “communion of saints,” helps its members by granting *indulgences*, that is, by authoritatively assigning the penitent a portion of the *treasury of merits of Christ and the saints* to remit the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven. These indulgences remit before God

either all (plenary indulgence) or part (partial indulgence) of the temporal punishment due to sins that have already been forgiven.

The “treasury” of the Church is not like “the sum total of material goods accumulated during the course of the centuries, but rather *the infinite, inexhaustible value of Christ’s merits* before God, that is *Christ the Redeemer himself* who offered the perfect redemptive sacrifice of love for the world. “Included too are the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary, . . . the saints, and all who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace led holy lives in carrying out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers/sisters in the unity of the Mystical Body” (*Paul VI, Indulgentiarum Doctrina, 5; cf. CCC 1471-79*).

II. ANOINTING OF THE SICK

1822. All sacraments heal in some way. For example, Marriage heals self-centeredness; Confirmation heals the fear of witnessing to Christ; Penance/Reconciliation heals our sinfulness. But this Sacrament of Anointing is healing in a special sense: it brings Christ’s compassionate loving healing to bear on those suffering serious sickness (*cf. CCC 1499*).

By “**healing**” we do *not* necessarily mean *a cure* or the *eradication* of the disease or defect, which the medical profession pursues. While some diseases and evils may be “incurable” in the medical sense, there can be “*healing*” by *holistic care* that touches the *body, soul* and *spirit* of the sick person (*cf. 1 Thes 5:23*). Healing, then, means the process by which persons are helped to realize their full potential before God and their fellow men and women. The Good News is primarily about healing, not “cure” in the current medical sense.

A. Sickness

1823. We have all experienced sickness at some time in our lives (*cf. CCC 1500-1*). Many of us have suffered from serious and prolonged illness, either personally or through persons close to us. Through this experience, we become painfully aware of the many serious effects in body and spirit of grave and prolonged illness. *Serious illness brings out our powerlessness and radical limitations* as nothing else does. When in good health, we are active, feel useful and needed by others, a real part of the community. But when serious sickness strikes us, we can no longer act as we would. We become completely dependent on others, feel useless and isolated from them and from the community. Worry and anxiety begin to depress us, and sometimes even tempt our Christian Faith. “Why did God send me this sickness? What did I do to deserve this?”

1824. On the other hand, *sickness can bring us to a more mature Faith*, helping us to discern what is really important in our life, against all the superficial, passing attractions that so often dominate us. As Christians, our Faith helps us to *understand better the mystery of suffering* and to *bear pain more bravely*. From Christ’s words we know that sickness has meaning and value for our own salvation and for others. We also know how Christ loved the sick, and often healed them of their infirmities (*cf. IRA 1*).

B. Sickness and Sin

1825. Serious sickness and pain bring before us the threat of death, and show the power of evil in the world. Many Filipinos *relate sickness directly to personal sin*, much like the disciples did in asking Jesus: “Rabbi, was it his sin or that of his parents that caused him to be born blind?” Jesus answered

‘Neither. . . it was to let God’s work show forth in him’ ” (*Jn 9:2-3*). Christ was sinless, yet “it was our infirmities he bore, our sufferings he endured” (*Mt 8:17*) to free us from our sins and death. Moreover, Christ still suffers whenever we suffer, members of his Body, the Church.

1826. But while a particular sickness is not usually directly related to a specific sin, sickness and sin *are nevertheless related in a more general way*. Sickness is the concrete *sign* of the deeper, more general spiritual evil in the world. Since sickness weakens us and pulls us down, it lays bare our helplessness and our *need for care and support*. Thus, sickness becomes the concrete *symbol* of our inescapable need for deliverance from the *ultimate evil of everlasting death*. **It is from this basic evil that Jesus has liberated us.**

C. Christian Attitude to Sickness

1827. As Christians, we realize that *first*, “it is part of the plan laid down by God’s Providence that we should *struggle against* all sickness and carefully seek the blessings of good health so that we can fulfill our role in human society and in the Church” (*IRA 3*). *Secondly*, we realize that *sickness is a sign* not of a particular, personal sin, but of *the oppressive presence of evil* in our human situation. *Thirdly*, this means that all those who are seriously ill *need the special help* of God’s grace lest, they be broken in spirit and fall into temptations and the weakening of their faith (*cf. IRA 5*). *Lastly*, by joining our sufferings with Christ’s, *our very sufferings can take on* creative, saving and transforming *meaning and value* (*cf. SD 24ff*).

D. Christ the Physician

1828. Jesus came to redeem us from all evil and thus inaugurate the “Kingdom of God.” By forgiving sin and healing the sick and infirm, Jesus showed that “God had visited His people” (*cf. Lk 7:16*) and “the Reign of God was at hand” (*cf. Mk 1:15*). He cleansed lepers (*cf. Lk 17:12-19*), gave sight to the blind (*cf. Mk 10:46-52*), healed the deaf-mute (*cf. Mk 7:31-37*), the paralytic (*cf. Mk 2:3-12*), the deformed (*cf. Mk 3:1-6*), those suffering from dropsy (*cf. Lk 14:1-6*), hemorrhage (*cf. Mk 5:25-34*), and possession (*cf. Mk 1:21-28; CCC 1503*).

1829. But in healing, Jesus did *not* perform some sort of *divine magic*, nor did he intend to take the place of all doctors and nurses by wiping out all sickness. He healed only a very small percentage of the sick in Israel. Even the relatively few who were cured in body by Jesus would gradually yield to old age and further ills. The real importance of the *body-cures*, then, was to act as *signs of the more radical healing over sin and death*, the *salvation of the whole person*. Jesus never healed the body as an end in itself, but always in view of bringing salvation to the whole person, *body and soul*.

Concretely, these healings involved **faith** in Jesus, and following him in loving obedience to God the Father. Jesus’ healing ministry must ultimately be grounded in his own life of suffering, dying, and rising from the dead, whereby he transformed the whole meaning of sickness and death. “At one and the same time Christ has taught us to do good by our suffering and to do good to those who suffer” (*SD 30; cf. CCC 1504-5*).

E. The “Healing Church”

1830. Jesus taught this care for the sick to all who would follow him and form his Church. In his parable of the Good Samaritan (*cf. Lk 10: 29-37; cf. SD 28ff*) and his description of the Last Judgment, Christ portrayed care for the sick and infirm as a basic *corporal work of mercy* and a norm for judging our very salvation. He even identified himself with the sick: “I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you come to visit me” (*Mt 25:36*). Thus within the Church, while *some* have received a

special *charism of healing* from the Holy Spirit (cf. *1 Cor 12:9*), *all are called to visit the sick and care for them* (cf. CCC 1506).

1831. Jesus passed on this ministry of healing to his apostles in a particular form. “Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them . . . they *anointed the sick with oil* and worked many cures” (*Mk 6:7,13*). The Risen Christ promised the Eleven that the sick upon whom they *laid their hands* would recover (cf. *Mk 16:18*). The Church fashioned the Sacrament of Anointing from these texts and from James 5:14-15.

Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the presbyters of the Church. They in turn are to pray over him with oil in the Name [of the Lord]. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his. (*Jas 5:14f*, quoted by Trent; ND 1636; cf. CCC 1510).

1832. This text was used by Vatican II to revise and renew the Rite of the Sacrament of Anointing. *First*, since the Sacrament is for baptized Christians who are *sick*, not only “for those who are at the point of death,” (cf. SC 73; CCC 1514) its name is changed from “Extreme Unction” to “*Anointing of the Sick*.” The revised ritual makes a clear distinction between Pastoral Care “of the Sick,” climaxed in the “Anointing of the Sick,” and “of the Dying” which focuses on “*Viaticum*” or the Eucharist “*with-you on-the-way*” to the next life.

Second, the *ministers of the sacrament* are not the charismatic “healers,” but the presbyters (priests), the “elders” whose authority assures the community’s solidarity and unity. They can, therefore, act in the name of the whole community. Vatican II teaches it is “*the whole Church*” which “commends those who are ill to the suffering and glorified Lord” (*LG 11*; cf. CCC 1516).

1833. *Third*, the sacrament heals not through any magic or natural medicinal causes, but through “*the prayer of Faith*” and “*anointing in the name of the Lord*.” Vatican II urges the sick to “contribute to the good of the whole People of God by freely uniting themselves to the Passion and Death of Christ” (*LG 11*). Like the other sacraments, the Anointing of the Sick celebrates the Paschal Mystery of Christ and incorporates those celebrating the sacrament more deeply into Christ’s Mystery.

1834. Thus, we see once more *Christ* as the *Primordial Sacrament*, and the *Church* as the *Foundational Sacrament*, acting within this Sacrament of the Sick. **The Risen Christ is the Healer**, acting within his Body, the Church, which applies the Name/power of “the suffering and glorified Lord” to the sick Christian. Anointing is a sacrament of **faith** —“the sick person will be saved by his faith and the faith of the Church which looks back to the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the source of the sacrament’s power, and looks ahead to the future Kingdom which is pledged in the sacraments” (*IRA 7*).

1835. *Lastly*, “practical-minded” Filipino Catholics are often tempted to judge that the Sacrament “worked” if the sick person got better, or “failed” if not. But this is a serious misunderstanding of the Sacrament. Christ’s victory over sickness and death is not conditional but absolute. Celebrating the Sacrament does two actions: it proclaims Christ’s victory to the sick person as a *truth of Faith*, and elicits the sick person’s *response of Faith* in the power of the Risen Christ “who will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body” (*Phil 3:21*). The *Sacrament’s healing* is the total, personal healing, a “saving and raising up of the whole person.” No amount of sickness, pain, suffering – and death itself – can shake our confident Faith that our ultimate healing is assured in Christ Jesus.

F. Celebration of the Sacrament

1836. After the initial *Greeting*, and recommended *Penitential Rite* similar to the one used in the Mass, the Sacrament consists of *three* distinct actions. *First*, “**the prayer of faith**” in which the community, the people of God represented by the priest, the family, friends and others, pray for those to be anointed. *Second*, “**the laying on of hands**” imitating Jesus’ own gesture of healing (*cf. Lk 4:40*), and invoking the coming of the Holy Spirit who brings the blessing of God’s healing grace upon the sick person. *Third*, “**Anointing with oil**” made holy by God’s blessing, signifying the strengthening and healing that comes from the Spirit. Anointing the forehead and hands of the sick, the priest prays:

Through this holy anointing may the Lord, in His love and mercy, help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen (*cf. CCC 1513*).

G. Effects of the Sacrament

1837. The new rite describes the Sacrament of Anointing as providing

the sick person with the grace of the Holy Spirit by which the whole person is brought to health, trust in God is encouraged, and strength is given to resist the temptations of the Evil One, and anxiety about death (*Pastoral Care of the Sick 6; cf. CCC 1520*).

Sometimes even physical health is restored after receiving the Sacrament if it will be beneficial to the sick person’s salvation. When needed, the sacrament also offers the sick person forgiveness of sins and completes the salutary penance (*cf. Ibid.*).

1838. These effects are brought about by **uniting the sick person with the Passion and Death of the Primordial Sacrament, Christ, the Healer**. Thus the sacrament transforms the meaning and significance of the sick person’s illness into a sharing in the saving work of Jesus, the Redeemer,

filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church (*cf. Col 1:24*) and for the salvation of the world as we look forward to all creation being set free in the glory of the children of God (*IRA 3; cf. CCC 1521*).

This union with Christ is an **ecclesial grace**, since the Church both intercedes for the sick person, and is in turn blessed by the sick person’s self-offering in faith. Thus the Church exercises its role as *Foundational Sacrament* in this Sacrament of Anointing (*cf. CCC 1522*).

III. PASTORAL CARE OF THE DYING/DECEASED

A. Holy Viaticum

1839. The revised ritual’s “Pastoral Care of the Dying” describes how the Church cares for, comforts, and strengthens the dying Catholic in the passage from this life (*cf. CCC 1524*). This ministry to the dying which includes both anointing and the reception of the Eucharist as *Viaticum*, stresses trust in the Lord’s promise of eternal life:

“He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood, has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day” (*Jn 6:54*).

The Eucharist as Viaticum completes and crowns our Christian life on earth. It vividly portrays Christ as leading and accompanying the Christian into eternal glory and the banquet of the heavenly Kingdom with all the saints and the blessed united together in the Holy Spirit before the Father. As the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist constitute the unity of the “Sacraments of Initiation,” so Penance, Anointing and Viaticum constitute the Sacraments “which complete our journey” (CCC 1525).

B. Rite of Funerals

1840. We Filipinos are noted for the many family and cultural customs relating to death in the family. The revised “Rite for Funerals,” while commending the dead to God, supporting the Christian hope of the people and witnessing to faith in the resurrection of the baptized with Christ, stresses just such customs. It advises Christians to seriously consider the “feeling and practice of their own time and place – family traditions, and local customs” (IRA 2). Contrary to some “modern” secularist tendencies in western society to cover up the “grieving process” and eliminate all funeral rites, Filipinos are very much attuned to the specifically Christian meanings of funeral rites.

1841. The new rite helpfully proposes the most significant meanings of Christian funeral rites: God is worshipped, the *Paschal nature of the Christian’s death* is proclaimed, and Christian hope of reunion in the Kingdom of God is strengthened (cf. 2 Cor 5:8; CCC 1681-83). Thanks and respect are given for the life of the deceased; intercession is made for God’s mercy on the deceased; and the bereaved family and friends are offered the consolation of faith in their very sorrow and grief.

In brief, through the Church ritual we pray for the dead, profess our faith in eternal life, and receive hope and consolation in the liturgy while expressing our sorrowful farewell to our beloved dead (cf. CCC 1684-90).

INTEGRATION

1842. Like all the Sacraments, both Reconciliation and Anointing are grounded directly on the **doctrine** and reality of *Christ’s Paschal Mys-tery*. More specifically, these two Sacraments rest on the Creedal *truths* of *Christ as Redeemer and Healer*, of the *Church’s mission to continue Christ’s reconciling and healing ministry*, and of the *Holy Spirit* sent down by the Risen Christ to *empower his Church with God’s healing love*. To avoid an all too common “moralistic” attitude of mind regarding these two Sacraments, especially “Confession,” we must link them directly to Christ our Savior, within his community, the Church. We will thus also recognize the real, substantial but limited help offered by the advances in medicine and the social and behavioral sciences.

1843. The Christian **moral** teaching about sin is obviously intrinsically inherent in our celebration of the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation. But the more positive link resides in the on-going life-long process of *conversion*. To “follow Christ” means developing the values and virtues – the “character” of a disciple. Current moral theology, relying on the Gospel tradition, stresses *discipleship* as well as *moral prescriptions, values* as well as *rules, fundamental commitment* as well as *particular acts*. These twin emphases help us to keep the sane Catholic balance between a morality that reduces everything to rules and one that stresses vague values which avoid the need of committed actualization

in particular instances. Finally, Christ's *love Commandment* is exercised in a very practical way through the care for the sick celebrated in the Sacrament of Anointing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1844. *What is meant by "Christ's healing"?*

Christ came with his "healing ministry":

- to save us from our sins, and
- from the many evils that flow from sin.

His compassion and care for the sinner and the sick were signs of his deeper redeeming mission of bringing us eternal life.

1845. *How do the "healing sacraments" relate to Christian prayer and worship?*

It is the **Holy Spirit** who:

- brings God's healing love and forgiveness,
- through the sacramental ministry of the **Church**,
- to restore and strengthen our **baptismal grace**, and
- our communion with one another in the **Eucharist**.

1846. *Why are the healing sacraments important for Filipino Catholics today?*

The renewal of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing challenge us to deeper Faith-understanding of:

- the evils of sin and sickness, and
- Christ's healing grace operative within our daily lives as Filipinos.

1847. *What is the Sacrament of forgiving sins called today?*

It is called:

- "**Confession**" when stressing our need to acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness;
- the **Sacrament of Penance** to focus on the conversion process of contrition, repentance and satisfaction; and
- the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** to bring out the restoring of our graced relationships of love and friendship with God and our neighbor.

1848. *What is the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation?*

It is the sacrament through which we:

- obtain pardon from God for sins committed after Baptism and for which we are truly repentant, and
- are reconciled with the Christian community, the Church (*cf. LG 11*).

1849. *Who forgives sin in this Sacrament?*

It is the **Triune God** who forgives: the **Father** reconciles us to Himself through **Christ** who empowered his apostles with the **Holy Spirit** for the forgiveness of sins.

1850. *Who instituted the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation?*

"Our Savior Jesus Christ instituted in his Church the Sacrament of Penance when he gave his apostles and their successors the power to forgive sins" (*R Pen. 2*).

1851. *How is going to Confession a “profession of faith”?*

By “going to Confession” we affirm our Faith-convictions that:

- we are sinners, needing God’s merciful forgiveness,
- which comes to us through Christ and his Church,
- in the sacramental ministry of the priests,
- acting in Christ’s name and empowered by the Spirit,
- who brings peace and reconciliation to the repentant sinner.

1852. *How is “Confession” also a communitarian and ecclesial act?*

Both our sins and our reconciliation involve others – the Christian community.

Like the Church herself, we need to be both **forgiven** and **forgiving**. Thus we pray daily in the Our Father: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

1853. *What is the Church’s role in the Sacrament of Penance?*

The Church not only calls sinners to repentance, but also intercedes for them and helps them toward ongoing conversion. By doing so, the Church:

- proclaims her faith in Christ’s victory over sin,
- gives thanks to God for the freedom Christ has won for us, and
- offers her life as a spiritual sacrifice in praise of God’s glory (*R Pen. 1,7b*).

1854. *What does “process of conversion” mean?*

Conversion is an ongoing process of constant turning

- a) *away* from sin and the occasions of sin, and
- b) *toward* renewing our spirit by:
 - acknowledging our sins,
 - being truly repentant, and
 - with firm purpose of amendment.

1855. *What steps make up the conversion process?*

King David and the Prodigal Son show a four step process:

- a certain **conflict**, followed by
- an **encounter**, which brings
- **self-discovery**, and leads to
- **personal transformation** through God’s grace.

1856. *What makes up this process of conversion?*

The Christian process of conversion includes both

- a) *sacramental means*,
 - starting with **Baptism** for the forgiveness of sins,
 - **Penance** itself, and
 - the fervent celebration of the **Eucharist**; and
- b) *non-sacramental means* such as:
 - prayer, almsgiving and fasting,
 - penitential services, and especially
 - our daily acts of sacrifice, loving service, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

1857. *What factors in the history of the Sacrament of Penance are essential today?*

Three factors are essential:

- a) true sorrow for sin with purpose to amend;

- b) confession of sins, and priestly absolution; and
- c) being restored to fellowship in the community.

1858. *What kinds of conversion are there?*

Among the many types of **conversion** are:

- **moral** conversion: turning away from sin toward genuine love;
- **affective** conversion: ordering our imagination, feelings and emotions toward the good;
- **intellectual** conversion: re-directing our understanding and judgment; all entering into
- **religious** conversion: a “falling in love” with God.

1859. *What are some of the false ideas of sin?*

Sin is often taken as:

- merely breaking some impersonal law in a book, or
- a guilt feeling, or as something we cannot avoid.

These simply avoid the **evil** of sin and the **harm** it does to the sinner and others.

[A common example of a false, legalistic, impersonal idea of sin is expressed by the question: “How far can I go without falling into mortal sin?” This reduces sin to a plaything or gamble, totally ignoring the true nature of our relationship to God, as etched in the love commandments. . .]

1860. *What really is sin?*

Sin is :

- a) a moral attitude, power, action, or refusal to act,
- b) that leads us into evil,
- c) alienates/separates us from
 - our true selves,
 - our neighbors, the community, and
 - God.

It often becomes “compulsive” or “addictive,” and weakens our power of resistance.

Despite its often glamorous cover, sin actually injures, destroys, dishonors, poisons, and corrupts.

1861. *How can sin be classified?*

Sin can be:

- **personal**: as committed by the individual person, but always in relation to others and the community;
- **social**: as common negative moral attitudes and acts;
- **structural**: as economic, social or political patterns or systems that produce injustice and harm.

1862. *What are the factors which determine the gravity of a sin and what are its degrees?*

The factors which determine the gravity of a sin are:

- the **nature of the act**,
- the **intention** of the doer, and
- the **circumstances** relevant to the sin committed.

In reference to their gravity, sins are commonly classified as “mortal” or “venial”:

- **Mortal sin**, or “sin unto death” kills our basic love relationship with God and others. For a sin to be considered “mortal” there must be grave matter, sufficient knowledge and full consent.
- **Venial sin** is “excusable sin” which does not involve our fundamental core freedom, but undermines and weakens our love relationships with God and others. Some venial sins can deeply hurt our relationships with God and others, and should be confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

1863. *What are the new emphases in the Sacrament of Penance?*

The three new Rites of Reconciliation emphasize:

- the community as well as the individual penitent injured by sin;
- penance as involving the liturgical life of the Church, not just a private action among God, priest and penitent; and
- conversion as a life-time process of turning away from habits of sin, not just particular sins.

1864. *What are the major parts of the Sacrament?*

The acts of the penitent are:

- **contrition**,
- **confession**, and
- **penance/satisfaction**.

The act of the priest-confessor is:

- **absolution**, which is the efficacious sign of God’s pardon, which reconciles the penitent to God and to the Christian community.

1865. *What are “indulgences”?*

Indulgences are the remission of all (plenary) or part (partial) of the temporal punishment due to sins which have already been forgiven. They are granted in view of the merits of Christ the Redeemer, and the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints.

1866. *What is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick?*

The Anointing of the Sick is the Sacrament which,

- through the laying on of hands,
- the prayer of faith, and the
- anointing with blessed oil,
- provides the sick with Christ’s healing grace of the Holy Spirit.

1867. *What are the effects of the Sacrament of Anointing?*

Through the grace of the Sacrament,

- the whole man is brought to health,
- trust in God is encouraged, and
- strength is given to resist the temptations of the Evil One, and anxiety about death.

A return to physical health may even follow if it will be beneficial to the sick person’s salvation.

1868. *What is the difference between “healing” and “cure”?*

“Cure” today usually refers to the medical pursuit of the eradication of disease or defect.

“Healing” refers rather to the *holistic care* that touches body, mind and spirit of the sick person.

Often, someone suffering from “incurable” disease in the medical sense may still be “healed” in the deeper, personal sense.

1869. *What is the relation between sickness and sin?*

A particular illness is *not* usually related to any specific sin. God is no vengeful Punisher. Yet, sickness is the concrete sign of the deeper, more general spiritual evil in the world.

1870. *What is the Christian attitude toward sickness?*

The Christian is called to:

- see sickness as a sign of the oppressive presence of evil in the world, and therefore
- struggle against all sickness and seek good health; and
- recognize the need of the sick for special help and comfort from family, community, and God's grace.

1871. *Did Christ institute this Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick ?*

Christ passed on his own ministry of healing the sick and the infirm to the apostles and the Church. Thus, St. James wrote:

"Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the presbyters of the Church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name [of the Lord]. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health" (*Jas 5:14f*).

1872. *How has the Sacrament of Anointing been renewed?*

The renewal of this Sacrament includes:

- changing its aim to serving the sick, not the dying, and hence the change of its name to *Anointing of the Sick*, instead of Extreme Unction;
- inserting the "prayer of faith" in which the community, represented by the priest, the family, friends and neighbors – all pray for those to be anointed; and
- giving emphasis to *Christ, the Healer*, who transforms the meaning and significance of the sick person's illness into a sharing in his own saving work.

1873. *What is Holy Viaticum?*

Holy *Viaticum* — "with-you-on-the-way" — is the Eucharist given to the dying Christian. It vividly pictures Christ as leading and accompanying the Christian into the heavenly banquet.

Chapter 28

Vocations in Christ: Marriage and Holy Orders

God created man in His image; male and female He created them. He blessed them saying: “Be fertile and multiply, fill the whole earth and subdue it.”

(Gn 1:27f)

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cling to his wife and the two shall be made into one. This is a great foreshadowing; I mean that it refers to Christ and the Church.

(Eph 5:31f)

Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. . . One does not take this honor on his own initiative but only when called by God.

(Heb 5:1, 4)

It is Christ who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ, till we become one in faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son.

(Eph 4:11-12)

OPENING

1874. We now come to the two “*Sacraments of Vocation and Ministry*” in Christ – **Marriage and Holy Orders**. These two Sacraments express different basic ways of living out Christ’s Gospel which proclaims that true life is found in loving service of one another. As with all the seven ritual Sacraments, Christian Marriage and Orders relate us not only to *Christ*, the *Primordial Sacrament*, but also to the *Church*, the *Foundational Sacrament*.

But different from the “Sacraments of Initiation” (*Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist*; cf. CCC 1533), as well as the “Sacraments of Healing” (*Reconciliation and Anointing*), these two are Sacraments of “Vocation” and “Ministry”:

- “*Vocation*,” as arising from God’s personal call to respond to the needs of others and of the Church itself; and
- “*Ministry*,” as serving to build up and strengthen the Church in its mission.

Both, then, are Sacraments of Ministry since they serve others and the Church in Christ (*cf. CCC 1534-35*).

1875. This chapter first takes up Marriage, the Sacrament of human love that Christ raised to a real efficacious symbol of his love for the Church. After a brief look at the current context of marriage, especially in the Philippines today, we shall study its essential nature as “covenant love” from the Genesis account, and from Christ’s institution as sacrament of his own love. An exposition of its three basic values as developed in the Christian tradition follows. A third section takes up married life today as a vocation with its own spirituality. The context and exposition of the Sacrament of Orders follows this study of marriage.

CONTEXT

1876. Marriage and the family in the Philippines today, as throughout the world, presents a sharp contrast. *On the one hand*, most Filipinos today have a deeper ***appreciation for personal freedom and the quality of interpersonal relationships within marriage***. There is serious concern for upholding the dignity of women, equality of the spouses, and responsible family planning. Filipino Christian families are brought to greater awareness of their social and political responsibilities, and their mission within the Church (*cf. FC 6*). Perhaps never before in history has so much emphasis been put on the personal happiness and self-fulfilling love and pleasure that marriage is presumed to offer.

1877. Moreover, in our culture,

there can be no doubt that the Filipino family plays a pivotal role in the life of the individual and society – its influence is all pervasive . . . For Filipinos, their families are their most important reference group, the core of their alliance system, where they find security, strength and support. Loyalty to family and kin, family solidarity and togetherness, concern for family welfare and honor, rank high in their priorities (*NCDP 12*).

Marriage and family life, then, are acknowledged as among our highest cultural values.

Among Filipinos, ***marriage is an affair not only of two individuals***, but also between ***two family groups***. Many beautiful Filipino cultural customs and values surround courtship and marriage in the various regions of our country.

1878. *On the other hand*, in contrast to such high esteem and expectations, many discern a ***growing weakening of the Filipino family and marriage*** today, brought on by many causes such as the so-called “sexual revolution,” growing secularizing modernization, and the consequent breakdown of traditional moral and religious values. Thus the growing number of *broken families*, of purely *civil marriages*, the “*scourge of abortion*,” *sterilization* and the “*contraceptive mentality*” (*cf. PCP II Decrees, Art. 47; cf. also FC 6-7*). Even Church weddings often seem marked more by social display of wealth or influence, with numerous and highly placed sponsors, than by any deeply religious dimension. The common overstress on “romantic love” and personal sexual fulfillment in marriage,

widely popularized in the mass media, makes successful “marriage in the Lord” doubly difficult for young Filipino adults of today.

1879. At a deeper level, some are concerned with the apparent *gap between official Church teaching on marriage and the family*, and *what appears to be the common mind and practice* of many ordinary Catholic Filipinos on questions such as sexuality, divorce, the indissolubility of sacramental marriages, and responsible family planning.

All seem in agreement that what is *needed* is an *effective catechesis* – down to the grassroots level – of a deeper, more adequate *personal understanding* of what *Christian marriage* really is. This would build on and strengthen traditional Filipino family values, and make them more effective and operative in the daily life of Filipino society today (*cf. PCP II Decrees, Art. 46*).

EXPOSITION

1880. When “marriage” is mentioned today, most will no doubt immediately think of the real pressing *ethical problems* regarding pre-marital sex, contraception, divorce, etc. But the teaching of the Church on individual moral norms can only be appreciated and followed if *Christian Marriage* is truly understood for what it really is. Only if Christian Marriage is recognized as part of “a new covenant, a covenant not of a written law, but of spirit,” will Filipino Catholics appreciate that Church teaching presents not a “written law [that] kills, but the Spirit [that] gives life” (*cf. 2 Cor 3:6*). Thus, the following exposition concentrates on presenting “what Christian Marriage really is.”

Part One: MARRIAGE

I. MARRIAGE AS “COVENANT LOVE”

1881. Marriage is a unique sacrament in that the vocation of *marriage* itself is a foundational human reality *built into the very created nature of man and woman*, with its own profound meaning, even before the teaching of any specific religion (*cf. CCC 1602-5*). It is unique also in that whereas other sacraments use material things like water, bread, wine and oil, in marriage the “external sign” is the *love relationship* between the spouses. Moreover, among all human love relationships, none rivals the life-long commitment of total conjugal intimacy and self-giving of the married partners.

1882. The Bible reveals this “*natural covenant*” of love as the image/symbol of God the Creator’s absolute and unfailing love. Created male and female, human persons are created through God’s *love*, in the image of God who is *Love*, and called *to love one another* in sharing God’s own *love*.* As the Third Preface for the Wedding Mass proclaims:

Father, you created man in love to share your divine life.
We see his high destiny in the love of husband and wife
which bears the imprint of your own divine love.
Love is man’s origin; love is his constant calling.
Love is his fulfillment in heaven.

* “God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to existence *through love*, He called him at the same time *for love*” (*FC 11*).

A. Marriage in Genesis

1883. The two inspired accounts of creation in Genesis provide a firm basis for understanding man and woman and their conjugal union. In the priestly account (*cf. Gn 1:1-24a*), man is created last as the summit of creation, with dominion over all creatures. “God created man in His image. . . male and female He created them,” and blessed them saying “Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (*Gn 1:27f*). Thus, marriage has the *social purpose* of propagating the human race by sharing in God’s own creativity (*cf. CCC 1604*).

1884. The second, older (Yahwist) creation account focuses more specifically on the creation of man, who is made complete only by the creation of woman. “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him . . . that is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and *the two of them become one body*” (*Gn 2:18, 24*). This expresses the *personal purpose* of marriage as the mutual love, support, and unity of the couple (*cf. CCC 1605*).

1. One “Body” (or “Flesh”)

1885. For the Hebrew author of Genesis, this meant not just physical unity, but the *unity of two persons in all their basic human levels* – physical, psychological, and spiritual, or body, mind, and heart or spirit. This unity does *not* mean losing one’s own identity by merging with another into one personality, nor yielding to domination by the other. Rather it is “*the intimate partnership of life and love*” (*GS 48*) in which the couple freely are present to, think about, care for, and enter into, each other. *Their thoughts, ideals, hopes and destinies become intertwined.*

Yet, within this deep mutual inter-personal relationship, both become more uniquely themselves, with their own personal character and traits. Authentic human love does not reduce persons to a “least common denominator,” but rather consists in the communion and sharing of unique persons in their very uniqueness.

2. “Become”

1886. “To become” implies a life-long *process* (only begun on their wedding day) of the *gradual transformation of an “I” and a “Thou” into a “We.”* The essential condition for this “becoming one body” is the basic *equality* of male and female, asserted in the creation account. The unity and equality in marriage is such that both partners are even included under the one name, “man.” “When God created man, . . . He created them male and female . . . He blessed them and named them ‘man’ ” (*Gn 5:1f*).

This equality does *not* mean ignoring the differences and diverse gifts and characteristics of the sexes. Rather, it points to the basic human capacities for knowing, willing, and free self-giving in love that arise from being created in the image and likeness of God who *is* Love.

B. Failure in Conjugal Unity/Equality

1887. But human history presents one long account of failing to live up to this creation ideal of “becoming one body.” *Genesis 3* sketches the origin of sin and its basic consequences in human

marriage. It is *sin*, not God's plan, that changes marriage from conjugal union of equal partners into mutual accusation and domination of one by the other. "God said to the woman: 'Your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master' " (*Gn 3:16*). Thus, we have the start of the sad history of infidelity, adultery, divorce, broken families, and all kinds of sexual disorders that destroy human dignity (*cf. CCC 1606-8*).

C. Marriage in God's Redemptive Plan

1888. God, however, ever faithful to His covenant of love, included marriage and family in His *redemptive plan*. The Old Testament prophets, by using marriage as a symbol of God's covenant with His Chosen People, had already pictured marriage as a covenant which should imitate God's own fidelity (*cf. Hos 2:21f; Is 54:4-6, 10; 62:4-5; Ez 16:8-14, 60-63*). "You must not break faith with the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel" (*Mal 2:15f; cf. CCC 1609-11*). But it was only through Jesus Christ that the "covenant of human love," symbol of God's love for his people in *creation*, could be raised to become the sacrament of the "*new covenant of Christ's redemptive love*" with His people, the Church.

1. The New Covenant

1889. In Jesus Christ, God's covenant with His people was brought to unsurpassable heights (*cf. CCC 1612-15*). "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" (*Jn 3:16*).

- Jesus is 'God's Covenant-with-His-people' *in person*: God and man united in one person.
- He is God's perfect Self-gift to man, and man's loving response to God.
- In Jesus, the new Adam, God has redeemed all of us, members of the first Adam's race.
- In Jesus, "we were all baptized into one body" (*1 Cor 12:13*), all "members of Christ" who cleansed his people "in the bath of water by the power of the word" (*Eph 5:26*).

Thus, Jesus is the Bridegroom of God's New Covenant People who are invited to share the wedding feast in God's Kingdom (*Mt 22:2ff*).

2. Marriage, Image of the New Covenant

1890. Marriage in the New Covenant, then, can properly be understood only in terms of Christ's saving work – how Jesus loves his people, the Church, and gives himself up for her (*cf. Eph 5:25*). Jesus' own teaching on marriage went back to God's original creative ideal of man and woman becoming "one body" (*cf. Mt 19:3-9; CCC 1616-17*).

In and with Jesus, God fulfilled what He had promised through the prophets: "I will give you a *new heart* and place a *new spirit* within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes" (*Ez 36:26f*).

1891. John Paul II develops this basic truth in focusing on one effect of the Sacrament of Marriage:

Christ renews the first plan that the Creator had inscribed in the hearts of man and woman, and in the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony offers "a new heart": thus the couple are not only able to overcome "hardness of heart," but also and above all they are able to share the full and definitive love of Christ, the new and eternal Covenant made flesh (*FC 20*).

1892. Likewise, *Vatican II* describes how Christian spouses “are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state . . . as spouses fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, they are penetrated with the Spirit of Christ, who fills their whole lives with faith, hope and charity” (*GS 48*). The Second Preface of the Wedding Mass prays to the Father:

This outpouring of love in the *new covenant of grace* is symbolized in the marriage covenant that seals the love of husband and wife and reflects your divine plan of love.

3. New Testament Ground

1893. This understanding of Christ’s teaching on marriage as a *new* “covenant of love” is confirmed in the famous text from Ephesians (*cf. 5:21-33; CCC 1616-17*). The key message is: *the covenant between man and woman* is seen as the image of the *covenant between Christ and the Church*. Husbands and wives, therefore, should love and act toward each other as Christ loves and treats us, his Church. Hence, marriage partners are admonished: “*Defer to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (*Eph 5:21*). All domination by one partner over the other is thus directly rejected.

1894. Moreover, contrary to a common misreading, this *mutual giving way to one another* is supported, *not* denied, by “the husband is head of his wife” (*Eph 5:23*). Why? Because he is head “just as Christ is head of the Church.” Now Christ defined his headship as *service*: “The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve — to give his life in ransom for many” (*Mk 10:45*). So Christ showed he is head of the Church in that he “loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (*Eph 5:25*).

1895. The mutual “giving way to one another” is precisely “*out of reverence for Christ*.” The profound basis for this mutual “giving way” is the incredible truth of Revelation that the marriage covenant between man and woman is “a great mystery foreshadowing” of the covenant between Christ and the Church (*Eph 5:32*). Christ’s covenant is clearly one of pure love and self-sacrifice. Therefore, “out of reverence for Christ,” whose covenant with the Church is symbolized in the marriage covenant of man and woman, “each one of you should love his wife as himself, the wife for her part showing respect for her husband” (*Eph 5:33*).

II. THE THREE GOODS OF MARRIAGE

1896. St. Augustine spoke of the *three goods* or *values* of marriage as offspring, mutual love/fidelity, and the sacrament. We shall take up each of these values, but in the reverse order, since the sacramentality of Christian marriage grounds for us the other two goods (*cf. GS 48-50*).

A. Marriage as Sacrament

1897. Catholic tradition has recognized “marriage of the baptized is one of the seven sacraments of the New Covenant” (*FC 13; cf. Trent, ND 1808; CCC 1638*). Marriage is seen as:

- a) an ongoing saving symbolic action,
- b) grounded in the ministry of Christ and continued in and through the Church, which
- c) when proclaimed, realized and celebrated in faith,
- d) makes present and actually shares in, God’s love and faithfulness in Jesus Christ, in the pattern of his Paschal Mystery.

As the Third Preface of the Wedding Mass prays to the Father: “The love of man and woman is made holy in the Sacrament of Marriage, and becomes the mirror of your everlasting love.”

1. Sacrament: Rite and Ongoing Married Life

1898. In speaking of Marriage as a Sacrament, we must be clear that it refers to two essential things: both the sacramental celebration of marriage, *and* the ongoing married life. The sacrament of marriage begins when a man and a woman stand before God and their fellow men and women, and freely and publicly declare, in one form or another,

to be of one heart and one soul, from this day forward,
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

This does not start their love relationship – presumably they have been in love with each other for quite some time already. What they are doing is publicly vowing their exclusive and permanent love relationship, making it a sacrament, a public, efficacious sign of Christ’s redemptive love to each other, their offspring, and their community.

2. “Why Get Married in the Church?”

1899. Today many young adults seem to take Marriage in the Church as merely some *social custom* (“our parents prefer it this way”), or possibly a question of *personal preference* or even of *financial considerations*. But real Marriage in the Church is none of these. It is, rather, the solemn entry of the spouses into a binding commitment before God and the Christian community, declaring: “We love one another and want our love to last forever. We ask you to respect this commitment, and help us to keep it.”

This brings out sharply the fundamental “untruth” inherent in “*trial marriages*” or “*free unions*,” (“living-in”) which attack both the intrinsic dignity of the human person, and the truth of their relationships in the community. The many religious, moral and social problems caused by such unions present a major pastoral challenge to the Church in the Philippines today.

1900. Christ is the key to the answer. For truly believing Christians, entry into and perduring in the most important relationship of their lives could not possibly succeed or make sense except *through, with and in* Christ their Lord and Savior. Christ’s presence and concern for Christian spouses is beautifully pictured in John’s Gospel account of the *Wedding at Cana* (*Jn 2:1-12*), where he saved the married couple from embarrassment by changing water into wine. This was the first of his ‘*signs*’ and “so he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him” (*Jn 2:11*).

1901. But besides the wedding ceremony, there is the second meaning of marriage as a sacrament: the *ongoing married life of the couple*. Couples preparing for marriage are frequently reminded: “Marriage is a process, not a state, a beginning, not an end; a threshold, not a goal. Your marriage certificate is a learner’s permit, not a diploma.” We must be clear about the *realism* of what is affirmed of marriage as a sacrament. Marriage is not just a celebration that “points to,” “witnesses to,” Christ’s love. Rather, Christ really gives himself to the married couple in and through their ongoing mutual self-giving love.

1902. Vatican II describes this presence of Christ our Savior, the spouse of the Church, in the married life of the Christian spouses.

He abides with them in order that, by their mutual self-giving, spouses will love each other with enduring fidelity . . . Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is directed and enriched by the redemptive power of Christ and the salvific action of the Church (GS 48).

The marriage of Christians, then, “becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ” (FC 13).

3. Marriage: the Sign of Christ

1903. Christ, the *Primordial Sacrament*, then, is doubly associated with marriage, as with the other ritual Sacraments. He both grounds and provides the basis for Christian marriage, and is himself the fullest exemplification of the spiritual reality symbolized: God’s perfect covenant love of His people. Jesus himself is God’s covenant “in person,” THE LOVER, just as we saw he is *The Baptized One, The Confirmed One, The Really Present One, The Reconciler, The Healer*, and of course, *The Priest*.

4. Sacrament of the Church

1904. The Church is the *Foundational Sacrament*, making the Risen Christ concretely present in history through its ritual sacraments to the members of his Body. Christian marriage and family life are said to constitute the Church in miniature, the “*domestic Church*.” For,

from the marriage of Christians there comes the family in which new citizens of human society are born and, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, these are made children of God so the People of God may be perpetuated through the centuries” (LG 11).

1905. The specific similarities between the Christian family and the Church are instructive. *First*, both the Church, as the People of God, and the Christian family, are *communities united together in love* through the power of the Holy Spirit under the Lord Jesus Christ. *Second*, the members of both are called to constant *growth in loving communion* with one another and with Christ, a maturing process of constant conversion involving purification and reconciliation. *Third*, both Church and Christian family *worship* around the Table of the Lord, sharing in the Eucharistic celebration of Christ, the unique Mediator. *Fourth*, Church and family both *share Christ’s mission* of loving service, responding to human needs and promoting the Kingdom of God among men and women. *Finally*, both Church and family are *pilgrim people*, on a journey toward a final destination glimpsed only in Faith.

5. What the Church Does for the Family

1906. Today many Filipino Catholics are challenged to defend the Church’s action regarding family life. John Paul II answers by explaining how the Church as Mother “gives birth to, educates, and builds up the Christian family” by exercising its saving mission for the family. He develops the Church’s bond with the family according to the same *threefold image of Faith* involving doctrine, worship and morals presented in our *NCDP*.

- By proclaiming the word of God, the Church reveals to the Christian family its true identity [*truth*] — what it is and should be according to the Lord’s plan.
- By celebrating the *sacraments*, the Church enriches and strengthens the Christian family with the grace of Christ for its sanctification to the glory of the Father.
- By the continuous proclamation of the *new commandment of love*, the Church encourages and guides the Christian family to service of love so that it may imitate and relive the same self-giving and sacrificial love that Jesus has for the entire human race (FC 49).

6. Mission of the Family

1907. For its part, the Christian family shares in the saving mission of the Church since the married couples not only “*receive* the love of Christ and become a *saved* community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ’s love to their brethren, thus becoming a *saving* community” (FC 49).

Families will generously share their spiritual riches with other families too. Thus the Christian family . . . will manifest to all the Savior’s living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church, by the love and generous fruitfulness of the spouses, their solidarity and fidelity, and by the loving way in which all members of the family work together (GS 48).

B. Conjugal Love and Fidelity

1908. Marriage and family are “founded and given life by love” in order to live with fidelity the reality of communion. “*Without love the family cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a community of persons*” (FC 18). But the over-riding problem here is: what precisely is true love?

1. Love in Christian Marriage

1909. Love in marriage refers not to any superficial, romanticized sentiment, but to the deepest, *most fundamental reality of human life*. As human persons we all strive for fulfillment through pursuit of material, psychological, and spiritual goods. But we find fulfillment only when accepted as a person, only in personal love. Only such love affirms us in our basic human dignity because it accepts us in our very selves: “I want you to **be** – to flourish, to become your truest, fullest self.”

1910. Vatican II describes how the biblical Word of God urges the married couple “to nourish and develop their wedlock by pure conjugal love and undivided affection.” For

Married love is *eminently human* because it is an affection between two persons *rooted in the will* and embraces the good of the whole person. Therefore it can enrich the sentiments of the spirit and their physical expression with a unique dignity and ennoble them as the special elements and signs of the *friendship* proper to marriage (GS 49).

2. Married Love as Friendship

1911. To speak of married love as ‘*friendship*’ may seem quite inadequate at first sight. But real authentic friendship is our most unselfish, enduring mutual love, grounded on our free, unshakeable commitment to the other for the other’s sake, not for our own good. As referring to the conjugal love of the married couple, friendship brings out the fundamental *equality* of the partners in sharing not just physically, but on all levels of their mind and spirit.

Conjugal love involves a totality in which all the elements of the person enter – appeal of body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, the unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul (FC 13).

This ‘natural’ married love Christ “has restored, perfected and elevated by special gifts of grace and divine love” (GS 49) which make the spouses “friends” in his friendship (cf. Jn 15:15).

3. Practical Implications of Married Love

1912. Because husband and wife are equal as persons, they bear joint responsibility for “becoming one body.” Conjugal unity does not come about automatically, nor by chance. The partners have to *work at fostering this unity* between their real – not romantically idealized – selves. That is, within the real, concrete limitations of their own capacities and personalities. The unity and fidelity of marriage is not simply the negative “avoiding adultery,” but the positive growing in *faith in each other*: trust and love and believing in the worth of one’s partner, and in the marriage union itself.

This also means responding maturely to the *ongoing changes* that occur in every human person’s life, and consequently in their primary interpersonal relationships. The partners must understand and accept these changes in the personal development of each. This means developing the ability of *communicating with each other* on ever deepening personal levels.

4. Two Aspects of Graced Conjugal Love

1913. For Filipino youth today, two aspects of this “graced” conjugal love are extremely important. The *first* is the *integration of their sexuality* into the married couple’s personal bond of love. Our sexuality is truly human only when integrated into personal self-giving in love. Otherwise it leads to disintegration and erodes our personal dignity and integrity. Now, when conjugal love is truly authentic, it “leads the partners to a free and mutual gift of self, experienced in tenderness and action, and permeates their whole lives. . . This is a far cry from mere erotic attraction, which is pursued in selfishness and soon fades away in wretchedness” (*GS 49*).

1914. The *second aspect* is that authentic *conjugal love is never* a romantic, self-centered, individualistic reality *separated from the actual social, economic and cultural conditions of the partners*. Married love must be seen as inclusive of both the personal and the objective or institutional elements of the family and within the larger community.

5. Marriage Fidelity/Indissolubility

1915. The very nature of *authentic conjugal love* of the spouses argues for constant fidelity (*CCC 1646-51*). “The intimate union of marriage, as a mutual gift of two persons, and the good of the children, demands **total fidelity** from the spouses and requires an unbreakable unity between them” (*GS 48*).

Christ proclaimed “*Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined*” (*Mt 19:6*). This was not a legal prescription about marriage, but rather Christ’s prophetic, messianic proclamation that God’s saving activity was already present through his ministry. Moses had allowed divorce because of the “*hardness of their hearts*” (*cf. Mt 19:8*). But now that “hardness” could be softened: the power was at hand, and offered constantly, to surmount the natural, everyday obstacles to persevering conjugal fidelity. How? Through the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1916. “*We don’t love each other any more!*” Thus runs a common objection against the permanence of the marriage *covenant*. But the wedding consent itself clearly proposes the marriage covenant as indissoluble – “till death do us part.” Moreover, traditionally the true inner reality of the marriage *covenant* was made “external” by speaking of the indissolubility of the marriage *contract*. The basic problem is obviously: what is the *love* that marriage calls forth from the married couple, that makes indissoluble marriage possible and fruitful (*cf. CCC 1644-45*).

Our response in faith must be that *permanent conjugal love IS possible* – because called for – through Christ’s grace-filled presence in the Holy Spirit. Through the *sacramental grace* of marriage, Christ gradually transforms the married couple in all the ups-and-downs, trials and sacrifices of their married love, into their own unique creation of sharing in his Paschal Love.

1917. This in *no way* ignores the *formidable obstacles* to marriage fidelity and permanence, nor the urgent need for the Church's pastoral help for those in broken marriages. Among the causes for marriage failure, *PCP II* lists the double standard of morality, and economic pressures, a hedonistic mentality, false values propagated by mass media, and the "*querida system*" (*cf. PCP II 582-589*). But perhaps the most common obstacles are marriages "forced" on the couple for one family reason or another, or marriages entered into "too early" by couples who are too young and immature to be prepared for responsible permanent commitment.

1918. Yet where sin is present, grace abounds even more. Since the Gospel times, believing Christians have wrestled with this seemingly impossible ideal. Yet they believed that Christ, "the perfect man, has restored to the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin" (*GS 22*). Thus, they are convinced that in insisting on God's original plan for marriage, ***Christ will give the grace and strength to live the marriage covenant***, through the power of his Holy Spirit, the *new* presence of God among them.

1919. Thus "Christian couples are called to participate truly in the irrevocable indissolubility that binds Christ to the Church, his bride, loved by him to the end" (*cf. FC 20*). The ultimate truth of the indissolubility of sacramental marriage, then, is that in God's plan it is "a ***fruit***, a ***sign***, and a ***requirement*** of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church. . . a sign of the unfailing fidelity with which God and Jesus Christ love each and every human being" (*FC 20*).

C. Serving Life: Offspring

1920. Today many authors emphasize how Vatican II offered a profoundly renewed and deepened exposition of marriage as "intimate partnership of life and love . . . rooted in the conjugal ***covenant*** of love of irrevocable ***personal*** consent" (*GS 48*). This stress on "Covenant" rather than merely "contract," and "personal" as well as "institutional," provided a helpful balance. This balance was also fostered by the Council's careful avoidance of the common distinction between procreation and conjugal support as primary and secondary ends of marriage respectively.

1921. What unfortunately receives much less emphasis is the Council's clear insistence on all the traditional aims of marriage. "For God Himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various ends in view: all these have a very important bearing on:

- the continuation of the human race,
- the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and
- the dignity, stability, peace, and prosperity of the family and of the whole human race" (*GS 48*).

The Council then immediately explicates the focus on offspring: "By their very nature, the institution of marriage itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown" (*GS 48; cf. CCC 1652-54, 2366-67*).

III. INTEGRATION OF MARRIAGE GOALS

1922. What the Council has done is to bring together the unitive and procreative ***goals of marriage: conjugal love and offspring***. "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward begetting and educating children. Indeed children are the supreme gift of marriage and greatly contribute to the good of the parents themselves" (*GS 50; cf. CCC 2373, 2378*). This union is based on nature of conjugal love, which

while leading the spouses to [become] “one flesh” does not end with the couple. It makes them capable of the greatest possible gift, the gift by which they become cooperators with God for giving life to a new human person. . . . a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother (*FC 14*).

A. Family Planning

1923. Many Filipino Catholics today are misled in thinking that the Church is against all family planning. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The *CBCP* issued a pastoral letter “*Love is Life*” (1990), and clear “*Guiding Principles on Population Control*” (1990).

The Church teaches the need for *responsible parenthood* (*cf. CCC 2368-72, 2399*). This means, among other things, that couples should bring into the world generously only the children whom they can raise up as good human beings. The decision on the number of children *rests solely on the parents* – no one can make that decision for them. But it is a decision they must make *according to their formed Christian conscience*, “with a sense of their responsibility to each other, to their children already born and still to be born, to God,” and in view of Church teaching. The Church advocates only *Natural Family Planning*, rejecting all artificial means of contraception and the contraceptive mentality that selfishly avoids offspring because of refusing responsibility for children (*cf. PCP II 584f*).

1924. But marriage “fruitfulness” or the “service of life” extends beyond procreation and education of offspring.

Even when procreation is not possible, conjugal love does not for this reason lose its value. Physical sterility, in fact, can be for the spouses the occasion for other important services of the life of the human person, for example, adoption, various forms of educational work, and assistance to other families and to poor or handicapped children (*FC 14*).

The important truth here is that authentic personal love is never egotistical or turned in on itself. Even when the spouses’ immediate reason for conjugal intercourse is to deepen their own life together and mutual love, there is indirect benefit to others in the family and the larger immediate community.

For Christians, marriage and family are not “private” realities, but always involve the larger community and society.

B. Vocation of Married Life

1925. Beyond all that has already been said, we realize that marriage as authored by God is a vocation, a call to share in God’s own life of love, as revealed to us in Christ Jesus, and present among us in his Body, the Church. The most common human experience we have of God who is love is our human loves and friendships. Within all human friendships, the married love of spouses is recognized as the natural paradigm. The Bible reveals that this marriage friendship among Christians is the sacrament of – that is, reveals and makes present – God’s love for His people, and Christ’s love for his Church. In this sense, Christian marriage can be said to be the “basic sacrament” of God’s saving presence among us.

1926. Marriage, then, is a vocation to fuller life in Christ, in love that is sealed, purified, deepened and strengthened by the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of the Father and the Risen Christ. Vatican II stressed that “all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the

perfection of love, and by this holiness a more humane manner of life is fostered also in earthly society” (LG 40). As a sacrament, marriage “is the specific source and original means of sanctification for Christian married couples and families. It makes specific the sanctifying grace of Baptism” (FC 56).

IV. MARRIAGE SPIRITUALITY

1927. Married couples and parents have “their own proper path to holiness by faithful love, sustaining one another in grace all through their lives” and forming their children “in Christian truths and evangelical virtues” (LG 41). This “authentic and profound *conjugal and family spirituality*” (FC 56) is lived out in the *quality* of the marital and family relationships, marked by fidelity, a spirit of mutual respect and readiness to forgive, generous service, and prayer. *Fidelity* in married life, for example, consists primarily not in the negation of adultery, but in the positive growth in deepening faith and trust in each another.

1928. Marriage spirituality needs to be specified more concretely in the essentials of living out the life of Faith in Jesus Christ today. *PCP II* decreed that diocesan family centers should be established to develop “the *Filipino elements* of a general spirituality of Christian marriage (*PCP II Decrees, Art. 46,2*). In the family, “the spirituality of the Christian is nurtured and rooted in the Word of God and finds its Filipino expression (*PCP II 421*).

Numerous books and pamphlets on Christian married and family life which draw mostly on current psychological and behavioral science insights, are very popular and helpful. But more local catechetical material solidly grounded in up-to-date Catholic theology is needed to work towards “*closing the gap*” between the lofty theory of marriage proposed in Church teaching, and the ordinary, everyday family life of Filipino Catholics. One such approach, as developed from Christ’s life and ministry presented in the Gospels and carried on in the life of the Church, is sketched in the following paragraphs.

A. Marriage and the Kingdom of God

1929. Christ came preaching the Kingdom of God, a “Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace” (*Preface of Christ the King*). Inheriting Christ’s own mission in fostering the Kingdom, the Church announces the “Good News” to draw the whole human family into personal communion with God through Jesus Christ. Christian marriage and family are the key factors in this mission. It is especially through the everyday give-and-take of family life that most Filipinos have some concrete experience of God’s Kingdom, *already* here but *not yet* fully.

1930. The *truth of God’s Kingdom* is not just avoiding lies, but sharing one’s own ideas, feelings, hopes and sorrows, as well as really *listening* to one another. *Life* in all its physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions arises from married and family communion, as do all the concrete sanctifying acts that initiate the *holiness* of the family members and their experience of God’s *grace*-filled presence. *Justice* and *peace* are first imbibed within the *love* received and offered within the immediate family, and gradually extended to the community and society in general.

B. The Ministry of Marriage

1931. While focusing on the laity’s role and life in the Church, *PCP II* stressed the “pivotal role the family plays in renewing Christian life and in forming communities of the Lord’s

disciples. . . . In the family the various ministries in the Church are awakened and cultivated” (*PCP II 421*). To emphasize the family as an “*evangelizing agent*”, the Council, following John Paul II, detailed *four tasks* of the Christian family to reveal and communicate the love of God:

- 1) forming a community of persons,
- 2) serving life through the procreation and education of offspring,
- 3) participating in the development of society, and
- 4) sharing in the mission of the Church (*cf. PCP II 575*).

1932. More specifically, Christian spouses *minister to each other* by strengthening each other’s faith, supporting, counseling, and easing each other’s burdens in healing and comforting. They *minister to their children*, most of all by having a lasting *loving relationship* with each other that establishes a sound family atmosphere. In relating to their children, parents must not only take care of them physically, but also provide for their religious formation. “The family is meant by God to be the first school of discipleship where the parents are the first catechists of their children and where all the members mutually evangelize each other . . . and learn to share with others the grace and light of Christ” (*PCP II 576*). In everyday actions, this demands that the parents accept and be present to each of their children as unique persons, and throughout the various stages of their growth.

1933. Finally, *the Christian family ministers to the wider community*. *PCP II* warns of “family unity based solely on ties of flesh and blood,” and consequently “insensitive to the greater demands of the common good” (*PCP II 582*). The truth is that, not only is the family the first and vital cell of society with basic social and political roles (*FC 42ff*), but “the Christian family is called upon to take part actively and responsibly in the mission of the Church in a way that is original and specific . . . an ‘intimate community of life and love’ at the service of the Church and society” (*FC 50*). The Christian family exercises this ministry through its relation to Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King as

- a believing and evangelizing community;
- a community of mutual sanctification in worshipful dialogue with God; and
- a community at the service of man through Christ’s new commandment of love (*Ibid.*).

C. In the Pattern of the Paschal Mystery

1934. We have seen how married love is the “sacrament” of “Christ who loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (*Eph 5:25*). Christ solemnly proclaimed: “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (*Jn 15:12f*). Actually, St. John tells us that “the way we came to understand love was that he laid down his life for us; we too must lay down our lives for our brothers” (*1 Jn 3:16*). Thus, for us Christians, all authentic love, and especially the primary model of conjugal and family love, follows the *Paschal pattern of dying to rise to new life*. The consequence of this Paschal nature of love is expressed in the Gospel paradox: “whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel’s will preserve it” (*Mk 8:35*).

1935. This Paschal pattern of love is stressed by John Paul II: “by marriage the spouses are made part of the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ in a new way” (*FC 56*). In the concrete, this means that the spouses relative to each other, and parents relative to their children, are called to die to their own selfish egotism to rise to being “for the other” in covenantal love. Daily they have to strive:

- to *die* to their own *amor proprio* and over-sensitivity,
to *rise* to mature communion in reaching out;
- to *die* to romantic illusions and naive dreams,
to *rise* to working at realistic possibilities;
- to *die* to holding grudges and jealous pettiness,

- to *rise* to open-hearted forgiveness and reconciliation;
- to *die* to self-centered independence and intolerance,
- to *rise* to mature cooperation and self-sacrifice.

D. Marriage and the Eucharist

1936. Vatican II directed that “marriage is normally to be celebrated within the Mass” (*SC 78*) since “in the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows and is continuously renewed” (*FC 57*). As the representation of Christ’s sacrifice of love, the Eucharist provides the Christian family with the living foundation and soul of its “communion” and its “mission.” Sharing in the Eucharistic bread both draws the family members together “to become one body, which reveals and shares in the wider unity of the Church, . . . and becomes a never-ending source of missionary and apostolic dynamism for the Christian family” (*Ibid.*).

1937. The *Eucharist* is a *model for Christian marriage* because it is the personal loving self-gift of Christ to his beloved disciples in the shared consecrated bread and wine, around the Table of the Lord. So marriage is the mutual personal loving self-gift of the spouses to each other in *two basic ways*: at table through shared meals, and in the marriage act of sexual intercourse. Both the Eucharist and the married spouses’ sexual intercourse involve the giving and receiving of the human body in a *life-giving* way. Both are acts of union “*already*” in the present, but promising a fuller unity “*not yet*” achieved. In both the participants are *drawn to God* because ultimately they are “*gifts*” from God, *not* “*duties*” which one has to perform. In the authentic Catholic view, then, marital intercourse is a God-given means of drawing closer to God and to Christ – to real sanctity and holiness – *not* an obstacle to it.

V. VOCATION TO CELIBATE LOVING

1938. Jesus’ own proclamation of the Good News brought two important changes in the living out of the two great Commandments of Love. *First*, as we have already seen (*cf. no. 1890*), he re-established the original unity and indissolubility of marriage. *Second*, he invited consecrated life-long celibacy, those who “have renounced sex for the sake of God’s Reign. Let him accept his teaching who can” (*Mt 19:12*).

“Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the *vocation* of the human person in its entirety to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy.” Actually,

virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage, but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity or celibacy are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of God’s covenant with His people (*FC 11 16; cf. CCC 1618-20*).

Vatican II renewed our understanding of the religious life as a distinct form of discipleship whereby persons consecrate themselves to living Christ’s life radically, publicly and in community, devoting themselves exclusively to the mission of Christ, embodying this “gift of God” of the evangelical counsels, “chaste self-dedication to God, of poverty and obedience.” The *three vows* of religion acquire particular significance in the Philippines: *poverty* witnesses against exploitation of material resources, greed leading to impoverishment of millions, by responsible stewardship, detachment, and its call for simplicity and trust in God; *chastity* witnesses against sex divorced from love, commitment and responsibility, exploitation of women and children; *obedience* witnesses against imposition by force and violence, domination of the weak. All three vows express communal discipleship through faith, hope

and love of a God who reveals Himself in word and deeds as LOVE, especially for the little ones, the poor (*PCP II 449, 461-63, 466-69*).

1939. Celibate loving is the freely chosen *vocation* of religious, priests and the laity who have opted for “single blessedness.” They make no pretense of being “holier” than married Christians. They freely choose virginity for the Kingdom of God, to

hold fast to the Lord with that undivided love which is profoundly proper to the New Covenant (*cf. 1 Cor 7:32*); they bear witness to the resurrection in a future life (*cf. Lk 20:36*), and gain extremely appropriate help for exercising perfect and unremitting *love* (*OT 10*).

In anticipating “the new world of the future resurrection,” *celibacy reveals the eschatological dimensions of marriage*. Marriage is never the ultimate, *the end* in itself. No spouse can give the other “heaven on earth.” Rather, marriage brings both spouses ultimately to God. This liberates them from becoming enslaved to each other. Celibacy, then, “keeps alive in the Church a consciousness of the *mystery of marriage* and defends it from any reduction and impoverishment” (*FC 16*).

1940. Likewise, the *eschatological quality* of marriage shows the celibate Christian that being directed to God does not imply flight from this world, nor fear of responsibility. Rather, like marriage itself, *celibacy is an unfolding of the baptismal grace*, a charism from Christ himself, *a special form of service of others* – for greater spiritual fruitfulness.

John Paul II adds a final reflection, very relevant to Filipino families in which older sons and daughters not infrequently are called to put off, even to sacrifice, marriage in order to support the education of their younger brothers and sisters.

These reflections on virginity or celibacy can enlighten and help those who for reasons independent of their own will, have been unable to marry and have accepted their situation in a spirit of service (*cf. FC 16*).

Part Two: HOLY ORDERS

1941. In this chapter’s Opening, we saw how the Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders are directed immediately towards the salvation of others. These two Sacraments help toward personal salvation precisely by relating the recipient to the service of others. Thus they confer a particular *mission* in the Church and help in building up the People of God (*cf. CCC 1534-35*).

Those already consecrated by Baptism (*cf. LG 10*) receive particular consecrations. We have already seen how Christian spouses “by a special sacrament are fortified and receive a kind of consecration in the duties and dignity of their state” (*GS 48*). Now we shall take up how “the faithful consecrated by the sacrament of Holy Orders are appointed to nourish the Church with the word and grace of God in the name of Christ” (*LG 11*).

CONTEXT

1942. Like the Sacrament of Marriage, the present situation of the priesthood has entered a “**state of crisis.**” *First*, there is the worldwide *shortage of priests*, and in many traditional Catholic countries, a dramatic decline in priestly vocations. This may well go unnoticed in our country since in general all our major seminaries are full to capacity. Nevertheless, the number of Filipino Catholics for every

priest is constantly growing. *Second*, since Vatican II, *great stress* has rightly been put *on the “priesthood of all the faithful,”* received in Baptism. But priestly ordination is reduced by some to mere functional appointment. *Third*, a great variety of *lay ministers* has emerged, who perform tasks that were once performed only by the ordained. Since today the priesthood is commonly presented in terms of **ministry** rather than power, **service** rather than authority, a certain “*identity crisis*” has arisen for ordained priests (*cf. PDV I, 11*). What precisely is the specific role of priestly ministry now?

1943. *Lastly*, many priests who are not bothered by any personal identity crisis are asking: how can “sacramental practice be made an expression of faith really affecting the whole of personal and social life – not wrongly reduced to mere external ritualism.” Doubts are raised about the effectivity of sacramental ministry toward resolving the pressing problems of poverty, injustice, and moral deterioration. Thus “in a world in which almost all problems have political aspects, participation in politics and even revolutionary activity is considered by some to be indispensable” (*1967 Synod 2-3*).

1944. For Filipinos, this crisis is significant because “in our cultural situation, perhaps nothing on the human plane will influence both the shape of the Church and its impact on Philippine society as palpably as the leadership of its ordained ministers” (*PCP II 507*). Therefore, the Council concluded, “it is of the utmost importance that we project a shape of the ordained ministry that responds to the signs of the times” (*Ibid.*).

1945. The following Exposition takes up first the origin and meaning of the priestly vocation in general, its expression in the term “**Orders**,” and its evolution in the Old and New Testaments. This culminates in *Jesus Christ*, the *One Mediator/Priest*, who shares his priesthood in a twofold manner: in the *common priesthood* of all the faithful, and in the *ministerial priesthood* of the ordained. The ordained priesthood is then developed in terms of complementary “models,” based on the common essentials of *configuration to Christ*, in the *service of the Church* for the salvation of the world (*cf. PDV 12*). The Sacrament of Holy Orders is then examined in its *three degrees: bishop, priest* and *deacon*, with excerpts from their ordination rites. Finally the basic *effects* of Ordination are examined, together with a brief exposition of the *spirituality* proper to the priesthood.

EXPOSITION

VI. ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE PRIESTLY VOCATION

1946. The vocation of every Christian is a response to Christ’s call, “Come, follow me” (*Mt 19:21*). Every single Christian, of whatever age, sex, race, or walk of life, is called to seek Christ, find him, and stay with him (*cf. Jn 1:37ff*). *This call is Trinitarian*: a free gift of God, grounded in the **Father’s** free loving choice, who blesses us in His Son, **Christ Jesus**, and seals us with the **Holy Spirit** (*cf. Eph 1:3-14*). Moreover the *Church* is the “begetter and educator of vocations” in her ministry of proclaiming the Word, in her celebration of the Sacraments, and in her service and witness to charity” (*PDV 35*). The vocation every Christian derives *from* the Church and her mediation, finds fulfillment *in* the Church, and is a service *to* the Church.

1947. What is true of every Christian vocation is true specifically of the *priestly vocation*, described by John Paul II as “the call by the Sacrament of Holy Orders received in the Church, to place oneself at the service of the People of God with a particular belonging and configuration to Jesus Christ, and with the authority of acting ‘in the name and in the person’ of him who is Head and Shepherd of the Church” (PDV 35). The priest’s vocation is likewise *grounded in the Trinity*: “by virtue of consecration he receives in the Sacrament of Orders, the priest is sent forth by the **Father**, through the mediatorship of **Jesus Christ** . . . in order to live and work by the power of the **Holy Spirit** in the service of the Church” (PDV 12).

1948. The Final Message of the 8th Synod of Bishops (1990) spoke in moving terms of the *mystery* and *gift* of the priesthood in these same Trinitarian terms:

We derive our identity ultimately from the love of the **Father**, we turn our gaze to the **Son**, sent by the Father as High Priest and Good Shepherd. Through the power of the **Holy Spirit** we are united sacramentally to him Our priestly life and activity continues the life and activity of Christ himself. Here lies our identity, our true dignity, the source of our joy, the very basis of our life (cf. PDV 18).

A. Holy Orders

1949. In its specific nature, Holy Orders is “*the sacrament of apostolic ministry.*” Through it, “the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church to the end of time” (CCC 1536). “*Order*” in Church usage simply means *the group or body of those who carry on certain functions*, such as teaching, sanctifying, and governing. *Ordination* is

the sacramental act by which one is integrated into the orders of bishops, of priests and of deacons. It goes beyond a simple designation, delegation or institution by the community since it confers a gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling the exercise of a sacred power which can only come from Christ himself, through his Church (CCC 1538).

B. Priesthood in Salvation History

1. Old Testament

1950. Already in the **Old Testament**, through Moses God called *all the Israelites* to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Ex 19:6), while consecrating *one* of the Twelve Tribes, Aaron and his descendents, the tribe of Levi, for priestly ministry (cf. Lv 8:1-12; Ex 28-30; CCC 1539). Now, a priest is someone appointed to act on behalf of the people “as their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Heb 5:1). But this Old Testament priesthood was powerless to effect definitive salvation.

Since the Law had only a shadow of the good things to come and no real image of them, it was never able to perfect the worshippers by the same sacrifices offered continually year after year. . . for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins (Heb 10:1-4).

2. New Testament Ministry

1951. The New Testament offers *four* basic dimensions of Christian ministry that Catholic tradition has brought together in the priesthood.

First, the priest is a *disciple*, called to “follow Jesus” in *total commitment*, undeterred even by family ties, life itself (Lk 14:26), hardship (the Cross), or death – “let the dead bury their dead” (cf. Mt

8:22), and with no “looking back to what was left behind” (*cf. Lk 9:62*). *Christian discipleship* was *unique* in that:

- Christ, not the disciple, initiated the call;
- whose aim was not to acquire intellectual or moral formation, but to gain faith in the saving mission of Jesus;
- in a never outgrown discipleship that consists in a complete, ever-deepening surrender to Jesus, Founder of the Kingdom and the unique Rabbi (Teacher); and
- in total and radical dedication to the Kingdom, beyond all ordinary human ties.

1952. *Second*, the priest is an *apostle*, “sent” to serve in the mission of Jesus and of the Church. It is always Jesus who is preached. St. Paul wrote: “It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (*2 Cor 4:5*). Being sent meant for Paul being “afflicted in every way – external conflicts, internal fears” (*cf. 2 Cor 7:5*). But “God, who encourages the downcast, encouraged us” and he could later write: “I will gladly spend myself and be spent for your sakes” (*2 Cor 12:15*).

Third, the priest is called a *presbyter*, an “elder” one responsible to the pastoral care of the Church members. As God’s steward he must be

blameless, . . . not self-willed or arrogant, not a drunkard, or violent, nor greedy. . . . He should, on the contrary, be hospitable, and a lover of goodness; steady, just, holy, and self-controlled. In his teaching he must hold fast to the authentic message, so that he will be able both to encourage men to follow sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it (*Ti 1:7-9*).

He represents an institution with authority,—not to dominate but to serve.

1953. *Finally*, the priest is *presider at the Eucharist* as he offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass *in persona Christi*. Thus, he gathers the community together for prayer, and in particular for the “breaking of bread,” to “proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes” (*1 Cor 11:26*). Since *the Mass* represents the apex of the Church’s prayer and work, it is obviously *the central function of a priest’s day*. For there, in the most clear and concrete way, all the faithful encounter the saving presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in word and sacrament.

VII. JESUS CHRIST, THE ONE MEDIATOR/PRIEST

A. Unique Priesthood of Christ

1954. Jesus Christ revealed in himself “the perfect and definitive features of the priesthood of the New Covenant” (*PDV 13; cf. CCC 1544*). Thus, the **New Testament** proclaims *Jesus as the unique Mediator of the New Covenant between God and humankind*. “There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (*1 Tim 2:5*). Jesus is not just the spokesman for God like Moses, Aaron or Elijah; he *is* God-made-man, Emmanuel, God among us, in whose very *being* the New Covenant – the perfect union of God and man – is fully realized. For “it pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him, and by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, on earth and in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross” (*Col 1:19-20*).

1955. But Jesus is uniquely “priest” not only by reason of his very *being*, but also by his *actions* (cf. CCC 1545). He “brought his role as mediator to complete fulfillment when he offered himself on the Cross, thereby opening for us, once and for all, access to the Father’s house” (cf. Heb 9:24-28; PDV 13). Thus he surpassed all priestly offerings and sacrifices of the past. “By the one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb 10:12-14).

Moreover, the *whole life* of Jesus was a priestly act. By emptying himself in becoming man, by his public ministry, by his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, Jesus brought us into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which he lives with the Father” (Synod 1967, I, 1).

In thinking of Christ’s *Priesthood*, then, we must keep before our eyes a unique, incomparable reality that also includes the *prophetic* and *royal* office of the Incarnate Word of God.

1556. Filipino Catholics are used to hearing such Christian proclamations, especially during Holy Week in Good Friday celebrations. But during the year we often seem to forget what Christ’s sacrifice of perfect self-giving *love* really means for us now. The Church constantly tries to awaken a deeper, personal realization within and among us of what Christ did in shedding his Blood on the Cross.

Exercising a supreme and unique Priesthood by the offering of himself, Jesus surpassed them by fulfilling all the ritual priesthoods and holocausts of the Old Testament and indeed of the pagans. In his sacrifice he took on himself the miseries and sacrifices of men of every age, and also the efforts of those who suffer for the cause of justice or who are daily oppressed by misfortune. . . . He bore the sins of us all on the cross; rising from the dead and being made Lord he reconciled us to God; and he laid the foundation of the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church (Synod 1967, I, 1).

What needs to be stressed is how *Christ’s sacrifice* of 2,000 years ago is *really present* and *operative* among us *today*. This leads us to study how Christ’s Priesthood is present among us today.

B. Christ Shares His Priesthood

1957. Christ’s priesthood did not stop with himself. “With the definitive sacrifice of the Cross, Jesus communicated to ALL his disciples the dignity and mission of priests of the new and eternal Covenant. . . [Moreover] for the sake of this universal priesthood, he called and appointed with a specific and authoritative mandate the Twelve “as his companions whom he would send to preach the Good News. They were likewise to have authority to expel demons’ ” (Mk 3:14-15; PVD 13- 14).

In Chap. 26 we saw how Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice on the Cross is made present in each Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. Now, in this chapter, we see how Christ’s unique Priesthood is rendered present today in a *twofold* manner in the Church: in the *common priesthood* of all the baptized, and in the *ministerial priesthood* of the ordained (cf. CCC 1546-47).

VIII. ROYAL PRIESTHOOD AND MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD

1958. This twofold sharing of Christ’s Priesthood is beautifully expressed in the first half of the Preface for the Chrism Mass, Holy Thursday morning.

Father, by Your Holy Spirit you anointed your only Son
High Priest of the new and eternal Covenant.
With wisdom and love you planned that this one Priesthood
should continue in the Church.
Christ gives the dignity of a *Royal Priesthood*

to the people he had made his own.
From these, with a brother's love, he chooses men to share
his *sacred ministry* by the laying on of hands. . .

A. Royal Priesthood of the Faithful

1959. Vatican II set forth the basic truth that all the baptized share in the unique priesthood of Christ.

Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men, made the new people “a royal nation of priests in the service of his God, and Father” (*Rv 1:6; 5:9-10*). The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that through all their works, they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the perfection of him who has called them out of darkness into his own wonderful light (*LG 10; cf. 1 Pt 2:4-10*).

1960. It is through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation that all the faithful are empowered to exercise their priesthood through shar-ing, according to each one's proper vocation, in the mission of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King (*cf. CCC 1547*). As *prophets*, we give living witness of Christ to the world through explicit profession of Faith in word and deed, especially by our way of life. As *priests*, we offer worship to God in the Eucharist, by receiving the sacraments, and by offering prayers and thanksgiving. As sharing *in Christ's kingship*, we continue Christ's ministry of reconciliation, leading others to follow his call to become peacemakers by confronting injustice and evil with compassion and forgiveness.

1961. As “the faithful” we form a *priestly community*, radically transformed by the grace of Christ. “Through him, with him, and in him, in the unity of Holy Spirit,” all we are and have and do is offered to “the glory and honor of the Almighty Father.” The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines sketches *three dimensions* of how we live this communal sharing in Christ's priesthood: as a *consecration*, committing everything we do to God; as *mediating* God's plan for transforming the world; and as *sacrifice* of life together with Christ, celebrated in the Eucharist (*cf. PCP II 413*).

B. Ministerial Priesthood of the Ordained

1962. Besides making all the faithful a holy and kingly priesthood, the Lord also appointed certain ministers among the faithful in order to join them together in the one body where ‘all members have not the same function’ (*Rom 12:4*). These men were to hold in the community of the faithful the sacred power of Order, that of offering sacrifice and forgiving sins. They would exercise their priestly office publicly on behalf of men in the name of Christ (*PO 2*).

The ordained, therefore, “in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest, are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament” (*LG 28*).

1963. The second half of the Preface for the Chrism Mass expresses why Jesus instituted the ministerial priesthood thus:

He appoints them to renew in his name the sacrifice of redemption
as they set before your family his paschal meal.
He calls them to lead your holy people in love,
nourish them by your word,
and strengthen them through the Sacraments.
Father, they are to give their lives in your service

and for the salvation of your people
As they strive to grow in the likeness of Christ
and honor you by their courageous witness of faith and love.

C. Inter-Relation of the Two Priesthoods

1964. The one Priesthood of Christ, then, is shared differently by the “*common*” or “*royal priesthood*” of all the baptized, and the *ministerial priesthood* of those who have received the Sacrament of Orders. Vatican II states: “Though they differ essentially and not just in degree,” nevertheless *they ordered one to another* (cf. LG 10). In his “Letter to Priests,” John Paul II describes how through the sacrament of orders, the priestly ministry “tends to make the faithful aware of their common priesthood and to activate it. It reminds them that they are the People of God and enables them to offer spiritual sacrifices” (*Novo Incipiente Nostro*, 6 April '79, 4). Similarly, it is the common experience of priests that they come to know their ministerial priesthood as it is called forth by the faithful whom they serve (cf. LG 24).

1965. Some comparison might be drawn *between* the mutually inter-related yet essentially different ordained priesthood and common priesthood, *and* the mutual relation and essential difference of husband and wife in marriage. Within marriage, husband and wife can only be defined in relation to each other. Husband calls forth wife to be wife, and yet is *essentially different* from wife, who calls forth husband to be husband. The identity of each, moreover, is based on the more fundamental union between them, the “becoming one flesh.” Likewise, the *essential difference between* the ministerial priesthood of the ordained *and* the common priesthood of the baptized consists precisely in being *ordered and directed to each other*. Moreover, each’s identity is constituted as a distinct mode of Christ’s unique Priesthood.

1966. Since both are different manifestations of the presence of Christ our Priest, both can be seen in the liturgy which is the “exercise of Christ’s priestly office.” In the Eucharist we saw that there is a *single presence of Christ in four distinct modes*: 1) in the Scriptural Word, 2) in the priest, 3) in the consecrated bread and wine, and 4) in the assembly (cf. SC 7). The second mode is an exercise of the ordained priesthood, calling together the community and leading them in worship. The fourth mode, the assembly, represents the common priesthood of the faithful, which needs to be called forth by the ministering priest.

IX. MODELS OF MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD

A. Different Models

1. Sacral and Service Models

1967. Through the Christian centuries, different emphases have arisen regarding the role of the ordained priesthood. For a long time the *sacred/cultic* model prevailed in which the priest was viewed as “apart” with its emphasis on the special powers of the priest — powers exercised principally in the administration of the sacraments, particularly the Mass and Confession. Post-Vatican II theology has tried to balance the previous emphasis on the “loftiness” of the ordained priesthood, by stressing the aspect of “service.” Hence the *ministerial* model — the priesthood as a ministry of community leadership which is exercised in *service* (*dia-konia*), rooted in the very ministry of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve (cf. Mk 10:45).

This broader understanding of priesthood is inspired by re-discovering the multiplicity of charisms and ministries present in the early Church (*cf. 1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12:4-8*).

1968. Unfortunately, neither model is able to present a completely adequate view of the mystery of the ordained priesthood. The *sacral model* can be misunderstood as leading toward a separation of the priest from the people. The more popular “*ministerial*” or *functional model* does not account sufficiently for priests who are not pastors of local parishes, nor even for the life-long commitment, celibate life-style, holiness, and simplicity of life which are essential to the vocation of all ordained priests. Neither does it adequately distinguish the priest-leader from other community leaders: scholars, educators, pastoral leaders, leaders in the thrust for justice and peace, and the like.

2. Representational Model

1969. Hence to focus on what is specific to the ordained ministry, a third “*representational*” model can help. Through ordination, Bishops and priests are incorporated into the Church’s pastoral office, with new relationships to Christ and to the Church. They are officially authorized to *represent* Christ and the Church – speak in the name of the Church, and in particular circumstances, to act in Christ’s name. In non-sacramental actions of the priest’s official ministry, the priest’s conformity to Christ is not automatic. Hence the priest must strive to prayerfully live up to his vocation to personal holiness, and “to stir into flame the gift of God” bestowed “through the laying on of hands” (*cf. 2 Tim 1:6*).

B. In the Person of Christ, Head

1. Configured to Christ

1970. Priests are ordained to be sacraments of Christ, “configured to Christ in such a way that they are able *to act in the person of Christ* the head” (*PO 2*). This does *not* mean Christ is absent, or that the priest somehow substitutes for Christ. On the contrary, in the ecclesial service of the ordained ministry, it is Christ himself who is present and acting through his ordained minister. Through his person and ministry the priest serves Christ by being the sign and instrument through whom Christ reaches out to touch and transform the faithful in his Church (*cf. CCC 1548-51; PCP II 516*).

1971. By the sacramental anointing of Holy Orders, the Holy Spirit configures priests in a new and special way to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd; he forms and strengthens them with his pastoral charity; he gives them an authoritative role in the Church as servants of the proclamation of the Gospel to every people and of the fullness of Christian life for all the baptized (*PDV 15*).

There is a specific “*ontological bond*,” then, which unites the ordained priest to Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd” (*Ibid.*, 11). “Priests are called to prolong the presence of Christ, the One High Priest, embodying his way of life and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care” (*Ibid.*, 15).

2. What Priests Do

1972. Today, Catholic Filipinos are often challenged by fundamentalists regarding the need for both Church and priests. John Paul II sketches the role of the ordained priest as follows:

In the Church and on behalf of the Church priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus the Head and Shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of

salvation particularly in Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist; showing his loving concern to the point of total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the Head and Shepherd (PDV 15).

C. In the Name of the Whole Church

1973. In his ministry the priest not only “represents Christ, the Head, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church, but also is placed *in the forefront* of the Church. The priesthood, along with the Word of God and the sacramental signs which it serves, belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church” (PDV 16). *The relation of the priest to Jesus Christ* and in him to his Church, is found *in the very being of the priest*, by virtue of his sacramental consecration/anointing, and *in his activity*, that is, in his mission or ministry (cf. PDV 16; CCC 1552-53).

1974. The priest’s relation to the Church flows from his *configuration to Christ* precisely as *Head* and *Shepherd* and in his *Pastoral Charity*. As conformed to **Christ, the Head** who loved his Body the Church, and gave himself up for her (cf. Eph 5:26), the priest’s life must be marked by this fundamental attitude of *service* to the People of God, freed from all “lording it over” those in their charge (cf. 1 Pt. 5:2-3). Configured to Christ the **Good Shepherd** of his flock, the Church, the priest is called to imitate and live out this pastoral charity.

1975. Moreover, Christ is also the true **Bridegroom** of his Church. Therefore the priest, while remaining a member of the community as a believer alongside his brother and sister believers, must imitate Christ’s spousal love towards the Church, his Bride, through total gift of self to the Church in *pastoral charity*. This “requires that a priest always work in the *bond of communion* with the bishop and with his brother priests” (PO 14). Ordained ministry has a radical ‘*communitarian form*’ and can only be carried out as ‘a collective work.’ This involves a triple relationship:

- hierarchical communion and necessary cooperation with his *bishop*;
- with his *fellow priests*, by reason of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the common bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and fraternity; and
- with the *laity*, by promoting their baptismal priesthood in serving their faith, hope and charity (cf. PDV 17).

1976. The priest actually serves the Church as *mystery*, *communion* and *mission*. In continuing Christ’s prayer, word, sacrifice and salvific action in the Church, the priest is a *servant of the Church* as:

- *mystery*, by actuating the Church’s sacramental signs of the presence of the Risen Lord;
- *communion*, by building up the unity of the Church in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services; and
- *mission*, by making the community a herald and witness to the Gospel (cf. PDV 16).

D. The Church in the Philippines

1977. Priests, then, are “representatives of Christ the Head in and before the community,” “servant-leaders of the community” (cf. PCP II 514, 518). The essential traits of the Christian community in the Philippines are described as:

- formed by the Word of God,
- Eucharistic,

- prophetic, and
- ministerial (*cf. PCP II 519-31*).

But the over-riding challenge is “to become the ‘Church of the Poor’” (*cf. PCP II 124ff*).

1978. But what does this mean in practice for its ordained ministers? *First*, “those who cannot pay the usual stipends or stole fees because of poverty will not be deprived of the sacraments or other spiritual services” (*PCP II 128*). *Second*, pastors “will give preferential attention and time to those who are poor, and generously share of their own resources in order to alleviate their poverty and make them recognize the love of the Lord for them despite their poverty” (*PCP II 129*). *Third*, through pastoral immersion, pastors will gain first hand knowledge of the life situation of the poor among their flock. . . [and] “courageously defend and vindicate the rights of the poor and oppressed, *even when doing so will mean alienation or persecution from the rich and powerful*” (*PCP II 131*).

1979. *Fourth*, this also means that pastors will practice preferential *reliance on the poor* in the work of evangelization, by learning how to be with, work with, and learn from the poor who will themselves become “evangelizers” (*cf. PCP II 132*). *Finally*, pastors in a “Church of the Poor” animated by Christ’s example and teaching on humility, “will not compete for the most prosperous parishes or offices, nor ambition for titles and honors. . . . Rather, they will live simply to share what they have with the needy, following the example of Christ himself and thus set an example” to their flock (*PCP II 133*).

X. THE THREE DEGREES OF THE SACRAMENT OF ORDERS

1980. The ordained ministry of the Church “is exercised in different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests and deacons” (*LG 28*). Church Law says simply: “The orders are the episcopate, the priesthood and the diaconate” (*CJC, 1009, 1; cf. CCC 1554*).

The essential of the ordination rite consists in “the imposition of hands, and the words of consecration,” through which “the grace of the Holy Spirit is given and a sacred character impressed” (*LG 21*).

A. Bishops

1981. By episcopal consecration is conferred the fullness of the sacrament of Orders. . . . [and] together with the office of *sanctifying*, the duty also of *teaching* and *ruling*. These, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college [of Bishops]. . . . Bishops in an eminent and visible manner undertake Christ’s own role as Teacher, Shepherd, and High Priest, and act in his person (*LG 21; cf. CD 2; CCC 1555*).

Each Bishop has, as Vicar of Christ, the pastoral responsibility for a particular diocese entrusted to him. But at the same time, he has, collegially with all his brothers in the episcopate, *care for all the Churches*. As a legitimate successor of the apostles, he has responsibility in solidarity for the apostolic mission of the Church (*cf. LG 23; CD 4,36f; AG 5f, 38; CCC 1559-60*).

1982. The suggested homily in the revised Rite of the Ordination of a *Bishop* clarifies the episcopal ministry:

faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funeral and burial services (*LG 29*).

1986. In the Ordination of a Deacon, following the laying on of hands, the Bishop pronounces these words of consecration:

Lord, send forth upon him the Holy Spirit,
that he may be strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace
to carry out faithfully the work of ministry.
(*Rite of the Ordination of a Deacon, 21*)

XI. EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF ORDERS

1987. The Sacrament of Holy Orders configures the ordained to Christ by a *special grace of the Holy Spirit*, in view of serving as an instrument of Christ for his Church. By ordination one is qualified to act as representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple function of Priest, Prophet, and King (*cf. CCC 1581-84*). Like Baptism and Confirmation, Orders confers an *indelible spiritual character* which John Paul II describes as a mark made in the depths of the priest's being, with its own "personalistic" dynamism for priestly personality (*cf. Letter to Priests, 7*). But a fuller account of the effects of the Sacrament must focus on the Holy Spirit and the life of the ordained.

A. The Spirit and the Life of the Ordained

1988. The Ordination Rites for Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, all invoke the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry they will perform. Is this only a functional consecration? Or are those ordained touched personally, in their very being? Vatican II answered this by clearly bringing out the intimate bond between the priest's own spiritual life and the exercise of his threefold ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral leadership (*cf. PO 4-6, 13; PDV 26-27*). Besides the *ex opere operato* power of the sacraments which the ordained celebrate by reason of their *office*, there is the personal spiritual *ideal* toward which the ordained are directed to strive, even while conscious of their own human frailties and sinfulness.

- One can more effectively *preach God's Word* only from a life wholly conformed to it, and conversely, preaching the Word always affects the whole life of the preacher.
- One can *lead others into the prayer of Christ* only from a life conformed to that prayer, and conversely, leading others in genuine Christian prayer affects the whole life of the prayer-leader.
- One can *shepherd with the affection of Christ the Good Shepherd* only from a life conformed to such affections, and conversely, shepherding others with the affections of Christ affects the whole life of the shepherd.

The ordained ministry thus incarnates the priesthood of Jesus Christ in the priest himself. The transformation through ordination involves the whole life of the ordained because of the nature of the ministries themselves.

B. Spirituality of Priests

1. The Holy Spirit

1989. The Spirit of the Lord is the principal agent in the spiritual life of all Christians, especially of priests (*cf. CCC 1585-89*). He creates the “new heart,” inspires and guides it with the new law of love and pastoral charity (*cf. PDV 33*). Following his action on Christ himself (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” [*Lk 4:18*]) the Spirit *reveals* and *communicates* the fundamental calling (vocation) which the Father addresses to everyone from all eternity through Christ Jesus, and becomes the indwelling principle and wellspring of its fulfillment. He links us with Christ and makes us sharers in his life as Son, in his love for the Father and for our brothers and sisters.

This applies to all the baptized, but in a special way to priests by reason of the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, configuring them to Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, and inspiring and enlivening their daily existence with gifts, demands, virtues and incentives – in a word, with pastoral charity (*cf. PDV 19, 27*).

2. Spiritual Life of Priests

1990. Vatican II declared that priests, who have already received in the consecration of Baptism the sign and gift of the Christian calling to perfection (*cf. Mt 5:48*), are bound in a special way to strive for this perfection since they are consecrated to God in a new way by their ordination. Since every priest in his own way represents the person of Christ himself, he is endowed with a special grace which enables him, through his service of the people, to better pursue the perfection of Christ (*cf. PO 12; PDV 20*). This means witnessing to the “*radicalism of the Gospel*,” particularly through living out the evangelical counsels: apostolic, pastoral *obedience*, *celibacy*, and evangelical *poverty* (*cf. PDV 27-30*).

3. John Paul II’s Exhortation to Priests

1991. John Paul II addressed 5,000 priests from throughout the world as follows:

The priestly vocation is essentially a call to holiness, in the form which derives from the Sacrament of Orders. Holiness is intimacy with God; it is the imitation of Christ, who was poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for persons and a giving of oneself on their behalf and for their true good; it is love for the Church which is holy and wants us to be holy, because this is the mission that Christ entrusted to her” (*PDV 33*).

In his “*Letter to Priests*”, John Paul II stressed the *need to be converted every day*. Directly addressing his fellow priests, he writes:

Being converted is a fundamental demand of the Gospel for everyone, all the more expected of us. It means: 1) returning to the grace of our vocation, meditating on the infinite goodness and love of Christ who has called us by name; 2) constantly rendering an account before the Lord of our hearts concerning our service, our zeal and our fidelity, our negligences and sins, our timidity, lack of faith and hope, of thinking only as men think and not as God thinks; 3) seeking again the pardon and strength of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation; and 4) “*praying always and not losing heart*” (*Lk 18:1; Letter to Priests, 10*).

4. For Our Filipino Priests

1992. *The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* offers a genial presentation of the *spirituality* they are called to. It has to be: 1) rooted and centered on Christ; 2) ministerial; 3) collegial; 4) lived in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity, and poverty; 5) missionary; 6)

Eucharistic; and 7) Marian (*cf. PCP II 532-555*). Moreover, the Council rightfully concludes by focusing on the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, who inspires and empowers the priest's spiritual life in the service of the Church (*cf. PCP II 556-558*).

INTEGRATION

1993. Doctrinally, both the Sacraments of Marriage and Orders are grounded on the *truths* of **Creation** in God's image, as embodied spirits, of man and woman, and of **Redemption** through the Risen Incarnate Word present in his Church, particularly in his ministers. **Morally**, marriage and the family constitute the *key factors in Catholic moral life*, which itself is enlightened, inspired, and empowered by the conscientious exercise of both the priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1994. *What is meant by "Sacraments of Vocation/Ministry"?*

The Sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders directly "call" the recipients to "minister" in Christ to the needs of others and of the Church itself, in its mission of drawing all persons to life-in-Christ.

1995. *What is the crisis regarding marriage and the family?*

While marriage and the family are very highly esteemed, they are under great pressure from:

- secularization of the marriage bond,
- the growing loss of the Christian view of sexuality, and
- the general weakening of Filipino moral and family values.

1996. *What is meant by Marriage as "covenant love"?*

Marriage is a unique sacrament in that it is built into the very nature of our human reality as:

- created male and female, through God's love,
- in the image of God who is love, and
- called to a covenant of loving one another,
- in sharing God's own divine love.

1997. *What does Genesis teach about Marriage?*

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, in its two creation accounts presents:

- the **two basic ends** of marriage: **procreative**, propagating the human race, and **unitive**, the two are called to become one body in intimate equal partnership of life and love;
- the **fall from conjugal unity and equality** in the sin originating the history of human infidelity, adultery, divorce, broken families, etc.;
- **God promising a Savior** who would not only redeem marriage as a "natural covenant of love," but actually raise it to become sacrament of God's new and eternal Covenant with His people, the Church.

1998. *How is Marriage the image of the New Covenant?*

The marriage covenant between husband and wife images the covenant between Christ and his Church.

Therefore husbands and wives should love each other as Christ loves the Church, “deferring to one another out of reverence for Christ” (*Eph 5:21*).

1999. *What are the three “goods/values of Marriage”?*

Catholic tradition speaks of Marriage in terms of:

- sacrament,
- mutual love and fidelity of spouses, and
- offspring.

2000. *How is Marriage a Sacrament?*

Both the celebration of the Marriage Rite and the couple’s married life of love are a “sacrament” of Christ’s love for his people.

This means that Marriage between Christians is:

- a saving symbolic act and life,
- grounded in Christ’s ministry, and
- continued in, by and for the Church, which,
- when celebrated in faith,
- fashions the married couple into the likeness of Christ
- by making them actually share in God’s own love and faithfulness
- through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2001. *Why get married in the church?*

Catholic spouses marry in the church:

- a) to have their binding commitment of love
 - to each other
 - before God and
 - the Christian community,
- b) blessed *through, with* and *in Christ* their Lord and Savior, as he blessed the wedding at Cana, where he performed the first of his “signs” revealing his glory to his disciples (*cf. Jn 2:1-11*).

2002. *How is Christ associated with marriage?*

In Christian marriage, Christ both:

- provides the basis for authentic married love through his redemptive grace, and
- embodies most fully God’s covenant love for His people.

2003. *How is the Church involved in the Sacrament of Marriage?*

The Church is the *Foundational Sacrament*:

- making the Risen Christ present through the ritual Sacrament of Marriage, and
- helping the Christian family by proclaiming the word of God, Christ’s new commandment of love, and
- sanctifying it through sacramental worship.

2004. *How are the Church and the Christian family alike?*

Both the Church and the Christian family are:

- *communities* united together *in love*;
- called to *constant growth* in loving communion;
- *sharing* in both Christ’s *Eucharistic worship*,
- and his *mission* of loving service,

- as *pilgrim people* journeying toward the Father.

2005. *What is the “conjugal love and fidelity” of Marriage?*

Married love is the special deep mutual spousal friendship of equal partners, rooted in the will, and embracing the whole person: body, mind and spirit.

2006. *What does authentic love in Marriage demand?*

Married love demands of the partners:

- the **integration of their sexuality** into the *personal bond* of their love,
- together with the **responsibility for fostering and preserving this “becoming one body”** through all the changes of their ongoing married life.

2007. *What does Marriage fidelity/indissolubility mean?*

Authentic married love should be marked by total permanent fidelity “till death do us part,” following Christ’s own prophetic proclamation: “let no man separate what God has joined” (*Mt 19:6*).

While recognizing the great obstacles to this Christian ideal, the Church is convinced of the power of the transforming sacramental grace of Christ and the Spirit which makes **possible** permanent conjugal love.

2008. *What Marriage value is signified by “offspring”?*

“By their very nature, the institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown” (*GS 48*).

2009. *Is the Church against “family planning”?*

No, the Church teaches the grave need for *responsible parenthood* which involves bringing into the world only those children whom they can well support and educate.

The Church advocates only Natural Family Planning, rejecting all artificial means of contraception.

2010. *What is meant by “Marriage Spirituality”?*

Married couples and parents have their own path to holiness through their faithful love. Like that of all Christians, this path includes:

- inheriting Christ’s mission in fostering the *Kingdom*
- through the ministry of loving service of each other, their children and the wider community;
- in the pattern of Christ’s Paschal Mystery;
- constantly inspired by the Holy Spirit and
- nourished by the Eucharist.

2011. *What is the Christian vocation to celibate loving?*

Virginity or celibacy, together with marriage, are the two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of God’s covenant with His people. Priests, religious, and lay persons who have freely chosen “single blessedness,” do so “for the Kingdom of God” in order to “hold fast to the Lord” and bear special witness to the Resurrection and life hereafter.

2012. *What is the Sacrament of Holy Orders?*

Holy Orders is the sacrament of apostolic ministry through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church till the end of time.

2013. *How is Holy Orders grounded in Sacred Scripture?*

In the **Old Testament** God called all His Chosen People to be a “kingdom of priests” (cf. *Ex 19:6*) while consecrating one tribe for priestly ministry (cf. *Lv 8:1-12*).

Likewise, in the **New Testament** all the baptized shared in Christ’s unique priesthood, and especially the priests who functioned as disciples, apostles, presbyters, and presiders at the Eucharist.

2014. *How is Christ the “unique Priest”?*

Jesus Christ is the *Son-of-God-made-man* whose Paschal Sacrifice redeemed the world. It revealed in his being and activity the perfect and definitive features of the Priesthood of the New Covenant.

“One is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all” (*1 Tim 2:5*).

2015. *How does Christ share his Priesthood?*

Through the **common priesthood** all the baptized share in Christ as prophet, priest and king.

Through the **ministerial priesthood**, those ordained in the Sacrament of Holy Orders are called to preach the Word of God, administer the Sacraments, and lead/build up the unity of the Christian community.

2016. *How are these two priesthoods interrelated?*

Though they differ essentially and not just in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained are “ordered one to another,” and mutually call forth and sustain each other.

2017. *Has the image of the ministerial priesthood changed?*

The ministerial priesthood was formerly pictured primarily in a “*sacral model*” wherein the priest was viewed “apart,” with special powers to administer the sacraments.

After Vatican II the “*ministerial*” or “*functional*” model predominated, stressing the priest’s role in community service.

Today, a third “*representational*” model showing the priest as officially representing Christ and the Church, tries to overcome the inadequacies of the first two models.

2018. *What are the two basic relationships of the priest?*

By his ordination in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest is specially related to, and functions in the name of:

- **Christ**, Head, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church, in whose name the priest labors;
- the whole **Church**, in which the priest is a constitutive element in his being and action.

2019. *What are the three degrees of the Sacrament of orders?*

The ordained ministry is exercised in three different degrees:

- **Bishops**, on whom the fullness of the priesthood is conferred;
- **Priests**, who serve the Church as co-workers under the Bishop; and
- **Deacons** who minister in various ways in the service of the liturgy, the Gospel and works of charity.

2020. *What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Holy Orders?*

The Holy Spirit configures the ordained to Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, by a special grace, and confers an indelible spiritual “character,” which marks the priest for special ministry in the Church.

2021. *What “spiritual life” are priests called to?*

As consecrated to God in a new way by their ordination, priests are bound in a special way to strive for the perfection indicative of one called to represent Christ before the faithful.

Chapter 29

Final Goal: Resurrection of the Body and Life Everlasting

Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die.”

(Jn 11:25f)

We have our citizenship in heaven. It is from there that we eagerly await the coming of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body, by his power to subject everything to himself.

(Phil 3:20f)

OPENING

2022. We come to the Apostles’ Creed’s final work of the Holy Spirit. It responds to the third fundamental human question: “What can we **Hope** for?” by affirming the *resurrection of the body and life everlasting* (cf. CCC 988ff, 1021ff). The first question “What can we know?” was answered in Part I by *faith* in the God revealed by Jesus Christ. The second question: “What should we do?” received its definitive answer in the *love* revealed in Jesus Christ’s life and teaching in Part II. This final chapter, therefore, completes our journey from *faith* to *love* to *hope*, the three greatest Christian virtues that activate our Christian living. They are called “theological” because they arise from God’s free gift and are directed immediately toward God, infinitely trustworthy and lovable. St. Paul tells us: “In the end three things last: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love” (cf. 1 Cor 13:13).

2023. In this Third Part we have seen how each of the *Sacraments* draws us into Christ’s Paschal Mystery. This chapter focuses on the ultimate goal of this sharing in Christ, as expressed in St. Paul’s prayer:

I wish to know Christ and the power flowing from his Resurrection; likewise to know how to share in his sufferings by being formed into the pattern of his death. Thus I do hope that I may arrive at the resurrection from the dead (Phil 3:10f).

Moreover, this ultimate goal of sharing in Jesus' dying and rising is gradually realized in us through the exercise of the *theological virtues*. **Faith** is not an escape from worldly problems, but the means of passing through present suffering and defeats to a new victorious life. **Love** is no romantic flirtation, but the God-given primal force that can absorb the betrayals of our sin-scarred world and empower us to rise again. **Hope** pushes us to seek out the Risen Christ present in our everyday life, while directing our sight far beyond death to our risen life with the Triune God.

2024. The reality and activity of the **Blessed Trinity** is once again manifested in the Holy Spirit's activity of creating the Church, inspiring its sacramental life, and raising the just to eternal life. Because the *Spirit* has been sent to us by the *Father* and the *Risen Christ* in **Baptism**, we have been formed into a "Communion of Saints," the **Church**. Within this community our wounds are healed in the *sacrament of reconciliation* in which we experience the *forgiveness of sin*. This enables us to receive together, as a community in Christ, the **Eucharistic Bread** of eternal life, the Sacrament and pledge of the "*resurrection of the dead and life of the world to come*" (*Nicene Creed*). Thus, this Third Part of the Creed, as the two previous Parts, manifests how we are caught up in the saving action of the Blessed Trinity – drawing us to share ever more fully in the divine life of the *Father*, the source of all life, revealed by *Jesus Christ* and made present to us in the *Holy Spirit*.

CONTEXT

2025. It has become increasingly difficult today to speak coherently of our Christian hope for life after death. True, we Filipinos have traditionally manifested our deep faith in an after-life by prayers for our departed loved-ones, our devotion to the saints and general acceptance of the "spirit-world." But in this present age of science and technology, the traditional Christian doctrines about the resurrection and the next life can seem, especially to the youth, to be mere wishful dreams or projections.

2026. In Philippine modernization, some secularized *psychologists* liken the catechetical images of heaven and hell to fairy tales aimed at enticing little children by promised reward/punishment to obey their elders. Many Filipino *activists* follow the Marxist-Maoist line in condemning all religious ideas about an after-life. Such ideas, they claim, betray the human responsibility to work for justice and liberation on earth, and doom the poor to continued unjust exploitation by their economic masters. In contrast, many *fundamentalists* assume the Scriptural accounts of the end of the world are to be taken literally as objective, factual descriptions of the "Day of the Lord," Christ's Second Coming.

2027. But besides those denying or misinterpreting the validity of the Christian truths on the end of life, there are a disturbing number of Filipino Christians who claim their primary motive for avoiding sin is fear of punishment, both here and hereafter. Despite the proclamation of the "Good News" of a loving God who brings us salvation in Jesus Christ, much deep-set syncretistic superstitious fear of "*Karma*," or various forms of "*gaba*" are still prevalent among many Filipinos today.

Moreover, the theory of "**Re-incarnation**" has attracted new interest and gained a certain superficial "popularity" among those who "following their own desires will surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears. They will stop listening to the truth and will wander off to fables." (2 *Tim 4:3f*).

2028. This chapter first takes up the problem of how to understand the Church teaching on the "last things," or "*eschatology*." The second section treats of "Resurrection of the Body," including the

Christian understanding of death, while the final section deals with life everlasting, embracing the concepts of Heaven, Hell, Purgatory and Judgment. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the Christian hope for New Heavens and a New Earth.

EXPOSITION

I. CATHOLIC TEACHING ON THE “LAST THINGS” (ESCHATOLOGY)

A. Background

2029. *Eschatology* – the very word is often used in jest to exemplify something so scholarly and academic as to be almost incomprehensible to the ordinary person. In *traditional catechisms* it concentrated on the *study of the individual’s last things* (*eschata*):

- **death,**
- **judgment,**
- **heaven or hell** and
- **Christ’s Second Coming.**

But the primary *biblical basis* for eschatology focuses more on *humankind’s collective destiny* expressed in the Old Testament messianic hopes, and directly grounded in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The “end time” has *already* begun in Jesus’ proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God, in his Death and Resurrection, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But it is *still to be consummated* when Christ comes in glory to judge the living and the dead.

B. Content

2030. “Eschatology,” then, plays an essential role in the “Good News” of the Gospel, expressing the goal and purpose of God’s total salvific plan. It treats of the final destiny on three levels: the *individual person*, the *whole human race*, and the *entire material cosmos*. The Church teaches that:

- Every individual human person is made up of a body which “is to be raised up on the last day,” and a “spiritual and immortal soul,” endowed with consciousness and will (*cf. GS 14; SCDF, Qq. on Eschatology, 1979*).
- The final goal of the “People of God” and the whole human race is “when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk” (*cf. Rv 21:23; NA 1*).
- The final state of the whole cosmos, is “the new heavens and a new earth . . . where the justice of God will reside” (*2 Pt 3:13*).

1. Unifying Focus

2031. Besides inter-relating these individual, social, and cosmic dimensions of eschatology, Vatican II carefully linked the future life with our present earthly life, with Christ as the unifying center of all (*cf. Rom 8:11; 1 Thes 4:14; 1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10*). For it is the crucified and Risen Christ, present among us in his Spirit, who is the hope of the world and the shape of the future to come. Christ our Lord is “the goal of human history, the judge of the living and the dead” (*GS 45*). “Remember, I am coming soon! I bring with me the reward that will be given to each man as his conduct

deserves. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rv 22:12f).

2. Importance

2032. Far from being a subject reserved for erudite academicians, then, eschatology touches our everyday Christian faith life. Without “the resurrection of the dead,” the whole structure of Christian faith collapses. Without “life everlasting” the Gospel promises and meaning of creation and redemption disappear, and earthly existence loses its “faith in what is hoped for, and conviction about things we do not see” (Heb 11:1; SCDF, Qq on Eschatology).

C. Problem Areas

2033. For most Filipino Christians, the major difficulty with eschatology is that it seems *so far away from everyday life*. We hardly know how to think and talk about “the last things,” much less make them relevant and important for ourselves. *Eschatological statements* are so abstract, in a language so metaphorical and symbolic, that we usually either ignore them, or unconsciously begin to accept them as ordinary factual descriptions or predictions of events to come — like some movie previews of coming attractions! But by so doing we turn them into unreal fantasies. Actually faith statements about judgment, heaven or hell are not “eye-witness accounts.” But these eschatological realities are truly real and objective — which we will meet in the future. They are really *interpretations of the ultimate dimensions which throw light on our present experience*. Our deepest human experiences of our conscience, of God’s presence within us in grace, or the heavy, disturbing feeling of His absence — these are the real, present ground for our faith-knowledge of the “last things,” the “eschatological realities.”

2034. Since eschatology seems so abstract and “far away” it naturally is accused of drawing us away from our present responsibilities and everyday concerns. But this is completely false.

It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities: this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfill these responsibilities according to the vocation of each one . . . The Christian who shirks his temporal duties, shirks his duties towards his neighbor, neglects God Himself, and endangers his eternal salvation (GS 43).

2035. This last point means that our “final destiny” is *already an active and present reality*, not just something in the future. We already have some initial experience of the deep happiness surging within us from God’s saving Presence — and perhaps of the awful, despairing feelings of separation. These experiences always involve our relations with others in our daily activities and works. Seen properly, Christian eschatological hope *in no way detracts from commitment to justice and liberation* in our present times.

Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. . . earthly progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society (GS 39).

II. RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

2036. Vatican II sums up the “resurrection faith” of Christians by stitching together key texts from St. Paul. “Strong in faith we look for ‘our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ’ (*Ti 2:13*) ‘who will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body’ (*Phil 3:21*), and who will come ‘to be glorified in his holy ones and adored by all who have believed’ ” (*2 Thes 1:10; cf. LG 48*). As Christians, we firmly believe that as Christ has truly risen from the dead and lives now in a glorified way, so after physical death the just will live for ever with the Father, through the Risen Christ, in the Holy Spirit. “Indeed, this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. Him I will raise up on the last day” (*Jn 6:40*).

A. Resurrection

2037. In “Resurrection of the body,” each term must be clearly understood. “**Resurrection**” means first of all *new life in the Risen Christ* – not just a restoration of our present earthly life as, for example, in Lazarus who was restored to physical life for a time by Christ (*cf. Jn 11:43f*). The risen life is rather *the ultimate life Jesus came to bring us* all. Everything that Jesus said or did, his whole life of preaching and doing good, climaxed by his own death and resurrection into glory, were to win for us this eternal life. “I came that they might have life, and have it to the full” (*Jn 10:10; cf. 3:16; 10:27; 17:1ff*).

1. Basis

2038. This notion of “eternal” life is based solidly *first* on the *Living God*, Source of all life, who revealed Himself in Old Testament salvation history, and especially in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (*cf. CCC 992-996*). *Second*, it is drawn from our faith-conviction that we have been redeemed by this *Son*, who by his Resurrection has become *life-giver*: “Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and grants life, so the Son grants life to those whom he wishes” (*Jn 5:21*). *Finally*, that this “eternal life” is “already present” is based on Jesus’ *disciples* whose Christian witness of word and deed draws others to “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,” so that through this belief they may “have life in his name” (*Jn 20:31*).

2. Means

2039. John’s Gospel not only relates this new life with *direct contact with Christ*, but also explains how this contact is fostered by a) *believing in Jesus*, his words and deeds, and b) *sharing in his Body*. “Believing in Jesus,” or discipleship for John involves many stages. *First*, there is being called through some human testimony, *then* hearing the call and responding by seeking, finding, and “coming to Jesus” (*cf. Jn 6:35*). This develops into listening to and acting upon – keeping – his words (*cf. Jn 5:24*), while remaining with Jesus. Finally, encountering Jesus stirs up the spontaneous desire to share the experience with others (*cf. Jn 1:35-42*). This “believing” marks such a change in the life of the believer that John describes it as “passing from death to life” (*Jn 5:24*). Moreover, this new life is sustained and nourished by the Bread of Life. Jesus boldly announced: “I am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever. The bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (*Jn 6:51*).

3. Goal

2040. The *goal* of this believing and partaking of the Bread of Life is a) *union with Christ*, and through him, b) with the *Father* and c) with *one another* in the *Spirit*. Christ pictures his union with us, his

disciples, by the unforgettable image: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly, . . . live on in my love” (*Jn 15:5, 9*). At the Last Supper Jesus prayed: “I pray for all those who will believe in me, that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, . . . that the world may believe that you sent me” (*Jn 17:21*). And the way we live on in Christ’s love, and be one with the Father is by keeping Christ’s own commandment: “love one another as I have loved you” (*Jn 15:12*).

B. Risen Life Already Begun

2041. The “already” of eternal life, then, is experienced in our mutual love for one another. Only “we know we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers” (*1 Jn 3:14*). Moreover, “the way we came to know love was that Christ laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (*1 Jn 3:16*). This clearly marks the difference between two dimensions of our life: mere physical life which can be sacrificed for the true full human life, grounded in the Father’s creative love, inspired by the grace-filled indwelling of the Spirit, and exercised by walking within the redeeming light and hidden glory of the Risen Christ.

1. Its Possibility

2042. Eternal life in Christ, then, is hidden within our mutual love for one another here on earth. There is no contradiction here because the opposite of eternal life is not earthly life but sin. St. John sees the eternal within the earthly by reason of faith in Christ and communion with him in the Eucharist. St. Paul explains it by relating the Christians’ life directly to the death and resurrection of Christ through Baptism.

Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection (*Rom 6:4-5*).

2. Ongoing Process

2043. The fact that our sharing in Christ’s risen life has already begun, brings to light three additional truths.

First, even though the resurrection of our bodies at the end of the world through the power of the risen Christ is a future event, already we experience the grace and power of the Resurrected One in our lives. This means that our future cannot be entirely different from what we experience now and that already by our response to the call of Christ’s love we are being prepared for the final transformation that is to come. In this sense our final transformation can be anticipated and even be understood as an ongoing process. St. Paul writes: “All of us, gazing on the Lord’s glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory into his very image by the Lord who is the Spirit” (*2 Cor 3:18*). Material creation itself “groans and is in agony even until now. . . but we ourselves, although we have the Spirit as the first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies” (*Rom 8:22-24*).

2044. *Second, it is a social/ecological task.* The “already present” aspect also implies that besides being *hope for the future*, our resurrection is also a *duty and a task for the present*. We are called to crucify our old self so that we might be “dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus” (*Rom 6:11*).

Finally, this personal transformation worked within us by the Spirit of the Risen Christ has *social and ecological dimensions*, since both community and the world are essential elements in our personal human lives. Scripture teaches that just as in the sin of the first man the whole created order

was wounded and alienated, so the creation of the new man in Christ must carry with it the ongoing, painful redemption of the world.

2045. We Filipinos experience this challenge today most sharply in the call to rectify the dehumanizing social structures that are oppressing so many, and to stop the wanton destruction of our nation's natural resources because of the uninhibited greed of a few. PCP II speaks of "people empowerment" to active and responsible participation in social life through people's organizations, NGOs, and the like, as the only means for genuine social transformation. Moreover, it advocates a "passionate care of our earth and our environment," by clarifying the "moral duty" of responsible stewardship in combatting the exploitation of our natural resources.

C. Of the Body

1. Whole Bodily Person

2046. "Body" in the Creed takes its meaning from Scripture where it signifies the whole human person, a living body whose life is spiritual. *Resurrection "of the body,"* then, means that *the whole person, body and soul, is raised up.* Our "body" is not like the rice husk to be threshed off and thrown away or burnt while the rice kernel is saved; or like a booster rocket used for lift-off to eternal life, but programmed to be jettisoned and fall back to the ground after the first stage. We are human persons, not fallen angels, material bodies with personal and interpersonal spiritual lives.

Moreover, since our bodies are the basis for our social lives our personal resurrection must have an essential *social* and *communitarian dimension.* Resurrection cannot be something merely "private" to each individual. Rather it must involve our whole interpersonal lives in family, community, and society, for which our bodies are the necessary and irreplaceable means and expression.

2. Not Re-Incarnation

2047. "Resurrection" in Christian Faith, then, is *not* a question of "*sal-vation of souls,*" but of a *transformation of the whole human person, body and soul.* While the Nicene Creed expresses this by "resurrection of the dead," the older translation of the Apostles' Creed was resurrection of the "*flesh.*" This so focuses on the resurrection of the individual person, with his/her own flesh and personal history, that all forms of *re-incarnation* and *transmigration of souls* are *rejected.* These seductive, esoteric theories are contrary to Christian Faith in that they first of all remove all ultimate meaning and value from our individual earthly lives. In addition, they destroy our personal unity by making the soul's identity separate from its different provisional bodies. Finally, they reject any real pardon of sins and ultimate fulfillment, since no number of earthly lives can purify or fulfill the human person. This can be effected only by the all-holy God of infinite Love who destines us to share in the life of perfect peace and love of the Blessed Trinity.

3. Transformation

2048. But since "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom" (*1 Cor 15:50*), *our present bodies must be radically transformed.* St. Paul sketches this transformation by contrasting the "natural body that is sown" with the "spiritual body that is raised." What is sown is corruptible, ignoble, weak and natural; but what is raised is incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual (*cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44*). The transformation from natural to spiritual body does *not* mean from material to immaterial. "Spiritual" here rather means that in the risen life, the Holy Spirit dominates bodily existence in place of all the

negative, death-dealing forces that operate within our earthly time and space. *The opposite of “spiritual” here is not material but whatever is self-centered and selfish, whether material or immaterial.*

4. In Christ

2049. St. Paul links the natural body with the first Adam and the spiritual body with Christ, the second Adam. The first Adam was created in God’s image and likeness, in harmony with Himself and the world. But after the Fall, he was ashamed of his nakedness, alienated from his partner, his environment, and subject to the power of death. In the risen life, then, restored through Christ, the second Adam, bodily existence is once again permeated by the life-giving Spirit of God.

Adam, the first man, became a living soul; the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. . . . The first man was of earth, formed from dust; the second is from heaven. . . . Just as we resemble the man from earth, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (*1 Cor 15:45-49; cf. CCC 1002-4*).

5. Truly Ours

2050. Resurrection of the body, then, affirms a new body, transformed by the Holy Spirit, which is truly ours yet changed. *How this will happen is beyond our knowledge.* To explain how our bodies would be different yet really our own, even St. Paul had to employ metaphors and analogies from creation: the various types of seed, the various types of flesh: men, animals, birds, and fish, the various types of bodies, earthly and celestial (*cf. 1 Cor 15:35-50*). But he insisted on the connection between the body of our earthly life and the future, heavenly, spiritual body:

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown in the earth is subject to decay, what rises is incorruptible. What is sown is ignoble, what rises is glorious. Weakness is sown, strength rises up. A natural body is put down and a spiritual body comes up (*1 Cor 15:42-45*).

The norm guiding his reflections was Jesus Christ, the last Adam, the man from heaven, who became a life-giving spirit. “Just as we resemble the man from earth, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven” (*1 Cor 15:49*.) By insisting that our earthly bodies will be the ones transformed, St. Paul shows that *what we do in our earthly bodies forms us for eternity*. For our earthly bodies, which are constitutive part of ourselves, will share the fate of the whole person at the end of the world.

III. CHRISTIAN VIEW OF DEATH

2051. In contrast to former ages, much in contemporary culture tries to conceal, hide, and cover up in various ways, the reality of death. But in so doing, the true meaning and significance of life is lost. For death, the separation of body and soul, is NOT just a biological fact. It is not merely a person’s cardiac arrest, or the last hour or moment of life. Rather the reality of death reaches into every moment of life, so interpenetrating it as to radically determine *life* as at once *precious* and *all-important, yet finite and limited* (*cf. CCC 1006*).

A. The Whole Person Dies

2052. Contrary to a common error that death touches only the body and not the soul, *the whole person dies*. Though the soul continues to exist after its separation from the body, this does not imply that it was not affected by death. On the contrary, the soul, though transcending the body, is also the form of the body which it animates. Hence, its attachment to the body makes death seem such a threat to it. Death thus highlights the enigma of our human existence. For we instinctively rebel against the

possibility of our complete disappearance and extinction as persons, because we bear within ourselves the “seed of eternity which cannot be reduced to mere matter” (*GS 18*). Death itself is enigmatic because of its complex nature and meanings: it is at once “*natural*,” yet also a “*consequence of sin*,” and for the Christian, a reality *transformed* radically by the *Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Each of these characteristics will be explained briefly.

1. Death as Natural

2053. In one sense death is the natural end of human life: there is “a time to be born, and a time to die” (*Eccl 3:2*). Our lives are measured by time and pass through a natural cycle of birth, growth and final decline. “Seventy is the sum of our years, or eighty if we are strong, and most of them are fruitless toil, for they pass quickly and we drift away” (*Ps 90:10*). This marks our temporal lives with a special urgency and importance: “keep careful watch over your conduct. Make the most of the present opportunity” (*Eph 5:15f*), for what we do day-by-day has meaning for eternity (*cf. CCC 1007*).

2. Death as a Consequence of Sin

2054. But death experienced precisely as a violent rupture, a painful loss of life filled with anxiety about the future, is the result of sin, humankind’s alienation from God, the source of all life, and from all creation (*cf. Gn 3:19; CCC 1008*). “God did not make Death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. He fashioned all things that they might have being . . . It was the wicked who with hands and words invited death, . . . and made a covenant with it” (*Wis 1:13,16*). As such, death is the “last enemy” of human life, that has to be conquered (*cf. 1 Cor 15:26*). This is precisely what God has accomplished in Jesus Christ, who “by his death set free . . . those who, through fear of death, had been slaves their whole life long” (*Heb 2:14*). “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Rom 6:23*).

B. Transformed by Christ

2055. Death, then, has been transformed by Christ who “has robbed death of its power and has brought life and immortality into clear light through the Gospel” (*2 Tim 1:10; cf. CCC 1009*). For the Christian, this means that death offers the real possibility of sharing in Christ’s own death and its immeasurable saving worth. The physical death of Christians completes the “dying with Christ” initiated sacramentally in their Baptism and continually nourished in the Eucharist. It consummates their incorporation into the saving dying and rising of Christ. “If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him” (*2 Tim 2:11*). For “as sin reigned through death, grace also may reign by way of justice leading to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (*Rom 5:21*).

2056. Jesus’ Death as Norm. As Christians, *we judge all human deaths in terms of Jesus’ death*. For his death sets before us in sharpest detail the two contrasting dimensions of the real deaths of human persons. Clearly, human death is destructive. It disintegrates the unity of body and soul, usually against the will of the person, often by accident. Yet *sometimes the dying person can conquer his death by freely accepting it as God’s will*, and making it an offering to God. Martyrs have done so, and their deaths represent the most positive human act, the total holocaust of love for God that ushers in eternal life. All Christians are challenged to bear witness to Christ until the end and to unite themselves to his death.

In *Christ’s death on the cross* both aspects were present: the *destructive aspect* and its *conquest in freedom*. Unjustly condemned to death and crucified between two thieves, the innocent,

sinless Jesus offered his life in perfect loving obedience to his Father, as his final human act of complete self-gift “in ransom for the many” (*Mk 10:45*), the perfect fulfillment and consummation of his whole human life.

C. End of Our Pilgrimage

2057. In death, the end of our earthly pilgrimage, God calls us to Himself. Thus we pray in the first Preface for Christian Death:

In him who rose from the dead, our hope of resurrection has dawned.
The sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality.
Lord, for your people life is changed, not ended.
When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death
We gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.

2058. This prayer expresses the confident Christian hope in life everlasting with our loving God, to whom we now turn. We shall first inquire into what this life is which we as Christians believe in and hope for, especially as indicated by the term “everlasting,” and then briefly investigate the specific realities involved in how we come to such a life.

IV. LIFE EVERLASTING

A. Nature of Everlasting Life

2059. The life Christians believe in and hope for is based firmly on God’s promises in the Old Testament Covenant (*cf. Gn 3:16-18; Ps 105, etc.*) and particularly in *Christ’s resurrection and risen life*. The simplest meaning of the Creed’s “life everlasting” can be grasped by contrasting our risen life-with-Christ with our present earthly living.

- No longer will we have to lie to ourselves that what we enjoy now will last forever. It will not, but it will be returned a hundredfold.
- No longer must we fear and disguise the reality of death. We will die, but live ever more fully in Christ.
- No longer need we deplore the fleeting, transitory character of time that drains away even the memory of our earthly fragile joys. These momentary sparks of joy will be brought together in the eternal Light of the Risen Christ.
- No longer must we bewail twisted limbs, withered by age, or dread the revelation of our sinfulness – we shall be made whole in a new creation of body and soul.
- No longer will solitary emptiness and loneliness threaten us – we will be received in the company of all Christ’s joyous members.

Such is the “quality” of life that Christians – Christ-bearers – believe in and hope for (*cf. CCC 1010-14*).

1. Life “Everlasting”

2060. “Nevertheless this notion of ‘everlasting’ life is difficult to grasp, even for us Christians, since all our present experience is transitory and fleeting. We know that such life does *not* mean *mere*

survival, the pro-longation of our present temporal succession of activities and events, one after another. *Nor* does it mean the static, frozen rigidity of *timelessness* of some detached, bodiless spirit, with no change at all because there is no personal activity, but at most absorption into a formless absolute.

Rather “*everlasting*” means a life transformed by God’s Spirit into the *perfect fulfillment of every dimension of our present human lives*. This includes the bodily and the spiritual, the temporal and the contemplative, the individual and the collective. It even assumes our physical environment of the material world. Thus “*everlasting*” focuses not on continued time but on the full transformation of the “*quality*” of our present earthly lives. This transformation is *effected by the Spirit* of our heavenly Father and the Risen Christ (*CCC 1020*).

2. Time Redeemed

2061. Everlasting life, then, is a life where the fragmented time of our earthly lives is itself perfected. In everlasting life, moments are not added *one after another* in an endless stream, but more like one *on top of another*, so that they inter-penetrate. Something like the experience we have when we, in one *present* instant, remember a *past* moment or anticipate a *future* one. Sharing in God’s eternal NOW, the past is no longer lost to us, or inhibiting us, nor is the future an unknown menace, a romantic dream, or merely a powerless possibility. Rather our *present* in everlasting life is filled with the *future* and renewed by the forgiveness that now is never *past*, but retrieved and made contemporary, because the Son eternally intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father.

3. Continuities

2062. Despite this radical newness in everlasting life, there *are three basic continuities*. On the *personal level*, our risen life *fulfills the new life* we received through Baptism and the Holy Spirit, and nourished through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Eternal life reveals and perfects what had been hidden in our everyday lives in the world, our Christian lives of grace that constituted the pledge of eternal life. On the *community level*, everlasting life is the fulfillment of our present corporate existence, especially our membership in the ecclesial community, the Church. Everlasting life means “*life together*.” There is no such thing as “private” or individualistic salvation. On the contrary, interpersonal dialogue remains perhaps the best analogy we have of the risen life. Finally, there is the *cosmic level* in which everlasting life brings to *ultimate fulfillment* and *transforms the whole creation* over which Christ reigns.

4. Biblical Images

2063. This new “quality” of life has been pictured in Sacred Scripture by various images: the kingdom of God (heaven), peace, light, wedding feast, and the like. But in all images, God is central. Already in the Old Testament, the Psalmist prayed:

Yet with you I shall always be;
you have hold of my right hand;
With your counsel you guide me,
and in the end you will receive me in glory.
Whom else have I in heaven? . . .
Though my flesh and my heart waste away,
God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever.

(Ps 73:23-26)

In the light of Christ's resurrection, St. John could write: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and him whom You have sent, Jesus Christ" (*Jn 17:3*). He added: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall later be has not yet come to light. We do know that when it comes to light, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (*1 Jn 3:2*). Paul writes in a similar vein: "Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (*1 Cor 13:12*).

5. Liturgical Images

2064. The entrance antiphon for the Mass for the Dead provides two images of life everlasting: "*Eternal rest* grant unto them, O Lord; and let *perpetual light* shine upon them." "To find rest" in God's presence, is a traditional theme depicting life everlasting, made famous by Augustine's adage: "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You" (*Confessions I,1*). But the antiphon actually refers to the seventh day of creation, when God rested (*cf. Gn 2:2*). This became the symbol of eternal life. This is not the tranquilizing rest of exhausted retirement, but the *perfect completion of all our fragmentary ways and struggles*. It is sharing in the completely unified and totally active love of God. In the Old Testament, to those who doubted His word God swore in His anger: "They shall not enter into my rest" (*Ps 95:11*). But those "who have believed. . . enter into that rest. . . a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. . . Let us strive to enter into that rest" (*Heb 4:3,9-11*).

2065. *Perpetual light* also expresses this new life, since Christ clearly affirmed: "I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall ever walk in darkness: no, he shall possess the light of life" (*Jn 8:12*). Christ came to the world as light "to keep anyone who believes in him from remaining in darkness. In the light of Christ, the Christian comes to the truth that "God is light" (*1 Jn 1:5*), and that only in Him will the darkness of sin, futility, and despair be dispelled and overcome. So we pray in the Responsorial Psalm of the Mass for the Dead:

Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil;
for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.
You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes. . . .
Only goodness and kindness follow me all days of my life.
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.

(*Ps 23:4-6*)

B. Realities in Process Toward Life Eternal

1. Death

2066. For Christians, *death is the entry into eternal life* (*cf. CCC 1010-14*). The Church helps them to unite their own deaths with the saving death of Jesus Christ, God's eternal Word who took "upon himself our human weakness, giving our mortal nature immortal value, so that in him, man restores to man the gift of everlasting life" (*3rd Preface for Christmas*).

Strengthened for the journey by the Sacrament of Healing, and the Eucharist as Holy Viaticum – "on-the-way-with-you" – the Church prays:

Go forth, Christian, depart from this world:

- in the name of God the Almighty Father who created you;
- in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who suffered death for you;
- in the name of the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon you.

In peace be your home this day, and in holy Sion your abode,
With the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, with St. Joseph, the angels and all the
saints . . .
Return to your Creator, who formed you out of earthly clay.
May you see your Redeemer face to face. (*Roman Ritual*)

2. Particular Judgment

2067. As the end of our earthly pilgrimage, death involves an inescapable judgment which leads to the definitive outcome of the person's life (*cf. CCC 1021-22*). Jesus indicated this with his parable of the poor man Lazarus (*cf. Lk 16:22*) and his promise to the good (repentant) thief: "This day you will be with me in paradise" (*Lk 23:43*). The Church teaches that those who have died in the state of grace "are received immediately into heaven, and see clearly God Himself, one and three, as He is, while those who die in actual mortal sin go down to hell immediately" (*cf. Council of Florence, ND 2309*).

But *this judgment* of Christ is *not something merely imposed on us from the outside*, as it were. It means that by our free acts in life, we have become open to Christ's light and love – and are received by, with, before the Father. *Or* we have freely made ourselves opaque and impervious to His light, and have thus freely chosen to harden our hearts to his love and let ourselves be condemned to eternal punishment.

3. Heaven

2068. Filipinos usually speak of heaven as if it were a "place", but only because, since we live in time and space, we imagine everything as a place. Actually, *heaven* means *the state of "being with the Lord,"* (*cf. 1 Thes 4:17*), living in Him in whom the blessed find the perfection of their identity and the perfect consummation of their earthly lives (*cf. CCC 1023-29*). By his death and resurrection, Christ "opened up the gates of heaven," meaning he has enabled the blessed to enjoy the "depths of God" by the Spirit, in the presence of the whole "Church in glory," that is, all those have been gathered together and incorporated into his Body. For them, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man, what God has prepared for those who love Him" (*1 Cor 2:9*).

2069. *Heaven* is often described as the "*beatific vision*" – the vision that makes happy. This indicates that the new life of heaven comes wholly from God and is wholly ordained to Him. It is *the consummation of the life of faith, hope, and love begun on earth*. It also implies the immeasurable gratitude and adoring spirit which characterize the blessed. What needs to be added is the active and corporate dimensions of this vision in which the blessed relate to one another in the "Communion of Saints," and to the whole of creation (*cf. CCC 1027-29*).

4. Hell

2070. "While the *reality of heaven* is peopled by the canonized saints and innumerable others known only to God, neither Scripture nor the Church has defined any specific human person as actually undergoing *eternal damnation*. But the Church clearly affirms the *existence and eternity of hell* for those who die in the state of mortal sin (*cf. CCC 1035*). In this the Church simply follows Jesus' own teaching on "gehenna," and his own judgment as Son of Man: "Out of my sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire" (*Mt 25:41; cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48*). The point of this teaching on hell, then, is to underline *the ultimate accountability of what we freely do with our earthly lives*, as well as the *finality of death*. Put briefly, God does not force His love on anyone. Persons can damn themselves; they have the radical freedom to destroy their own freedom and very selves by obstinately persevering in rejecting the merciful love and grace of God, even in the face of death.

2071. The image of hell's *unquenchable fire* brings out its *ultimate finality*. Fire is a natural symbol for "being consumed." It can refer to the Holy Spirit, as the "tongues of fire" at Pentecost, the prayer of mystics, or the divine anger that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Here it emphasizes that we are created to be "consumed-for-others." We can either choose to live by this orientation through freely giving ourselves in authentic love, inspired by Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, and resulting in the ecstatic joy of heaven. *Or* we can choose to live a self-serving, self-centered life that results in ultimate irrevocable self-exclusion from communion with God and from all other creatures. The *essence of hell* is the *loss of God*. Hence the basic aim of Scripture's and Tradition's teaching on hell is to stress the utter seriousness of our historical responsibility to "walk with God" in authentic use of our freedom. And so we pray: "Father, grant us your peace in this life, save us from final damnation and count us among those you have chosen" (*EP I*).

5. Purgatory

2072. The Church doctrine on purgatory, "*the state of final purification*," is based mainly on its ancient liturgical practice of offering prayers for the departed (*cf. CCC 1030-32*). This was done so that they may be purified and be accepted into heaven. Holy Scripture speaks of such prayers for the dead: "Thus he [Judas Maccabaeus] made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from sin" (*2 Mc 12:46*). Scripture also speaks of a purifying fire: "He himself will be saved, but only . . . through fire" (*1 Cor 3:15; cf. 1 Pt 1:7*). This doctrine of purgatory proclaimed in the Church Councils (*cf. Trent, ND 2310*) both moderates and strengthens the Church teaching on the particular judgment. It *moderates it by calming excessive anxiety* over the remnants of selfishness and sin even in the lives of very generous and loving persons.

But purgatory also *reinforces* the particular judgment's stress on the *radical demands of salvation*. It is not a question of achieving a minimum "passing mark" with God who overlooks the errors still remaining. Rather, to gain eternal life, even the small remaining sinfulness must be purified so the blessed can be permeated completely by the light and love of the Lord. Whether this purifying process takes place within the process of dying itself, or in some other manner, we do not know, since the processes of both death and purification are hidden from our earthly eyes.

6. The Parousia, General Resurrection and Last Judgment

2073. The Old Testament speaks of awaiting the "Day of the Lord" when God's holiness and glory will be manifested to all (*cf. Am 5:18*). In the New Testament this becomes the "day of Christ Jesus" (*Phil 1:6*), his *Parousia*, when Christ will come in glory, as the consummation of his Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection, "to judge the living and the dead" (*Acts 10:42*). "Just as it is appointed that men die once, and after death be judged, so Christ was offered up once to take away the sins of many. He will appear a second time not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him" (*Heb 9:27-28*).

This judgment will not be by Christ alone, but Christ together with all those who are in Christ and live by him – the apostles (*cf. Mt 19:28*), the angels (*cf. Rv 3:21*), and the saints (*cf. 1 Cor 6:2; CCC 1038-41*).

2074. Filipinos are often confused about the Biblical "signs of the coming of Jesus Christ" – wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, and the like – which are stressed so much by the fundamentalists. Actually they are really just exhortations: "Be constantly on watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come" (*Mk 13:33*). These signs reflect man's alienation from God, but are not meant to be means of calculating the day of the end (*cf. Lk 17:20*). All human history is constantly marked with such afflictions. Rather "the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night.

. . . therefore let us not be asleep like the rest, but awake and sober” (*1 Thes 5:2, 6*). For “as to the exact day or hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in heaven nor even the Son, but only the Father” (*Mk 13:32*).

2075. A general resurrection of all the dead is presupposed by Jesus coming as Judge. “The hour is coming in which all those in their tombs shall hear his voice and come forth. Those who have done right shall rise to live; the evildoers shall rise to be damned” (*Jn 5:28-29*). “The lives of all of us are to be revealed before the tribunal of Christ so that each one may receive his recompense, good or bad, according to his life in the body” (*2 Cor 5:10*). Thus will God’s justice have the final say about all of human history, bringing all things to their complete fulfillment and providing the unshakeable ground for Christian hope.

V. CHRISTIAN HOPE OF THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

A. Christian Hope

2076. In one sense, hope is *the* characteristic Christian virtue, since nothing like it is quite possible for the non-Christian (*cf. CCC 1042*). St. Paul reminded his Gentile converts: “Remember that, you had no part in Christ, . . . strangers to the covenant and its promise. You were without hope and without God in the world” (*Eph 2:11-12*). The **sources of hope** for Christians are many: there is the encouragement of *Scripture* (*cf. Rom 15:4*), the *Gospel* itself (*cf. Col 1:23*), the awareness of God’s call (*cf. Eph 1:18*). But all these are grounded on **Christ, our hope of glory** (*cf. Col 1:27; 1 Tim 1:1*). Yet, perhaps the closest source of hope for ordinary Filipino Christians is their experience of the support and help of the Holy Spirit, especially in difficult times. Within daily problems of family, personal relationships, financial straits, and the like, we spontaneously look to Christ and his Spirit for support and comfort. St. Paul expressed similar sentiments:

We even boast of our afflictions! We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (*Rom 5:3-5*).

2077. Likewise **what** Christians hope for is complex. St. Paul mentions the resurrection of the dead (*cf. 1 Thes 4:13*), God’s glory (*cf. Rom 5:2*), and the new dispensation of the Spirit (*cf. 2 Cor 3:12*), salvation (*cf. 2 Cor 1:10*) and right relation with God (*cf. Gal 5:5*), eternal life (*cf. Ti 1:2*) and the victorious Second Coming of Christ (*cf. Ti 2:13*). But what is more important than the particular object hoped for is the **grace** of God which alone makes hope possible and victorious. As with the other two theological virtues of faith and love, *it is grace that is the inner dynamic core of hope*. Paul prays: “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, may God our Father who loved us and in his mercy gave us eternal consolation and hope . . .” Paul then adds God’s purpose in this: “to encourage your hearts and strengthen them for every good work and word” (*2 Thes 2:16*).

B. The New Heavens and New Earth

2078. The “Kingdom of God” which Jesus preached and which the Holy Spirit animates, the Kingdom visible in the Church, its sacraments, loving service, and individual members — this Kingdom is not yet fulfilled, perfectly accomplished. Only “in the fullness of time” will God’s plan be accomplished, namely, “to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ’s headship” (*Eph 1:10; cf. CCC 1043*). This plan “will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven, when together with the human race,

the universe itself attains its destiny and will be perfectly re-established in Christ” (cf. *LG 48*). This will happen when Christ, after having “destroyed every sovereignty, authority, and power, . . . will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father” (*1 Cor 15:24*). The result of this renewal will be the “new heavens and a new earth where, according to His promise, the justice of God will reside” (*2 Pt 3:13*).

2079. In these ‘new heavens and new earth’ “God will dwell with His people, and he shall be their God who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away” (*Rv 21:3-4*). This “**new creation,**” then, involves the **transformation, perfection, and glorification of every redeemed individual** person, the **whole human race**, and the **material cosmos** as well.

C. Mary, Model of the New Creation

2080. The solemn definition of Mary’s Assumption into heaven, body and soul, has given us a concrete model of this new creation. Mary is the first to share completely in Christ’s resurrection. We have already seen Mary as the first Daughter, the Model and Mother of the pilgrim Church. Now in eschatological terms of their final end, Mary and the Church are linked. Tradition has so interpreted the text from Revelation. “A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (*Rv 12:1*). Vatican II declares:

In the meantime, the Mother of Jesus in the glory which she possesses in body and soul in heaven is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come. Likewise she shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, as a sign of sure hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God (*LG 68*).

For the Filipino Christian, Mary may be the best help in coming to some personal grasp of what God has prepared for those who love Him.

INTEGRATION

2081. The Catholic **doctrinal** response to “What can we hope for?” in terms of “resurrection of the body and life everlasting” radically modifies our Christian **moral** ideal and behavior. It provides the basic ground for Christian **Hope**. Moreover, we judge the morality of every act in part by its compatibility with this truth of our final destiny. If the act is in conformity with this truth of our final destiny, it is judged morally good in regard to its “nature.” But perhaps the strongest influence which this doctrine of our final destiny exercises on Christian morality is the way it grounds, with creation, the **Dignity of the Human Person**. No man or woman can rightfully be used or treated as a mere instrument or means for any purpose whatsoever, because each one of us is destined for nothing less than everlasting life with God Himself.

2082. This doctrine of our final destiny also animates our **worship**, since our whole authentic prayer-life, personal and ecclesial, is already a graced sharing, a foretaste, in this final goal. The ordination toward resurrection and life everlasting is what is meant by the “eschatological dimension” of our sacramental life, especially the **Eucharist**. We already experience in our prayerful communion with the eternal Father, through His Risen Incarnate Son, in their Holy Spirit, the beginning of this “life of

the world to come.” For it is in this “bright promise of immortality” that we come to learn how to really “proclaim [God’s] glory and join in the unending hymn of praise.” (*Pref. of Christian Death I*)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

2083. *What fundamental human question is addressed in this chapter?*

This chapter responds to the basic question: “What can we hope for?” The Creed’s final article asserts that our ultimate destiny is “resurrection of the body and life everlasting.”

2084. *How does this final goal relate to our daily life and worship?*

Our final destiny is the goal of the virtue of **hope**, which impels us to seek out Christ within our everyday life, even within our problems and sufferings.

Moreover, our sacramental sharing in Christ’s Paschal Mystery here on earth is ordered toward this perfect Trinitarian communion with the Father, through the Risen Christ, in their Holy Spirit.

2085. *What does “eschatology” mean?*

“Eschatology” means the study of “the last things,” or the final destiny of every **individual person**, the whole **human race**, and the entire **material cosmos**.

Christian eschatology, as it was prefigured in the Old Testament’s messianic hopes, is grounded in Jesus Christ’s preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God, his Resurrection from the dead, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

2086. *What are the “final things” for the individual person?*

Christian faith holds that *death, judgment, heaven/hell and Christ’s Second Coming* are the “final things” for every person.

We are embodied spirits destined to be with God and the saints in heaven forever, with a body “which is to be raised up on the last day,” and a “spiritual immortal soul,” endowed with consciousness and will.

2087. *What is the destiny of the human race and the cosmos?*

The final goal of the human race and the cosmos is to be gathered together with God in “the new heavens and a new earth where the justice [and love] of God will reside” (*2 Pt 3:13*).

2088. *What is the importance of eschatology for us?*

The Risen Christ is present among us in his Holy Spirit, linking our future destiny with our present earthly life. Thus, the Gospel promise of resurrection and life everlasting touches everything we think and say and do. It is our ultimate norm for judging good and evil, success and failure, authentic human love from deceit.

2089. *Does eschatology lead us away from our present duties?*

Properly understood, eschatology is not about some “far away,” abstract fairy land. It rather deals with the **deepest dimensions of our daily life, now**. Our final destiny is already active in our daily events, spurring us on to loving service of our neighbor.

2090. *What is meant by our “resurrection”?*

Our “resurrection” means *new glorified life* in the Risen Christ, not just a restoration of our present life.

We Christians firmly believe we are all:

- created by God, Source of all life, to share His Trinitarian divine life forever;
- redeemed by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who by his Resurrection became life-giving; and
- sharers of his risen *life already* in his Holy Spirit in *grace*, but *not yet* fully as we will in *glory*.

2091. *How do we already share Christ’s risen life?*

We share in Christ’s risen life:

- through our Spirit-inspired life of Faith,
- nourished by the sacraments, and
- exercised in our moral loving service of others.

Christ is the living vine, we are the branches, drawing life from him, in a bond of unity and charity with him and all others (*cf. Jn 15:5,9,12*).

2092. *If death comes to us all, how can we be said to already share Christ’s risen life?*

The opposite of sharing in risen life is *not* earthly life subject to physical death, but *sin*.

We come to share Christ’s risen life by our Baptism (*cf. Rom 6:4f*) and by keeping Christ’s own commandment: “love one another as I have loved you” (*Jn 15:12*).

2093. *What new insights does this sharing in Christ’s risen life bring?*

We understand that:

- our transformation into risen life is an ongoing process already begun in us by the Holy Spirit;
- we have a duty and a task *now* to live out our baptismal promises: dead to sin, alive for Christ;
- this life includes essential community and ecological dimensions.

2094. *What does “resurrection of the body” mean?*

“Body” here means the *whole human person*. Thus “resurrection of the body” means the whole person, body and soul, will be raised up, including the person’s social and communitarian dimensions.

Two consequences follow. Christians hope for:

- a transformation of the whole person, body and soul, not a “salvation of souls”; therefore:
- any “re-incarnation” or “transmigration of souls” are rejected since they remove the ultimate meaning and value of our present life, and destroy our personal unity.

2095. *What kind of “transformation” will we undergo?*

Transformation means the change from being “natural” or “self-centered,” to a “spiritual” or “Spirit-inspired” life, in the likeness of Christ.

Our bodily existence, with all our relations to community and environment, will be radically transformed by the Holy Spirit, yet be truly “ours.”

2096. *What is the Christian view of death?*

Christian Faith views death as:

- a dimension of every moment of life, *not* just as the last moment of our earthly, biological life;

- radically touching the whole person, not just the body; the whole person dies, not just his/her body,
- as at once the “*natural*” end of temporal human life,
- and also a *consequence of sin* insofar as it causes a violent rupture, anxiety, dread, etc.

2097. *How has Christ transformed death?*

The Christian’s death:

- completing the life-long “dying with Christ” begun in Baptism,
- is a sharing in Christ’s:
 - a) own death of perfect self-sacrificing love,
 - b) the end of his earthly pilgrimage, and
 - c) entry into his risen glory.

It is clear that both:

- the destructive, disintegrating aspect, and
- the integrating final option dimension of natural death,

are imaged perfectly in Jesus’ violent death on the Cross, ending in his final words: “It is finished,” and “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (*Jn 19:30; Lk 23:46*).

2098 *What is the meaning of the Creed’s “life everlasting”?*

Life everlasting means a life transformed by God’s Spirit into the perfect fulfillment of every dimension of our present bodily-spiritual lives.

It is not simply a never-ending prolongation of our temporal lives, nor a static timelessness, but a radical change in the quality of life.

2099. *How is the quality of our temporal life enhanced?*

In everlasting life the *temporal fragmentation* of our present lives is *overcome*. In the next life, the present retrieves the past and is already filled with the future.

Temporal existence is brought to authentic fulfillment on three levels:

- on the *personal level* of our lives of grace as individual disciples of Christ, begun in Baptism and nourished in the Eucharist;
- on the *corporate level* of all members of the Church;
- on the *cosmic level*, in its transformation in Christ.

2100. *What are some liturgical images of this new life?*

Two central liturgical images are used for the next life:

- “*eternal rest*,” in the sense of sharing God’s own sabbath rest; and
- “*perpetual light*” as the perfection of Christ, Light of the world, who dispels all the darkness of sin, futility, and despair.

2101. *What is meant by the “Particular Judgment”?*

At death, the end of our earthly pilgrimage, we meet Christ, our just Judge, for the judgment which decides our fate for everlasting life. This “judgment” is not merely imposed on us from the outside; it indicates what we have made of ourselves through all our free acts on earth:

- either we have become open to God’s life and love,
- or we have freely made ourselves impervious to His Light, and freely chosen not to live in God’s presence.

2102. *What is meant by “Heaven”?*

Heaven means the state of **“being with the Lord”** (cf. *1 Thes 4:17*), enjoying the “depths of God,” the Father, the Risen Christ, our Savior, in their Holy Spirit, in the presence of the whole Church in glory. We often call this state of seeing God “face to face” (cf. *1 Cor 13:12*) the “beatific vision” because it causes unspeakable joy and happiness in communion with all the saints.

“Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love Him” (*1 Cor 2:9*).

2103. *What does Catholic teaching mean by “Hell”?*

In contrast to the *reality* of heaven, the Church teaches the *possibility* of **eternal damnation**, following Jesus’ own teaching. The possibility of hell stresses our *ultimate accountability* for what we do with our earthly lives. The essence of hell is the **loss of God**, suffered by those who have freely chosen to separate themselves from Him.

2104. *What does Church teaching mean by “Purgatory”?*

Purgatory means **“the state of final purification,”** so that those who died in the state of grace but are weighed down by the remnants of selfishness and sin, may be purified and thus enter into everlasting glory with the Lord.

2105. *What is meant by “Parousia,” “General Resurrection,” and “Last Judgment”?*

Parousia refers to **Christ’s coming in glory** “as judge of the living and the dead” (*Acts 10:42*), “to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him” (*Heb 9:28*).

With Christ’s coming, all who have died will **rise** again with transformed bodies. All will be **judged by** Christ who “will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and manifest the intentions of hearts [so that] everyone will receive his praise from God” (*1 Cor 4:5*). Thus the justice and mercy of God’s judgment will be vindicated before all.

2106. *What is meant by “Christian hope”?*

Christian hope is that virtue, grounded on Christ our Lord and experienced in the “love of God poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (*Rom 5:5*), by which we yearn for the coming of God’s Kingdom, and the establishment of the “new heavens and a new earth where, according to His promise, the justice of God will reside” (*2 Pt 3:13*).

This “new creation” involves the transformation, perfection, and glorification of every human person, the whole human race, and the material cosmos as well.

2107. *What is the place of Mary in this “new creation”?*

The Blessed Virgin Mary, through her Assumption into heaven, body and soul, offers us a concrete model of this new creation. She is at once:

- “the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come,” and
- “the sign of sure hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God” (*LG 68*).

Chapter 30

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
Holy be your name,
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us,
Do not lead us to the test,
But deliver us from evil.**

(Mt 6:9-13)

**[For yours is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory
(Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), for ever and ever. Amen.]**

OPENING

2108. Together with the *Creed*, the *Commandments*, and the *Sacramental Liturgy*, the “*Our Father*” is one of the four pillars of Catholic catechesis (*cf. CCC 13*). This final chapter, then, has a *twofold aim*. The *first* is to present the riches of the Lord’s Prayer. In the process, we wish to indicate how the prayer can “pull together” all that has been proposed in this catechism. In brief, our *second* aim is to integrate the Catholic Doctrine, Moral Life, and Worship/Sacraments that have been presented here, using the text of the Lord’s Prayer as the unifying factor.

2109. This integrating role of the “Our Father” is in keeping with the Catholic tradition. For the prayer our Lord taught his disciples has always been revered as a “summary of the whole Gospel,” the perfect and fundamental Christian prayer (*cf. CCC 2759-61*). In a reading from the Liturgy of the Hours, St. Cyprian counsels:

The Lord’s Prayer contains many great mysteries of our faith. In these few words there is great spiritual strength, for this summary of divine teaching contains all of our prayers and petitions (*Monday, 11th Wk in Ordinary Time*).

CONTEXT

2110. The “Our Father” is a very popular prayer among Catholic Filipinos. This is clearly manifested in the numerous creative musical versions sung in the local languages in Eucharistic liturgies throughout the country. The great popularity of the Rosary also makes the “Our Father” a familiar prayer to Filipino Catholics, especially in family devotions, BEC’s prayer groups, Block Rosaries and the like.

2111. Nevertheless, *The Second Plenary Council* has called for renewed worship involving a renewed prayer life (*PCP II 167-72*). We tend to separate our prayer and worship from our ordinary daily life.

The *NCDP* warned against a certain “empty ritualism” in which external ceremonies are performed, but without the necessary interior understanding and heartfelt commitment (*cf. NCDP 103,167,327,430*).

When reciting various prayers, and the “Our Father” in particular, we often do it from routine, with a take-it-for-granted attitude. Many of us have never stopped to reflect carefully on the *meaning* of the words in the prayer, and consequently our *personal appreciation* of it is weak. This is clear from the embarrassment caused when we are asked to explain how we live out the “Our Father” in our daily lives.

2112. Therefore a *renewal* is definitely called for – a renewal that helps us to a better understanding of our common Catholic prayers and sacramental worship. It could begin by *first* deepening the substantial progress already made in improving and *inculturating* our local *liturgical celebrations*. *PCP II* calls for a renewed focus on the *Eucharist* as central to all Catholic piety, and constantly insists on “*inculturating*” our worship so that it becomes more meaningful and “natural” to the ordinary Filipino (*PCP II Decrees, Arts. 5-8*).

2113. But renewal must also include a renewed *doctrinal* and *biblical* catechesis, which grounds prayer and worship on the doctrinal Truths of the Faith. Equally essential is relating authentic Catholic prayer to a spirituality of *social transformation* (*cf. PCP II 262-82*). This means creating an *integration* of prayer and action such that it can lead our “Church of the Poor” toward a true “Community of Disciples of the Lord” (*cf. NPP Flow Chart*).

2114. This final chapter, then, attempts to answer that need by developing the rich meaning of the Lord’s Prayer and its power to integrate the Catholic doctrine, morals, and worship presented in this book for the adult Filipino Catholic of today. The exposition will *first* introduce the general aspects of the Lord’s Prayer: its pre-eminence as a prayer; for whom it was intended by Christ; the qualities of an authentic approach; and its basic structure. *Section Two* then takes up the address and the group of “*You Petitions*,” while *Section Three* covers the “*We Petitions*.” *Finally*, the Epilogue concludes with a brief sketch on the “Amen” and final doxology. In each section, the integrating factors of the prayer will be explicated.

EXPOSITION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Pre-Eminence

2115. The pre-eminence of the “Our Father” can be grounded on three basic characteristics. *First*, as the prayer of Christ the Lord who is in himself the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law, Prophets and Psalms, and the core of the whole New Testament, the “Our Father” is at the “*center of the Scriptures*” (*cf. CCC 2762-64*).

2116. *Second*, it is unique in that it is the **Lord’s Prayer**, taught by Christ himself in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and in the context of his own personal prayer to the Father, in Luke (*cf. Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4*). The prayer itself is clearly **Trinitarian**. It is the prayer of the *Son*, to the *Father*,

in the *Spirit* “sent into our hearts, crying out ‘*Abba, Father!*’” (*Gal 4:6*). As such, it is a prayer that inserts us into the joint saving *Mission* of Son and Spirit (*cf. CCC 2765-66*).

2117. *Third*, it is the **prayer of the Church**, rooted in the Church’s liturgy from the beginning, especially in the Sacraments of *Baptism*, *Confirmation*, and the *Eucharist*. It is a prayer of the “time of the Church,” proclaiming the Lord “until he comes” (*1 Cor 11:26; cf. CCC 2772*).

Thus, all the petitions of the “Our Father” are “*eschatological*,” proper to these “last times,” the time of salvation already begun by the sending of the Holy Spirit, but achieved fully only with the second coming of the Lord. Meanwhile, our petitions are grounded firmly on the salvation already won, once-and-for-all, in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (*cf. CCC 2767-72*).

2118. The pre-eminence and integrating quality of the “Our Father” is also evidenced by the practice in Catholic tradition of relating its Petitions to the Beatitudes, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the Commandments. The following schema offers a rough summary of the relationships proposed by St. Augustine, with an indication of the pertinent chapters in this Catechism.

“Our Father”	Beatitudes	Holy Spirit’s Gifts	Commandments	CFC
Our Father				cc. 2-3, 5, 13, 22-24
Holy Be Your Name	Poor In Spirit	Fear of the Lord	1st and 2nd	cc. 6-7, 16, 29
Your Kingdom Come!	Meek	Piety	Two Love	cc. 9-12, Command. 14, 23-24
Your Will Be Done!	Mourn	Knowledge	3rd	cc. 11, 13-17, 28
Give Us . . . Bread	Hunger and Thirst	Fortitude	4th and 7th	cc. 1, 7, 18, 25-26
Forgive us our sins	Merciful	Counsel	Preamble	cc. 14-15, 18-21, 27
Lead us not into Temptation	Pure of heart	Understanding	5th to 8th	cc. 4, 14-17, 18-21
Deliver us from Evil	Peace-makers	Wisdom	9th and 10th	cc. 4, 8, 29

2119. Such a schema must, of course, be filled out with adequate explanations of each of the Beatitudes, Gifts of the Spirit, and Commandments.¹ Its principal value here is simply to point out how the basics of our Catholic Faith do *interrelate* to one another.

To understand anyone or anything in any depth is to grasp its relationships – how it relates to other things. Nowhere is this more true than in our Catholic Faith. We come to some personal realization of the truths, moral values and worship of our Faith only when we begin to grasp how they all “fit together.” This should constitute a primary goal of PCP II’s “renewed catechesis.”

B. For Whom?

2120. But for whom is the “Our Father” proposed as a model prayer by Christ our Lord? In the context described in St. Luke’s Gospel, Jesus had just finished praying when he was asked by one of his disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray” (*Lk 11:1*). This indicates that the disciples felt that: *first*, their traditional Jewish ways of praying were no longer adequate; *second*, Jesus had a new way of approaching God; and *third*, this new way was essential for all his disciples, and indicative of a Christian community.

2021. For Disciples. This is important because some today like to reduce the “Our Father” to a simple formula common to any and all religious persons. But in the Gospel, Christ clearly meant the prayer to be for his *disciples*. A disciple is one called to faith in Jesus, who sits at his feet and hears the Word of God from him and keeps it (*cf. Lk 11:28*).

2022. For Followers. Disciples, moreover, are called to “*follow*” Christ, leaving everything behind and taking up the cross daily. This demands detachment from the various enticements from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and a commitment to Jesus that never looks back (*cf. Lk 9:57-62*). To follow Jesus means resolute *solidarity with Christ in his saving mission*, within his community, the Church.

2023. For Forerunners. Those following Jesus in this way would actually be preparing the way for Christ, becoming *forerunners* like John the Baptist in drawing others to Christ.

In the Virgin Mary, “the handmaid of the Lord,” we have the model of the perfect *disciple*. She *followed* her Son in perfect solidarity with his mission even to the Cross. Her presence in the apostolic community provided the faith-basis for the apostolic missionary *forerunners*. Thus she completed her earthly mission with complete openness to whatever God asked of her, as she had promised: “Be it done to me according to your word” (*Lk 1:38*).

¹ St. Augustine sketched the following brief explanation:

- i) If through *fear of the Lord*, the *poor in spirit* inhabit the Kingdom of heaven, let us pray that the **name of God may be hallowed** among men through holy fear enduring forever.
- ii) If through *piety* the *meek* will inherit the earth, let us pray that His **Kingdom will come**, that we may become meek and not resist Him.
- iii) If through *knowledge* those who *mourn* will be comforted, let us pray that His **will be done** so the earth will accord with the spirit (heaven) in peace.
- iv) If through *fortitude* those who *hunger and thirst* shall have their fill, let us pray that **our daily bread be given**, in whose strength we can come to fullest abundance.
- v) If through *counsel* the *merciful* shall obtain mercy, let us forgive our debtors their debts and pray that **ours be forgiven**.
- vi) If through *understanding* the *pure of heart* shall see God, let us pray that we be **not led into temptation** lest we have a divided heart.
- vii) If through *wisdom* the *peacemakers* shall be called the children of God, let us pray that we be **delivered from evil** to make us children of God in the spirit of adoption so we may cry “*Abba, Father*” (*Sermon on the Mount, Bk. 2, c. 11, 38*).

C. Approach

2124. With Reverence. One official introduction to the “Our Father” in the Eucharistic celebration is: “Jesus taught us to call God our Father, and so we *dare to say*.” The note of *reverence* and awe before God flows from the long biblical tradition, graphically pictured in the scene of Moses and the burning bush. “Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet for the place where you stand is holy ground” (*Ex 3:5*). Only through God the Son-made-man, Jesus Christ, do we dare to approach God as our Father, with joyous filial confidence. “In Jesus Christ and through faith in him we can speak freely to God, drawing near Him with confidence” (*Eph 3:12; cf. Heb 4:16; 1 Jn 5:14; CCC 2777*).

So often we take for granted this *incredible privilege* of sharing in the very sonship of Christ our Lord, enabling us to call God: “Our Father.” This truth dawns on us, and grows within us, only in authentic *humility* (*cf. CCC 2779, 2785*).

2125. According to the Spirit. We approach God in praying the “Our Father,” then, realizing that it is possible only because God Himself *revealed* this prayer through His Son Jesus Christ, and *empowers* us through His *Holy Spirit* indwelling in us.* Prayer is the “life of the heart,” enlivened by the Spirit who “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech” (*Rom 8:26*). The Spirit keeps on awakening us to God’s presence, and sustaining us in *persevering* prayer.

2126. As adults. In Luke’s text, God as Father is related to our *active* experience of acting as father/mother, not the *passive* experience of receiving as children. “What father among you. . . if you know how to give good things. . .” (*Lk 11:11-13*). We pray the “Our Father,” then, primarily *as adults* who know what it means to be a father/mother: their feelings toward their children, and the expectations their children have in their regard. Therefore in praying “Our Father” we do so with all the warmth, respect and love that we as adults have for our parents, not with the naive attitude of little children who have no idea of the joys and responsibilities of a parent.

2127. Filipinos in general are familiar with the text: “unless you change and *become* like little children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God” (*Mt 18:3*). Unfortunately, it is often taken as an excuse for childishness, not child-likeness. St. Paul has a strong admonition in this regard: “When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, think like a child, reason like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways aside.” and concludes: “Brothers, do not be childish in your outlook. Be like children as far as evil is concerned, but in mind be mature” (*1 Cor 13:11 and 14:20*).

2128. More often, perhaps, “becoming like little children” unconsciously creates the attitude that Christian Faith is not really practical in our adult daily life of competition and fight for survival. But this ignores the basic spiritual values of simplicity, trust, and *openness* that are desired and respected by all, even in the harsh adult world. Moreover, it misses the adults’ active, disciplined effort implied in the verb “become.” To be able to imitate in our relation to God the child’s natural complete dependence on, and trust in, his or her parents, demands serious *effort*. The dependence and trust that is “natural” to a child, must be regained by the adult, often only with much personal effort and persevering prayer.²

² St. Basil summarizes the tradition in picturing the circular process from the Spirit in us, through the Son, to the Father, and back again. The path to the knowledge of God leads from the “one” Spirit through the “one” Son to the “one” Father, and conversely the essential goodness, inherent holiness and royal dignity flow from the Father, through the Son, to the Spirit (*Treatise on the Holy Spirit, chap. 18*).

D. Structure

2129. Three-Part. The “Our Father” is composed of three parts: an address: “Our Father,” three “You Petitions,” and four “We Petitions.” The opening address sets the tone and orientation of the whole: *God-centered* (cf. CCC 2803-4). The first set of petitions draws us to the Father’s glory: His Name, His Kingdom, and His Will. All three begin now, in our time on this earth. But they continue for eternity, where, as St. Augustine writes, the Father’s Name, Kingdom, and Will are perfectly realized (cf. *The Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Bk. 2, Chap. 10, 37*).

2130. Only after focusing on God does the prayer take up our present needs in moving towards Him: material and spiritual sustenance (bread), and overcoming the negative realities of sin, temptation, and Evil (cf. CCC 2805). These needs will cease with our entry into the next life.

2131. Trinitarian. In both sets of petitions, the *Blessed Trinity* is clearly evidenced. In the first group, we pray: Holy be God’s Name, “*Father*”. May the Kingdom brought near us in Christ Jesus, His *Son*, come to ever greater fulfillment. May God accomplish His Will through the Holy *Spirit*.

The second group is equally *Trinitarian*. We pray to the *Father* for the bread of life; we entreat our Savior, Christ the *Son*, for forgiveness of our sins; and we entrust ourselves to God’s *Holy Spirit* to overcome temptation and the power of evil.

2132. Theological Virtues. Praying the “Our Father” also involves acts of faith, hope and charity. We need *Faith* to profess God as our Father despite His silence, and apparent remoteness from all the evil and suffering surrounding us. We express our *hope* that His Kingdom already inaugurated by Christ His Son, may come to fulfillment, and that His will be done, forever. Finally, we find all the warmth and intimacy of *love* in God our Father, experienced in His Spirit.

All this is made possible for us only through the Spirit of the Son whom the Father sent into our hearts, crying out, “*Abba, Father!*” (*Gal 4:6*). The Father’s gift of the Spirit sums up all the petitions of the “Our Father.”

II. ADDRESS

“Our Father in Heaven”

2133. In Salvation History. In the Bible’s inspired account, God is designated as the *Father-Creator* who thus is the *highest authority and Lord*. This can be seen in the Old Testament experience of Yahweh as “far yet near,” prodigal in His mercy toward His covenant people, yet constantly calling for their obedient fidelity to His Covenant. The prophets enlarged upon this image by developing an *ethical* dimension of God as compassionate Father/Mother. “You, Lord, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever. . . . Keep not our guilt forever in mind” (*Is 63:16; 64:8*).

But Yahweh was never invoked directly as “Our Father” in any Old Testament prayer. Only indirectly was there an indication, perhaps a *hope* that someday it would come: “He shall say of me, ‘You are my father, my God, my rock, my savior.’ And I will make him the first-born, highest of the kings of the earth” (*Ps 89:27f*).

2134. Revealed in Jesus Christ. This hope was brought to perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ. With Jesus a whole new closeness and intimacy with God appears, expressed in his “*Abba*.” As “the only Son, ever at the Father’s side” (*Jn 1: 18*), Jesus affirmed in complete confidence: “No one knows the Father. . . but the Son — and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him” (*Mt 11:27*).

The “*Abba, Father*” in Jesus’ prayer takes up every aspect of the Old Covenant tradition and carries it much further. “Father” now signifies not only *Creator*, sovereign *Ruler*, and *Helper/Protector* of His covenant people. In his teaching, Jesus integrated these three images within a new, intimate personal relationship with God as loving Father, offered to all in and through Jesus, *the Son*. This new relationship with God is in the present, the *now* of daily life, and is experienced especially in loving, merciful *Forgiveness*. Jesus’ Father is a **God who cares**, whose love for each of us – calling us by name – is completely freely given, undeserved, and lasting – never failing.

2135. Made Real in Baptism. God not only revealed Himself as “our Father” through Jesus Christ His only begotten Son. In *Baptism* we actually become adopted sons/daughters of the Father by our rebirth to new divine life through the Holy Spirit. We become members of Christ’s Body, with Christ as our Head. We are called to continual *conversion* through the power of the Holy Spirit to “fellowship. . . with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (*1 Jn 1:3; cf. CCC 2782-84*).

2136. “*Our*” *Father*, then, is *not* a general designation for some vague fatherly “Someone up there.” No, it is a personal adoring address to the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*cf. CCC 2789*).

The “*our*” cuts through all individualistic notions and puts us squarely within the community of “brothers and sisters under our one Heavenly Father” (*cf. CCC 2792f*). In revealing God as our Father, Jesus reveals to us our true identity as united in him.

As sons and daughters of the Father in THE SON, our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to reach out to others who have not yet come to know Christ. This is to “gather into one all the dispersed children of God” (*Jn 11:52*). Praying to God as “Father” thus involves loving service of our fellow men and women, in working for the common good (*cf. GS 22; CCC 2799*),

2137. Son and Spirit. Some Filipino Catholics worry about whether in praying the “Our Father,” they are praying to all three Persons of the Trinity. The answer, of course, is that the Blessed Trinity is ONE Indivisible God. In praying to the Father, source and origin of Son and Spirit, ***we adore the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit***. We do not confuse the distinct Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, with one another. But we nevertheless confess our communion is ***with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in their unique Holy Spirit*** (*cf. CCC 2789*). We express this in the Creed when we proclaim that the Holy Spirit “with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.”

2138. In heaven. We know “heaven” is *not a place*, so this phrase does not move God our Father away from us, but rather expresses His *majesty* and *transcendence*. God is *not remote* from us. He is totally *other* than we are, but with a love for us we cannot begin to fathom. Thus He is both “*beyond all*” we know and are, yet ***more intimate to us than we are to our very selves***.

Therefore, “heavens” can also signify those who bear in themselves the heavenly image and in whom God dwells because He has made his home in them” (*St. Cyril of Jerusalem; cf. CCC 1794*). Thus St. Augustine explains:

“Our Father who art in heaven” should be understood as applying to the hearts of the just where God dwells as in His temple. In this way, too, we who pray will wish that He whom we invoke may dwell in us also, and when this is our striving, we will be practicing right living, thus inviting God to make His home in us (*Sermon on the Mount, Bk. 2, Chap. 5,18*).

INTEGRATION

2139. The address “Our Father in heaven” clearly pulls together major themes of this Catechism. “Our Father” represents the *climax of God’s Self-Revelation* (Chap. 2), and the *primary goal of our response in Faith* (Chap. 3). As embodied spirits in community, we have to give voice to this basis for our faith in a common Creed which expresses our firm belief (Chap. 5).

Moreover, as the address of the special prayer Christ taught his own disciples, “Our Father” identifies us as disciples of Christ (Chap. 13), who are enlivened from within by the Holy Spirit sent into our hearts (Chap. 22). The Father’s gift of the Spirit incorporates us into Christ’s Body, the Church (Chap. 23) in which we are able to offer the Father authentic worship in Spirit and in Truth (Chap. 24).

Thus, the very address of *the Lord’s Prayer* already *integrates central Christian doctrines, moral vision and worship*.

III. THE “YOU PETITIONS”

A. “Holy be your Name”

2140. In this first petition, we pray that God will sanctify His Name, that He will manifest His greatness before all peoples. “I will prove the holiness of my great name. . . The nations shall know that I am the Lord . . . when in their sight I prove my holiness through you” (Ez 36:23).

In the Bible, “*name*” refers to the very reality of the person named, expressing the person’s role or status, and often representing the person’s personal disclosure or self-revelation.

The *holiness* of God is called His “Glory,” manifesting His majesty. “‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!’ they cried to one another. ‘All the earth is filled with His glory’” (Is 6:3).

2141. Old Testament. God’s holiness was manifested most clearly in His liberating *Covenant*:

He has sent deliverance to His people,
He has ratified His covenant forever;
Holy and awesome is His name;
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
Prudent are all who live by it.
His praise endures forever (Ps 111:9-10).

2142. *Jesus* perfectly exemplified this petition. In his life and death, he brought together two basic ideas. *First*, the Father glorifies His own Name; but *second*, He does this *in* and *through* Christ, His Son, and us, Christ’s disciples. Just before his “hour,” Jesus prayed: “Father, glorify your name” (Jn 12:28). In his high priestly prayer he developed this.

Father, the hour has come! Give glory to your Son that your Son may give glory to you . . . I have given you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do . . . I have made your name known to those you gave me out of the world. . . It is in them that I have been glorified . . . protect them with your name . . . that they may be one, even as we are one” (Jn 17:1, 4, 6, 10-11, 22; cf. CCC 2812).

2143. In Deeds. From Jesus’ prayer it is clear that the Father is to be glorified not only in words, but also in deeds. Thus Jesus prays that his disciples be “consecrated in the truth” (Jn 17:17,19), the truth of God’s Love that Christ definitively expressed in his Paschal Death and Resurrection. Hence, we pray that the Father will glorify His Name in and through our life and prayer.³

³ St. Cyprian explains: “May your name be hallowed. . . We are asking God that His name may be made holy in us . . . Because He Himself said: ‘Be holy for I am holy’ (Lv 20:26), we pray that we who

We ask that this name of God be hallowed in us by our lives. For if we live well, the divine name is blessed; but if we live badly, it is blasphemed (*St. Peter Chrysologus, Sermon 71; cf. CCC 2814*).

2144. Twofold dimension of holiness. That God be hallowed in our lives is, of course, not mere pious rhetoric, but illumines two basic dimensions of God. *First*, praise of **God's being**, His "total Otherness," dwell in "unapproachable light" (*1 Tim 6:16*), separated from the profane by His exclusive holiness. This rejects all forms of idolatry since **God is different from all created realities**.

Our human reaction to such an All-Holy God is both **flight** and **attraction**. We are *fearful* in the presence of the unknown Holy One, yet *fascinated* by the fullness of meaning and light.

Second, the **ethical dimension** wherein God is "shown holy by His justice" (*Is 5:16*). He is a God who loves justice and hates iniquity, who favors the weak, and opposes the oppressor (*cf. Ex 3:17*).

2145. Sharing God's holiness. God calls us to share in His "*Holy Being*" by a **life of grace**, offered to everyone by the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit. Through this life of grace we achieve our ultimate destiny, God Himself. He calls us to share in His **ethical holiness** by living a good life, empowered by the Spirit.

God's holy Name is sanctified only when we act with a pure heart, a thirst for justice, in solidarity with others in work for peace against all violence and exploitation.

2146. Challenge to commitment. If "Holy be your Name" is accepted as God's call to share in His Being and Ethical action, this petition will save us from all superficial sentimentality. We recognize in it a **life-long process of conversion**, an *inescapable obligation of reverence* before our All-Holy Father, and a challenge to **commit ourselves** to **Christian action** for justice and peace.

2147. Trinitarian. This petition – like all the rest – we make in the name of Jesus. For as Jesus promised: "whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son" (*Jn 14:13; cf. CCC 2815*). But as with the address "Father," we "hallow the Father's Name" not only with the Son, but through the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit. Every aspect of our Christian life is, in truth, *Trinitarian*.

INTEGRATION

2148. Only the "*poor in spirit*" can actually pray that God's name be hallowed in and among us. The Spirit's Gift of filial "Fear of the Lord" brings us the reverence and respect for God that does honor to both God and the believer. We experience God's terrifying yet fascinating holiness especially as our **Father Almighty** (*Chap. 6*) who continually **creates heaven and earth** (*Chap. 7*) We are created from the Father's Love, in His image and likeness, to love Him with all our minds, hearts and wills (*Chap. 16*), and journey towards Him as our final goal (*Chap. 29*).

B. "Your Kingdom come."

have been hallowed in Baptism may persevere in what we have begun. We pray for this every day, for we have need of daily sanctification; sinning every day, we purify our faults again and again by constant sanctification. . . . We pray that this sanctification may remain in us" (*Lit. of Hrs., Tues., 11th Wk.; cf. CCC 2813*).

2149. Kingdom here means God's Reign, brought close to us in Jesus Christ's life, teaching, Passion, Death and Resurrection. We experience this especially as members of Christ's Body, worshipping the Father in his perfect sacrifice of love in the Eucharistic celebration.

2150. St. Cyprian explains well how we pray that "God's Kingdom promised to us, the Kingdom won by Christ's blood and passion, will come and become present for us. Then we, who formerly were slaves in this world, will reign from now on under the dominion of Christ." He goes further to stress the Christo-centric character of God's Kingdom:

it may even be that the Kingdom of God is Christ in person, whom we call upon longingly every day and whose coming we wish to hasten by our yearning [*Marana tha, Come Lord! 1 Cor 16:22*]. He is our resurrection, since we rise again in him; so too he can be the Kingdom of God because we are to reign with him (*Lit. of Hrs., Wed., 11th Wk.; cf. CCC, 2816-17*).

2151. In the *Synoptic Gospels*, the Kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus' preaching. In *Mark's Gospel*, Jesus begins his public ministry by proclaiming: "This is the time of fulfillment. The Reign of God is at hand. Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel" (*Mk 1:15*). *Luke's Gospel* presents the coming of the Kingdom as *hidden* (*cf. Lk 17:20*), yet offers *signs* of its presence in Jesus' reply to the disciples of John. "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind recover their sight, the cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them" (*Lk 7:22*).

2152. In *Matthew's Gospel* Jesus described the Kingdom in a number of striking parables that show it to be as both *hidden* and *desirable*. The parables bring out a number of *essential qualities* of the Kingdom. For example:

- a. It has such *precious value* that it cannot be measured – its worth is beyond anything else we possess. Thus the Kingdom is like the *treasure hidden in a field*, or a *pearl of great price*, for which people would give up everything they have to acquire (*cf. Mt 13:44-46*).
- b. Its *creative* and *growing power*, like the *yeast* that leavens the dough, or the *tiny mustard seed* that grows into the largest of plants (*cf. Mt 13:31-33*).
- c. *Including good and bad*, like wheat and weeds growing in the same field, or like a dragnet thrown into the sea, catching good fish and the worthless (*cf. Mt 13:24-30, 47-50*).

2153. Beyond these qualities, the Gospels offer a number of *penetrating insights* into the Kingdom. The Kingdom is:

- *among us*, in the poor in spirit, and those persecuted for justice's sake (*cf. Lk 17:21; Mt 5:3,10*);
- *to be sought first of all*, and all other things will be given besides (*cf. Mt 6:33*);
- *suffering violence*, and the violent take it by storm (*cf. Mt 11:12*);
- *not a kingdom of this world* (*cf. Jn 18:36*);
- entered only by *those born of water and the Spirit* (*cf. Jn 3:5*);
- *hard to enter* for those who are rich, unforgiving, or just give lip service (*cf. Lk 18:24-25; Mt 7:21; 18:23ff*);
- *inherited fully* by those who fed, clothed, visited and cared for the "least of my brethren" (*cf. Mt 25:34,40*);
- for whoever serves Christ in this way, it is a *Kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy* in the Holy Spirit (*cf. Rom 14:17-18*).

2154. Such a Kingdom is

- *in process*, an “eschatological” reality already present but not yet fully achieved;
- *universal*, embracing all peoples and every condition and dimension of their lives;
- *structural*, going to the roots of reality, re-structuring our relationships to God and to one another, and in the process upturning the world’s basic values; *fourth*,
- *definitively established* by Christ according to the Father’s will and design, yet *fifth*,
- *continually “coming”* in the lives and hopes of the faithful.

Thus, St. Augustine comments: “it is the grace of living the right way that you ask for when you pray: ‘thy Kingdom come!’ ”

2155. Two extreme interpretations of the Kingdom are to be avoided. One makes it completely “other-worldly,” a transcendent, inward reality for the overly “*pious*” who thus try to escape any care and responsibility for this world. The *second* is the opposite secularist extreme, identifying God’s Kingdom with specific earthly goals. In this view, *we* build up God’s Kingdom by our own powers.

Obviously, the truth is in neither extreme, but in recognizing *both* God’s transcendence *and* His constant concern for this worldly life of ours. God’s Kingdom, rather, is *at hand*, calling for a conversion and faith that can renew and liberate our human hearts in all the trials and temptations of our human condition.

2156. For most Filipinos, “*Kingdom*” is not a word that spontaneously calls forth any great personal affective or intellectual response. Therefore we must view it in terms of Christ, who clearly gave his life for the “Kingdom of God” he preached. Concretely, Jesus is calling us into an order of unity and peace, under his own Kingship, in which each of us serves as servant members, in our day-to-day activities.

2157. The first petition, “Holy be your Name” referred primarily to *God’s Self-communication* in human life and history. This second petition, “Your Kingdom come!” relates more directly to *God’s transforming presence* within each of us and society as a whole. As with the preceding, it is essentially *Trinitarian*: we pray together with the Risen Son, that the Father’s Kingdom may come through the powerful action of the Holy Spirit.

INTEGRATION

2158. “*Meekness*” is not a very popular virtue these days – self-assertion as in “I did it MY way” seems to be gaining widespread acceptance. Yet, no one admires the self-centered braggart, always boasting of his own talents. The meek before God are characterized by sound piety, and concerned about building up the “Kingdom of God” on earth. Thus, they have fixed their eyes on Jesus Christ, promised from of old (*Chap. 9*). Both in his Person and his ministry (*Chap. 10*), especially through his Passion, Death and Resurrection (*Chaps. 11-12*) Jesus makes the Kingdom of God present to us all. The challenge to follow him (*Chap. 14*) is proclaimed by word and example throughout the earth by the members of his Body, the Church (*Chap. 23*), supported especially by their communitarian prayer (*Chap. 24*).

C. “Your Will be done”

2159. Most of those who recite this prayer regularly never seem to ask themselves: “what actually does God will?”

- For many *adolescents*, God's will seems to be roughly identified with all the restrictions imposed on them by various authorities in family, school, and the like.
- For *activists* inspired by some cause, God's will is frequently identified with their cause. Therefore everything and everyone else must be sacrificed for their goal.
- For some *ritualists* God's will is uniquely focused on prayer and liturgical worship. His will is accomplished by fulfilling the "religious" duties of prayer and weekly Sunday worship.

Most of us probably never stop to think much about it; we just take for granted that what God wills is good, but perhaps often not directly relevant to what we are doing day-by-day.

2160. *Jesus Christ* gives us a different picture! Everything he did, his whole life and mission are sketched in striking fashion in the Letter to the Hebrews:

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
Holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.
Then I said, "As is written of me in the book
I have come to do your will, O God" (*Heb 10:5-7*).

Thus Jesus could assert of his relationship to the Father: "I always do what pleases Him" (*Jn 8:29; cf. 4:34; 5:30, 6:38; CCC 2824*).

2161. The Father's Will. But what does the Father actually will? From Christ's life and ministry, his disciples came to realize that God our Savior "wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth" (*1 Tim 2:4*). He "shows generous patience since He wants none to perish but all to come to repentance" (*2 Pt 3:9*). To the question, "what does God want us to do?," Christ summarizes all other commandments in his own: "Love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn 13:34; cf. CCC 2822*).

2162. Christ's love commandment was only summarizing his own life of "doing good." He exemplified this both in his teaching, especially in his famous parable of the "Good Samaritan" (*cf. Lk 10:29-37*), and his own faithful obedience to his Father's will in his agony in the Garden (*cf. Lk 22:39-46*). Of this obedience the Letter to the Hebrews comments: "Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and when perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (*Heb 5:8-9*).

D. "On earth as in heaven"

2163. As for us on earth, "by clinging to Christ, we can become one single spirit with him and so accomplish his will. In this way, it will be fulfilled on earth just as it is in heaven" (*Origen, On Prayer, 26; cf. CCC 2825*). But how exactly do we accomplish Christ's will? St. Cyprian gives us a good run-down:

The will of God is what Christ did and taught. Humility in our daily lives, unwavering faith, modesty in speech, justice in acts, mercy in deeds, discipline in not harming others, readiness to suffer, peaceful living with our brothers, whole-hearted love of the Lord, loving Him because He is our Father, fearing Him because He is our God; preferring nothing to Him who preferred us above all else; clinging tenaciously to His love, standing by his Cross with loyalty and courage – that is what it means to do the will of God (*St. Cyprian, Lit. of Hrs. Thurs., 11th Wk*).

2164. Cyprian adds "we must pray that those who still belong to the earth may themselves accomplish the will of God to which Christ submitted perfectly for the salvation of all." This demands the

practiced ability of *discernment*: trying “to discern the will of the Lord” (*Eph 5:17*). Critical Christian discernment is guided by St. Paul’s admonition: “Do not conform yourself to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God’s will, what is good, pleasing and perfect” (*Rom 12:2*).

2165. In the final analysis, what we pray for is: let what you, our Father, want, be done, and be done in me and in everyone. This undoubtedly involves a certain humble *abandonment*, as we should expect if we are serious in sharing in Christ’s Paschal Mystery, and imitating the Virgin Mary’s and the saints’ obedience of faith (*cf. CCC 2827*). We realize the powerful forces, both within and without, that oppose God’s loving will, and honestly evaluate our life in Christ and ask for strength. As always, our prayer is *Trinitarian*.

And that we might live no longer for ourselves,
but for him [your only *Son*, our Savior]
He sent the *Holy Spirit* from You, *Father*,
As his first gift to those who believe,
To complete his work on earth, and
Bring us the fullness of grace (*EP IV*).

INTEGRATION

2166. Relative to the number esteeming “meekness,” a virtue, even fewer persons today aspire to be among “*those who mourn*.” Despite much high idealism today, “*carrying one’s Cross*” seems to have been quietly pushed aside as a Christian ideal (except perhaps symbolically once a year at the Good Friday procession). Yet the Spirit’s gift of “*knowledge*” helps us see the true meaning of Christ’s sacrifice (Chap. 11), and the consequent call to his disciples to follow in his path of self-giving love (Chaps. 13-17). This is specified more concretely in the “Sacraments of Vocation”: Marriage and Orders (Chap. 28). Thus is God’s will “done” among us, in our convictions, commitments, and trusting prayer.

Summary of the “You Petitions”

2167. The three “You Petitions” are ultimately different ways of *asking God to be God* on earth as in heaven. They all refer to God’s *escha-tological glory*, that is, His presence in the final times of Christ’s return in glory and the definitive establishment of God’s Rule. But this presence is *already* among us *now*, but not yet as it will be.

The *first petition* on “hallowing” the *Name* focuses more on the internal dimension of God’s glory, on His own nature, while the *second* on the coming of His Kingdom stresses more the external dimension, God’s relationship to the world. The *third petition* that God’s *will* be done fixes on His saving action reaching the whole world, thus highlighting the *universality* of God’s glory.

All three begin with the community of Christ’s disciples, but extend beyond to include everyone and everything in heaven and on earth.

IV. THE “WE PETITIONS”

2168. Introduction. We shift now to the second group of petitions, those which pertain to our *basic needs*: bread, support against sin (forgiveness), temptation and Evil. The two groups should not be separated, since Christ himself has brought them together in his prayer. The reason is clear: God Himself cares about our needs. His Name, Kingdom and Will are truly committed, by His freely given Love, toward responding to our needs. So Jesus insisted:

Stop worrying over questions like: “What are we to eat?” or “What are we to drink?” or “What are we to wear?” The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first His kingship over you, His way of holiness and all these things will be given to you besides (*Mt 6:31-33; cf. CCC 2830*).

A. “Give us this day our daily bread”

2169. “Give us.” This is said with full confidence in our heavenly Father who makes “His sun rise on the bad and the good, and rains on the just and the unjust” (*Mt 5:45*). The Psalmist chants: “They all look to you to give them food in due time” (*Ps 104:27; cf. CCC 2828-29*).

“Give us” is really a *Covenant expression*, based on the essential interrelated roles of the covenant partners. Our work of growing, producing, distributing food, depends ultimately on nature, and the life given us and sustained by our Creator. Thus we recognize the fact that food is still a gift from our Father for which we must ask and thank Him (*cf. CCC 2834*).

2170. Our bread. “Bread” here is the symbol for *all human food*, the food necessary to sustain our human life, literally, the “bread of life” (*Jn 6:35*). “*Our*” bread means that although each of us has an *individual* need for bread, responding to that need is a *community effort*. Jesus teaches us to pray for “*our* bread,” stressing our *human fellowship*. We are all brothers and sisters under God, our Father.

Moreover, “eating” for us means more than simply “feeding” to stay alive physically. Human eating is a communitarian act, carried out in a *meal*. It is a communion with others not only in physical food but in dialogue and conversation around the table. Bread is *human* only when it is *shared* and supports communion with others. This bread calls for a *collective conversion* that responds to the *scandalous hunger* and *starvation* so widespread, and so unnecessary, in the world today, and even in our own Philippines.

2171. The challenge of sharing. This demand for effective response to the urgent physical needs of our fellow human beings, challenges all Christians both personally and in their solidarity within the human family (*cf. CCC 2831*). The challenge was already presented in Old Testament times: “Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked – this is the fasting I wish!” (*cf. Is 58:5-7*).

2172. *Christ* sketches the challenge graphically in his parable of the *rich man* and *Lazarus*. The rich man was “dressed in purple garments and fine linen and feasting every day,” while the poor beggar Lazarus, lying at his gate, covered with sores, “longed to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table” (*cf. Lk 16:19-31*). The parable pictures perfectly the complete self-centered, uncaring, rationalizing attitude of the rich toward the poor starving Lazarus.⁴

2173. Today this *individual contrast* between the rich man and Lazarus is transferred to its global dimensions in terms of *social and structural sin*. What remains the same is the shocking lack of basic human values which are the underlying cause of this unjust evil situation. These conditions literally

⁴ St. Basil the Great, writing in the 4th century, reads like some inspired preacher of *today*: “The bread that is spoiling in your house belongs to the hungry. The shoes that are mildewing under your bed belong to those who have none. The clothes stored away in your trunk belong to those who are naked. The money that depreciates in your treasury belongs to the poor!”

cry out for new, creative social, economic, and political structures to effectively bring the earth's resources to everyone. But these structures will "work" only if the human persons running them have undergone a true conversion of heart (*cf. CCC 2832*).

PCP II and the National Pastoral Plan (*NPP*) put great stress on the Catholic faith-vision into our social fabric. For such a vision to become operative, the Spirit of the new Covenant in Christ must inspire and motivate not only individual Filipino Christians but also our *organizations* and *institutions*. It focuses on a real **social transformation** which looks to the total authentic development of the Filipino, in work for justice of the common good, and love in forgiveness and solidarity (*NPP*).

2174. Not by bread alone. But even beyond this "human bread" taken to include full meal fellowship, there is *a further human need*. Christ indicated this in his response to the first temptation to change stones into bread. "Not on bread alone is man to live, but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God" (*Mt 4:4*). This includes both the *Word* of God and His Breath, the *Spirit*. Amos even prophesied a "famine" not of bread, but "of hearing the word of the Lord" (*Amos 8:11*).

Thus, the specific Christian meaning of the petition for bread is the "*bread of life*" understood as both the *Word* of God received in faith, and the Body of the Lord received in the *Eucharist* (*cf. CCC, 2835*).

2175. This day our "daily bread." Bread in this petition can refer to:

- the material bread we need for today, simply to live;
- the eschatological bread of God's eternal kingdom; and
- the Kingdom's bread already present to us in the teaching of Jesus, the Incarnate Word of the Father, and in the Eucharist.

But there is more. In the eras before our present desacralized societies, bread represented a **holy** reality, treated with respect because of its close relation to the mystery of life. In the Old Testament Covenant, bread was taken as a basic sign of God's sustaining His people. For us in Christ's New Covenant, bread is holy because Christ has made it the means of his saving presence within and among us.

2176. The "holiness" of Christ's "bread of life" can be developed in terms of Luke's Gospel portraying the Christians' journey to the Father. In this Christian Exodus we share in Christ's own vision and mission. Bread, then, becomes the "Christian manna" on our journey to the Father, sustaining us by our sharing in Christ's life, death and resurrection. Thus, in the Christian meal, the Lord's Supper, the "breaking of bread" is:

- a. a call to *discipleship* and to *reconciliation* with one another (*cf. Lk 5:27-32; 7:36-50*);
- b. a call to *mission* (*cf. Lk 9:10-17*) and to *welcoming* one another in hospitality (*cf. Lk 10:38-42*), *sharing* with the poor, (*cf. Lk 14:1-14; 16:19-31*), *forgiving* and celebrating the return of lost/dead Christians who return home to new life (*cf. Lk 15:1-32*);
- c. expressing the gift of one's own life for the life of others (*cf. Lk 22:14-38*), in the "breaking of bread" in which we recognize our Risen Lord (*cf. 24:13-35*).

2177. Trinitarian. Our petition for daily bread is made with the **Son**, around his earthly table, the altar. This is the "sacrament" among us of his eternal feast in the Father's Kingdom toward which we journey (*cf. Lk 22:14-20*). We offer this petition in the **Spirit** who joins us together in Christian [graced] fellowship, *koinonia*, to address our needs to the **Father** (*cf. Acts 2:42*), and brings the Risen Christ present to us in the Bread of Life.

INTEGRATION

2178. The fourth *Beatitude* confirms our petition for bread in speaking directly of those who *hunger and thirst for righteousness*. The Spirit's gift of *Fortitude* supports our search. Moreover, this petition for "daily bread, this day and 'for tomorrow,' "echoes our Filipino search for meaning in life in our meal-oriented culture" (*Chap. 1*). The petition both interiorizes and specifies the Commandments to respect and care for God's gift of life (*Chaps. 7, 18*), including the "New Life" given in Baptism and strengthened in Confirmation (*Chap. 25*). But most of all, it voices our yearning for Christ as our Word of Truth and Eucharistic Bread of Life (*Chap. 26*). Thus, this petition of the Lord's Prayer brings together an inculturated Filipino experience of gratitude and respect for life, particularly the "new Life" given us in Christ.

B. "And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

2179. This petition begins with our confident plea for forgiveness, grounded firmly in our opening address: "Our Father in heaven." For we come before our "*Abba*," Father, as lost prodigal sons and daughters who, "coming to our senses," return home in repentance: "Father we have sinned against heaven and against you. We no longer deserve to be called your sons/daughters. . ." (*cf. Lk 15:17-19*). Or like the publican who "would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast and prayed: 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner' " (*Lk 18:13*).

2180. Our petition is a personal acknowledgment of our own sinfulness. The radical importance of this is forcefully presented by St. John:

If we say, "we are free of the guilt of sin," we deceive ourselves; the truth is not to be found in us. But if we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrong. If we say, "We have never sinned," we make Him a liar, and His word finds no place in us (*1 Jn 1:8-10*).

But this is confessed within our trust in the Father's MERCY and in His beloved Son. "Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (*Col 1: 14*). The effective sign of God's forgiveness is given us in the Sacraments of the Church (*cf. CCC 2838-39*).

2181. Sins/Debts. Matthew's version uses the word "*debts*." We can incur debts of *justice* in owing something to others. Or debts of *gratitude* from favors graciously granted us. Or debts resulting from *offenses* committed against another, personal *affronts* that call for repentance, and whose forgiveness is granted only as a free gift from the offended.

If we offend another to whom we are already bound in gratitude, as in our relationship with God, the debt of offense is far greater, calling for deeper repentance on our part. It is a truism to assert that only the saints have any real understanding of the immeasurable debt we owe to God by our sins. But they have this authentic "sense of sin" precisely within their experience of the Father's unbounded forgiveness, transforming debts of *offense* into debts of inexpressible *gratitude*.

2182. Forgiving. "To forgive" involves much more than simply not holding a grudge against some offender, or not plotting some revenge. It is not the same as "forgetting" the offense. Rather, it means setting the offenders free, releasing them from all obligation, re-establishing broken relationships.

In a personalistic culture such as ours, this can be very difficult at times. But we Filipinos can appreciate something of the depth and gravity of this Christian challenge by reflecting on Christ's own prayer on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing" (*Lk 23:34*). St. Stephen, the first martyr, closely followed Christ's example in his plea: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (*Acts 7:60*). Each of us is called by Christ, to love even our enemies. "My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father." (*Mt 5:44-45*). "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" (*Lk 6:36*).

2183. Asking forgiveness. Perhaps it is even more difficult for the average Filipino to ask for forgiveness. The positive aspects of reconciliation and joyful reunion find ready acceptance in our culture. But acknowledging that we have done wrong, and asking for pardon, seem much less common. Christ's repeated admonition should alert us: "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (*Mt 23:12; cf. Lk 14:11; 18:14*). Humility for Christ means *truth* – no false groveling or abasement – but the truth that sets us free, that liberates. Ultimately there is no escaping this humility: either we humble ourselves in acknowledging the truth of our sinfulness, or be humbled by God's true judgment.

2184. As we forgive those who sin against us. This phrase is essential for understanding the true nature of the petition. The word "*as*" seems to imply *first*, that we forgive others, and *then* ask God to forgive us, in reward. This cannot be, since only through God's grace within us are we able to forgive others. God never comes "after us." His grace always precedes.

Or *second*, the "*as*" could mean that we have no right to ask God to forgive us unless we do the same for others. This is true enough but misconceives God's loving "gift" of forgiveness in terms of "rights," and fails to explain *why* God's forgiveness of us is so linked with our forgiveness of others.

2185. Christ's parable of the unforgiving servant holds the *key to the proper interpretation*. Although the master was moved by the pleading of his servant to forgive the huge debt of the servant, the servant did not receive the gift of forgiveness. Rather, he took it as a result of his own pleading. Thus when his fellow servant pleaded a chance to repay a small debt, the unforgiving servant refused. He had no experience of receiving the gift of forgiveness – only of tricking his master. When informed of this action, the master could rightfully hand over the unforgiving servant to the torturers because the servant had never really received his forgiveness in the first place (*cf. Mt 18:21-35; CCC 2843*).

2186. The parable brings out *three* important truths. *First*, that God's forgiveness precedes our forgiveness. *Second*, that our human forgiveness is grounded in God's love for us and his forgiveness of our sins. We can forgive others because we have first been forgiven by God. *Third*, that God's forgiveness becomes real for us only if we accept it and make it part of our relating to others.

2187. God's forgiving mercy does not really penetrate our hearts unless we realize our own sinfulness, and in joyfully accepting God's forgiveness, find the strength and inspiration to forgive those who have offended us (*cf. CCC 2840*). Our forgiveness of one another is so important that Jesus made it the condition even for authentic worship of his Father.

If you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift (*Mt 5:23-24; cf. 6:14-15; Mk 11:25; CCC 2841*).

2188. Trinitarian. We know that our Father's mercy has no limits or bounds. Christ answered Peter's question about the number of times one should forgive by stating: "not seven times, but seventy times seven times" (*Mt 18:22*), meaning without limit. St. Paul urges us: "Be kind to one

another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving just as God has forgiven you in Christ” (*Eph 4:32; cf. CCC 2842*).

The call is clear. The only way we could possibly respond is in accepting the Father forgiveness, with the *Son*, through the power of the *Holy Spirit*. For the communion of the Blessed Trinity is the basic source and norm for the TRUTH of all our relationships. This communion is lived through the Risen Christ in the Spirit, and experienced in our prayer, especially in the Eucharistic celebration.

INTEGRATION

2189. “*Blessed are the merciful*” fits this petition very well, as does the Spirit’s gift of *Counsel*. Asking for “forgiveness of sins” presumes an authentic Christian sense of sin, based on a loving personal relation to God through Jesus Christ (*Chaps. 14-16*). It involves respecting God’s gifts to us of life, sexuality and truth (*Chaps. 18-21*), and the yearning for Christ’s healing coming to us in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing (*Chap. 27*). All this rests upon the basic creedal convictions of an all-Provident Creator who has promised to redeem us from the Fall (*Chaps. 6-9*).

C. Do not lead us to the test

2190. This petition forms one whole with the last one. Together, they pierce to the roots of our sinfulness, for which we prayed for forgiveness in the preceding petition. For we know how we are led into sin by temptation and the power of Evil, or the “Evil One.”

In “*Lead us not into temptation*,” we pray that God may not let us enter into, give in to, submit to, temptation. Such a petition follows Christ’s own warning to his disciples in the Garden: “Be on guard and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but nature is weak” (*Mt 26:41; cf. CCC 2846*). God surely does not want us to be tempted, but rather to liberate us from temptation. Our petition, then, comes to be an invocation for the spirit of *discernment* and of *decision*.

2191. Discernment. Actually two basic distinctions must be made. The first is between “*test*” or “*trial*” and “*temptation*.” St. Paul wrote that we should even boast of our tests/afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven virtue (*cf. Rom 5:3-5; CCC 2847*).

Temptation, on the other hand, is enticement to evil, seduction to sin and death. St. James writes clearly on this matter:

God. . . tempts no one. Rather, the tug and lure of his own passion tempt every man. Once passion has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin reaches maturity it begets death (*Jas 1:13-15*).

2192. The second important distinction is between “*being tempted*” and “*consenting to temptation*.” We know that temptations are part of our human condition. The fact that Christ our Lord himself was tempted (*cf. Mt 4:1-11*) shows there is no moral fault involved in the fact of being tempted. The problem is willfully consenting to the temptation. Here is where we need the Holy Spirit to properly discern and unmask the lie and falsehood of temptation. Outwardly it appears “good. . . pleasing to the eyes and desirable” (*Gn 3:6*), whereas in reality, its fruit is alienation and death (*cf. CCC 2847*).

2193. Decision. Not to enter into temptation, then, depends on a “decision of the heart.” Christ said: “Where your treasure is, there your heart is also. . . . No one can serve two masters” (*Mt 6:21,24*). Here we must seek the help of the Holy Spirit to draw our hearts to what is good. “Since we live by

the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's lead" (*Gal 5:26*). St. Paul assures us that "God will not let you be tested beyond your strength. Along with the test He will give you a way out of it, so that you may be able to endure it" (*1 Cor 10:13; cf. CCC 2848*).

2194. Such success over temptation is not possible without *prayer*, as we see in Christ's own example. That is why Christ insisted so much on "watchfulness of our hearts." "Be constantly on guard. Stay awake" (*Mk 13:9, 23, 33-37*). We are to "pray perseveringly. . . and pray in a spirit of thanksgiving" (*Col 4:2*). And St. Peter warns us:

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith . . . the God of all grace who called you to His everlasting glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish those who have suffered a little while (*1 Pt 5:8-10; cf. CCC 2849*).

D. But deliver us from evil

2195. Whether simply "Evil" or the "Evil One," namely Satan, be preferred here, makes little difference in the text's basic meaning. We are dealing with EVIL beyond our individual daily temptations and sinful thoughts, words and deeds. It is a question of the much deeper battle between God and the power of Evil.

In this final petition we are asking to be preserved from the final diabolic onslaught. Christ himself prayed to his Father for his disciples: "I do not ask that you take them from the world, but to guard them from the evil one" (*Jn 17:15; cf. CCC 2850*). The combat is with the "devil or Satan, the seducer of the whole world" (*Rv 12:9*). "He brought death to man from the beginning, and has never based himself on truth; the truth is not in him. . . He is a liar, and the father of lies" (*Jn 8:44*).

2196. The crucified and Risen Christ has won the victory over "the Prince of this world" (*Jn 14:30*). Yet this liberation is *not yet* manifest in all, for "the whole created world eagerly awaits to be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God" (*Rom 8:19-21*).

But Christ encourages us: "There is nothing to fear. I am the First and the Last, and the one who lives. Once I was dead, but now I live — forever and ever. I hold the keys of death and the nether world" (*Rv 1:18*). And so we pray for that final, definitive liberation that only Christ can bring: Come, Lord Jesus! (*Rv 22:20*). In every celebration of the Eucharist, our prayer is offered to the Lord:

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil,
and grant us peace in our day.
In your mercy keep us free from sin,
and protect us from all anxiety
As we wait in joyful hope
For the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

INTEGRATION

2197. The "*Pure of Heart*," strengthened by the Spirit's gift of *understanding*, have a clarity of direction, a "single mindedness" and "sense of purpose," that help them from falling into temptation. Their attention is not dissipated among a thousand frivolous pursuits, whether referring to unbelief,

life, sexuality, possessions or truth (*Chaps. 4, 18-21*). They are thus confirmed in their vocation as disciples of Christ, following his great Commandments of Love (*Chaps. 14-17*).

2198. Those blessed as “*Peacemakers*” are grounded in the Spirit’s gift of *wisdom*, and like the “pure of heart” live the redeemed life that overcomes the effects of the original Fall of our human race (*Chaps. 4, 8*) The insidious worm of envy and jealousy, subject of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, is not theirs (*Chaps. 19-20*). Rather, they are at home here on earth precisely in being so clearly oriented toward their final goal: risen life with God, Father, Risen Son and Holy Spirit (*Chap. 29*).

V. FINAL DOXOLOGY

2199. “*For yours is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*” This doxology, or “prayer glorifying God,” takes up the three “*You Petitions*”: that God’s Name be held holy, His Kingdom be established on earth, that His saving Will be accomplished. But now they are taken up in the form of *adoration* and *thanksgiving*. Its roots go back to David’s prayer:

Yours, O Lord, are grandeur and power,
majesty, splendor, and glory.
For all in heaven and on earth is yours;
Yours, O Lord, is the sovereignty,
You are exalted as head over all (*1 Chr 29:11*).

But now we take up this doxology in the light of our *Risen Savior*, Jesus Christ. Its value resides in helping us to focus once again on Whom we are praying to: God our Almighty Loving Father.

2200. So *Kingdom* reminds us of God’s active reign over us. *Power* clarifies that our Father is not a static potentate, but an incredibly active, dynamic personal force among us. It also purifies “power” of its many abusive forms among us. Finally, *Glory* may be for us the best personal attribute of God our Father: utterly uplifting, luminous, of unimaginable beauty, shining for us in the Risen Christ Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

Soli Deo Gloria

Glossary

Absolution: in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the formula pronounced by the priest, over repentant sinners, of forgiveness through Christ of personal sins. (*Cf. Trent, ND 1620.*)

Abstinence: commonly refers to refraining from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays in Lent.

Adoration: the worship and homage offered to God alone.

Advent: the liturgical season preparing for Christmas, the feast day which celebrates the coming of Christ.

Agape: the special NT Greek term for *God's love for us*, and which Christ commanded his disciples to have for one another. (*Cf. Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 4:16; 1 Cor 13.*)

Agnosticism: the theory that God or the afterlife cannot be known with certainty. (*Cf. Vatican II, GS 57.*)

Anamnesis: “*memorial*” or “*remembrance*,” Greek term used to describe the Eucharist as a commemoration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection/Ascension of Christ. (*Cf. 1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19.*)

Anathema: term used by St. Paul to exclude an unworthy member from the community. (*Cf. Gal 1:9; 1 Cor 16:22.*) Later, it was used as the Church's solemn condemnation of an erroneous, heretical position that contradicts Catholic truth.

Apocalyptic: the style of writing filled with visions, portents and signs claiming to reveal divine mysteries, especially the end of the world. (*Cf. Daniel, Revelation and Mk 13.*)

Apocrypha: writings of ancient Jewish and Christian origin that have not been accepted as part of the Biblical Canon. Among them are: “*The Book of Henoc*” and “*the Ascension Moses*,” the “*Infancy Gospel of James*,” the “*Gospel of Peter*” and the “*Gospel of Thomas*.” Protestant practice includes under this term “*Apocripha*” what we call “*Deuterocanonical Books*” (Wisdom, Sirach and Baruch) which the Catholic and Eastern Churches accept as canonical.

Apologetics: the systematic theological presentation of the reasonableness of Christian doctrine in defense from various attacks.

Apostle: someone sent as messenger or missionary of the Church. In the NT, the 12 disciples chosen by Christ to be the primary witnesses to his teaching, miracles and resurrection.

Apostolic See: name given to the Catholic Church in Rome, founded on the apostles Peter and Paul, and especially to the Papal office whose authority rests on the Pope as successor of St. Peter.

Asceticism: the general name given to the spiritual efforts and exercises at purification and growth in Christian perfection, and toward a closer following of Christ.

Beatific Vision: the immediate direct knowledge of God and perfect happiness enjoyed by the Blessed in heaven.

BECs/Basic Ecclesial Communities: small faith communities of Christians, gathered together around the Word of God and the Eucharist, striving to integrate their faith and their daily life, in solidarity with one another, action for justice, and a vibrant celebration of life in the liturgy. (*Cf. PCP II 138-39.*)

Body of Christ: can refer to:

a) the human earthly body of Jesus;

b) the glorified body of the Risen Christ, present to us in the Eucharist; or

c) the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, constituted by all the baptized, including those in purgatory and those in heaven.

Canon: a rule or norm. With the reference to the Bible, this term is used to indicate the list of books accepted as part of the Bible whose content contains the “norm” of our faith and Christian living. (*Cf. DV 11.*)

Canon Law: the body of laws, precepts and regulations of the Catholic Church.

Canonization: the solemn declaration by the Pope that a deceased person, already beatified, is among the saints in heaven and can be publicly venerated. (*Cf. CJC 1186-90.*)

Catechesis: “education in the faith, especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.” (*Cf. Catechesi Trad., 18.*)

Catechism: a general term for the contents of catechesis, used primarily for books, manuals, and summaries of Catholic teachings.

Charism: special grace or gift of the Holy Spirit given for building up the Christian community. (*Cf. 1 Cor 12; LG 10-12.*)

Charity: the infused theological virtue of love of God above all, and all else for God’s sake. (*Cf. Dt 6:5; Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 4:7-5:4; 1 Cor 13:1.*)

Chastity: the virtue that enables persons to integrate their sexuality within their vocation in life, according to the principles of faith and right reason.

Concupiscence: the disorder of desires which, while not sin in the true and proper sense, comes from original sin and inclines to sin. Since it remains in the baptized, it is left to us to wrestle with, and to resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ. (*Cf. Trent, ND 512; 1 Jn 2:16.*)

Conscience: the inner power which discerns and calls us to do what is good and to avoid evil, according to the law God has written in our hearts. (*Cf. Rom 2:12-16.*)

Conscience applies moral law to a particular case, thus formulating moral obligation.

Conversion: a change of heart (*metanoia*), turning away from sin (sorrow and repentance) and turning toward God and the following of Christ in his Kingdom (purpose of amendment). (*Cf. Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17.*)

Corporal Works of Mercy: acts of charity responding to “body needs”: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and imprisoned, and bury the dead. (*Cf. Mt 25:31-46.*)

Creation: God’s free act of putting and keeping all reality in existence.

Creationism: originally, God’s direct creation of each human soul, but now more commonly referring to anti-evolutionary views which interpret Genes is in a Fundamentalist way.

Decalogue: “Ten words”: the Ten Commandments summarizing Israel’s religious and moral obligations in the Covenant with Yahweh. (*Cf. Ex 20:1-17.*)

Deposit of Faith: everything God definitively revealed through Christ for our salvation and entrusted to the Church to be proclaimed, preserved, and interpreted. (*Cf. 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12,14; DV 10; GS 62.*)

Deuterocanonical Books: Catholic name for books found in the Greek version [LXX Septuagint] of the OT, but not in the Hebrew version. These Books are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees. There are also additional parts in the Books of Esther and Daniel.

Devil: (“tempter”) Lucifer or Satan, chief of the fallen angels. (*Cf. Wis 2:24; Mt 25:41; Lk 10:18; Rv 12:9-12; 16:14.*)

Development of Doctrine: gradual growth in the Church’s understanding of the deeper meaning and implications of the truths revealed by Jesus Christ.

Diakonia: “service”: the NT Greek term referring to ministry in the Church for the good of the community. (*Cf. Acts 12:17, 25; 21:19; Rom 11:13; 1 Tim 1:12.*)

Didache: the oldest Christian writing outside the NT. In the catechetical process, *didache* as “teaching” refers to what follows the first proclaiming of the Gospel, the “*kerygma*.”

Discernment of spirits: the Holy Spirit’s gift, including prudence and wisdom, enabling one to distinguish authentic divine charisms from natural or evil influences. (Cf. *1 Cor 12:10; 1 Jn 4:1-6*.)

Dogma: truths defined by the infallible teaching authority of the Church as revealed by God and thus to be accepted by all the faithful as a matter of faith. (Cf. *ND 219, 839-40; LG 25*.)

Doxology: giving praise and glory to God, e.g., the “*Gloria*” and the concluding prayer in the Eucharistic canon. (Cf. *Ps 8; 66; 150; Lk 2:14; 1 Pt 4:11; Rv 4:11; 5:12*.)

Epiclesis: the calling down of the Holy Spirit to bless and sanctify creation. (Cf. *1 Tim 4:1-5*.) In the Mass it is the invocation to the Spirit to come and change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and sanctify the participants.

Ecumenism: the movement to foster through prayer and dialogue the unity willed by Christ for all his disciples. (Cf. *Jn 17:21; Eph 4:4-5; UR 1-4; LG 15*.)

Eschatology: study of “*the last things*” (death, judgment, heaven and hell), especially the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Excommunication: the exclusion from celebration or reception of the Sacraments, and from exercising any ecclesiastical office or ministry in the Church. (Cf. *CJC 1331*.)

Exegesis: bringing out the meaning of the Biblical texts by analysis of its words, grammatical structure, literary form, historical context, etc. (Cf. *DV 12, 23; OT 16*.)

Faith: the free, reasonable, personal committed total response to God, or the objective revealed truth believed in, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. (Cf. *Jn 20:31; Rom 10:9; Heb 11:1; 2 Cor 3:16-18; Acts 16:14; DV 4-5*.)

Fruits of the Spirit: effects worked by the Holy Spirit in the believers. They are: “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity*.” (Cf. *Gal 5:22f*.)

Fundamentalism: the movement that rejects the Bible’s historical formation, literary forms and study of original meaning, and emphasizes its literal interpretation as the sole norm for all Christian belief and behavior.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: seven special graces of the Holy Spirit: *wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord*. (Cf. *Is 11:2-3*.)

Grace: God’s free Self-giving whereby we share in God’s own Triune life of love (cf. *2 Pt 1:4*), and the consequent multiple favors offered to all persons, particularly salvation in Christ. (Cf. *Rom 3:21-26; 1 Tim 2:4-6*.) It brings new life (cf. *Jn 1:13; 1 Pt 1:3-5*), making us adopted children of God in the Spirit and members of Christ’s Body. (Cf. *Rom 5:5, 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-7*.)

Hermeneutics: the theory and practice of “interpretation” of texts, their original and contemporary meanings; usually taken as broader in scope than “exegesis.”

Hierarchy: in the Church, the successors of the Apostles, under the Pope as successor of St. Peter. This term describes the order of the ordained: bishops, priests and deacons; more commonly, it refers simply to the Pope and the bishops.

Infallibility: the special charism bestowed by Christ in the Spirit that safeguards the Church from teaching error in matters of faith and morals. (*Jn 16:12-15; LG 12*.) It is exercised particularly by the college of bishops in union with Peter’s successor, the Pope (*Acts 15:1-29; 1 Cor 15:3-11; LG 25*), and by the Pope alone when, as Peter’s successor, he solemnly teaches a revealed truth of faith and morals.

Inspiration, biblical: the special assistance to the human author-editors by the Holy Spirit through which the books of the Bible were written and have God as their [principal] author. (Cf. *Jn 20:31; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pt 1:19-21, 3:15-16; DV 11*.)

Justification: the saving grace which is “not only the remission of sins but the sanctification and renewal of the interior man,” that he may be “an heir in hope of eternal life (*Ti 3:7*)” (*cf. Trent, ND 1932*), through faith in Jesus Christ. (*Cf. Rom 1:17; 9:30-31.*)

Kerygma: the act of proclaiming, or the core message proclaimed, of the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ (*Cf. Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 15:3-5.*)

Koinonia: community or fellowship in the Holy Spirit (*cf. Acts 2:42-47; 2 Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1*), or the sharing in the Eucharist (*cf. 1 Cor 10:16*), or in Christ’s sufferings. (*Cf. Phil 3:10.*)

Lent: the liturgical season of 40 days of prayer and penance (imitating Jesus’ 40-day fast in the desert), beginning on Ash Wednesday, and preparing for Easter, the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection.

Lex orandi, lex credendi: an old Latin axiom that states “the law of prayer is the law of belief,” i.e., liturgy is a reliable expression of the Church’s basic beliefs.

Liberation Theology: stresses the Exodus and prophetic calls for justice and of liberation from sin and its consequences, especially structures of injustice and economic oppression.

Liturgy: originally any “public service” (*cf. Phil 2:17, 30*), it now refers to the *official public worship of the Church*, especially the Eucharist and the administration of the Sacraments.

Magisterium: the teaching authority of the Church, exercised primarily by the bishops, both collegially and individually, as successors of the Apostles, and united under the Pope as successor of St. Peter.

Ministry: authorized service of God in the service of others, according to specific norms of the Church. The rendering of this service is a sharing in Christ’s roles as prophet, priest and king. It can be conferred on all the faithful in virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, and on clerics in a particular way through the Sacrament of Orders. (*Cf. Vatican II, PO 1; AA 10; Christi-fideles Laici, 14 et passim.*)

Mystery: not an obscure, inexplicable matter, but God’s loving plan and present saving action, revealed through Jesus Christ. (*Rom 16:25; Eph 1:9; 3:9; Col 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3.*) “Mystery” is not primarily what we cannot understand, but rather something about which there is always more to understand. (*Cf. Vatican I, ND 132.*)

Natural Law: the universal moral law built into human beings by God in creating them, and accessible to the light of reason. (*Cf. GS 79; DH 2.*)

Paraclete: “helper,” a title applied in John’s Gospel to the Holy Spirit (*cf. Jn 14:16; 15:16; 16:7*), the Spirit of Truth who will guide the disciples in everything Christ has taught them.

Parousia: the Second Coming of Christ in glory to judge the world. (*Cf. Mt 24:29-31; 35:31-46; Nicene-Const. Creed.*)

Paschal Mystery: the saving work of Christ, especially his Passion, Death, Resurrection/Ascension (*cf. SC 5; GS 22*). Christians share in it through Baptism, the Eucharist, the other sacraments, and their life of grace.

Pentateuch: the first five books of the OT (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*) called *Torah* by the Jews, and traditionally assigned to Moses as their author.

Petrine Office/Ministry: the special service for the guidance of the Church and its unity, exercised by St. Peter and his successors, the Bishops of Rome.

Predestination: God’s eternal fore-knowledge and will of our salvation. (*Cf. Mt 20:23; Jn 10:29; Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:3-14.*) While safeguarding the primacy of God’s grace, both God’s universal salvific will (*1 Tim 2:3-6*) and authentic human freedom must be preserved.

Providence: God’s universal loving guidance and care for everything He has created, and particularly free human persons. (*Cf. Mt 6:25-34; 10:29-31.*)

Redemption: literally to “buy back,” “pay a ransom”: God’s action of saving us from sin and evil. In the OT God “redeemed” His people in the Exodus event (*cf. Ex 15:1-21; Dt 7:8; 13:5; 24:18*), and the return

from the Exile (*Is 41:14; 43:14*). In the NT God redeemed all mankind through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. (*Cf. Mk 10:45; Rom 4:25; Eph 1:7; 1 Pt 1:18-21.*)

Resurrection: the core Christian truth that God has raised Jesus from the dead to his definitive glorified life (*cf. Acts 2:24, 32-33, 36; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:1-11, 42-50; DV 4, 17*), and which is the ground for the resurrection of all human persons and their world. (*Cf. 1 Cor 15:20-28.*)

Revelation: “taking away the veil,” God making Himself known through words and deeds in salvation history. (*Cf. DV 2, 4, 6-11.*) The term refers commonly to both who/what is made known, and the means of disclosure; it also refers to the last book of the NT.

Sacrilege: the deliberate violation and desecration of persons, events, places and things set aside publicly for the service/worship of God.

Sanctifying Grace: God’s freely bestowed gift by which we are made holy, through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Senses of Scripture: the different meanings of biblical texts. Traditionally, the term refers to 4 “senses”: *literal*, the meaning intended by the original author, what happened; *allegorical*, what must be believed; *moral*, what is to be done; *anagogic*, toward what we must strain.

Soteriology: the study of Christ’s saving mission, from the Greek word *soter*, meaning Savior. (*Cf. Mk 14:24; Jn 11:49-52; Rom 4:25; 5:6-11; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pt 1:3.*)

Spiritual Works of Mercy: acts of charity responding to spiritual needs: *to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish the sinner, comfort the sorrowful, forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, and pray for the living and the dead.*

Supernatural: what is “above nature” and pertains to the order of grace which “elevates” our natural capacities beyond their created abilities and prepares us for the life of glory.

Theological Virtues: infused virtues that center directly on God: *faith*, on God as Creator and Savior; *hope*, on God as Provider and final Destiny; *charity*, on God as perfect Love.

Tradition: the “handing on” of the complex of Christian doctrines, moral norms, and rites of worship. (*Cf. DV 8-11.*)

Viaticum: “food for the journey,” the Eucharist or Holy Communion given to those in danger of death, to prepare them for life hereafter.

Vicar of Christ: the Pope as visible head of the Church, acting in the place of Christ. The biblical basis of this title/role is Jn 21:15-17: “feed my lambs, feed my sheep.”

Virtue: an operative good habit or the capacity for doing good with ease, pleasure and consistency. Natural virtues are acquired through repeated acts, while other virtues are “infused” by God’s grace.

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