

shepherds of Christ⁺

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



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CONTENTS

The Peace of the Lord	1
The Eucharistic Sacrifice	2
Prayer	4
The Priesthood	5
This Friend Jesus	5
The Father's Love for Us	5
Devotion to the Holy Spirit	6
Scriptural Reflection	6
The Christian and the Social Order	6
A Prayer for Priests ..	7
St. Louis de Montfort and Consecration to Jesus and Mary	7
Act of Consecration ..	7
Letters	7

Chief Shepherd of the Flock

The Peace of the Lord

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. (Jn 10:11-15¹)

Yes, the Good Shepherd laid down His life for us in His brutal and agonizing death on the cross and rose gloriously from the dead so that we might have abundant life in Him.

One of the most important aspects of the life Jesus came to give us is peace. We have the following account of Jesus' appearance to the disciples after His resurrection:

"In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you'" (Jn 20:19-21).

◆ The world needs peace. Individual nations need peace and families need peace. The Church needs peace. Each of us individually needs peace. We must work for peace through prayer, fasting, and other Christ-like activities.

And just what do we mean by peace? St. Augustine says peace is the tranquility of order. God has put order into His creation and this order must be

respected and promoted if peace is to prevail. To the extent that the human family lives according to God's will—lives according to the order or the plan God has established for creation—to that extent does peace exist in the various segments of human society. To the extent there are violations of God's plan, of His will, to that extent peace is absent.

If we are to be instruments of peace, we ourselves must be at peace. Our personal peace is that tranquility of order which results from our doing God's will. The more we are united through love with God in the doing of His will, the more we experience peace.

Sometimes the sense of peace we experience is so strong that we can "feel" it pulsating throughout our being. These are periods of what we may call the experience of extraordinary peace. This type of peace usually is not an everyday occurrence.

Most of the time we live immersed in a more subdued kind of peace which results from our daily attempts to do God's will in love. It is that peace which is a welcome and sustaining companion as we walk the path of everyday life with its usual assortments of joys and disappointments, successes and failures, laughter and tears.

Occasionally, very deep suffering may enter our lives. It is during these times that we need special determination to preserve ourselves in a basic peace of spirit despite the very significant pain. One may wonder how a person can be at peace amidst the experience of great suffering. St. Francis de Sales in one of his writings—and I have not been able to locate the exact place—offers an analogy which I think is very helpful. He asks us to picture an ocean body of water at the time of a violent storm. The surface of the water becomes extremely turbulent. Francis asks us, as we use our imagination, to descend beneath the surface of the water into its depth. What do we find? The more deeply one descends away from the turbulent surface, the calmer the water

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The Peace of the Lord

continued from page 1

becomes. Likewise, says the saint and doctor of the Church, should it be with us during times of profound suffering. Although the surface of the spirit may be very agitated, one can still maintain basic peace of spirit by going deep down to one's center where God is more directly experienced. Here the person experiences a calm, a basic peace, although the suffering remains.

If we are trying to do God's will in love, God intends us to be at peace. The more we conform to God's will, the more we are living according to the order He intends for us. In turn, the more our lives are in harmony with the order established by God, the more we experience peace—peace being the tranquility of order. The more we ourselves live in this manner, the more fit instruments we become for promoting God's order and consequent peace throughout the various segments of society.

◆ St. Dominic was an outstanding witness to the peace of the Lord: "Dominic possessed such great integrity and was so strongly motivated by divine love, that without doubt he proved to be a bearer of honor and grace. He was a man of great equanimity, except when moved to compassion and mercy. And since a joyful heart animates the face, he displayed the peaceful composure of a spiritual man in the kindness he manifested outwardly and by the cheerfulness of his countenance."²

◆ Shortly before he was to die from cancer, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin left us these inspiring words about peace: "It is the first day of November, and fall is giving way to winter. Soon the trees will lose the vibrant colors of their leaves and snow will cover the ground. The earth will shut down, and people will race to and from their destinations bundled up for warmth. Chicago winters are harsh. It is a time of dying.

"But we know that spring will soon come with all its new life and wonder.

"It is quite clear that I will not be alive in the spring. But I will soon experience new life in a different way...

"What I would like to leave behind is a simple prayer that each of you may find what I have found—God's special gift to us all: the gift of peace. When we are at peace, we find the freedom to be most fully who we are, even in the worst of times. We let go of what is non-essential and embrace what is essential. We empty ourselves so that God may more fully work within us. And we become instruments in the hands of the Lord."³

◆ Here is the beautiful prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, life.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life..

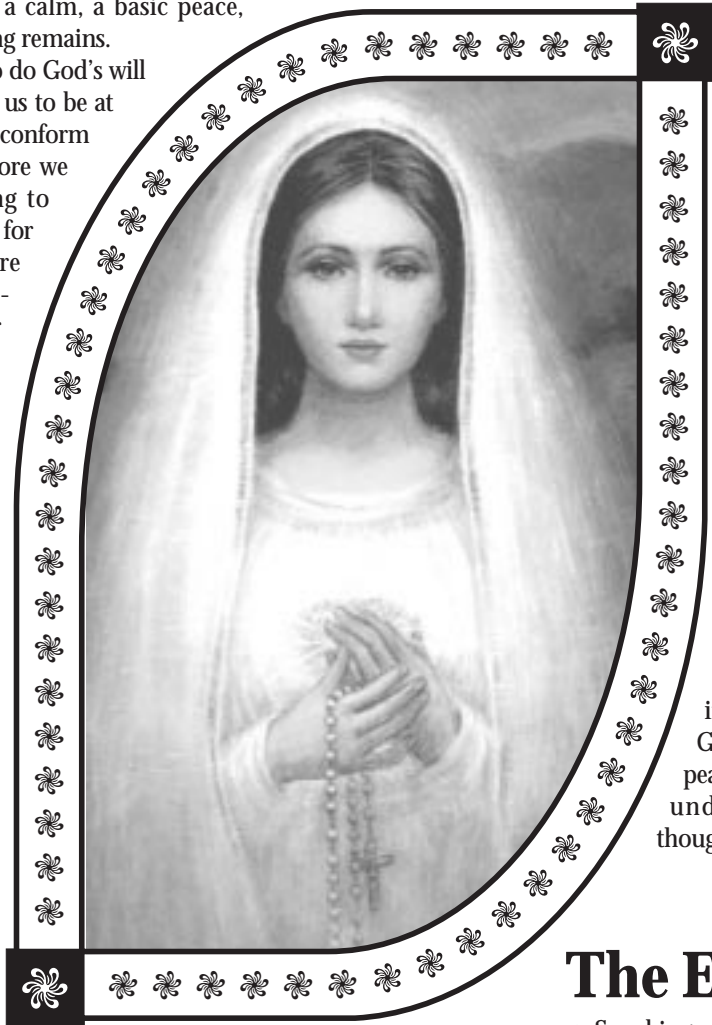
◆ St. Paul speaks to us about the peace of the Lord: "I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:4-7)

The Eucharistic Sacrifice

◆ Speaking of Eucharistic participation, Vatican II tells us: "The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a proper appreciation of the rites and prayers they should participate knowingly, devoutly, and actively. They should be instructed by God's word and be refreshed at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves too. Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all."⁴

The above words remind us that the universal priesthood gives the faithful a real priestly power of offering the Eucharistic sacrifice. This capacity of offering, of course, differs from that power of offering which the priest receives through ordination. Nevertheless, all of us do participate in the priesthood and victimhood of Jesus, who is chief priest and victim in the Mass.

◆ Pope John-Paul II, in one of his writings prior to his becoming Pope, points out that the truth of our sharing in the priesthood of Christ is central to the entire teaching of Vatican II: "...the attitude which derives from sharing in the priesthood of Christ is seen as one which contains in a special way all the richness of faith, both as regards content and as regards subjective commit-



ment. The Conciliary teaching, which lays so much emphasis on this attitude, also shows us its proper place in the inner life of every Christian and the life of every Christian community, in which all the wealth of faith must be sought and developed. It can in a sense be said that the doctrine concerning Christ's priesthood and man's share in it is at the very centre of the teaching of Vatican II and contains in a certain manner all that the Council wished to say about the Church, mankind and the world.

"Only against the background of the truth concerning Christ's priesthood, in which all the People of God share, does the Council delineate the mutual 'subordination' between the priesthood of all the faithful and the hierarchical priesthood."⁵

◆ The following words of Fr. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O., are closely connected with the above. His words emphasize the great importance regarding personal holiness and one's participation in the Mass. "Mass, inasmuch as it is Christ's offering, is not only always acceptable to God, but is of infinite value as well. But, inasmuch as it is your offering and mine, and that of every other member of the Mystical Body...we can limit the effectiveness of God's great Act of Love; we finite beings can set bounds to the veritable flood of God-life made possible by the Infinite Son of the Infinite Father."⁶

◆ Yes, the effectiveness of each Mass, which makes the sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally present, depends in part on the holiness of the entire Church offering it with Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit, including the holiness of the individual priest offering the Mass and the holiness of his participating congregation.

Fr. Maurice de la Taille, S.J., formerly professor of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and a universally recognized authority on the Mass, points out the great importance of personal holiness in the Church relative to the effectiveness of the Eucharistic sacrifice: "It is, then, of greatest importance that there should be in the Church many holy, many very holy persons. Devout people, men and woman, who should be urged by every means to higher sanctity, so that *through them the value of our Masses may be increased* and the tireless voice of the Blood of Christ, crying from the earth, may ring with greater clearness and insistence in the ears of God. His Blood cries on the altars of the Church, but, since it cries through us, it follows that the warmer the heart, the purer the lips, the more clearly will its cry be heard at the Throne of God. Would you wish to know why for so many years after the first Pentecost the Gospel was so marvelously propagated; why there was so much sanctity amongst the Christian people; why such purity in heart and mind, such charity, the sum of all perfections? You will find the answer when you recall that in those times the Mother of God was still on earth giving her precious aid in all the Masses celebrated by the Church, and you will cease to wonder that

never since has there been such expansion of Christianity, and such spiritual progress."⁷

If all, then, have a responsibility to grow in holiness in order to render the Mass more efficacious, the priest has a special duty to do so. His goal must always be to grow in holiness—to grow in union with Christ the priest, this Christ Who leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit with Mary at our side.

◆ Let us continue to build upon the thought of Fr. de la Taille. He states that the Masses which took place while Our Blessed Mother was still upon earth were extraordinarily effective because of her great holiness.

We can, therefore, make our own participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice much more effective by striving to develop within us those dispositions of Mary which she brought to her own participation in the Eucharist sacrifice while she was upon earth.

Let us ask Mary to help us participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice as perfectly as possible. She is the perfect model for us in the putting on of Christ crucified and Christ glorified. Mary has been given great insight into how one is to participate more and more in Christ's paschal mystery of death and resurrection, this paschal mystery which becomes sacramentally present upon our altars at the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Mary is the Sorrowful Mother who has cried. She is also the one who is totally wrapped in victory as she stands above the altar of sacrifice. Mary is the Lady of Victory, the Lady of Peace and Joy, the Lady Clothed with the Sun. Through her Immaculate Heart she brings the crying children of Eve into greater light so that grace will flow in great torrents from the altars of sacrifice.

Let us pray that we ourselves will contribute more and more in helping the waters of salvation flow more copiously from our altars to the thirsty earth.

As we have indicated, the fruitfulness of each Mass depends greatly on the holiness of the priest offering the Eucharistic sacrifice. An aspect of the priest's holiness is his coming to the altar with that presence of being which allows him to have the greatest appreciation of the awesome event which is to take place. The priest attains the proper presence at the Mass proportionate to his oneness with Christ. In turn, his oneness with Jesus is in proportion to his union with Mary. For it is Mary's God-given role to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in producing the deepening of the image of Jesus within us. Consequently, the more one is united to Mary, the more the Holy Spirit, Whose spouse Mary is, forms us in Christ.

Besides having a duty to grow in appreciation of the greatness of the Mass himself, the priest has a great privilege and responsibility to teach the faithful how to participate more fruitfully in the Mass. Many seem to come to the Mass knowing little regarding the greatness of the event about to occur. Many seem to come to the altar lacking in that proper knowledge and proper overall disposition which would allow for a proper participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

In childlike trust, let us ask the Father to grant us through Christ and in the Holy Spirit with the assistance of Mary our Mother, ever greater knowledge and love of the Eucharist: "At that time Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'" (Mt 11:25-27)

*Immaculate
Heart
of Mary,
Pray for us.*

Prayer

◆ Not all agree with everything Joseph Cardinal Bernardin said and did during his tenure as head of the Chicago archdiocese. I think all, though, will agree that he gave an outstanding witness concerning how a Christian should face and accept death. During his final months as a cancer patient, he gave inspiration to millions. There is another aspect of the Cardinal's life that I also think all would voice agreement on—that the Cardinal, as Archbishop of one of the Church's largest archdioceses, was an extremely busy man. Yet, he tells us, in one of his final comments to us before his death, that he gave one hour each day to prayer, and that he treasured this early morning time with the Lord. "I learned many years ago that the only way I could give quality time to prayer was by getting up early in the morning (I must add parenthetically that I didn't have a great desire to get up so early—I usually tried to stay in bed as late as I could.) The early hours of the morning, before the phones and doorbells started to ring, before the mail arrived, seemed to me to be the best for spending quality time with the Lord. So I promised God and myself that I would give the first hour of each day to prayer. Though not knowing then whether I would keep the promise, I'm happy to say that I have kept it for nearly twenty years. This doesn't mean that I've learned how to pray perfectly. It doesn't mean that I have not experienced the struggles that other people have faced. Quite the contrary. But early on, I made another decision. I said, 'Lord, I know that I spend a certain amount of that morning hour of prayer day dreaming, problem-solving, and I'm not sure that I can cut that out. I'll try, but the important thing is, I'm not going to give that time to anybody else. So even though it may not unite me as much with you as it should, nobody else is going to get that time'.

"What I have found as time has gone on is that the effect of that first hour doesn't end when the hour is up. That hour certainly unites me with the Lord in the early part of the day, but it keeps me connected to him throughout the rest of the day as well. Frequently, as I face issues, whether positive or negative, I think of my relationship to the Lord and ask for his help. So these are two important points,

at least for me. Namely, even if it's not used right, you shouldn't give that time to somebody else; you should just keep plugging away. And secondly, if you do give the time, little by little you become united with the Lord throughout your life, which is very important.

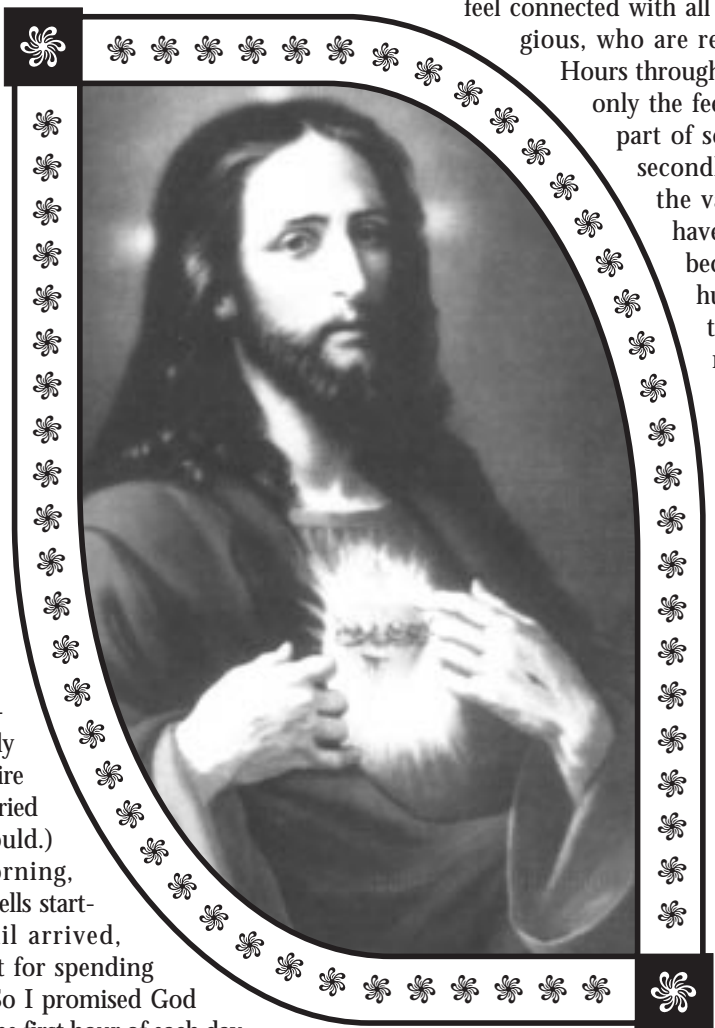
"What do I do during my morning prayer? I pray some of the Liturgy of the Hours. For me, that's a very important prayer. It's a prayer of the Church, and I feel connected with all the people, especially clerics and religious, who are reciting or praying the Liturgy of the Hours throughout the world. And so it gives me not only the feeling but also the conviction that I'm part of something that is much greater. And, secondly, a major portion of the prayers of the various hours are from the Psalms. I have found the Psalms to be very special because they relate in a very direct way, human way, the joys and sorrows of life, the virtues, the sins. They convey the message that good ultimately wins out. And as you see the people who are mentioned in the Psalms struggling to be united with the Lord, it gives you a certain amount of encouragement knowing that even thousands of years ago this same thing was happening.

"I also pray the Rosary because it brings into vivid images some of the high points in the Lord's life and ministry as well as that of his Blessed Mother. It's a real help. Some people think it may be repetitious, and in a sense it is. But it keeps you focused on the mysteries of the Lord, Joyful Mysteries, Sorrowful Mysteries, Glorious Mysteries.

"And then I spend part of my time in mental prayer, reflection. I try to enrich that as much as I can prayerfully reflecting on the Scriptures and

other good spiritual books...Without prayer, you cannot be connected or you cannot remain united with the Lord. It's absolutely essential."⁸

◆ Thomas Merton has left us these words concerning prayer and self-knowledge: "The sincerity of all prayer, whether liturgical or private, depends on the fundamental acknowledgment of our actual spiritual state. We have to have some realization of what we are supposed to be, of what we are not, and of what we are. The first step towards a liberty that is a free gift of God's grace, is the free acknowledgment of our own need for His grace. Or, in other words, if our liberty aspires to a union with the supreme freedom of the Spirit Who is Liberty itself, it must begin by freely accepting the truth about ourselves. For without truth we cannot see to make choices, and if freedom cannot see to choose, it is not fully free. We must see and accept the mystery of God's love in our own apparently inconsequential lives."⁹



*Heart of Jesus,
We place our trust in You.*

The Priesthood

◆ Vatican II tells us: “Priestly holiness itself contributes very greatly to a fruitful fulfillment of the priestly ministry. True, the grace of God can complete the work of salvation even through unworthy ministries. Yet ordinarily God desires to manifest His wonders through those who have been made particularly docile to the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

◆ The priest can obviously appropriately apply to himself what Vatican II says concerning the spiritual formation of seminarians: “Spiritual formation should be closely linked with doctrinal and pastoral training. Especially with the help of the spiritual director, such formation should help seminarians learn to live in familiar and constant companionship with the Father, through Jesus Christ His Son, in the Holy Spirit. By sacred ordination they will be molded in the likeness of Christ the Priest. As friends they should be used to loyal association with Him through a profound identification of their whole lives with His. They should live His paschal mystery in such a way that they know how to initiate into it the people entrusted to them.

“They should be taught to look for Christ in many places: in faithful meditation on God’s word, in active communion with the most holy mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and the divine Office, in the bishop who sends them, and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the young, the sick, the sinful, and the unbelieving. With the trust of a son, they should love and honor the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as a mother to His disciple by Christ Jesus as He hung dying on the cross.”¹¹

◆ *The Directory on the Ministry and the Life of Priests* tells us: “The priests, as collaborators of the Episcopal Order, form with their Bishop a sole presbyterate and participate, in a subordinate degree, in the only priesthood of Christ. Similar to the Bishop, they participate in that espousal dimension in relation to the Church which is well expressed in the Rite of the episcopal ordination when the ring is entrusted to them...

“By this communion with Christ the Spouse, the ministerial priesthood is also founded—as Christ, with Christ, and in Christ—in that mystery of transcendent supernatural love of which the marriage among Christians is an image and a participation.

“Called to the act of supernatural love, absolutely gratuitous, the priest should love the Church as Christ has loved her, consecrating to her all his energies and giving himself with pastoral charity in a continuous act of generosity.”¹²

This Friend Jesus

Friendship is a process of self-liberation. As I give myself to another in friendship, I am aided in the process of escape from my false self. I am aided in the process of growing in true self-identity. The facade which the false self has erected around the authentic self gradually dissolves through the dynamics of true friendship. Thy is this? When another receives me in friendship, that other receives me as I am. The friend loves me in my good points, loves me despite my bad points. In the warmth of this receptive love, I am encouraged to be and to become my authentic self. I do not have to project a false self in the hopes that such an image might be more acceptable to the other. I am encouraged to take the risk of being my true self, since I know the other will not reject me. As a matter of fact, my true self is more attractive to the friend and to others precisely because it is my authentic self—the self God destines me to be. Friendship, then, increases my freedom—the freedom to be my real self. The deeper the friendship, the more I am encouraged by the other’s love to be and to become, to exercise my talents and to bring them to ever greater maturation for love of God and neighbor.

If my possibilities of growing according to my authentic self are enhanced as I give myself to a human-person friend, much more are the possibilities enhanced as I give myself to Jesus in friendship. The more I am aware of Jesus’ tremendous and personal love for me, the more secure I feel in developing my real self. Being accepted by Jesus as an intimate friend should really change my life—as it changed the life of St. Paul and many others. As Jesus has given himself entirely to me, so I should give myself entirely to Him. This deep and intense friendship accomplishes my ongoing transformation, my ongoing conversion. This friend Jesus, through the strength and the tenderness of his love, gradually draws me out of my selfish self, gradually makes me freer to really be, gradually allows my Christic, divinized self to emerge more and more in expressions of love of God and neighbor.

Sharing the pleasant experiences of life with this friend Jesus enhances their joy. Being loved and accepted by others, enjoying the challenge and success of work, experiencing simple joys as well as moments of overwhelming happiness, drinking in the breathless beauties of nature, these and all other such experiences take on deeper meaning to the extent I share them with Jesus. His presence, far from lessening our joy, increases it, and makes us want to thank God all the more for the beauty, the awesomeness, the grandeur, and the tenderness of life.

Sharing with Jesus the difficult aspects life within the human condition lessens their burden. If Jesus is my friend, should a sense of failure ever snuff out my determination to struggle on? If Jesus is my friend, should fear ever paralyze me? If Jesus is my friend, is there any cross which I can claim is too heavy? If Jesus is my friend, can I ever allow suffering to make me bitter?

This friend Jesus always wants to be so near. He is strong, tender, understanding, gentle, loving. He sympathizes, encourages, challenges, inspires. He leads, but does not force. He admonishes us when we are wrong, but He does not reject us. He is overjoyed at a good deed, and gently but firmly reminds us that there is more to do and to accomplish. This friend Jesus is the perfect friend. He is your friend, and my friend.

The Father’s Love for Us

Pope John-Paul II tells us: “The more the Church’s mission is centered upon man—the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric—the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father... Today I wish to say that openness to Christ, who as the Redeemer of the world fully ‘reveals man to himself’, can only be achieved through an ever more mature reference to the Father and his love... *Making the Father present as love and mercy* is, in Christ’s own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of his mission as the Messiah...”¹³

Devotion to the Holy Spirit

Archbishop Luis M. Martinez instructs us: “Consecration to the Holy Spirit must be total: nothing must draw us away from His loving possession. Undoubtedly vacillations and deficiencies are part of our imperfection, but even so, our love must not be extinguished. Rather, it must lift its divine flame toward infinite love in the midst of all human vicissitudes.

“True devotion to the Holy spirit, therefore, is not something superficial and intermittent, but something profound and constant, like Christian life itself; it is the love of the soul that corresponds to the love of God, the gift of the creature who tries to be grateful for the divine Gift, the human cooperation that receives the loving and efficacious action of God. As divine love is eternal, its gift without repentance and its action constant, it is our part to have our heart always open to love, ready to receive the unspeakable gift, and to keep all our powers docile to the divine movement.”¹⁴

A Scriptural Reflection

St. Paul tells us: “Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in this body means doing work which is having good results—I do not know what I should choose. I am caught in the dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake.” (Phil 1:21-24)

We should all be inspired by these words of Paul to stimulate our own personal love and enthusiasm for Jesus. After all, for us, to live should mean Christ. What else does the word *Christian* mean? If we reflect on the meaning of the word *Christian*, we realize that it ideally means a follower of Christ, one totally committed to Christ, one for whom life has no real meaning without Jesus, one who is willing to live and to die for Jesus and His cause. Why is it at times that we do not allow Jesus to influence our lives as He should? Why at times do we tend to relegate Him to the back of our consciousness and go off in various self-centered directions? Why, apparently, do so many Christians become enthusiastic about all kinds of projects, and yet have such faint enthusiasm for that all-important project which is the work of Jesus? As committed Christians, we should

take the appropriate means which will prevent us from succumbing to such an attitude.

We have the privilege and the responsibility of allowing Jesus to live through us. Jesus wants to live in us. He wants us to help Him continue His redemptive mission in and through us. Some two thousand years ago Jesus walked the earth teaching, healing the sick, forgiving sins, extending His love and mercy, choosing His apostles, forming His Church. In all this He was achieving what theologians call the objective redemption. We had no part in this. However, we now live in the stage of subjective redemption—the application of the fruits of Jesus’ objective redemption to individual subjects or persons. In this phase of redemption, Jesus asks our help. He asks us to lend Him our hands, our speech, our minds, our wills, our hearts.

In this work of ongoing redemption, each of us has a special mission, a special role to fulfill. No one can fulfill another’s mission. Each of us, being a unique person, has a unique mission to carry out. John Cardinal Newman reminds us: “...everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not sent into this world for nothing; we are not born at random...God sees everyone of us; He creates every soul, He lodges it in the body, one by one, for a purpose. He needs, He deigns to

need, every one of us. He has an end for each of us; we are all equal in His sight, and we are placed in our different ranks and stations, not to get what we can out of them for ourselves, but to labor in them for Him. As Christ has His work, we too have ours; as He rejoiced to do His work, we must rejoice in ours also.”¹⁵

We accomplish our mission in, with, through, and for Jesus. He is with us showing the way, gently teaching us how to live according to the pattern of His own life. He encourages us when the days become bleak. He constantly reminds us of His tender and concerned love for each of us. He inspires us to greater things. He tells us that He wants us, that He needs us, that He thinks so much of us, that He values so highly what each of us has to contribute. This is the Jesus we follow. To live is Christ.



The Christian and the Social Order

Vatican II states: “Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this Council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his 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.

“In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person...whether he be an old man abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongfully suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person...”

“Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions...as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.”¹⁶

A Prayer for Priests

Many of the laity pray for us priests, and consistently so. Is it not also fitting that we priests pray for all our brothers in the priesthood, and consistently so? There follows a prayer that can aid us in this endeavor.

“Lord Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, we pray that in the great love and mercy of Your Heart that You attend to all the needs of your priest-shepherds throughout the world. We ask that you draw back to your Heart all those priests who have seriously strayed from your path, that you rekindle the desire for holiness in the hearts of those priests who have become lukewarm, and that you continue to give your fervent priests the desire for the highest holiness. United with Your Heart and Mary’s Heart, we ask that you take this petition to your heavenly Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen”.

The above prayer is taken from the prayer manual of Shepherds of Christ Associates, a facet of Shepherds of Christ Ministries. The associates are members of prayer groups which meet regularly to pray for all the needs of the entire human family, but most especially for priests. If you would like a copy, or copies, of this prayer manual, and, further, if you would like information on how to begin a Shepherds of Christ prayer chapter, contact us at:

Shepherds of Christ, P.O. Box 193,
Morrow, Ohio 45152-0193, U.S.A.
Phone (toll free): 1-800-211-3041
Phone 1-513-932-4451
Fax: 1-513-932-6791

St. Louis de Montfort and Consecration to Jesus and Mary

J. Patrick Gaffney, S.M.M., writes of St. Louis de Montfort: “Montfort’s intense devotion to Mary is clearly Christocentric. So strongly does the saint insist upon the point that he forcefully teaches that if devotion to Mary alienated us from Jesus it would have to be rejected as a diabolical temptation...With Mary we enter into a more intense

and more immediate union with the Incarnate Wisdom. To wrench Mary from salvation history and therefore from Christian life is, for Montfort, to reject the plan of salvation as decreed by the Father.

“The total, lived-out acceptance of the reality of our faith is what Montfort calls ‘Consecration to the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom.’ This loving, free surrender to God’s plan renews us in the Spirit so that we may ‘carry out great things for God and for the salvation of souls’ (cf. The True Devotion, 214)...and all must be done in the ‘milieu’ of Mary’s maternal influence so that we may, like her, be temples of the Holy Spirit and thereby renew the face of the earth.”¹⁷

And here are words from St. Louis himself: “The more one is consecrated to Mary, the more one is consecrated to Jesus.”¹⁸

Act of Consecration

Lord, Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, I consecrate my priestly life to Your Heart, pierced on Calvary for love of us. From Your pierced Heart the Church was born, the Church You have called me as a priest, to serve in a most special way. You reveal Your Heart as symbol of Your love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for me, whom you have chosen as your priest-companion. Help me always to pour out my life in love of God and neighbor. Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in you.

Dear Blessed Virgin Mary, I consecrate myself to your maternal and Immaculate Heart, this Heart which is symbol of your life of love. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. You love me with a most special love as this unique priest-son. In a return of love I give myself entirely to your motherly love and protection. You followed Jesus perfectly. You are His first and perfect disciple. Teach me to imitate you in the putting on of Christ. Be my motherly intercessor so that, through your Immaculate Heart, I may be guided to an ever closer union with the pierced Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, Who leads me to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Letters

Here are a few of the many letters we have been receiving, a number of which are increasingly coming from countries outside the U.S.A. This is indicative of the expanding international circulation of the Newsletter.

◆ Dear Father,

This date two copies of your Catholic newsletter reached my desk. I put other mail aside and read your publication.

It sold itself. Therefore I would ask for 60 copies that can be spread among our priests, brothers, sisters, deacons and catechists.

I am sure they will appreciate what you send.

Blessings and best wishes.

Your servant in Christ,

Cardinal Pio Taofinu’u

Archbishop of Samoa-Apia

◆ Dear Fr. Edward:

Thank you for the Shepherds of Christ Newsletter. You are putting in the hands of our priests timely materials for spiritual reading and for allocutions and homilies. I myself will find this helpful for my apostolate of giving recollections and retreats to seminarians and priests.

I will be glad to have 60 copies of each issue of the Newsletter starting with the forthcoming newsletter.



website: <http://www.shepherds-of-christ.org>
E-Mail: info@shepherds-of-christ.org

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shepherds of Christ

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Letters

continued from page 7

Permit me to extend to you and your companions in the apostolate my appreciation and gratitude for extending your help to your fellow priests in the ministry.

God bless you.

Sincerely yours,

Angel N. Lagdameo

Bishop of Dumaguete, Philippines

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

I have just finished reading issue Two, 1998 of Shepherds of Christ.

I really enjoyed it. It had real spiritual depth. I especially enjoyed the piece on Spiritual Freedom and John of the Cross. Really all the pieces were worthwhile. I liked the mix of traditional pieces (the two consecration prayers and Anima Christi) and your quoting of contemporary writers like Henri Nouwen and Robert Schwartz.

It was an act of the Holy Spirit—divine intervention—that I even read the newsletter. Like all priests, I receive so much unsolicited mail that I automatically toss out a lot of it without looking at it. Somehow, I looked at your newsletter on May 21, my birthday. Your newsletter was my best birthday gift. Keep up the good work.

In Christ,

Fr. Eamon Tobin, Cocoa Beach, Florida

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

Thank you for your newsletter of priestly spirituality, "Shepherds of Christ". It is both informative and inspirational.

In the peace of Christ,

Fr. Austin Green, O.P. University of Dallas

NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. "From the Various Writings of the History of the Order of Preachers," as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol IV, p. 1302.
3. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace*, Loyola University Press, pp. 151-153.
4. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", American Press Edition, No. 48.
5. John Paul II, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of Vatican II*, translated by P.S. Falla, Harper & Row, p. 225.
6. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O., *This Is Love*, Bruce, p. 106.
7. Maurice de la Taille, S.J., *The Mystery of Faith: Book 2, "The Sacrifice of the Church"*, translated by Joseph Carroll and P.J. Dalton, Sheed & Ward, p. 240.
8. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace*, Loyola Press, University Press, pp. 96-100.
9. Thomas Merton, *The New Man*, Farrar, Straus and Cudaby, p. 231.
10. *The Documents of Vatican II*, op. cit., "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests", No. 12.
11. *Ibid*, "The Decree on Priestly Formation," No. 8.
12. *Directory on the Ministry and the Life of Priests as in Inside the Vatican*, Special Supplement, Nov., 1994, No. 13.
13. Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia as in The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, edited with introductions by J. Michael Miller, C.S.R., Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Nos 1.4 and 3.4.
14. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, Pauline Books and Media, p. 48.
15. John Cardinal Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, Longmans, Green, and Co., p. 111-112.
16. *The Documents of Vatican II*, op. cit., "The Church in the Modern World", No. 27.
17. *God Alone, The Collected Works of St. Luis de Montfort*, p. xv.
18. St. Luis de Montfort, *True Devotion as in God Alone*, op. cit., p. 327.