

shepherds of Christ

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

GOD WITH US

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd 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 as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away 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 10:11-15}'

The Son of God became Man for our salvation. Yes, He became incarnate. He took to Himself a real human nature. Because Jesus possessed a real human nature, He could die for us. As the Good Shepherd, He has laid down His life for us, His sheep.

There are indeed many thoughts which come to mind when we reflect upon the truth that the Son of God took to Himself a human nature and dwelt among us.

♦ St. John puts it very simply in his Gospel: *The Word was made flesh, he lived among us...* (Jn 1:14) Yes, John states it so succinctly, yet these few words contain a wealth of meaning. We should expect nothing else, since this brief statement of the fourth Gospel points out the central event of all human history. These words sum up God's creative and redemptive activity. They sum up God's process of self-communication to us.

♦ *This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your*

wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet:

Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' {Mt 1:18-23}'

Yes, Jesus is Emmanuel: "God is with us." How tremendously more approachable God is to us because we have Jesus. The more the mind dwells on the meaning of the Incarnation, the more one is stricken with wonder at this unfathomable mystery of love.

♦ Vatican II speaks to us about Christ's presence in His Church: "... Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister... but especially under the

Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the church. He is present, finally, when the Church prays and sings..."²

♦ Pope Paul VI tells us: "All things, all history converges in Christ. A man of sorrow and

hope, he knows us and loves us. As our friend he stays by us throughout our lives; at the end of time he will come to be our judge; but we also know that he will be the complete fulfillment of our lives and our great happiness for all eternity.

"I can never cease to speak of Christ for he is our truth and our light; he is the way, the truth and the life. He is our bread, our source of living water who allays our hunger and satisfies our thirst. He is our shepherd, our leader, our ideal, our comforter and our brother.

"He is like us but more perfectly human, simple, poor, humble, and yet, while burdened with work, he is more patient. He spoke on our behalf; he worked miracles; and he founded a new kingdom: in it the poor are happy; peace is the foundation of a life in common... the hungry find justice; sinners are

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forgiven; and all discover that they are brothers.

“The image I present to you is the image of Jesus Christ. As Christians you share his name... So once again I repeat his name to you Christians and I proclaim to all men: Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, Lord of the new universe, the great hidden key to human history and the part we play in it. He is the mediator--the bridge, if you will--between heaven and earth. ...he is the Son of man, more perfect than any man, being also the Son of God, eternal and infinite. He is the son of Mary his mother on earth, more blessed than any woman. She is also our mother in the spiritual communion of the mystical body.

“Remember: (it) is Jesus Christ I preach day in and day out. His name I would see echo and reecho for all time even to the ends of the earth.”³

◆ And we see a pillar against a dark sky. We see Jesus against the darkened sky and the Woman beneath and the scene cries out to earth, “Not my will, but Thine be done”, not as spoken words, but the very vivid scene of the New Adam, the Pillar of Light, and the New Eve says this. What do you see as you look at the scene of the New Adam and the New Eve, the New Adam hanging from the tree in the place with a garden?

Do you not see the words as if they are almost written across the sky, “Thy will be done”? See her underneath the cross as she holds Him across her knees. His arms lay limp. And the words go across the sky again, “Not My will, but Thine be done”. For He did the Father’s will to His death on the cross. He is placed in the tomb as she cries outside. Behold the most sorrowful Mother. Within her Heart is an understanding of the divine mysteries that far exceeds that of any human person. In her sorrow, in her tears, she knew so deeply the great gift that God sent--Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, the Savior of the world. She knew that her Son had to suffer these things in order to enter into the glory of His resurrection.

And on the day of His resurrection, Mary’s tears were now tears of joy. The victory of her Son has now been accomplished, and the victory will last forever. And on that first Easter morning Mary also knew that all of us, her children, are called to share in her Son’s victory-- His resurrection--now, and especially in eternal life. She is ever pleading with us that with the help of God’s grace we will do all that is necessary to share as fully as possible in the life of Jesus’ resurrection--here and hereafter. She wants Emmanuel to be with us to the greatest degree possible, now and in eternal life

◆ Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., tells us: “Christ is God among men, and the Son of Man before God. He is the bridge that spans all chasms and therefore He is the only mediator. He is the sacrament of God in the world and therefore he is our justification. He is

the Word that comes from the Father and returns to Him, and therefore He is the key to all creation. His Incarnation and his revelation have made it possible for us to answer the question “Who do men say I am?”. But it is necessary to accept and live his word about Himself if it is to grow in us, reproducing the Trinitarian love that confounds all logic: the miracle of love that is a scandal to the Jews, madness to the Gentiles and a thing of no account to the unbelievers of our times.”⁴

◆ John Henry Cardinal Newman observes: “This is what it is to be one of Christ’s little ones... to be possessed by His presence as our life, our strength, our merit, our hope, our crown; to become in a wonderful way His members, the instruments, or visible form, or sacramental sign, of the One Invisible Ever-Present Son of God, mystically reiterating in each of us all the acts of His earthly life, His birth, consecration, fasting, temptation, conflicts, victories, sufferings, agony, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension...”⁵

◆ Jesus is with us. He gives us various signs of His love for us. He watches us grow in faith and trust. He is with us as we suffer, knowing that suffering embraced according to the Father’s will, leads us closer to Himself.

Jesus watches us surrender, watches us turn our wills over to Him more and more. He sees us let go of that which He does not want in our lives. As we die more to the false self, He draws us closer to Himself. He is with us as our love for Him grows, and He is overjoyed as this deeper love brings us closer to His Heart.

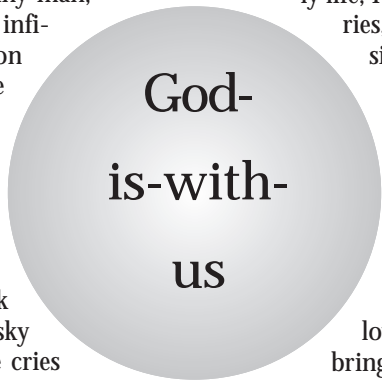
Jesus is with us as we endure trials that at times seem as though they will never end. He knows that these trials, properly encountered, lead us to greater union with Himself. He is with us as we learn lessons through these trials.

He is with us in each pain and joy, loving us silently, always so much closer to us than we can ever realize.

From the day we were born, Jesus has watched us. He is forever by our side, guarding us, loving us, knowing the most secret desires of our hearts far better than we ourselves. He knows the Father’s plan for us. He knows the Father’s love for us. He knows the intimate workings of the Holy Spirit and, in a subordinate way, of Mary upon us to fashion us more and more according to the image of Himself.

Jesus is with us, oh, so intimately. He helps us grow in the awareness that He has come to give us abundant life. He helps us grow in the awareness that through His Heart, Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in a most special way with all those who are in the state of grace.

◆ Jesus is Emmanuel: “God is with us”. He is with us to lead us ever closer to the Father, in the Spirit, with Mary our Mother at our side.



THE FATHER’S MERCIFUL LOVE

Pope John Paul II observes: “Jesus Christ was sent by the Father as the revelation of God’s mercy (see John 3:16-18). Christ came not to condemn but to forgive, to show mercy (see Matthew 9:13)...

“No human sin can erase the mercy of God, or prevent Him from unleashing all His triumphant power, if we only call upon Him. Indeed, sin itself makes even more radiant the love of the Father who, in order to ransom a slave, sacrificed His Son: His mercy toward us is redemption. This mercy reaches its fulness in the gift of the Spirit who bestows new life and demands that it be lived.

“No matter how many and great the obstacles put in His way by human frailty and sin, the Spirit, who renews the face of the earth (see Psalms 104:30), makes possible the miracle of the perfect accomplishment of the good. This renewal, which gives the ability to do what is good, noble, beautiful, pleasing to God, and in conformity with His will, is in some way the flowering of the gift of

mercy, which offers liberation from the slavery of evil and gives the strength to sin no more. Through the gift of new life, Jesus makes us sharers in His love and leads us to the Father in the Spirit.”⁶

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Here are words of Pope John Paul II: “The Holy Spirit, in his mysterious bond of divine communion with the Redeemer of man, is the one who brings about the continuity of his work; he takes from Christ and transmits to all, unceasingly entering into the history of the world through the heart of man... he becomes the ‘sweet guest of the soul’, whom the Church unceasingly greets on the threshold of the inmost sanctuary of every human being. For he brings ‘rest and relief’ in the midst of toil, in the midst of the work of human hands and minds; he brings ‘rest’ and ‘ease’ in the midst of the heat of the day, in the midst of the anxieties, struggles and the perils of every age; he brings ‘consolation’, when the human heart grieves and is tempted to despair... Therefore, he purifies from everything that ‘disfigures’ man, from ‘what is unclean;’ he heals even the deepest wounds of human existence; he changes the interior dryness of souls, transforming them into the fertile fields of grace and holiness.

“What is ‘hard He softens,’ what is ‘frozen he warms,’ what is ‘wayward He sets anew’ on the paths of salvation.”⁷

MARY

St. Louis de Montfort has been one of the greatest apostles regarding devotion to Mary. Here are some of his thoughts:

“Just as in natural and bodily generation there is a father and a mother, so in the supernatural and spiritual generation there is a father who is God and a mother who is Mary.

“... God the Son wishes to form himself, and, in a manner of speaking, become incarnate every day in his members through his dear Mother.

“... Moreover, Jesus is still as much as ever the fruit of Mary, as heaven and earth repeat thousands of times a day, ‘Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus’. It is therefore certain that Jesus is the fruit and gift of Mary for every single man who possesses him, just as truly as he is for all mankind. Consequently, if any of the faithful have Jesus formed in their heart they can boldly say, ‘It is thanks to Mary that what I possess is Jesus, her fruit, and without her I would not have him.’

“...When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, finds Mary in a soul, he hastens there and enters fully into it. He gives himself generously to that soul according to the place it has given to his spouse. One of the main reasons why the Holy Spirit does not now work striking wonders in souls is that he fails to find in them a sufficiently close union with his faithful and inseparable spouse.”⁸

THE EUCHARIST

At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries 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, a 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 (Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 17)⁹

♦ *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. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 48)¹⁰*

♦ *Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice Christ the Lord desired to set before us in a very special way this remarkable union whereby we are united one with another and with our divine Head, a union that no word of praise can ever sufficiently express. For in this sacrifice the sacred ministers act not only as the representative of our Saviour, but as the representative of the whole Mystical Body and of each one of the faithful. Again, in this act of sacrifice, the faithful of Christ, united by the common bond of devotion and prayer, offer to the eternal Father through the hands of the priest, whose prayer alone has made it present on the altar, the Immaculate Lamb, the most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the Church’s universal need. Moreover, just as the divine Redeemer, while dying on the Cross, offered Himself to the eternal Father as Head of the whole human race, so now, ‘in this clean oblation’ He not only offers Himself as Head of the Church to His heavenly Father but in Himself His mystical members as well. He embraces them all, yes, even the weaker and more ailing members with the deepest love of His Heart. (Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* AAS. XXXV, 232-233)¹¹*

♦ Pope Paul VI instructs us in his encyclical, *The Mystery of Faith*: “The Catholic Church has always devoutly guarded as a most precious treasure the

mystery of faith, that is, the ineffable gift of the Eucharist which she received from Christ her Spouse as a pledge of His immense love, and during the Second Vatican Council in a new and solemn demonstration she professed her faith and veneration for this mystery. When dealing with the restoration of the sacred liturgy, the Fathers of the council, by reason of their pastoral concern for the whole Church, considered it of the highest importance to exhort the faithful to participate actively with sound faith and with the utmost devotion in the celebration of this Most Holy Mystery, to offer it with the priest to God as a sacrifice for their own salvation and for that of the whole world, and to find in it spiritual nourishment.



For if the sacred liturgy holds the first place in the life of the Church, the Eucharistic Mystery stands at the heart and center of the liturgy, since it is the font of life by which we are cleansed and strengthened to live not for ourselves but for God, and to be united in love among ourselves...

"It is to be desired that the faithful, every day and in great numbers, actively participate in the Sacrifice of the Mass, receive Holy Communion with a pure heart, and give thanks to Christ Our Lord for so great a gift..."

"In the course of the day the faithful should not omit to visit the Blessed Sacrament, which according to the liturgical laws must be kept in the churches with great reverence in a most honorable location. Such visits are a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, an acknowledgment of the Lord's presence.

"No one can fail to understand that the Divine Eucharist bestows upon the Christian people an incomparable dignity. Not only while the sacrifice is offered and the sacrament is received, but as long as the Eucharist is kept in our churches and oratories, Christ is truly the Emmanuel, that is 'God with us'. Day and night He is in our midst, He dwells with us, full of grace and truth. 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.

"Anyone who approaches this august Sacrament with special devotion and endeavors to return generous love for Christ's own infinite love, will experience and fully understand--not without spiritual joy and fruit--how precious is the life hidden with Christ in God... for there is nothing more consoling on earth, nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road of holiness.

"Further, you realize, venerable brothers, that the Eucharist is reserved in the churches and oratories as in the spiritual center of a religious community or of a parish, yes, of the universal Church and of all humanity, since beneath the appearance of the species, Christ is contained, the invisible Head of the Church, the Redeemer of the World, the Center of all hearts..."

"From this it follows that the worship paid to the Divine Eucharist strongly impels the soul to cultivate a 'social' love... Let us consider as our own the interests of the community, of the parish, of the entire Church, extending our charity to the whole world, because we know that everywhere there are members of Christ".¹²

♦ From a spiritual journal: "Go to the tabernacle. Jesus will give us our answers. He is waiting for us to come. We must come and sit in silence and let Him work in our hearts. We must not be filled with fear, we should be filled with hope and joy. We must pray to the Holy Spirit to give us His wisdom to know the will of the Father. Mary is our Mother. She will help us with all our trials and all of our struggles. We must discipline our thoughts and go to the Heart of Jesus. It is through the Eucharist that we will be strengthened for our trials.

"We may have to face many sufferings; we will not be harmed. We are being protected by our heavenly Mother, she spreads her mantle over us. We must surrender to the Heart of Jesus and to the Heart of Mary. We must be deeply united in Their Hearts. We must meditate on the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit within us. We must pray for the grace to know and love God more. We should pray to the Father, in union with Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Holy Spirit, through the powerful intercession of the Virgin Mary."

PRIESTHOOD

♦ Here are words for the priest from Fr. Nicholas Cachia: "This sense of the belonging of the priest to his community is essential both for his personal life and for his pastoral work. He is not a stranger to that community. This is particularly true of diocesan priests. A group of diocesan priests in South Africa stated in a document they published on the spirituality of the diocesan priest: 'By virtue of his diocesan vocation... the diocesan priest belongs in a primary, immediate, and undifferentiated sense to the people of the diocese, and to the parish to which he is sent.'

"This *being with others* and *for others* is made concrete through service. Jesus presented himself as the Son of Man who came to serve others (cf. Matt. 20,28; Mark 10,45). John presents Jesus as laying aside his garments in order to wash the feet of his disciples, asking them to follow his example (cf. John 13, 4-16)... As the German Bishops say in a document on the priestly service: 'in all these and many other New Testament texts, there is no trace of either hierarchical triumphalism or authoritarian arrogance. On the contrary, these texts speak of a special mission of devoted and unity-oriented leadership, and of an assumption of service for the Gospel'

"The note of service immediately corrects any misunderstandings which could be connected to the authority aspect which the priest receives over his community. We have to distinguish between authority and power. Jesus taught with authority. But his teachings like his actions were always aimed at the liberation of persons. The same should be true of the Christian pastor. He receives authority with his priestly ministry, but 'this is something very different from a license to lord it over those under his care. Rather his authority always exists for the sake of service. Christ has given us the example: his ultimate service was the laying down of his life for his friends' ".¹³

♦ Here is an excerpt from reflections of a priest regarding his relationship with God: "As I reflect on my own inconsistent relationship with God, I am keenly aware that I have loved best when I have felt most loved by God, and I have been most open to others when I have been most open to God. Conversely, I have loved least when I have shut myself off from God..."

"But I also know that God initiated my relationship with him. God started me on this Jesuit journey by gracing me with a profound and compelling experience of his presence and love. Then, having felt that experience, I could hardly resist, and I said my 'yes' wholeheartedly..."

"But as time has passed and the relationship has developed, I have discovered a resistance. I have encountered the limits of my love. Ideologies and principles not underlain by a constant love are inadequate bases for fidelity. And so I pray for a renewed experience of God's presence and love".¹⁴

THE CHURCH AND RECONCILIATION

John Paul II instructs us: "Sin is ... a wound inflicted upon the Church. In fact, every sin harms the holiness of the ecclesial community. Since all the faithful are in solidarity in the Christian community, there can never be a sin which does not have an effect on the whole community. If it is true that the good done by one person is a benefit and help to all the others, unfortunately it is equally true that the evil committed by one obstructs the perfection to which all are tending..."

“Reconciliation with God is also reconciliation with the Church, and in a certain sense with all of creation, whose harmony is violated by sin. The Church is the mediatrix of this reconciliation. It is a role assigned to her by her Founder, who gave her the mission and power of forgiving sins. Every instance of reconciliation with God thus takes place in an explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, relationship with the Church.”¹⁵

DYING FOR OTHERS— EVERYDAY

Jesus tells us: “No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.” {Jn 15:13}

In rarer moments of heroic reflection, we perhaps have dreamed of sensational ways through which we may be called to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in the human family. For most of us, however, such opportunities will probably never occur--and we should not lament. Our courage could well be far less in a real situation than it is in the inflated proportions of dream-like musings. Most people perform much better in the less heroic atmosphere of everyday sameness. Yet each day, usually so ordinarily similar to both the one which has preceded and the one which will follow, offers constant opportunities for the laying down of our lives for others. If these daily opportunities are less sensational than the more heroic occasions, they are much more numerous, and, therefore, much more consistently present as possibilities for serving others.

Dying daily for others means many things. It means curbing those persistent selfish tendencies, which, if left unchecked, gradually narrow our vision so that we hardly think of anyone but ourselves. Dying daily for others means working at being kind and patient--seemingly little things, but immensely important in maintaining a spirit of harmony. Dying daily for others means fidelity to our work, even though this fidelity must be expressed amid negative feelings such as discouragement, laziness, boredom and disinterest. Dying daily for others means these and many other things, some of which we all share in common, some of which are peculiar to each one's uniqueness. One of these common elements is this: dying for others in daily and varied fashion is an expression of our present concern while at the same time it increases our capacity for future love of others.

PRAYER

Because the Christian life in its entirety is not without its difficulties, the practice of prayer is likewise not without its crosses. Prayer has its pain as well as its joy. Every Christian act has the Christ-like imprint of death-resurrection. To experience the resurrection dimension of prayer demands a willingness to endure the death aspect. Similarly, the death aspect must always be seen in relation to resurrection. Christian suffering is never an end in itself, but always a means--and, it is important to note, an inevitable means--toward greater life. It is easy for us to admit this in theory, but in actual, everyday existence it is all too easy to lose this perspective.

What are some of the difficulties, some of the sufferings, connected with prayer? To pray well demands a basic Christian self-discipline that is to be used during and outside periods of prayer. If the proper asceticism, the proper self-discipline, is not present outside of prayer, we can hardly expect to be properly disciplined during prayer itself. As for the set time of prayer itself, a reasonable self-discipline must pervade one's entire being--the body, the intellect, the will, the memory, the emotions, and so forth. This self-discipline costs us; it is, in fact, a form of dying with Jesus. But again, the dying is a means to make us more alive--more alive and mature Christians.

Putting up with distractions during prayer is a difficulty that is often experienced. Only in higher mystical prayer, when contemplative graces are powerfully at work, do all distractions disappear. But seemingly, only a relatively small percentage of people are blessed with these special graces. The goal of achieving maturity in the spiritual life can be achieved by those who follow the more ordinary path of prayer, but, again, this path is strewn with distractions. The task, then, is not to expect to completely eliminate these distractions, but rather to strive to lessen and control them.

Dryness is another suffering that is experienced during prayer. We open ourselves to numerous disappointments if we expect an emotional high to often accompany our prayer. If the emotions are operative in bringing about noticeable consolation during prayer, we are thankful. If this aspect is lacking, however, we must not be discouraged. Rather, we must realize that the essence of prayer resides in the graced activity of our intellects and wills--an activity that does not need to be accompanied by strongly felt consolation.

At times we suffer during prayer because God seems far away. We long for

a closer union with God, but there almost seems to be a wall between God and us. When this happens, we should examine ourselves to see if there is an obvious and significant deficiency in our present Christian existence. Is there something that we are doing and should not be doing, or something that we should be doing and are not? If such an examination uncovers no significant deficiency, we can be reasonably assured that this experience of God-seeming-distant is one of the pains that we can encounter during prayer's evolving journey. We must also remember, as the lives of the mystics remind us, that God can be very close precisely at those times when He seems so far away.

There is a definite pain experienced during prayer's transformation of consciousness as one goes more and more from an awareness of the false self to an awareness of the true self. To cut through the layers of pride, selfishness, greed, laziness, hedonism, and so on, that cover over and blemish the pristine Christ-like image of the true self is no painless task. The act of not shying away from prayer's illumination which points out these ugly manifestations of the false self, carries with it its own kind



of pain. Likewise, the act of not shying away from cooperating with prayer's strength in order to correct these manifestations of the false self requires a willingness to suffer.

As we cut through the layers of the false self and descend more and more to the vibrant and refreshing realms of the true self, we are also open to the suffering that accompanies a certain type of fear. During prayer, as we become more aware of the true, Christ-like self and what this self requires, we can become afraid. We know the true self longs for a greater love union with God, but we fear what this will demand of us. We hesitate. We want to say a full 'yes' to God's love, but we may find this very difficult to do. We waver, torn between the desire to come closer to God in Christ and the dread born of the realization of the cost that is involved. This suspended state, indeed, can be very painful. We must come to realize that the pain of the wavering, the pain of the suspended condition, is greater than the suffering involved in giving God what He wants.

Whatever the difficulty, whatever the pain we endure in prayer, we are to remain in a basic peace of spirit. The spiritual life, as it evolves, leads to an ever-deepening peace despite the suffering that accompanies the process toward spiritual maturity. This principle also obviously holds true for that dimension of the Christian life which is the life of prayer. An evolving prayer life progresses in peace to a greater peace, as Jesus leads us closer to the Father, in the Spirit, with Mary our Mother at our side.

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

the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8:38-39)

Our zeal for deepening the beauty of the world's Christ-like design also depends on our love for our brothers and sisters in the human family. It takes a constant, a vibrant, a long-suffering love for others, to contribute properly to the ongoing Christianization of the world order. Again, St. Paul is an example for us: *Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would be a positive gain. On the other hand again, if to be alive in the body gives me an opportunity for fruitful work, I do not know which I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and to be with Christ, and this is by far the stronger desire--and yet for your sake to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need. (Ph 1:21-24)*

We should have a deeper love for God's world than the non-believer. All that is good and true and beautiful, all that we reach out for in hope, all the possibilities for the world's true progress, all the worthwhile and enthusiastic dreams for a better world--yes, all this we should yearn for more deeply than the non-believer. Why? Because we know that the world belongs to Christ. We know that the human heart's pursuit of the true, the good,

and the beautiful is ultimately a pursuit of Christ. We know that any authentic step forward in the world's process of becoming marks a deepening of the process whereby the human family and the entire world order are united more to the center and crown of the universe, Christ Himself. St. Paul speaks of this centrality of Christ:

*He is the image of the unseen God,
the first-born of all creation,
for in him were created all things
in heaven and on earth:
everything visible
and everything invisible,
thrones, ruling forces,
sovereignities, powers--
all things were created through him
and for him.
He exists before all things
and in him all things hold together,
and he is the Head of the Body,
that is, the Church. (Col 1:15-18)*

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD

God calls us to share in His love for His creation. He calls us to a participation in His creative and redemptive work. Our zeal and enthusiasm for accepting this invitation to assist in the world's evolving movement toward God in Christ obviously depends upon our love for Christ. If our love for Him is weak or mediocre, we will have little zeal to bear with the hardships which are inevitable if one is to help in the process of more deeply imprinting the name of Jesus upon the universe. The more we realize what it means to be loved by Christ, the stronger the bond of love between Christ and us, the more we will contribute to the restoration of all things in Christ. We must constantly open our hearts to the warmth of the Spirit so that the Spirit's action may increasingly create within us an enthusiasm for Christ similar to that which He inspired in St. Paul: *"For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor*

PEDRO ARRUIPE AND THE HEART OF CHRIST

We continue our series of reflections on the Heart of Christ from the writings of Pedro Arrupe, S.J., who was the 28th Superior General of the Society of Jesus: "The world of today tends to unity. There are groups and associations of a national character, of a European, intercontinental and even world character. In his Christmas message to the world of 1964, Pope Paul VI spoke of the evil of classism, so stringent and oppressive in contemporary society. He spoke also of party spirit and factiousness which oppose ideologies, methods, interest and organizations in the very tissue of the community. On the one hand, these complex and very extensive social phenomena unite men who have common interests; but on the other hand, they create insuperable gaps between the various categories. They convert their systematic opposition into a way of life that gives a gloomy and embittered aspect of discord and hatred to our society which is thoroughly developed from the technical and economic point of view.

"All these aspirations of mankind to unite in spite of all barriers and dividing walls, because it feels itself to be one in its origin, nature and rights, are aspirations profoundly Christian. They find, however, and they will ever find insu-

perable obstacles, until the point is reached when all share in some manner that catalysing element which is the love of Christ. For this love impels each one to give himself to the community in a brotherly gift, and assures that each one receives the gifts of the others. Only in the strength of the Heart of Christ is each one of us able to overcome selfishness in favour of the community".¹⁶



THE THEOLOGY OF CONSECRATION

A. Boussard gives an extremely fine and concise sketch of the theology of consecration: "By the Incarnation, in and of itself, the Humanity of Jesus is consecrated, so that in becoming Man, Jesus is *ipso facto* constituted Savior, Prophet, King, Priest, and Victim of the one sacrifice that was to save the world. He is the 'Anointed', par excellence, the 'Christ' totally belonging to God, His Humanity being that of the Word and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. When, by a free act of His human will, He accepts what He is, doing what He was sent to do, He can say that He consecrates 'Himself'. In Christ, therefore, what might be called His 'subjective' consecration is a perfect response to the 'objective' consecration produced in His Humanity through the Incarnation...."

"Through Baptism Christians also are consecrated and 'anointed' by the power of the Spirit. They share, in their measure, in the essential consecration of Christ, in His character of King, Priest, and Prophet...."

"With Christ and through Christ they are 'ordered' to the glory of God and the salvation of the world. They do not belong to themselves. They belong to Christ the Lord, who imparts His own life to them...."

"The vocation of those who have been baptized is to 'live' this consecration by a voluntary adherence--and one that is as perfect as possible--to what it has made of them. Living as 'children of God', they fulfill subjectively their objective consecration; like Jesus, they consecrate themselves. This is the deeper meaning of vows and baptismal promises, together with the actual way of life corresponding to them. The baptismal consecration is the fundamental one, constitutive of the Christian. All consecrations which come after it presuppose and are rooted in it..."

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 Sacred 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:

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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 a 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 a 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

30 June 1999

Reverend and dear Father Carter,

Warmest Greetings to you from Plentong, Malaysia.

I write to thank you for your kindness and thoughtfulness in sending us several copies of your "Spirituality Newsletter for Priests". We have received Issues One & Two, 1999.

There is no doubt that our priests will benefit from the articles of your Newsletter and hopefully they will inspire and encourage them to seek holiness in their pastoral work.

With renewed gratitude and warm regards.

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

Bishop James Chan

Melaka-Johor Diocese



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shepherds of Christ

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Dear Father Edward J. Carter, S.J.:

Greetings and prayerful good wishes!
I am edified etc., etc., by my reading "Shepherds of Christ"...
Congratulations on publishing and editing such an excellent "diamond of spirituality".

Oremus pro invicem.
Sincerely,
in Jesus our Good Shepherd and High Priest,
Father Bruce Riski, Capuchin
Appleton, Wisconsin

Dear Rev. Fr. Edward Carter,

I am Am Nguyen, a Salesian priest. I am a full-time student in the S.T.D. program at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. My desire is that after the completion of studies, I will be back in Vietnam.

I have usually received "Shepherds of Christ." I highly appreciate what you have been doing. It promotes a new awareness of the gift of the priesthood.

I wonder whether I can have a free copy of Newsletters both in cassette form and in book form. Burned with a zeal to serve the Body of Christ more effectively through an ongoing spiritual renewal, I think that these Newsletters will be useful. At the same time, I wish I can share them with my other companion priests in Vietnam.

Thanks for your consideration. May God bless your ministry and make it fruitful for the sake of his Church.

With gratitude and prayers in Christ the Lord,
Am Nguyen, S.D.B

NOTES:

1. Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday.
2. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", America Press Edition, No.7.
3. *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol III, pp. 418-419.
4. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *In Him Alone Is Our Hope*, Institute of Jesuit Sources, p. 88.
5. *The Heart of Newman: A Synthesis Arranged by Erich Prywara*, S.J., Ignatius Press, p. 174.
6. Pope John Paul II, as in *Celebrate 2000!*, Servant Publications, pp 158-159.
7. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, Pauline Books and Media, No. 67.
8. *God Alone: The Collected Writings of St. Louis de Montfort*, Montfort Publications, pp. 298-299.
9. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", America Press Edition, No. 17.
10. *Ibid.*, No. 48.
11. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV, pp. 232-233.
12. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Mysterium Fidei*, St. Paul Books and Media, pp. 5, 25, 26.
13. Nicholas Cachia, *The Image of the Good Shepherd As A Source for the Spirituality of the Ministerial Priesthood*, (last quotation within the quotation from J. O'Donnell - S. Rendina, *Sacerdozio*, p. 46), Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, pp. 312-313.
14. Mark Horack, S.J., *Pleading for the Lord*, as in National Jesuit News, June, 1999, p. 20.
15. Pope John Paul II, as in *The Pope Speaks*, 37/5, 1992, 305, as in *Celebrate 2000!*, Servant Publications, p. 149.
16. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *In Him Alone Is Our Hope*, Institute of Jesuit Sources, p.113.
17. A. Boussard, as in *Dictionary of Mary-*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., pp. 54-55.